

Borzoi Coat

One of the distinguishing characteristics of Borzoi breed type is coat. From a distance it is the coat that makes a Borzoi easily identifiable from other hound breeds. In the Borzoi standard there are several coats that are correct, but all should be silky without a woolly texture. It is not surprising that even today there is more than one type of coat since it is believed that the borzoi was developed from a variety of crosses of ancient breeds. One theory is that a Persian Greyhound was crossed with heavier coated herding breeds that existed at the time to adapt the dogs to the harsh Russian climate. The reason that the standard does not want a woolly coat is not only to distinguish this breed from herding stock but also for functional purposes. A silky coat is less likely to pick up brambles and debris when working in the open field.

Of the three coats mentioned in the standard flat, wavy and rather curly we seldom see the curly coat in today's show ring. It is however a beautiful and correct coat and the fancy should be careful not to lose this coat type just because the big winners have not had this coat. The borzoi standard states "*on the neck the frill should be profuse and rather curly*". Not only is this an important part of the standard it also has a functional quality. During the hunt the protective nature of a profuse coat around the neck helps to protect the dogs from their prey. The same goes for the feathering on the hindquarters, tail and the back of forelegs where the coat also has a protective value from the cold and during field work. If you have ever witnessed a tussle between dogs at play it is often just a mouth full of hair that is lost without a scratch on the dog.

There are two other points to make about the Borzoi coat. Any coat color is permissible. Any pattern is permissible. There should not be a preference to color or marking. Judges should be sure to consider that some markings can distract from conformation. It is always important to use your hands to properly evaluate borzoi structure.

The borzoi coat is one of the characteristics that make this a unique sight hound but it can also be used to hide faults. Clever grooming can change topline and angulation and excessive grooming is not warranted. Underlines that are so trimmed as to give the dog a herring gut or heads shaved so that it distracts from the correct profuse frill of the neck is incorrect. The breed does not call for excessive grooming and a dog with a full and correct coat, as long as the texture is silky, should never be penalized. The coat of a male is generally more profuse than a bitch. It is perfectly natural in the heart of summer, or after a cycle, to see a bitch that has blown her coat and appears to be naked.

Nothing can match the picture of a mature full coated borzoi with the breeze licking at the fringes, as he gazes off to the horizon as though he were seeing the horses and huntsman from centuries past riding on the wind.

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