

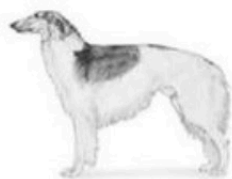
Borzoï

Taking Borzoï Seriously

Is the Borzoï in contention in the group ring, or is the breed mostly overlooked? I have seen judges ignore excellent Borzoï in favor of hounds who stop foursquare or are perfect little robots who show expression on command. It is rare that a Borzoï shows either of these characteristics. It is the nature of this sighthound that they will often look away as a judge passes rather than stare her down with a clever gaze. An almost haughty breed, the Borzoï will more likely look down the length of his nose at the judge and then submit to the demeaning task of letting her touch him.

While this is a giant breed, he also must have supple muscles and ligaments to do the job of chasing and overtaking his prey. The athleticism of the breed is that of not a weightlifter but a runner, and as such the structure is built for speed and agility, not for stopping foursquare in front of a judge. The Borzoï's having very long legs means that his muscles need to control very long levers, significantly more so than those of a more moderate-height hound.

As for the breed's gaze, these dogs are looking toward the distance rather than at what is right in front of their noses. A Borzoï may be looking 100



yards out in the field, or maybe even toward another ring where there is something much more interesting than the nicely dressed judge.

I have been in the Best in Show ring where the handlers of the group winners were asked to go into the middle of the ring and free-stack their dogs. This is not fair to ask of a Borzoï, just as it would be unfair to ask of a Bulldog.

Consider the nature of this hound when considering the Borzoï in the group or Best in Show ring. Most Borzoï are happy to do what their own-

ers ask—but only once, not twice. From their perspective, I am sure they are saying, "I did it once; it is beneath me to do it again." To keep a Borzoï on point is a near-impossibility; if you saw what you needed to see, don't keep asking for more.

The other problem is that some judges do not realize you should never "stare down" these dogs, or most sighthounds for that matter. They do look at the world differently, and their vision and temperament do not take kindly to a stranger staring them down. The longer you stare, the more likely the Borzoï will get unnerved and react accordingly.

Borzoï do place in the group regularly, but it seems there are many judges who just dismiss this breed without understanding the quality that may be right in front of them. The Borzoï is supposed to be an aristocratic breed, which means we probably are doing something below their station by even entering them in a show. I know some of mine have let me know this in public! Their haughty and aloof attitude has resulted in the dog acting like he was never trained and me looking like a novice. As far as the Borzoï is concerned, I am sure he is thinking, "Well, I did this at home perfectly last week—it's not my fault that the show is on the wrong weekend." —*Jon T. Steele, Hemlock, Mich.; aural@tm.net* ♦

