Four Sloughis with their masters, a tracking Braque and two tracking Rateros in Algeria, North Africa
(Rateros are a Podenco type, Braque a Pointer type) © Mangelsdorf

UNDERSTANDING THE SLOUGHI

By Dr. M.-Dominique de Caprona
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Bensekrane's Saff, country of origin Algerian Sloughi © de Caprona

Endemic to North Africa, the Sloughi, besides being a national treasure for its countries of origin (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) has had a long and detailed history in the Western world. Following are a few milestones.

In 1867 Eugène Gayot, citing the Baron de Noirmont, writes "....The North of Africa produces very tall sighthounds, usually fawn brindled and with short hair, named Sloughis in the Arabian language. In Algeria, the natives hunt wild boar, jackal, hartebeest and gazelle with them. These dogs, highly treasured and difficult to find when they are pure-bred, were well known and appreciated by our ancestors; in a letter written to Charles IX by Pierre Bon, consul of Marseille, one sees that the King of Algiers sends to this prince Barb horses, lions and fawn sighthounds...." Charles IX of France, of the Valois Dynasty, was King of France from 1560 to 1574 .

In 1852, the General Daumas wrote the historic description of the Algerian Sloughi in his book "The Horses of the Sahara". Late 1800s and early 1900s, the Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian Sloughis inspire famous artists of the time; the sculptors Antoine-Louis Barye , Gaston d'Illiers, Alfred Dubuccand and Jules Edmond Mason; the glass maker René Jules Lalique; the painters Henri-Emilien Rousseau, Eugène Fromentin, Jean- Léon Gérome, Auguste Le Gras and others. Famous Italian and French writers Gabriele D'Annunzio, Alphonse Daudet and Joseph Kessel were also taken by the breed. Following the occupation by France of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, the Sloughi becomes a French sighthound by "right of conquest".

In 1906, the Dutch artist Auguste Le Gras, who was the first to import Sloughis from Algeria and Tunisia to the Netherlands at the end of the 1800s, draws the ideal Sloughi. This drawing is still a reference to serious breeders and judges. The Sloughi was known and admired in France and other European countries long before the Saluki.

After WW 2 and the interruption of all Sloughi breeding in Europe, followed by not even a handful of breeders in the 1960s, the early seventies witnessed the renaissance of the breed in Europe. It is also at that time that the FCI standard of the Sloughi, which the French had put together in the early 1900s after claiming the Sloughi, was given over to Morocco.

Although it is in Europe that the history of the breed in the Western world is extensive, the Sloughi was not unkown in America. The first representation of a Sloughi appeared in Harpers Magazine in 1882, showing a man holding two mountain type "Algerian Greyhounds" on a leash. Millionaire William T. Walters acquired the rarest Algerian Sighthounds bronzes by Antoine-Louis Barye, to be admired today in the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.

It is possible that other sloughis were brought earlier to the USA. However, the first recorded import was in 1973, when Kate and Carl Rodarty brought a male Sloughi back from Libya to California. His name was Tagiurie el Sian and he had been bred by the Sian tribe. Whereas his sister Damiela became an important foundation bitch in the Netherlands, Tagiurie was alone in the USA and died of old age with no progeny.

California is the state in which activities about the Sloughi started. In 1987, a rare breed exhibit sponsored by the Rare Breed Kennel Club (RBKC) was organized in collaboration with the Kennel Club of Beverly Hills. J. McGuffin represented the Sloughi with his red brindle bitch, Jaaram Nubia, and had a booth with information about the breed. Along with the contacts established before, during and after this show, the first American Sloughi club, the Sloughi Fanciers Association of America (SFAA), was officially founded January 1, 1988 and the Stud book opened in an attempt to keep track of the Sloughis being born in the USA at the time. The founders were Gisela Cook-Schmidt, Jack McGuffin, Carole Cioce, Mario Rechtszaid and Kate and Carl Rodarty. The SFAA Founders were involved with other breeds as well, Salukis mainly and Azawakhs. Mrs. E. Moreau-Sipière later created ASLA.

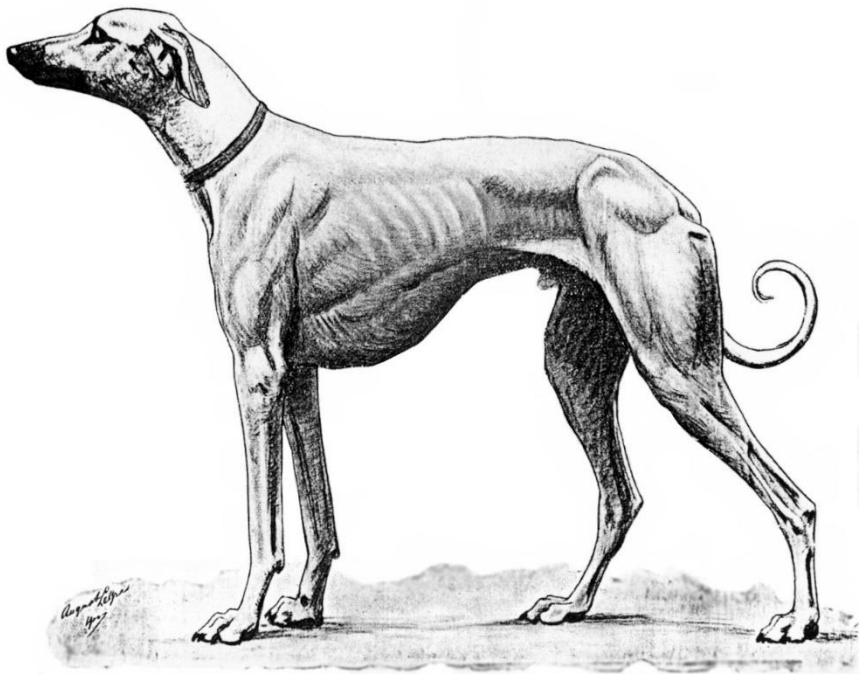
In subsequent years, SFAA Sloughis owned or bred by Shi'Rayan succeeded in getting the breed recognized by the American performance venues. The Sloughi was recognized by the National Oval Track Racing Association (NOTRA) in 1994, and the American Sighthound Field Association (ASFA, coursing) in 1996. The breed was the inspiration behind the Large Gazehound Racing Association (LGRA, straight racing) created in 1995. The Sloughi was recognized for coursing by AKC in 2006.

During all these years and until more recently, the Sloughi was met with a lot of skepticism and downright antagonism by a small faction of the Saluki Fancy- the misconception being that this breed is just another version of the Saluki. This attitude has considerably undermined the efforts of Sloughi owners in America. However, it seems that the new millennium has brought with it a more tolerant and knowledgeable attitude toward this breed, as open minded people exposed to these dogs see the differences. Dog Genetics' recent DNA findings, by various scientists in different countries, have shown that the Sloughi has a clear genetic profile distinct from other dogs and other sighthound breeds.

Apart from its DNA, what are then the physical features that make a typical Sloughi? This article aims at illustrating the standard of the breed and describing correct Sloughi type. The new AKC standard is based on the FCI standard for the breed, established at the time the Fédération Cynologique Internationale was created in 1911. The modifications of the FCI standard for the AKC are cited in the text.

Before evaluating a Sloughi, it is important to understand the role of these Sighthounds in North Africa. The Sloughi there is an all-around working breed of sighthound, guarding dwellings, protecting herds of sheep and goats against jackal attacks, and hunting hare, jackal, gazelle, and boar. Guarding requires a keen sense of who is a stranger and who isn't. This results in the Sloughi's typical aloof and cautious reaction to strangers, including judges. It also results in a breed with high prey drive, solid structure and strong jaws.

The first impression one gets of a Sloughi is that of medium to large sized, lean, somewhat bony, squarely proportioned, proud and aloof sighthound, with a far looking gentle gaze - males impressive while elegant, females more refined and usually smaller.



Ideal Sloughi by Auguste Le Gras 1905

Apart from the lop ears that were imposed by the French on the breed in 1937, Auguste Le Gras' drawing still represents most of the structural characteristics required of the Sloughi today. The artist captured the square proportions, the almost level topline from the base of the neck to the hips with a slight curve over the loin, the underline from a deep chest with long sternum, barely reaching the elbow, to a high tuck up. It shows the correct muscular shoulders, front legs, slope of bony hips, hind-legs and oval shaped feet. Angulations are typically moderate front and rear. The neck, the strong head with correct profile and slight stop are typical. The thin tail is carried with the correct upward curve, the curl varying among individuals

from a tight curl to an open curl. Although a Sloughi in optimal physical condition shows muscular definition, it is always lean, and should not have bulging greyhound-like muscles. Males are often taller than females, their size ranging from 26-29 inches (66-72 cm) at the withers, whereas the females' height ranges from 24-27 inches (61-68 cm). Bitches are allowed to be a bit longer in body than the dogs.

Seen from the front, the Sloughi should not appear barrel chested, the ribs are relatively flat and the last floating ribs slightly rounded. The chest is neither too wide nor too narrow.

Classic moderate Sloughia of recent African lineage (Algerian and Moroccan)
Correct head, front and rear. © Marieke Wegner (Germany),

Classic moderate Sloughis of recent African lineage (Tunisian, Algerian and Moroccan)
with correct silhouettes
Bitches are allowed a little additional length of body, as with other breeds too
Left © de Caprona, right © Marcus Arndt (Germany)

The Sloughi's coat is always short**,** its skin very fine, close fitting to the body, without folds. There is a large variety of coat colors in the breed. To use the breed's terminology, solid coats in all shades of dark mahogany fawn to light sand, with or without black markings such as dark overlay, black mantle, black ears, brindle, black mask are accepted. Although these coat colors exist in the country-of-origin Sloughis, liver mantle, liver brindle, liver mask, blue mantle, blue brindle, blue mask, white and black are not part of the current FCI standard and not cited in the AKC standard. Parti-colors were never part of any standard. Small

white markings on tip of toes or on chest are usually tolerated, the ideal coat color being solid with no white markings.

Some of the Sloughi's coat colors. "The Nap" Tempera by the author.
From left to right: red brindle/black mask, sand/black mantle, sand/black mask, sand, red sand/black mask, sand/brindle/black mask, sand/dark overlay/black mask

Male Sloughi showing the correct lean muscles of the breed
as well as a rare combination of most of the black markings of the breed: black mantle, brindle, black mask
© de Caprona

Variations of fawn, from mahogany red fawn to light sand © Chaouki (Finland)
Elegantin Magma and V'Hibba Shi'Rayan

On the move, the Sloughi appears effortless, feather light and covers ground without excessive reach and drive. His back stays level while he trots. The tail, with its typical upward curve, is to be carried no higher than the back, although the AKC standard accepts the upward curve reaching above the line of the back when the animal is excited. Puppies and Juniors are fleet of foot too.

Correct natural gait of the Sloughi, multi Ch. Malala Schuru-esch-Schams, FCI Eurosighthound 2016 © Kristina Kosmas

Sloughi Puppies are, from early on, sound movers.

The Sloughi's head appears at first as relatively wide, particularly in males. This good width of skull is coupled with similar lengths of skull and muzzle, with a slight stop. Seen from the side, the head is longish, refined, delicate but rather strong. Seen from above, it has the shape of a long wedge, the skull being the widest part, tapering to the tip of the nose. Between the ears, the skull measures about 4-6 inches (12-14 cm). The skull is distinctly rounded at the back and curving harmoniously on the sides. The nose is black with thin and supple lips just covering the lower jaw and the corner of the mouth is to be barely noticeable. The Sloughi's scissor bite shows normal teeth set on strong jaws. The AKC standard adds a level bite. Strong dewlaps and flews are to be avoided.

The medium sized lop ears are mobile and expressive, and can fold backwards when the dog is nervous or moving.

The expression of the large brown eyes is alert, gentle and slightly melancholy. Their color are shades of amber in light coats to dark brown, eye rims being pigmented.

Bensekrane's Saff © de Caprona and V'Hadiyyah Shi'Rayan © Markus Arndt
Left: Correct planes of skull and bridge of muzzle in relationship to each other
Right: Proportions of the Sloughi head seen from the front

Left: Phareeda Shi'Rayan © de Caprona
Right: head seen from ¾, Qalb Elassad Ayda © Liina Niemelä

The characteristics of the Sloughi that make it such an attractive breed are also further highlighted indirectly by what are considered faults or disqualifications in the breed. Although the AKC standard makes no mention of them, the FCI standard lists faults as any departure from the foregoing points stated in the standard - the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded to be proportionate to its degree. They are listed as follows: Bad ratio between length of body and height at withers, head and body slightly too heavy, stop too pronounced or not enough, eyes too light, top line not horizontal, croup narrow, too or insufficiently oblique, belly not enough tucked up, rounded ribs, chest not long enough, seen from the side cut up or very arched, tail too short, with too much hair, badly carried, muscles roundish and protruding, hair hard and coarse, small white mark on chest.

The FCI and AKC standards have their own set of disqualifying faults. For the FCI, they are the following: body clearly longer than high, haunch bones lower than withers, depigmented areas on the mucous membranes, over- or undershot mouth, ears erect, or raised with tips drooping, too long, folding backwards (rose ear), hair semi-long, Fringes on legs or tail, white stockings, larger white markings, color not in accordance with the standard. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. For the AKC they are: ears erect, rose ear, overshot or undershot jaw, color not in accordance with the standard, invasive white markings.

The Sloughi has charisma and presence and an ideal coat color has very little or no white markings. Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Estonian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Baltic, Nordic Ch. Qalb Elassad Anig Owner: Joanna Sjövall, breeder Pia Chaouki, Finland © Satu Lukkarila (Finland)

A good example of a top show Sloughi. International, Luxemburg, Polish, German VDH, German DWZRV, Dutch and Belgian Ch. Chameh Schuru-esch-schams has so many titles to her name, won in many different countries, that it is impossible to list them all. Here is a short selection. She is German National Specialty winner 2012, FCI Eurosighthound winner 2012, Amsterdam Winner 2012, Belgian Winner 2012, Winner Donaueschingen 2013, European Winner 2014. She was #1 Sloughi in Germany 2012, 2013, 2014, and in the Netherlands 2012. Owner Kristina Kosmas, breeders: Ingeborg & Eckhard Schritt (Germany) © Kristina Kosmas

Sloughis are athletes with a strong prey drive. They have long been admired for their coursing and racing ability, having already been coursing in France in the early 1920s. It is a good tradition in the breed to promote dual championships.

Top Dual Champion in Europe. German, Danish and Dutch Ch., FCI Eurosighthound winner 2015, Ganoosh Areen Ksar Ghilane, FCI European racing winner 2015, FCI short track racing Champion 2015, FCI World oval racing winner 2016, German Champion for Beauty and Performance. Owner: Anja Schwarzat, Breeders: Cora Nürnberger & Ylenia Gasparini, Germany. © Schwarzat. Ganoosh represents the best of a team work between North African (Morocco and Algeria), American and German breeders.

Last but not least, Sloughis of good breeding age gracefully, and can be shown in Veteran classes with success. Their life span is usually about 11 to 12 years old under optimal care. However, quite a few Sloughis turn 13-14 years old, while some have reached the age of 16, and one is even known to have turned 17 years old.

Aging with grace, 12 years old Multi Ch. BIS O'Dah Shi'Rayan, Field Champion, Oval Racing Champion, Superior Gazehound Racing Champion 5. The only Sloughi in the US at this time, combining top show wins with impressive racing and coursing titles. Owner: Dr. Bernd Fritzsch, breeder: Dr. Dominique de Caprona (USA). © de Caprona.

Sloughi compared to other breeds

During its long history in the Western World, the North African Sloughi has been confused mainly with two breeds: English Greyhound and Saluki. We now know from recent DNA studies that these breeds are genetically distinct; they originate in the UK (Greyhound), North Africa (Sloughi) and Middle East (Saluki)

The confusion with the Greyhound dates mostly prior to 1937, when the lop-ears were imposed by the French Sloughi standard. Before that, the Sloughi's ears were first described as half erect (1897) and later on as larger than those of the Greyhound (1904) but also folded back. Still today old engravings, statues, and paintings of Sloughis are often sold as "Greyhound", because many of the Sloughis represented have such ear-sets.

Since 1937, The Sloughi has been required to have lop ears, but there are other differences as well.

Both breeds are smooth coated, but whereas the black mantle (black and tan) of the Sloughi is not known for the Greyhound, coats of the Greyhound that are party colored or with ticking are not known for the Sloughi.

The body proportions of the Greyhound are those of a standing horizontal rectangle. The Greyhound is more heavily muscled and not as lean as the Sloughi. In contrast, the Sloughi has a square build and the lean muscles of the long distance runner. This lean musculature enables the Sloughi to cool down faster after effort in the often very hot North African environment.

The Sloughi's head with its slight stop looks stronger and less elongated than that of the Greyhound. The Greyhound appears bulkier and somewhat taller but Sloughis, particularly males, can be similar in height.

The confusion with the Saluki starts mainly with the 1937 French Sloughi standard that forced the lop-ears on the Sloughi breed, against the outcry of the Dutch fanciers. It was enforced in literature after WW2 when the English translation of the General Daumas' historic description of the Algerian Sloughi replaced the word Sloughi by the word Saluki.

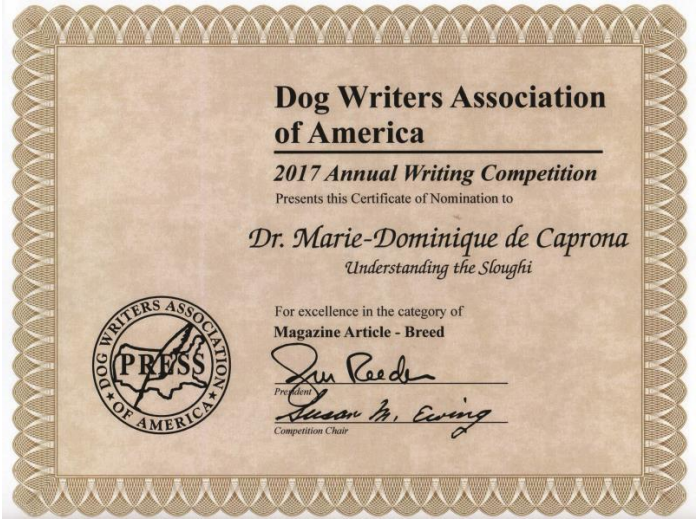
The Sloughi is always smooth coated, whereas the Saluki can be smooth coated or feathered. The Sloughi's coat colors do not include extended white markings such as Irish spotting, parti-color and ticking found in the Saluki. The black mask treasured for the Sloughi is not common among Salukis.

Although there are always individual differences within each breed, the Sloughi appears taller and sturdier than the Saluki. The differences in structure include the Sloughi's different topline, with its barely noticeable withers and underline with its long sternum and high tuck up.

The Sloughi's head, particularly in males, appears stronger and less chiseled than that of the Saluki. The Sloughi's ears are usually shorter than Saluki ears and should not reach below the lower jaw.

From left to right, silhouettes of Greyhound, Sloughi and Smooth Saluki
These drawings by the author show the differences between the breeds, not ideals for each breed.

Differences in head features and ear size and shape between Sloughi (left) and smooth Saluki (right)
© Marcus Arndt and Daniela van der Lichte



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Dr. M.-Dominique Crapon de Caprona received her first Sloughi Lakh d'Ymauville in 1962, and has owned the breed ever since. Born in New-Haven, Connecticut, she was raised in France and studied in Geneva, Switzerland and near Munich, Germany, at the Research Institute famous for Nobel Prize Winner Dr. Konrad Lorenz. After many years as a professional Ethologist in Germany, Switzerland, and Africa, she moved to the USA in 1990. She established the Sloughis of Shi'Rayân kennel in 1993, whose dogs have dominated the show and performance venues for years, and set milestones for the breed in the USA. In addition, Dr. M.-D. C. de Caprona is an artist whose animal paintings are treasured by collectors. She is also the author of the only 2 Sloughi breed books. She lives with her husband, their cats, their French Pointer and their Sloughis on a ranch at the top of the hill of their private wildlife refuge in Iowa.