

Borzoi

Movement Revisited

Because we don't often see great movement, does that make poor movement acceptable? Absolutely not! The Borzoi is a breed about movement.

As I mentioned in an earlier column, the Borzoi standard's opening paragraph says "*special emphasis is placed on sound running gear.*" Further, the standard reads:

"Front legs must reach well out in front with pasterns strong and springy. Hackneyed motion with mincing gait is not desired, nor is weaving and crossing. . . . The overall appearance in motion should be that of effortless power, endurance, speed, agility, smoothness, and grace."

Why would you breed a long, lean, athletic, and up-on-leg dog who would not cover ground in an effortless and smooth gait? No other purpose than movement and athletic strength would create a tall, elegant dog with a silhouette of curves, angles, and smooth transitions from head to toe. A Borzoi mincing around the ring lacking reach and drive or one who is moving from the elbow rather than the shoulder is incorrect.

One of the breed characteristics is having a large dog who is effortless in movement. Borzoi need to be light on their feet, with springy pasterns and strong hocks—not sickle hocks, but flexing well out behind. The dogs have to be strong and agile to do their job of bringing down game in the field, whether hare or wolf.

These dogs ran with horses to the field and had to reach the destination miles from their homes and still do their job with energy to spare. If they cannot cover ground in an efficient manner, they would not be able to have the endurance to hunt.

In the case of Borzoi, *efficient* does not mean compact or stifled move-

ment, but rather easy, ground-covering movement that is true and clean, with elbows tight, pasterns strong, hocks parallel, and no interference front and rear.

Front legs must reach well out in front, as described in the standard, means extension from the shoulder, not the elbow. The whole front assembly should be flexible and strong, with low reach well out to the nose, which is carried neither too low nor too high. Power comes from the rear, with well-bent stifles and broad hocks. I have seen Borzoi reach out, grab the ground, and pull themselves forward while driving off the rear, all in one effortless stride that shows power, elegance, and agility. It is a shame to see a Borzoi who is beautiful standing but as soon as he moves appears to be in pain, with restricted movement. Think runner, not weightlifter.

It is imperative that we never lose sight of the function of the breed—not just on the field or in the show ring, but in terms of the total function of the Borzoi to travel to the field, fulfill the hunt, and return home, all with sound running gear.

Picture the meaning of the words *effortless power, endurance, speed, agility, and smoothness and grace*. The picture described by the words of the standard should be of one of a Borzoi as beautiful in motion as he is in repose.

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Borzoi Club of America website: borzoiclubofamerica.org