

Where Are You Going?

*A Report From the Countries of
Origin of the Sloughi*

By Ulrich Rosenzweig





Tunisian shepherd with his Sloughi.

Origin

The Sloughi is one of the oldest known dog breeds. They are counted among the Oriental sight-hounds. Dogs of this type are depicted in ancient Egyptian wall reliefs dating back farther than three thousand years. Depictions of smooth-haired, sighthound-like dogs date back to the Mesopotamian empire over 6,000 years ago. Older, historical mosaics in North Africa from around the time of the birth of Christ portrayed sand-colored, black and brindle greyhounds hunting for African wild animals. The Sloughi is traditionally the hunting dog of the nomadic tribes of North Africa, the Berbers and the Arab Bedouins. Important Sheikhs kept large kennels of Sloughis. Sloughis, accompanied by trained falcons, rode horseback in front of the riders in the saddle.

European explorers and travelers, who began the exploration of the Arab world, which had been closed down at the beginning of the nineteenth century, made the first reports of Sloughis. The origin of the Sloughi probably lies in the Near East, but the exact area of origin can not be defined. Amidst the entourage of Arab conquerors, it probably came to North Africa and was native to Egypt, Libya and Mauritania, but existed also in the most remote corners of the desert. When the Sloughi returned from the hunt, he could rest in the tent of his master.

Today's Sloughi hails from the North African countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The Sloughi reached Europe via France.

The Sheikhs and the big Sloughi kennels of the Sheikhs no longer exist. So the images that one might imagine of Arabia or North Africa are like mirages. Stories of Arabian Nights spring to mind and it is easy to imagine a Sloughi on a precious Oriental carpet, together with the two other traditional middle-eastern status symbols that are part of this romantic concept: the Arabian horse and the hunting falcon. The surroundings could be a Bedouin tent or even a palace.

But this fantasy does not fit into the sparse, minimalist environment in which the Sloughi lives today. If you are looking for good Sloughi today, you will find a completely different picture.

The Keeping of the Sloughis in the Countries of Origin

The Sloughis in Tunisia, which I have met, reside in old buildings near the house or old farms with typical enclosed courtyards or terraces and small gardens. On the border with Algeria, there are still a few Bedouins who lead a nomadic existence between Tunisia and Algeria, where very few know where they are. In Algeria, there are a lot more nomads, but due to the huge size of the country, they are very difficult to locate. They still keep their Sloughis for meat procurement and to preserve an ancient tradition. In Morocco, the attitude toward Sloughis is slightly different. By far, the largest number exists out in the country in small villages, and most live outdoors, which is not a big problem because of the much warmer climate. But life in North Africa is never a luxurious one, as you might imagine. Many hunters and shepherds take care of their Sloughis very well and give them everything they have. It is certainly a hard and more functionality-oriented existence than in Europe. The typical, traditional menu of the Sloughis consists of olive oil and wheat flour, as well as dates and the table scraps of his master. They are often fed some meat, vegetables, much couscous or pasta with vegetables. An extremely nutritious and absolutely healthy traditional food of the Bedouins is goat's milk or sheep's milk. I saw this for myself in Tunisia on an expedition to a shepherd. The puppies fed in this manner were in an impressive condition and looked very healthy. Since that experience, I have been feeding my own bitches goat's milk and my puppies get to drink it as they are growing as well.

Purity vs. The Threat of Mix Breeding

Even the formerly safe passage to Douz, to search for good Sloughis among the nomads in the nearby desert, has not been fruitful for many years. You also cannot find Sloughis without special contacts in the country. Too many of the elegant desert Sloughis, which were still typical a few years ago, were sold to very wealthy people, mostly to Libya or to the Arabian Peninsula. For some time now, the quality of the Sloughis in Tunisia has deteriorated, as those with good genetic potential were simply given away, and the best representatives were not retained for further breeding or hunting. Political



A brindle Sloughia with cropped ears.



A sand Sloughi in Tunisia.



A shepherd's Sloughi puppy and another Sloughi in the background.

unrest in the last few years and the subsequent revolution of the so-called Arab Spring did not lead to an improvement in the situation of returning to ancient traditions. Thus, the preservation of the breed remains the work of some very traditional men and a few Arab-Tunisian families, who still keep and breed Sloughis. For financial reasons, the migration of the young Tunisian population into the cities or even to Europe often contributes to this trend.

Even in the 1950's, good Sloughis were rare; they are now even rarer. Without good local contacts you will not find Sloughis or be able to purchase one. This is evident in some African imports of the past few years, which certainly appear to be part- Sloughi, but a clear breed classification can not be made. Especially in the South, two types of Sloughis are distinguished. On the one hand, there are small ones, which are certainly mixed with the very common pariah-like representatives of Canids. They are of much smaller stature and more short-legged than the true Sloughis. The coat is rougher and slightly longer. Since they are more agile, they are especially suitable for hare hunting. However, these are not real Sloughis according to our standard.

Only the true long-legged and much more elegant representatives of Sloughis have the ability to course and take down a gazelle.

In the northerly regions of Tunisia and Algeria, Sloughi mixes are used for hunting wild boar, because the Sloughi with its extremely short coat, is not ideally suited for a fight with an extremely defiant and bristly opponent. In fact, many are seriously injured in such a hunt. However, the hunt in the Maghreb is essentially unchanged. With the new requirements of non-traditional prey that are hunted in recent history, more and more sloughis are crossed with stronger dogs and dogs that are more heavily coated. The good Sloughis are scattered all over Tunisia and are often owned by shepherds with sheep and goats, who are still nomadic. I myself was allowed to visit one of these shepherds and his Sloughis on my last trip. Finding these traditional breeders without good local contacts or knowledge is impossible. With such contacts, you can still find very good examples. Some enthusiasts and breeders of recent years have made great contributions to the preservation of the breed through these means.

In Morocco, the situation does not look much better, although in the meantime the Sloughi's mother country and the FCI have affiliated themselves. The development and continuation of the Sloughi breed in Morocco is and will continue to depend on the handling of Galgos or galgo-like greyhounds imported more and more from Spain. Cross breeding Galgos and Galgo-like sighthounds with the native purebred Sloughi can gradually increase the speed of the

hunting dogs, but the result are mixed breed hunting dogs. Only in the south of Morocco are there still a number of very committed hunters and breeders, who protect the tradition of the Sloughi and keep it as it has been for centuries. In the area around Taroudant, Agadir and Massa there are still very typical specimens and so far no Galgos, which could lead to cross-breeding with Sloughis.

The situation in Algeria is a huge problem, because of the expansive country and its inaccessibility for Europeans due to travel risks. My longtime Facebook contacts and friends from the areas in which Sloughis are still bred also complain that more and more Spanish sighthounds are coming into the country. They now threaten to displace the original Sloughis. In Algeria, there are still many regions, where passion is still being pursued according to old tradition. There is probably the largest and best population of pure Sloughis in the Maghreb. To visit this country and my friends there in search of good Sloughis remains one of my dreams, that I would like to realize in the coming years.

From Libya, we hear almost no reports or see photos indicating that the hunting and breeding of Sloughis continues. One wonders where the many good Sloughis that were sold from southern Tunisia to Libya have landed and what has become of them and why they have not been bred. One also wonders if the Gaddafi- Regime has decisively rejected these ancient traditions of breeding and hunting with Sloughis. Gaddafi himself owned some Sloughis at one point in time. It remains a bit puzzling.

Conclusion

Not every dog from the Maghreb is a Sloughi. On the contrary, more and more other dog breeds are kept and mixed with Sloughis. The Sloughi is not referred to as a dog in the Koran, but as something completely different. All dogs are unclean; the Sloughi is pure.

The greatest problems for Sloughi lovers or breeders in Europe are the new EU import regulations, which make it impossible to spontaneously import a Sloughi. For fear of the introduction of diseases, such as rabies from such a third country as the entire Maghreb, imports are prohibited without prior rabies titer test. These provisions are very strict, so it is impossible to import a puppy before the 7th month of life. In the remote regions where the best Sloughis are living, there are no veterinarians and, above all, no laboratories to carry out such examinations, so that extraordinary effort is required to involve laboratories in France or elsewhere. To do this, you need breeders or contact persons who are willing to foster the dog as long as possible, to find out and organize the tests, vaccinations and papers for the transport or who can arrange the necessary transport details on

the spot. A great adventure with significant financial investment is therefore required to import a Sloughi from one of the countries of origin. After that, one hopes that there is no problem with the transport or the transport papers which would require the Sloughi to be quarantined, or worse, to be sent back to Africa.

After all the excitement and effort of importing a Sloughi, there remain the questions of whether the dog will settle in and whether or not it will mature into a suitable representative of the breed. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for some Europeans with all the best intentions, to accidentally import a mixed-breed or an impure Sloughi. This has nothing to do with luck, but with expertise. It can only be hoped, that enthusiasts and hunters will continue to remember their old traditions, and not allow the current demands to corrupt the gene pool. For a healthy population of Sloughis in the countries of origin, performing its ancient function of traditional hunting is of enormous importance to the gene pool so that it does not finally dry up.



Ulrich Rosenzweig is a psychologist in Austria and is also a Sloughi breeder and exhibitor. He is passionate about preserving the true type and authentic bloodlines of the Sloughi and has focused his breeding program on combining genuine North African Sloughis with some of the oldest bloodlines in Europe.

AKC's NEW TRICK DOG TITLING PROGRAM

The American Kennel Club is pleased to announce the launch of the AKC Trick Dog program. The program will include four levels allowing dogs with any amount of experience the ability to participate. Teaching their dog tricks is enjoyable for owners, mentally stimulating for their dogs and can take place at any time or place that fits their lifestyle.

"It is easy to see why trick training is becoming so popular," said Dr. Mary Burch, AKC Canine Good Citizen and Trick Dog Director. "The primary characteristic of trick dog training is having fun. Tricks can be both entertaining and practical, such as teaching a dog 'paws up' for a therapy setting. Trick dog training makes a team out of the handler and dog. We hope this exciting new program will encourage more dogs and owners to become involved in training."

All dogs (purebred and mixed breeds), can earn Trick Dog titles provided the dog is AKC-registered, enrolled with AKC Canine Partners, or enrolled in the Purebred Alternative Listing (PAL) program. The titles will be listed on the dog's AKC record and will appear on pedigrees.

Trick titles can be awarded by AKC approved Canine Good Citizen Evaluators, and the AKC will also recognize trick titles earned through the Do More With Your Dog (DMWYD) organization.

"The AKC is proud to partner with DMWYD. Founded in 2005 by Kyra Sundance, DMWYD has introduced trick dog training to thousands of owners and their dogs," said Doug Ljungren, Vice President of Sports and Events. "By providing basic training to our dogs, whether through CGC training, trick training or in preparation for AKC sports, we prepare our dogs to participate in more areas of our life. Together we encourage all owners to join the fun."

To learn more about the AKC Trick Dog program and access the title application form, please visit www.akc.org/trick-dog.

The AKC will begin processing Trick Dog title applications on May 1, 2017.