



The Homogenous Borzoi

Without first being able to produce a consistent type in your kennel, it is extremely difficult to predict what—if any—an import or outcross can do to improve your line.

In recent years, I have noticed that many imports have American dogs as direct ancestors. Not that any of these dogs are bad examples of the breed, but why bother importing if half of the pedigree is available here?

All lines have both good and bad traits. Understanding the faults in your line is just as important as concentrating on the virtues. No line is perfect. It is much easier to produce good offspring consistently if you know what qualities, and faults, your line can reproduce. When looking for an outcross, the first thing you need to know is the line's ability to reproduce itself.

Years ago, many kennels kept large numbers of dogs and produced a great number of litters. This allowed those kennels to reproduce a significant number of dogs, and select those that had the type and qualities they wished to perpetuate. Today, most people cannot keep those kinds of numbers. A litter every four years makes it exceptionally hard to create any line that is prepotent for one type.

Karen Staudt-Cartabona, of Majenkir Borzoi, says: "When you outcross, it should never be just to get a litter of show dogs. You need to produce breeding stock that you can cross directly back to your own dogs to improve your line. Breeding should not be just for first-generation show dogs, but rather for future generations. It is extremely important how those offspring will blend back to your own dogs." Using a linebred dog will give you a better chance of making a difference in your dogs, but first you need to be able to reproduce the best qualities in your own line.

Once you identify what you want to improve, it is important to breed to a

line that is prepotent for those desired qualities. Outcrosses to outcrosses will only bury problems in future generations. It is quite possible you may end up with dogs with faults from origins that you cannot identify. As a breeder, you need to first decide what problem you can live with, and then what virtue you want, balancing your needs with the potential risks.

Nancy Reimer, of Windrift Borzoi, says: "Compared to years ago, it was a common occurrence to go to a show and see an outstanding male. Today, we see more of the same with few animals really standing out. Possibly it is that few kennels breed for type first, and too many have generations of outcrosses that are not prepotent for any particular type."

The homogenization of our breed will make it harder in the future to be able to go to a particular kennel to breed with any certainty of improving your line. When outcrossing, I will accept the bad along with the good, as long as I have a very good chance of improving my dogs. It is important that the outcross be a consistent producer.

Without knowing what you can and cannot produce from your own line, importing and outcrosses can change your dogs with drastic and unexpected consequences.

—Jon Titus Steele, *Hemlock, Mich.*;
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