

Q&A With a Borzoi Dog Breeder

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Borzoi breeder Irina Korshunova plays with a dog at her farm, Rusich.

Irina Korshunova has dedicated 30 years to breeding borzois at her farm, Rusich, located in the Moscow region town of Golikovo. The Moscow Times spoke with her about the dogs and what they mean to her.

Q: Why is the borzoi breed important for you?

A. It's tremendously important for me because I consider these dogs to be part of Russian national pride. The borzoi is a Russian national treasure as it has been bred for generations by the nobles — monarchs and aristocracy.

Q: When did you have the idea to breed borzois?

A. I purchased my first dog in 1985, and at that time my parents advised me not to do it. In the Soviet Union, this kind of hobby was not encouraged and considered bourgeois. But I couldn't help myself — I have a love for borzois in my genes. My great-grandmother had a borzoi

before the revolution. She loved the dogs, like most nobles at that time. We still have paintings in which she is portrayed with her pets.

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Q: Why did aristocrats love the dogs so much?

A. Because these dogs and Russian aristocrats are the same. What characterizes Russian aristocracy? Thin hands, delicate facial features. The borzoi's beauty is similar! First of all, look at its refinement, the delicacy of its complexion. The skin of a Russian borzoi is very subtle, the hair resembles silk, the posture is a work of art. The aquiline nose, small, almost invisible, ears and the tail in the form of a saber make it look like a piece of art!

Q: At first sight, it's fragile creature, but it is a skilful hunter. Do you hunt with dogs as well?

A. Yes. I am happy that hunting is still legal in some parts of Russia and we actively support the traditions of Russian hunting. Every year I travel with around 10 dogs to the Chuvashia republic or to Crimea. To go hunting, I take a pack of three dogs — two females and a male, or a female and two males.

Q: Have Russian borzoi breeders managed to keep the lines that originate from the legendary Pershino farm at the beginning of the 20th century?

A. Yes, I have some dogs that originate from the Pershino line. As the revolution came, Russian aristocrats, thank God, escaped to Europe, bringing dogs to England, Germany and France. When I worked in Germany in the 1990s, I found the dogs in a Bergland kennel. This one bred dogs from the Pershino lines and I brought them back to Moscow. Now there are around 2,000 borzoi dogs in Russia.

Q: Who are the people who buy borzoi puppies today?

A. I sell puppies to mostly wealthy people who are able to provide the necessary space and care for dogs. A puppy costs from 1,500 euro up to 5,000 euro.

I choose my owners carefully. They must be not only rich, but also highly educated people. Because to breed, hunt and take care of dogs, you need an education and a wide range of interests.

Q: Do you feel nostalgic about the pre-revolutionary times?

A. From one side, I think you can't step in the same river twice. From the other, I wouldn't mind if Russia had a tsar again — maybe there would be more order.

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