

## Size Matters

What is the correct size for a Borzoi? Most owners would tell you that a Borzoi should be tall enough to clean off the counters with all four feet on the ground but small enough to recline comfortably in a midsize station wagon. The standard is a little more specific. **Mature males should be at least 28 inches at the withers and mature bitches at least 26 inches.** There is no upper limit.

The largest wolf caught in Alberta was reportedly placed at 235 lbs. and the largest wolf killed in the Kobelyakski Area in the Ukrainian SSR was 190lbs. Considering those sizes, it is highly unlikely that any one borzoi could take down an animal of that size and mass. The borzoi standard has the range in weight of males between 75 to 105 lbs. and bitches 15 to 20lbs. less. It was never the intent of this breed to singularly take down a full grown wolf but rather to work in pairs or packs. The borzoi has to be fast to overtake the wolf, but also be nimble, quick and highly coordinated to rush in and grab the wolf by the leg or neck. They work in pairs darting in and out to subdue the wolf from different angles with fast reflexes and tremendous courage. Historical live hunts from 1910 Russia can be seen on *You Tube* and it is worth viewing, although not for the faint of heart.

Today we seldom see dogs in the show ring 28 inches and bitches at 26 inches more the norm are 28 inches to 30 inches for a bitch and 30 inches to 33 inches for a male. Outside of those ranges look both extremely large and way too small, although certainly acceptable by our standard. There are measurements from the kennels of Perchino, Orseroff, Boldareff and Tschelischtscheff and Gejeroff from before the 1900's that place those dogs in size from 33 to 30 ½ inches with some kennels preferring larger and others trending toward 30 inches.

The borzoi standard continues to say that; **dogs and bitches below these respective limits should be severely penalized; above the respective limits should not be penalized as long as extra size is not acquired at the expense of symmetry, speed and staying quality.** Balance and symmetry, this is not the first time I have written about those qualities. Many key elements of the Borzoi come back to balance and symmetry, from size to angles to movement to outline. All the moving parts must come together to make a quality Borzoi that is functional, sound, swift and elegant. When it comes to size of a Borzoi you need to see a large but not lumbering sighthound that is light on their feet yet substantial enough to hunt in the field without injury. They must possess enough bone and muscle but be agile and fast with athleticism and endurance. Combine those qualities in a size needed to take down a wolf, while working in pairs after a long distance run and you have the ideal called for in the standard.

In my home, the perfect size Borzoi is one who's nose is just tall enough to knock my coffee cup out of my hand when I least expect it.

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