

Pure Dog Talk 454 – Danish Swedish Farmdogs

Pure Dog Talk is the voice of purebred dogs. We talk to the legends of the sport and give you the tips and tools to create an awesome life with your purebred dog. From showing, to preservation breeding, from competitive obedience, to field work. From agility, to therapy dogs, and all the fun in between, your passion is our purpose.

Hey crew, as 2020, otherwise known as the year from hell draws to a close, I have some actual good news to share with you all. First of all, if you haven't twigged to The Good Dog Pod, you should most definitely add it to your downloads. This is a new podcast I'm hosting for Good Dog, with the goal of reaching an even wider audience than we do here at Pure Dog Talk. With great content supporting dog breeders and responsible dog ownership. You can find the Good Dog Pod, wherever you get this podcast, including Spotify, Apple Podcast, and Google Podcasts.

Our primary topics on the Good Dog Pod are training and veterinary and breeding and legal advocacy. And I am so excited because we're going to try out a new format, we're sort of taste testing it. Basically a call-in show concept with an ask our advisors Q&A session with myself and Dr. Gayle Watkins and Susan Patterson from the Facebook repro group. Our first crack at this, we're talking about that very first week of neonatal care and fielding questions from the audience. I.E. you guys. So very cool.

Second of all, stay tuned for more good news in the New Year. This is in advertising speak what we call the big tease, but seriously though, enjoy this month's outstanding, Pure Dog Talk and Good Dog Pod episodes. Go like the Pure Dog Talk Facebook page so that you can get up to the minute details and consider joining our patrons community by supporting great content at Pure Dog Talk. Most of all, stay safe, stay healthy and stay strong, happy holidays to one and all.

Laura Reeves:

Welcome to Pure Dog Talk. I am your host, Laura Reeves, and I have one of our very favorite recurring guests here, Dr. Marty Greer, but Marty is going to talk about something entirely different than veterinary medicine. And I am so thrilled. I've been trying to get her to come and talk about the Danish-Swedish farm dogs, which are an FSS breed here in the US. They are fully recognized and popular in Sweden, right, Marty?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Correct.

Laura Reeves:

And they are the cutest little things in the world. In fact, Marty has a litter of puppies on the ground right now that you guys are going to get to see in the blog post. So I'm so excited. So welcome, Marty, how are you doing besides the Packers lost?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well yeah, but it happens.

Laura Reeves:

It does.

Dr. Marty Greer:

The real tragedy is that we have tickets.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, no.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Season tickets, but guess what? There are no games. So yeah. So we're stuck here.

Laura Reeves:

Not as fun. Definitely not as fun.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, my gosh.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No, but losing's not good either way you look at it.

Laura Reeves:

Exactly. Better to lose at home while you're sitting at home, I guess. Okay. So talk to me about the Danish-Swedish farm dogs. They are cute little buggers. That's what I know. Done, end of conversation.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, that's not very complete because a lot of dogs are cute little buggers, so that may not be especially helpful to people who-

Laura Reeves:

That's why I'm saying, I came to the person who knows the stuff, because I don't know anything. So you started, or you have had, and are noted for Pembroke Welsh corgis. And so Danish-Swedish farm dogs also will eventually trend to the herding group. Is that correct?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, we're not really sure where they're going to end up. They may go herding, they may go working. Right now, they're getting WS as their prefix. So technically that is a working dog prefix.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

However, if they are put in the working dog group, they would be the only table dog in that group. So I'm not sure how happy the rest of the working dog people will be about having us schlep a table into there have this little dog that leads the way at the end of the lit, as everybody else is going around. We're still on our first time around when the large dogs, the malamutes are zooming past us. So I'm not exactly sure what they're going to do with this.

Laura Reeves:

Interesting. So tell us everything about the Danish-Swedish farm dogs, their history. I mean, they were farm dogs clearly, but what was their actual job on the farm?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, they were originally a dog from Denmark and their job on the farm was sort of an all-purpose farm dog. So they were to herd, they were to rat, they were to play with the kids, be a little watchdog. So they were just an all-purpose little farm dog. And that's kind of what appealed to me about them is they're a hardy little dog. They have some terrier like appearance, but if you say terrier to a true farm dog person, you will find yourself decked. They'll take you right out because they're not a terrier. They don't act like a terrier. They're not built like a terrier, but there are some similarities. I

mean, it's hard to be too dissimilar because they're all dogs, but they are definitely not a terrier. So please don't confuse them with that.

They do have some similarities with Jack Russell terrier, but they're not a Jack Russell terrier. The original crosses back from the 1700s, some of the reports said that they were a min pin crossed with a rat terrier, which doesn't exactly scream great temperament to me, not to say anything negative about either of the breeds, but neither one are real collegial little dog and this one really is.

Laura Reeves:

Interesting.

Dr. Marty Greer:

They're cool little dogs. I find them to be absolutely fascinating and really easy to get along with. Every time you see pictures of them, they're stacked on top of each other sleeping. They don't have that terrier, snarky, sparring kind of attitude.

Laura Reeves:

Right. And so general farm dog have been around for a while in Denmark and in Sweden, yes?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Since the 1700s. So it's not a new breed, but if you look at it compared to corgis, which were around since the 1100s, it's newer, but it's an older breed than golden retrievers. It's an older breed than a lot of the others that we commonly think of as being a well-established breed, so they're not new. They're just new to the US because very few of them are here even now with the increase in popularity. They're still not a popular dog.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. You said, you think there's probably less than 500 here in the US.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, I would guess probably between 300 and 400, but I don't know that precisely. Not all of them of course are registered.

Laura Reeves:

Sure.

Dr. Marty Greer:

But they are registered with the Danish Kennel Club, the Swedish Kennel Club, the UKC, the United Kennel Club and the American Kennel Club has them as an FSS, which just is Foundation Stock Service. Norwegian Kennel Club recognizes them and then FCI recognizes them. And you can show in the American Rare Breed Association, the ARBA. So there's places we can show them. And we have been showing in AKC.

Laura Reeves:

Nice. And we talk about them being a small dog, give us an approximate size, weight.

Dr. Marty Greer:

The males are probably 22 to 24 pounds. The females are 18 to 20, depending on the size of the dog. They're a small enough dog that you can pick them up under one arm. You can put them in a bag, a Sherpa bag and fit them under the seat of an airplane, so if you're going to be traveling. They're portable, so they're a nice size for that. We went to Florida two years ago to show at the FSS show. The open show at the Florida shows down in Eukanuba, Royal Canin, whatever

shows you want to classify them as, he December shows that we always have down there before Christmas. And we took eight of them with us.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, my gosh.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So they will fit in a mini-van, many crates will fit in the minivan. They're small enough for that to happen. And I have flown to Florida and California and so forth with them so that I was able to travel with them. They're easy. One person, one Sherpa bag under your seat. So it does work pretty well.

Laura Reeves:

Nice. And they look to be sort of a short, medium coat, not real fluffy, not a lot of grooming requirements.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Correct. It's a short coat. It's a short, tight coat. More like the smooth terrier coats. But again, like I said, please don't call them terriers, but it is that smooth coat. There was no rough coat version of that. And that's one of the things that appeals to me about them is that easy to maintain coat. When I got into corgis back a million years ago, back in the 1980s. You'd wash your dog, you'd blow her out and you'd take her in the ring and you didn't do anything else. But now there's quite a bit of grooming that goes into a corgi. And I find that to be a little upsetting when you're supposed to be showing a dog that's natural. Well, this dog really is natural. There's no trimming. There's nothing you could for trim, other than their toenails. When you travel with them, you just need a towel. You don't need a brush. You don't need a comb. You need a towel and a leash.

Laura Reeves:

Sign me up, man. This is looking better and better all the time. I love it. You said they really just kind of get along. No dog aggression, no people aggression, just kind of chill, kind of little dogs. Yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, they come in the house they do one loop through flop down on the couch, hang out with you the rest of the day. I really appreciate that about a dog because by the time I'm done with a 14 hour shift, I don't really want to come home and throw the tennis ball for two hours. So I appreciate a dog that has the ability to settle in the house. But at the same time, there's a lot of activities that people do with them. They're doing nose work, lure coursing, lots and lots of flyball, lots of agility. They do some sheep herding. Of course, they can do the farm dog events.

Laura Reeves:

Barn hunt, I assume.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Barn hunt. Yep. They're good at all those things. And so that makes them a really fun dog because you can compete with them, fly with them and they're a very athletic dog. I have a litter of corgi puppies right now and the farm dog puppy I kept one out of the previous litter. So she's two weeks older than the corgis. And when she runs for the yard, she deliberately zigzags in front of the corgi so that they can keep up with her because she is twice as fast as the corgis and corgis are not slow dogs.

Laura Reeves:

No.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So they're fast little dogs. They love to be athletic. So they really appreciate the athletic aspects, but they know how to settle in the house.

Laura Reeves:

Right. So good size and activity level for even apartment, condo kind of situation.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. And not much grooming, so you can throw them in the shower, clean them up, dry them off. You don't need a blower. And a towel is all you need. So you're good to go. So they really do serve a lot of purposes.

Laura Reeves:

And talk to us about kind of the health and longevity and some of those kinds of things of this breed.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Sure. And my first one is seven, so I can't really speak to firsthand longevity because she's still the first one that I have. And she's still going strong. She's the one that just had a litter. So at age seven, she produced a litter, free whelped a litter without any assistance.

Laura Reeves:

Nice.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So great little athletic dogs. They are reported to live to be 15 and 16 years old. They have reportedly few health problems. When you look at the concerns that are listed as possible genetic defects in the breed, it includes retained testicles and rear dewclaws.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, gee.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah. So I can live with those types of health issues because I don't think they're much of an issue.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. And so we talk a lot about, and I know you and I have talked about this. We talk about it on the podcast all the time. We talk about preserving some of these breeds.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right.

Laura Reeves:

And this seems to me like a dog, if you're looking for something to help preserve, this is starting to check a whole lot of boxes, right?

Dr. Marty Greer:

It is, it is. And we have people that are contacting us because they have family that grew up in Sweden and Denmark and they remember that their grandfather had a dog that looked like that. And so I'm pretty sure that some of them really were farm dogs. Now, if you go to the Humane Society, the pound, the rescue, they are probably some dogs that you'll

see that you're going to think are pretty similar looking to them. So it can sometimes be a little bit difficult to identify exactly where they stand. But once you've seen a couple of them, you start to realize that there is enough similarity to actually recognize a farm dog as what a farm dog is.

Laura Reeves:

And so what would you think of as the hallmark of the breed? Like if I glance across the ring, I'm going to know it's a farm dog because?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, one of the things that they say pretty significantly is that they should have a thick body. They should not look like an elegant dog. A head that looks a little too small for their body and no question that this is a sturdy dog, you don't want anything that looks elegant or frail or anything other than sturdy. So they can really hold up well. They have more angulation than a terrier.

Laura Reeves:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Marty Greer:

A thick, broad chest. They're supposed to have that barrel chest, not that slab sided chest. Like the Jack Russells are supposed to have a narrow enough chest that they can go to ground.

Laura Reeves:

To span it.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. They need to be able to get into the tunnels under the ground. The farm dog is supposed to have a thick, heavy bodied chest. They need to be more than 50% white and otherwise color isn't really much of an issue. Many of them have markings, most of them have markings. And of course, anytime you have a dog that has a predominantly white coat, you have to be concerned about deafness, but I can't find anybody to tell me if they've ever found a deaf farm dog in the European countries or in the United States. I hearing test all of mine because I want to be sure that I'm not perpetuating anything that would be difficult to diagnose. It can sometimes be hard to tell if you have a dog that's unilaterally deaf or deaf in one ear because they still appear to hear.

So I've just tested everybody that I've bred and I've had now four litters. That's not a lot by most people's standards, but it's still four litters more than we had before. And I've bred corgis on average one litter a year over the last 32 years. So I've had a number of more corgi litters than farm dogs, but everybody gets tested for eyes, for hearing, for hearts, for deafness, for all those things. And of course we do hips and elbows. So they all have their health clearances done, just like you would any other breed.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Hang tight guys, we've got a little bit of information for you. We'll be right back to the podcast in a minute.

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Laura Reeves:

Living with them, they're easy to get along with, who would you think maybe shouldn't have one? Maybe somebody that they're too active. I mean, are there flags when you start to place these dogs, who you think of as owners that might work for them or not?

Dr. Marty Greer:

I've had very few concerns about owners being capable of taking care of these dogs.

Laura Reeves:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Marty Greer:

Now of course, not everybody needs a dog or should have a dog, so don't get me wrong.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I did misjudge on one placement and the owner returned the puppy to me, but immediately found him a home that's just turned out to be a fabulous place for him to be. And it was more of a person problem than anything. She just wasn't capable of taking care of a dog that was small enough to fit through the hog panel fencing that she had. And I told her that they weren't big dogs. She knew that, she has a friend that has them and she had in fact sort of recommended her to me and me to her. So she felt really bad about it. So they will fit through the holes of a hog panel. So if you have fencing that doesn't hold a dog that size, then it's probably not a good choice, but otherwise they're pretty good. They do have the ability to jump. My four-month old farm dog puppy will already scale an ex pen, so you do have to be aware of that.

Laura Reeves:

Jumping.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Her grandmother, my first one saw me step over a baby gate. And she said, "Oh, well, if you can do that, I can do that too." So she's apparently going to take after her grandmother.

Laura Reeves:

Oh my goodness. And barky, not barky. I mean, how are they on that kind of a thing?

Dr. Marty Greer:

They're relatively quiet. Olga rarely, rarely barks. The other dogs will bark occasionally if the corgis start them off, but they don't usually initiate the barking.

Laura Reeves:

Again. We're still checking boxes. I mean, this is what we ...

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Laura Reeves:

It's what everybody wants.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Right. But there aren't thousands of them. So you're not going to have an easy time calling up a breeder and finding one.

Laura Reeves:

Right. There's our hole, right? Okay. And so what is ... As you are clearly very actively involved with the development of this breed with the American Kennel Club, you're working towards registration or full registration. How are you in that process?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, I think we had a setback with COVID. I think everything was set back with COVID, but we're getting close. We were hoping by 2020 to have them as a fully registered, a recognized AKC breed in miscellaneous, but it's pretty clear we're not going to make that. And I'm not directly involved with that part of it. I'm just on the fringes of it. And we have to have a certain number of dogs. We can only have one breed club. There were two for a bit. So that's been resolved. So things are moving along to the point that it's not going to be too long until we actually have enough dogs and enough registrations of dogs to get this to happen.

And I will say that Olga, my first one that I brought in from Sweden, I imported three dogs from Sweden, two females and a male. But Olga is the first Danish-Swedish farm dog to get a Certificate of Merit, a CM, which is the equivalent of a champion with AKC. She will be in the record books as the first FSS farm dog with a Certificate of Merit. So we're pretty proud of that.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, I think that's awesome.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Laura Reeves:

And I have to tell you guys, Marty sends me these pictures. I'm like, "Oh, that is cute." I mean, they just have a cuteness factor. I mean, all puppies are cute, sorry. But I just think that they're a fun little dog in a fun little package.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, we're really having a good time with them. I have had no regrets when it came to bringing one in or three, actually. I got the first one and you know what they say, they're like potato chips, you can't have just one.

Laura Reeves:

Potato chips.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yep.

Laura Reeves:

So if someone is interested in acquiring one, is the basic option realistically going to be to import them at this point still or are there enough folks that you can at least get on a list in the US?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh yeah. You can get on the list. There's a few people that are listed. And I think we can probably safely post the Danish-Swedish farm dog of America (<http://www.farmdogs.org>) website to your blog so that people can find it. And then of course, they have Facebook page as well, which makes it a lot of fun to get to know people. So there are several

breeders listed. I think there's about 10 breeders listed in the United States at this time. So there are some, and right now bringing anything in from overseas is a bit of a challenge.

Laura Reeves:

Impossible, yeah.

Dr. Marty Greer:

I actually just had a client bring a dog in from France and one that brought one in from Canada, but that is really outside the norm for right now. It's been very difficult to do that.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah. I have one that I need to get to Costa Rica. I don't know when that's going to happen.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah.

Laura Reeves:

Okay. All right. Well that's very, very cool. So I guess the biggest thing I would think of for people wanting to learn more about them, we'll post the website, like you said, for the National Club. Anything else that you can think of besides they jump, do they dig? They don't bark. This is good.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Well, they'll dig a little bit, but they're no worse than my corgis.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

What I like most about them is that you see them stacked on top of each other, they can't sleep without touching each other. My corgis, they spread out. They're like, "Oh, it's too hot." But the farm dogs are always touching each other. When you see the litter together, they're always together, they're always touching. They always have this need to touch you, this relationship. Olga, my first, who will not do a closed tunnel for an agility event, can't sleep anywhere except under the covers of my bed. So I'm not quite sure the difference between sleeping under the covers and going through a closed tunnel, but clearly it's her idea instead of my idea.

Laura Reeves:

Right. So trainability, that is a great one. How are they for trainability? Are they quick biddable, challenging? All of that.

Dr. Marty Greer:

No, they're quick. They're biddable. They're a lot of fun. And like you said, they like the barn hunts. They like to rat. When I say herd, I don't mean herd like a border collie, so please don't let the border collie people call me and say, "This is not a herding dog." Because they're right, they don't. But if you're trying to move livestock or move your chickens in for the night or move the sheep under the trailer, they're going to be useful, as far as that goes. They're just not going to be a hardcore herding dog, because they're not meant to be that, they're meant to be all-purpose farm dog that just sort of hangs out. And they're great with kids. They're just really collegial little dogs.

Laura Reeves:

So then my next question, do you use them? I know that you guys have stock there, are you using them on your farm?

Dr. Marty Greer:

Oh, I'm embarrassed to tell you that our stock has gone.

Laura Reeves:

Oh, no. Okay.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Yeah, that sheep died at 17. So sheep do live that long.

Laura Reeves:

No, that's amazing.

Dr. Marty Greer:

We had sheep, when the kids were in junior high and high school and finally, after the last sheep died, we have not replaced any of the livestock, but I have sold multiples of them. I've got one that lives on a goat farm, one that lives on a sheep and llama farm, one that lives with some alpacas. So they are used for those kinds of livestock purposes. So yes, they'll definitely do that. And they are a very biddable little dog and wicked smart. Yeah, you've got to be really careful because like the corgis, they're very, very smart little dogs and very quickly we'll out smart you, if you haven't thought of everything before you start teaching something.

Laura Reeves:

Right. That was my question on the training piece. They sound like that dog that will have taught you how to let them do what they want to do before you've taught them how to do anything.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. So there are some opportunities for people to get to know them and see them and I always encourage people to meet a dog before they jump in. I made sure I had met one before I brought my first one in from Sweden. So we drove to Chicago to meet her and right now with COVID, it can be a little bit more difficult, but we've been doing FaceTime and Skype and things like that.

Laura Reeves:

Right.

Dr. Marty Greer:

So clients can see the dogs, see how they look in their natural settings and get an idea of what their activity and behavior is like, their size, their appearance, their general personality. So that it's just nice for them to be able to see that before they commit. So I would strongly encourage people to do those kinds of things, even though, it may be a long distance across the country, there are some shortcuts that we can make to make that work.

Laura Reeves:

Well, you know what? We've all learned how to Zoom now. Even I learned how to Zoom for God's sake. Come on.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Don't you wish you owned stock in the Zoom company, when this all started?

Laura Reeves:

Right, ooh boy. Go back to January and buy Zoom really hard.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Exactly. So whatever platform works for you and it could just be your iPhone and FaceTime, but there are definitely ways that we can get to know each other and the dogs without having to meet physically in person. So yes, dogs are flying, dogs are being moved around the country. It's just a little bit more of a challenge right now than it had been in the past.

Laura Reeves:

Yeah, absolutely. Okay. Well Marty, thank you so very much. I am excited and there will be lots of pictures for everybody to see. And I can't wait to meet one of them in person soon, someday, when this is all over.

Dr. Marty Greer:

You got it. We'll figure it out.

Laura Reeves:

All right, sounds great. Go back to mourning the Packers loss and I will talk to you soon.

Dr. Marty Greer:

Thank you again.

Laura Reeves:

Thanks a lot, Marty.

As always, if you have any questions or input, we'd love to hear from you. The show notes and links to resources on today's topic are available at puredogtalk.com. Drop us a note in the comments or email to laura@puredogtalk.com. Remember guys, this podcast is for you. So if you want to know something, give me a holler, we'll do a podcast for you. If you wouldn't mind, you could help me out here. Take a couple minutes to visit iTunes and give us a review.

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