
Borzoi

MATURITY AND PATIENCE

One of the hardest lessons to learn in showing a Borzoi is when is a dog ready for the ring. A Borzoi can be 80 percent of their eventual adult weight and height at 6 months. However, often they are nowhere near 80 percent ready for the ring.

A Borzoi can take a long time to reach maturity. Coat, muscling, weight, and mental maturity can take as long as three years to reach a mature balance. Differences in height and weight often result in a gangly stage as a juvenile. At near a year of age, a Borzoi will reach 95 percent of their full adult height. Muscling, on the other hand, may take a year or two more. The same goes for the coat: At 6 months a Borzoi will have a glorious, plush puppy coat, only to lose most of it by a year. The first coat-blow will leave the dog with wisps of feathering on the chest and bib, and the topline can look all wrong as the coat over the shoulders and pelvis remains longer and the hair on the back is short.

I try to explain to new owners that a Borzoi will have a window of opportunity as a puppy

to be competitive, and then at near a year of age that window slams shut for a long period of time until the coat, muscling, and maturity all catch up to each other. It is not surprising that a 6-month-old Borzoi will pick up several points from the puppy class. After that, points become harder until at 2 1/2 years of age the dog wins back-to-back majors.

Some Borzoi will finish very fast at a young age because of soundness and the quality of their competition, but that doesn't mean they will be ready to special any sooner. Rare is the puppy who can take breed from the classes or even a group placement. Specialing a Borzoi takes even more patience. A specials career generally takes three years, so timing and maturity need to be considered.

In preparation for this column I talked with Michael Canalizo of Afghan fame. Michael remarked that a specials career will take three years: The first year is getting to the top, the second year at the top, and the third year coming down from the top. So if a Borzoi is mature at 2 1/2 to 3, that means at 4 to 5 they should be at the top of their game, and at 6 their career should peak. Now that does not mean their career will be over. There have been several great Borzoi who continued to win as veterans, but in general the best years will be 4 to 6 years of age.

While the Afghan Hound national does not

have a veterans class because they feel the dogs should be just as competitive over 7, the Borzoi national recognizes that age can matter for a Borzoi. There have been several good Borzoi who have won the national from the Veterans class or were entered in regular specials over the age of 7. Considering the size and weight of a Borzoi and that coat continues to fill out with age, conversely movement can diminish as they reach veteran status. Sometimes it is foot-timing, balance, or even stamina that keeps them from being at the top of their game.

Considering the choice to special, when is a Borzoi most competitive? By year 3 you should see potential, and at 5 to 6 might be the peak; beyond that, selectively the dog can still be in the running. If you start too soon or wait too long to special a Borzoi, that three-year window may close before the dog matches his potential.

—Jon Steele

Borzoi Club of America
