

Hip Scoring in Hungary

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An article appeared recently in the Aussie Times (September-October 2005) and ACD Quarterly (Winter 2004), titled Hip Scoring Around the World. The author stated the following in regards to Hungary's current system in this article "In Hungary, currently the vet that has taken the x-ray performs the evaluation. Although there is a trend developing that because more dogs are being evaluated now than in the past, the program is likely to change in the near future."

Unfortunately this information is inaccurate and I would like to tell you about the systems that are and have been in existence for many years, especially since Australian Shepherds and Australian Cattle Dogs are now beginning to be sold and bred here.

In Hungary there are actually two hip evaluation organizations or registries. The oldest is FDB (Független Diszplázia Bizottság – in English this translates to Independent Dysplasia Committee), the second is MKOE (Magyar Kisállat Ortopédiai Egyesület – in English, Hungarian Small Animal Orthopedic Association).

The FDB has been evaluating hip health for 13 years and has checked 1,584 dogs of all breeds to date. No Aussies or ACD's have been checked as of this writing through FDB, but as these breeds are currently quite rare in Hungary, I am not concerned by this fact. (Several of the Aussies that are now in Hungary were bought as adult dogs and were checked in their country of origin prior to purchase. The puppies from these dogs I believe are still under two years of age.) What is a concern is that so few dogs of all breeds have been checked. I should point out that the German Shepherd Dog breeders do not usually use FDB or MKOE. They use private vets approved by the GSD Club. Other breeds may also do this in Hungary that I am not aware of which could account for the low numbers of checked dogs in those breeds as well.

The FDB has a website in both Hungarian and English. Of course most information is only available in Hungarian, but the results of checked dogs are in both languages on the website. (<http://www.fdb.hu/>)

Every month the FDB evaluates dogs via a committee. This committee consists of 3 vets who have worked together for the entire 13 years of the FDB's existence,

this has provided a great deal of experience as they have evaluated thousands of radiographs during this time as a team. Some of these vets work for both FDB and MKOE. The FDB website and my personal contact in the FDB report that their scoring or grading system is equal with the FCI's system of scoring and "from the beginning the FDB has worked in accordance with the FCI's hip evaluation recommendations".

There is no international or standard grading system in Europe other than the one provided by the FCI. The FCI scientific committee's 1983 classification is the starting point from which all the different national systems originated. The FCI recommendation is that the first 3 grades of hip scores can be bred without discrimination. The FDB follows the FCI's five grade evaluation tradition, but instead of using the alphabet (A, B, C, D, E), the FDB uses Hungarian words to reflect the grades of hip conditions (please see the chart).

The registration system the FDB uses is also similar to OFA's. The FDB registration #2MU-62E24 means: 2 is female (1 is male), MU is for Mudi breed, 62 is the 62nd Mudi checked and passed, E (for *Enyhe*) is the hip score result and 24 is the age in months of the dog when it was checked.

Dogs must be a minimum of 24 months of age to be officially scored with FDB. Each dog that is presented to the vet must have ID either by tattoo or microchip and the pedigree must also be submitted with the x-rays. Each dog is also required to submit 2 cheek swab samples for DNA identification at the time of the x-raying (the vets provide the swabs). The purpose of these swabs is to be able to firmly identify the dog that was x-rayed in case there is a discrepancy in the future.

Below 2 years of age the FDB will make a preliminary check, however the results are not official. They provide this as a service for those that buy or keep dogs for breeding that are less than 24 months of age. When these young dogs are checked, the owner is informed that those with medium or severe dysplasia results will almost surely not improve after 24 months of age and those with acceptable results are told to possibly be worthy to try for breeding. If an official result is desired, the owner must x-ray the dog again after 24 months of age and submit these through the official process.

The FDB does not publish on the website or in writing, medium or severe scored dogs unless the breed club requests it with an official contract made with the FDB. The results will be given to the club only in that case and the breed club has to decide what to do with them.

The FDB also checks elbows, which is a more recent addition, scores are given on the website as well (all prices listed in this article are USD approximate as they depend on the exchange rate on any given day.) The FDB cost for grading hips or elbows is \$5.00 each. Plus a fee to keep each dogs DNA samples stored for 10 years of \$4.00. Soon the FDB plans to offer free checking to Hungarian dog breeds. This is a wonderful incentive for Hungary's 9 official national treasures.

The cost with the FDB for hip and elbow evaluation is \$14, add in the x-ray expenses (needed films plus anesthesia, costs \$45. at our vet which is an MKOE/FDB approved vet) and you can get your dogs hips and elbows scored for \$59. The FDB requires the pedigree be submitted along with the x-rays as they stamp the hip check result onto the pedigree (passing score only) which is included in the price and your dogs DNA is stored for 10 years as well. It is a pretty good bargain compared to costs in most other countries. But when you compare average wages in Hungary with the USA, you will see why this is not as favorable as it sounds. In the USA the average salary per month is around \$2,000, in Hungary it is \$400.

The FDB used to publish the owners names as well on their website with the dogs name and results (passing scores only), now however times have changed and the owner needs to pay \$5.00 per year to have their name listed. This is partially because it is now illegal to list the owners name and address (privacy protection laws) unless they request it and to make sure they do want it, they need to indicate it with a payment. It was also considered a free source of advertising at one time so the free ride is no longer an option.

The FDB website also provides a list of vets that perform x-rays for the FDB (knowledge of certain rules applies when submitting x-rays to either organization, lack of adherence could mean the x-rays are rejected and have to be redone) plus two additional websites are listed for further information, one to Southpaws Vet Reference Center in Springfield, VA for hip dysplasia information in English and to the Vet Surgery Central, Inc, in the USA, for elbow dysplasia information in English.

The MKOE started to score hips in 2003. They have checked 321 dogs to date, with about 20% of those that check hips, also checking elbows according to my MKOE contact. Also up to this date, no Aussies or ACD's have been checked. The MKOE also checks x-rays once a month and uses a panel of 3 vets that rotate. Every month one vet is changed to a new one and two are the same from the

previous month to provide continuity. Approximately 50 orthopedic specialist vets participate in the MKOE's evaluation program.

All dog breeds can be checked at 12 months of age officially. But if the breed parent clubs would like to make a contract that their breeds should only be checked at a particular age, the MKOE is open to discussion of that possibility.

The MKOE charges \$10 per joint checked. They also will mark the pedigree if the owner requests and a certificate with a hologram is also provided with the 3 vets each signing it that performed the grading. The patella is checked by the MKOE member vet during the initial screening performed in his office and he provides the certificate as screening is not done via x-ray for patellas by either association. Each vet has their own fee for this service. Our vet charged \$10 for this check as well.

One well positioned dorso-ventral (dog on its back) x-ray is taken for the hip check, the dog is anesthetized for this (both FDB and MKOE recommend heavy sedation or general anesthesia for obtaining correct results). For the elbows two x-rays of each elbow are needed with one in the cranio-caudal 15 degree inward rotated position and the other in medio-lateral flexed 85-120 degree position. These x-rays must be marked with either the dogs tattoo or microchip number or they are refused by the MKOE to be checked. Of course the FDB also requires the x-rays to be permanently identified as well.

The MKOE does not presently have the results listed on their website. The individual breed clubs are responsible for contracting with the MKOE and then dealing with the results according to the clubs policies. The MKOE is considering placing the passing results to their website in the future.
(<http://www.kisallatortopedia.hu/>)

The MKOE website is in Hungarian only as it is targeted mainly at Hungarian breeders and owners presently. The director will give lectures to dog clubs that invite him or his associates and they also make efforts to place articles in dog journals regarding the importance of orthopedic health screening.

The results are registered to each dog by the number of dogs checked to that date and the year (6/2004, means it was the 6th dog checked in 2004 in all breeds). The hip rating system is done by word description: *Mentes*, *Átmeneti*, *Enyhe*, *Közepes* and *Súlyos* (translation is provided under the attached chart). The MKOE also uses the classification of the FCI scientific committee (W. Brass and S. Paatsama) from

1983. The results are given in Hungarian terms but also correspond to the FCI system of A, B, C, D and E. (Similar to the FDB)

When my Mudi bitch was checked here in Hungary almost two years ago, I was curious how the 2 committees would score her hips, that is, would they both give the same score. I submitted the x-rays concurrently and was reassured to discover both scored her the same. As my bitch is *Enyhe*, I was especially pleased to have had both committees grade her so that I was sure her hips were not in the not breedable category. I refuse to breed sick dogs, either my own or my stud with some else's unhealthy bitch. I have had a dysplastic GSD and an epileptic Aussie and both are distressing illnesses to live with and I wish not to recreate this hardship for anyone else.

If I were to compare the two committees in general, the FDB has a website with verifiable results which makes it harder to falsify scores. Of course if the individual breed clubs also post scores (as the Mudi club does) than the MKOE system works against this as well. The MKOE is only slightly more expensive than the FDB, but when the Hungarian breeds become free with the FDB, it will be a remarkable difference. Both the MKOE and FDB contacts I know have been user friendly with me and have happily and promptly answered all of my questions whenever I have asked them. I submitted and asked for their approval of the chart I developed which is in this article as well. Both organizations care about dogs and health and work towards improving it in their own ways.

The FDB contact I speak with had this additional information to add, which I think sums up one issue quite well: "On the OFA homepage there is a misleading chart of comparison about the international hip grades. It is absolutely wrong and even enhances the existing chaos. We have made multiple parallel evaluations with both Finland and the USA, which means that I sent x-rays evaluated by the FDB to these countries. The results showed that each country drew the line (between what is breedable and what is not) between mild and moderate grades, in Finland it is between the C and D and in the USA-OFA it is between the fair and the borderline. This is the essence! Sometimes we experienced one grade up or one grade down differences between the breedable categories, but this deviation did not show a tendency between countries. The threshold line is on the place where it is internationally because this is that grade below which the clinical symptoms will likely occur and over this threshold they are unlikely to occur." (The chart that is spoken about in this comment also appeared in the article I mention above.)

What it all comes down to is what is breedable and what is not. It does not matter

if A equals *Mentes*, Free, Clear, 0, or any other word. What is breedable in one country should not differ from what is breedable in another, otherwise veterinary science would not work. I believe that good hips are good hips everywhere as well as bad are bad. I believe that each country's vets also agree on this and what is deemed to be acceptable is uniformly agreed upon by everyone in the veterinary field worldwide. With this in mind I have developed the following chart which only provides for what is breedable and what is not. The chart is based upon information I gathered from the FCI, MKOE, FDB and OFA organizations.

Hip Scoring Registry Comparisons	Recommended For Breeding	Not Recommended For Breeding
FCI	A, B, C	D, E
Finland	A, B, C	D, E
Hungary FDB	N (<i>Normál</i> ¹), M (<i>Majdnem normál</i> ²), E (<i>Enyhe</i> ³)	<i>Közepes</i> ⁴ , <i>Súlyos</i> ⁵
Hungary MKOE	<i>Mentes</i> ⁶ , <i>Átmeneti</i> ⁷ , <i>Enyhe</i>	<i>Közepes</i> , <i>Súlyos</i>
USA OFA	Excellent, Good, Fair	Borderline, Mild, Moderate, Severe

(Translation of Hungarian Terms: ¹ *Normál* = Normal; ² *Majdnem normál* = Almost Normal; ³ *Enyhe* = Mild; ⁴ *Közepes* = Moderate; ⁵ *Súlyos* = Severe; ⁶ *Mentes* = Free; ⁷ *Átmeneti* = Borderline Free) (This chart was developed by Celeste and Dr. Péter Pongrácz.)

Of course deciding what score to breed to what is another matter entirely, we do not breed hips, we breed every part of the dog so many things are taken into consideration, however hip scores are usually a major factor. The usual recommendation is:

A can be bred to: A, B, C

B should only be bred to: A, B

C should only be bred to: A

D and E dogs should not be used for breeding

In Hungary and the USA, all dogs can be used for breeding, hip evaluation is not necessary and even dogs with the lowest scores can be bred. In Hungary however, breed parent clubs are able to make rules which forbid this, in the USA they are not.

I list FDB, MKOE, OFA and PennHIP on the American Mudi Association website and do not make my choice readily apparent on my kennel website which

Hungarian committee I use. All four organizations are good and equally qualified to check joints and none of them should be presented as better or worse than the other. Several vets work for both organizations in Hungary, which provides consistency and proficiency for both committees.

What do I think the future holds for orthopedic health in Hungary's dogs? I know that every year more dogs are being checked as the awareness and concern is spread among breeders and buyers. Demand from buyers will force the breeders to perform the tests, it is the best way to effect a change rapidly. Unlike in America, dog breed clubs here do have the right to make rules that also can effect this change quicker, but of course many are reluctant to do so because of the pressure from club members against making such rules mandatory. I think eventually the demand from the buyers will sway the numbers to higher percentages being checked, especially in the active breeds where the buyers want and need healthy dogs. Good breeders will want to do these checks and be proud of it, caring buyers will look for them.

I and many others would like to see a universal and international scoring system in place. Whether it is a number system (0,1,2,3), a letter system (A,B,C) or a word system (Excellent, Good, Fair) is not so important. But the system should be easy to understand and easy to compare results from country to country. It is difficult and nearly impossible to compare results today and breed and buy correctly out of your own countries system if you are concerned with hip scores of parents or mates. This is something that needs to change very soon for the good of all breeds and those concerned for them.

I would also like to see all countries use the multi vet committee system rather than the one vet only method, I think it makes the scoring more accurate and reliable. I would also like to see results on the committee's own websites for further reliability and as an action against forgery. I would like to see national kennel clubs allow breed parent clubs make health testing mandatory to get pedigrees on puppies in those countries that do not allow this presently (America is one that does not allow for this). I would like to see the testing become affordable worldwide to encourage more breeders and pet owners to do these tests. I would like to see the age limits become universally agreed upon for optimum testing based on the specific breeds factors and age at which breeding is usually being considered. I would like to see kennel clubs offer compensation to breeders that use checked dogs for breeding, such as lower priced puppy pedigrees. I would like to see parent clubs offer awards and accolades for breeders that only use checked dogs for breeding. These suggestions are only a basic list to get ideas across of

what we can do to promote better health for our dogs and get some activity moving in this direction.

It is up to us that care about our dogs and breeds to do the right thing and set an example for those that don't. We need to set the bar high enough to have an effect upon what it is we want to accomplish. It is the duty of those organizations that have the ability, to offer encouragement and rewards to do these health checks and more, which concern the welfare of our dog breeds. It is the responsibility of puppy buyers to only purchase pups from health concerned breeders, this is the final return for both the new owner and breeder, but most of all for the individual dogs and the breed's future.

As a closing note I would like to give you a bit of background information about myself and how I came to live here in Hungary. I am an American born and raised for more than 40 years. I love the Australian Shepherd breed and previously owned Aussies along with a few other breeds. The deteriorating health of the Aussie breed in general however, led me to look for another breed and I found the Mudi, a rare Hungarian herding dog. I started a yahoo group for Mudi owners around the world and met a very like minded and good hearted man with whom a friendship quickly developed. This friendship led to love and marriage and of course as he is a Hungarian, my relocation to Hungary. My husband and fellow Mudi breeder, is a biologist, ethologist, researcher and lecturer at the largest University in Budapest in the Ethology Department and as my luck would have it, his usual subjects are dogs. He is the first scientist to use the Mudi breed in a research project. The dogs that are studied are brought in by their owners or tested at dog schools. This research is not cruel in nature and the dogs live with their owners, not in the lab. I am still a member of ASCA and get the Aussie Times journal as the articles are very well written and they basically pertain to all herding breeds, not just Aussies, and it is considered to be one of the best breed journals today.

I would like to thank Dr. Péter Pongrácz for his thoughts, translation assistance and critique of this article. If you would like to have your countries hip results placed to our chart, please contact me, eliminating the confusion is beneficial for all breeds. For contact information, please visit our websites.

<http://www.geocities.com/americanmudiassociation/>

http://www.geocities.com/the_mudi_kennel/