

wolves but on many different types of game. They needed to have sufficient intelligence to distinguish game from pets or livestock and confidence to accept handling by strangers.

Books rating the intelligence of dogs tend to rank sighthounds at the bottom of the scale. Those of us who own sighthounds know that these books are ranking “work ethic”—which is defined by the authors as “a dog’s willingness to look to humans for direction, then do as he is told.”

Hunting Borzoi did not look back at their handlers for instructions while they hunted. They were bred to hunt instinctively, and in cooperation with other Borzoi—regardless of whether those hounds were kennelmates or strangers. In a hunt, or course, that may last two minutes or less, the hound must rely on instinct and training to achieve a successful outcome.

This Borzoi thinks for himself, assesses his environment, and makes decisions based on experience and judgment. Temperamentally, the Borzoi who does this will not have the same characteristics as the typical family pet. He will be more independent and more likely to explore on his own. He may be more aloof with strangers or less likely to learn obedience by traditional methods.

This translates to the modern lure-coursing field, where hounds are no longer under the direct control of their handlers and are free to express their temperaments as only hounds can. As owners and coursing enthusiasts, a critical part of sportsmanship is ensuring that our hounds have both sound bodies and minds, and that they pose no danger to themselves or other hounds.

When shopping for a puppy with coursing potential, look for the puppy who confidently accepts new people and situations. He should play with his littermates and not be overly aggressive or shy. When offered a plastic bag (I use a lunge whip as a lure-toy) he should chase it with great enthusiasm, whether alone or with other puppies. At no time should he decide to gain possession of the lure by

“eliminating” the competition!

A Borzoi puppy with correct temperament must then be nurtured as he develops, with continued socialization and plenty of free play. At one year he is eligible to run a Junior Coursing Test with the AKC, which acts as an assessment of the puppy’s drive to chase the lure. The JC test allows the owner to decide whether the puppy is focused enough to run with other hounds (at which point he may run with another Borzoi for his Qualifying Coursing Certificate and begin running in trials), or whether he needs more time and training.

The historic temperament of the Borzoi is still the optimal temperament for the breed—capable of being a loving companion, and competitive in field trials designed to preserve the unique qualities of the breed.

There are many resources for the coursing novice. A few are *Sighthounds Afield*, by Denise Como; *Lure Coursing*, by Arthur Beaman; and *Peak Performance: Coaching the Canine Athlete*, by Marcia Schlehr and Christine Zink.—R.R.

Thank you, Rita.

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Borzoi

Our guest columnist is Rita M. Rice, AKC judge for both lure coursing trials and conformation (ariaborzoi@yahoo.com).

Lure Coursing and Borzoi Temperament

The historic function of the Borzoi defines correct temperament for the breed. Borzoi were kenneled in large numbers and hunted in teams of two or three. They were not used strictly on