

A finer point on the point of shoulders.

At the 2008 Borzoi Club of America National Specialty, respected breeder & hound judge Lena Tamboer spoke after her assignment at the Awards banquet. The main point of her talk was that the breed was lacking in a specific point mentioned in the standard “Shoulders: sloping, fine at the withers and free from coarseness or lumber”. Lena noted a great need to keep this in mind as it is easy to lose this essential breed quality.

Fine at the withers means, that the space between the scapulas above the spinal column should be rather narrow. The old adage is – if you can put more than two fingers between the shoulder blades – it is too much. Of course, two fingers for some may be three fingers for others. The idea is that too much space, and the formation of the shoulder, is out of balance.

The difference between a working dog, and a hound, has as much to do with function as it does with form. While a working or carting dog needs the bulk and breath for draft and pulling, a hound is not built for carrying packs or pulling carts. Fineness at the shoulders is a breed characteristic that is very important. Built for speed and strength, the Borzoi should have shoulders well laid back, and the muscling should be smooth when viewed from the front. Think to yourself – a long a long-distance runner versus a body builder. Strength should refer to the strong shoulder and the neck which is essential to catch and just as important hold the prey. You want good length of fore arm in proportion to a long upper arm, with good return, and a well laid back scapula, to form the Borzoi shoulder.

The Ibizan standard states “moderate at the withers”, the Whippet standard calls for “moderate space between the shoulder blades”, while the Greyhound standard states “muscular without being loaded”. Most of the sight hound standards do not discuss this finer point. The fact that it is specific in the Borzoi standard makes it an important point in Borzoi conformation.

It is quite possible that one of the reasons that the standard makes mention of this point helps keep the balance in check between size and substance. The Borzoi, being a large breed, should never appear coarse or lumbering in look and or movement.

As breeders and judges, when evaluating the Borzoi we need to keep the term “fine at the withers” in mind. The Borzoi should be a delicate balance between strength, size, speed, smoothness, grace and effortless power, as appropriately stated in the standard.

Jon Titus Steele
3380 N Orr Rd
Hemlock, MI 48626
auroral@tm.net

Home 989 642-5093
Woirk 989 791 8414