

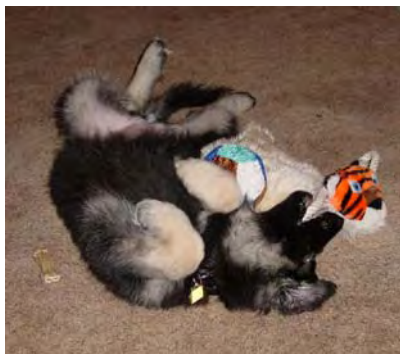
## 4. Phase IV—Pulling It All Together

- 4.1. Sanity Checks
- 4.2. Heartstrings
- 4.3. Shaping the Future



**4.1 Sanity Checks:** Hopefully the breeder has updated you throughout the growing up process and provided pictures, statistics, and observations (this of course is the ideal situation). Now you want to sit down with the breeder and get his or her input on the data you have collected during the testing, conformation evaluations, and litter observations. Does the breeder agree with the LE results and if not, why? Can the breeder expand on any of the critical criteria results? Does the breeder agree with your puppy choice? And if the breeder does not agree ask him or her to explain why? It is very important to hear what the breeder has to say about the test results, but you should also factor in what I mentioned previously—the breeder's observations are based primarily on a "group setting" so do not be surprised if the test results do not always match the breeder's impressions. In addition, the quality of the breeder's impressions relate directly to how good

the breeder is at raising puppies.



**4.2: Heartstrings:** When all is said and done and you have narrowed your choice down—does the puppy tug at your heartstrings. You have to assess this last because if you are like me, all puppies tug at your heartstrings. When I hold this puppy, does it feel right or am I thinking about some of the aspects of the LE? Does this puppy match my critical criteria? If I made some compromises based on the data obtained, are they compromises I am going to be able to live with? It is important to note here that environment, especially when dealing with young puppies, can minimize or maximize traits. Compromising on certain traits does not mean the puppy cannot learn to do something or to develop stronger instincts for a behavior. It means an owner may have to work harder at enhancing (or reducing) the trait. For example, some puppies show a natural ability to retrieve, some do not. It is much easier to train a puppy with natural tendencies than one who shows

no interest. However, patience and a hard work can usually pay off if the puppy has all the other traits you are looking for. On the other hand, a puppy with low drives is not going to be a good candidate for Schutzhund work. By looking at the data first and then assessing your emotional response, you are more likely to come away with the best puppy for your needs. Remember, a puppy is supposed to be a life-long commitment so make a good decision for you and for the puppy.

**4.3 Shaping the Future:** Now that you have selected your puppy, the real work begins! No matter how good the genes, the conformation, or the traits—if you do not train your puppy to be a good companion, you might as well forget about all the research you did—it will go right down the drain. In order for your new puppy to develop into a good canine citizen, you must define what it means and takes steps to ensure it becomes a reality. This includes some kind of training hopefully with behavioral aspects blended in. It is good for you and the puppy to attend a class (hopefully more than one). This is a win-win for training and socialization—there are many books available to help you choose a good trainer. And training does not end in class—training must be reinforced at home, in public, and for a lifetime. In other words you reap what you sow—you have a partially developed puppy brain at 8 weeks—give him or her the nurturing environment to fully develop all the great potential you observed during the puppy testing!



## Conclusion

It is important to remember that the PPE shows potential—things like nerves and thresholds are very difficult to assess in 8-week-old puppies. There are indicators—good and bad depending on what you are looking for—and it behooves a

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buyer to get familiar with them. Nor can health issues always be predicted in 8-week old puppies. The best way I know to conclude Marlette's Puppy Selection Process is to say that I used this process with all four of my dogs (all obtained as puppies), but with process improvements all along the way that led to the creation of the PPE. They were, in fact, my field testing for this process. My dogs are not perfect—I deal with some serious issues. For example, my first Shiloh was diagnosed by an orthopedic surgeon and confirmed through both OFA and PennHIP as having moderate to severe hip dysplasia at 8 months.



I often learn my best lessons the hard way. In this case, it never occurred to me that a hip rating for a Shiloh being bred could be “bestowed” by someone who was not a radiologist, an orthopedic surgeon, or did not work for OFA or PennHIP but that was the case. It did not occur to me to ask to see proof of testing, and I paid the price for my stupidity. My next two Shilohs were purchased from parents that were both OFA certified and although my dogs hips are not as tight as I would like, they were not dysplastic at 8 months and to date, show no signs of becoming dysplastic. It pays to do the research regarding health testing. I paid \$1,500 for a puppy said to come from healthy stock and from a breed with a lower incidence of hip dysplasia (instead of trusting the published word, I wish I had thought to check out the OFA database for the truth of that statement). I ended up paying twice that to maintain my dog's quality of life (and I do not regret

doing it—I regret that it was necessary). Had I done what I espouse in this document, I would never have purchased my first Shiloh puppy from that breeder because the research would have negated the sale.

Life is full of risks. Sometimes you can do “all the right things” and still run out of luck. I also have a dog with Enzyme Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI). There was very little information available on EPI in Shilohs when I bought her. There is always going to be risk involved in purchasing a young puppy—the best we can hope for is to do everything possible to reduce the risk and put the odds in our favor. When it comes to temperament, it becomes even more difficult to reduce risk.

I have great respect for and belief in puppy temperament testing, again, when the test is a good one and properly conducted and interpreted, but I understand that nerves and thresholds are difficult to assess in young puppies. I have one Shiloh that is dog aggressive, one Shilohs that over reacts to new situations and my first Shiloh is a spook—I am not happy about these character flaws but I deal with them. I will share that I find these “warts” much easier to deal with because I got so many of the traits I wanted (my critical criteria) in each one of these dogs. So much so that learning to manage the “warts,” and we do work on the issues around here, seems a small price to pay. I have said many times on the Zone that I do not regret Kiera, my first Shiloh, but I would never want another one like her. I stand on that statement, but I am very proud of the progress Kiera has made over the years—she is still a spook but I hope to compete with her in obedience in the future. If the foundation is there, even warts can be dealt with if one has patience and fortitude.

I do not think I would have the will or the enthusiasm for dealing with these health and temperament issues if my dogs did not display on a daily basis so much of the critical criteria I established. And many of their more serious issues, like the dog aggression, do not surface unless I take them off my property. I get to interact, for the most part, with dogs that meet or exceed my criteria and that is what keeps me excited about this breed and wanting another Shiloh in the future. I would not trade a one of my dogs—they have (and hopefully will continue to) taught me so much about training, behavior, research, nutrition, health, etc. I have even higher hopes for the future with all the improvements some of the breeders not associated with the ISSR are making.

We all have different criteria for the type of dog we want—I am convinced using this process will help you do a better job of selecting a puppy. It will not eliminate your risks, it will not guarantee anything, but it will put the odds in your favor.

I have attached the forms I described in this document for your convenience. I highly recommend you read the instructions sheets before trying to use the forms.

#### Attachments

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- 1) Instructions for the Puppy Potential Evaluation (PPE)
- 2) Puppy Potential Evaluation (PPE)
- 3) Shiloh Puppy Conformation Form
- 4) Instructions for the Litter Interaction Observations (LIO) Form
- 5) Litter Interaction Observation (LIO) Form



I wish one and all a happy, healthy, and stable puppy! If you have any questions about the information presented in this document, feel free to contact me at: [74452.525@Comcast.net](mailto:74452.525@Comcast.net) or join us on the ShilohZone: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ShilohZone/>

**Acknowledgements:** *I want to express my deep appreciation to Kent who took all the wonderful PPE pictures, to Zoners whose puppy pictures I used, and to Christi for being the first breeder brave enough to use the PPE and who encouraged others to try it as well. Lastly, my heartfelt thanks to the members of the World Class Program for their continued support and dedication to using the PPE and collecting data on it so that I can continue to improve it. It is a much better puppy temperament test thanks to their inputs!*



**Dedication:** *I dedicate this “process” to all future puppy buyers in the hopes that they find the kind of puppy that grows into the type of dog they have always dreamed about.*

