

the Whippet standard, or as in the Greyhound standard, which asks for “more hare than cat feet, well-knuckled-up with strong claws.” The hounds closely related to the Greyhound call for a hare foot, as compared to other breeds such as the Mastiff, whose standard calls for the feet to be “heavy, round and compact with well arched toes.” One should never confuse long toes that are arched with a flat foot. Almost all standards for breeds designed to travel long distances call for toes that are close and well arched.

Often a cat foot will be found on a dog who has a straight pastern and an under-angled shoulder assembly. If the foot fails, so does the athlete. Why would Nike or Reebok make millions in selling footwear if feet were not so important in sports? A breeder should be just as cognizant of his dog’s feet as an athlete is about his shoes. Form follows function, and the make of the foot affects the speed and endurance of the Borzoi in the field. The Borzoi should have hare feet—not cat feet—and strong and springy pasterns, with bladed bone.

—Jon Titus Steele,
jonauroal@gmail.com

Borzoi Club of America website: borzoiclubofamerica.org

Borzoi Of Cats and Hare

The Borzoi standard says that the feet are “hare-shaped, with well arched knuckles, toes close and well padded.”

What exactly is “hare-shaped”? It is a foot that is longer from front to back than from side to side. A cat’s foot, on the other hand, tends to be round rather than oval. Many breed standards call for a cat foot, such as that of the English Foxhound, which says the feet “in all cases should be round and cat-like.”

The purpose of the foot is to provide purchase and propel the dog forward. In the case of the Borzoi, his foot must carry him over long distances in rough terrain. The pads are shock absorbers, as is a springy pastern, with both features preventing jarring and inefficient movement.

A foot that is flat and splayed does not hold up in the field and certainly cannot provide shock absorption. I have yet to see a flat-footed person who is light on their feet. Most standards include language calling for the toes to be “close and well arched,” as in