

Borzoi

TOPLINES

Toplines are always a point of contention for Borzoi and one of the most discussed points of the breed with both prospective and experienced judges.

The standard reads: “Back: Rising a little at the loins in a graceful curve.” Simple, really. Eleven words. The back is level and the rise occurs at the loin in a graceful, continuous curve to the pelvis. The standard does not say that the topline starts at the base of the neck, nor does it say where the highest point should be. It is somewhat ambiguous and allows for

variation from a slight rise to a more pronounced rise. Nonetheless, there should be a rise. When the dog is standing, the topline should never be flat or swayed. In motion it is flexible and can flatten out and even invert while in the double-suspension gallop. If the back itself is not level, this will affect the placement of the sternum in relation to the shoulder and the depth of chest at the elbow. The back and ribs are relatively short, which also creates the pronounced underline, due to the great depth of chest and the rather tucked up loin. An underline that is shallow in definition from chest to loin is wrong. If you have a short back and a topline rising at the loin it naturally will create a graceful curve, neither too steep nor too slight.

It is important to note that too steep a fall-away at the croup is wrong. The hips and back should be equal in height. And the pelvis should not be too steep, nor should it be goose-rumped. Balance is important, as it leads to an even gait, with reach in front and drive off the rear. If the pelvis has too steep an angle, the result is unbalanced movement, lifting in the front and rear legs interfering. Sometimes the result is side-winding on the down and back. Whether you see movement that is incorrect that leads to incorrect structure, or you feel an incorrectly proportioned, inflexible topline, the result will be the same

unbalanced movement. Movement doesn't have to have tremendous reach and drive to demonstrate the correct trot for a Borzoi, but it does need to be balanced, effortless, and smooth with grace. Note that the definitions of both topline and movement use the words *grace* or *graceful*. This is not by accident.

To sum it all up: Short, level back, the topline rising at the loin in a graceful curve. Withers and hips near parallel, the pelvis a smooth, continuous line, with the topline neither too steep nor flat and a deep chest with a short back and a well-tucked-up loin. Graceful in movement or repose, no abrupt angles, nothing that draws your eye away from a smooth transition from base of neck to tail.

Considering the description of the correct topline is only eleven words of the standard, it can be the hardest thing to conceptualize by the fancy.

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