

Borzoï

Size Matters

What is the correct size for a Borzoï? Most owners would tell you that a Borzoï should be tall enough to clean off the counters with all four feet on the ground but small enough to recline comfortably in a midsize station wagon. The standard is a little more specific, saying: *Mature males should be at least 28 inches at the withers and mature bitches at least 26 inches.* There is no upper limit.

The largest wolf ever caught in Alberta, Canada, was reportedly placed at 235 pounds, and the largest wolf killed in the Kobelyakski area in the Ukrainian SSR was 190 pounds. Considering those sizes, it is highly unlikely that any one Borzoï could take down an animal of that size and mass. The Borzoï standard specifies the range in weight of males between 75 to 105 pounds, with bitches 15 to 20 pounds less. It was never the intent that the wolf would be taken down by the leg or neck. The hounds would work in pairs, darting in and out to subdue the wolf from different angles with fast reflexes and tremendous courage. Historical footage of live hunts from 1910 Russia can be seen on YouTube, and these are worth viewing, although not for the faint of heart.

Today we seldom see dogs in the show ring at 28 inches, nor bitches at 26 inches; more the norm are 28 inches to 30 inches for a bitch, and 30 inches to 33 inches for a male. Hounds outside of those ranges look either extremely large or way too small, although certainly acceptable by our standard.

There are measurements from the kennels of Perchino, Orseroff, Boldareff, and Tschelischtscheff and Gejeroff from before the 1900s that place those dogs

in size from 33 to 30½ inches, with some kennels preferring larger, and others trending toward 30 inches.

The Borzoï standard continues, *Dogs and bitches below these respective limits should be severely penalized; above the respective limits should not be penalized as long as extra size is not acquired at the expense of symmetry, speed and staying quality.*

“Balance and symmetry”—this is not the first time I have written about those qualities. Many key elements of the Borzoï come back to balance and symmetry, from size to angles to movement to outline. All the moving parts must come together to make a quality Borzoï who is functional, sound, swift, and elegant.

When it comes to the size of a Borzoï, one should see a large but not lumbering sighthound who is light on his feet yet substantial enough to hunt in the field without injury. He must possess sufficient bone and muscle but be agile and fast, with athleticism and endurance. Combine those qualities in a size needed to take down a wolf while working paired with another hound and following a long-distance run, and you have the ideal called for in the standard.

In my home, the perfect-size Borzoï is one whose nose is just tall enough to knock my coffee cup out of my hand when I least expect it. —*Jon Steele;*
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