

I recently had the opportunity to judge the Borzoi Club of America's 2014 National Specialty which was held in Albuquerque, NM. Considering the remote location, the entry was a very respectable size. The committee was wonderful and my ring steward was the ever efficient Karen Mays.

The overall quality of the entry was very good and the Borzoi of today are in the hands of some very good breeders. In my 30 years in Borzoi, the ebb and flow of good dogs seems to be back on the upswing. One observation is that at most shows across the US the quality is often not anywhere near the caliber of our National. Where are these dogs the rest of the year?

In evaluating the entry I was pleased with silhouette, side gait, breadth and depth of chest and shoulders. There were some stunning heads and excellent coats. Bone and feet were generally good. There were more than a few of the entries that were way too narrow and lacked the capacity for good lung and heart. On average no matter where I judge the frequency and amount of missing teeth is universal, neither an issue for concern nor a cause for a major penalty but an issue still to see improvement. However, size of teeth are getting smaller and we need good strong large teeth set in a well-developed under jaw (a "U" not "V" shape). One of the general faults in profile was borzoi that had necks set at too upright an angle with poor placement into the shoulders and croups that were too steep. We all need to be cognizant of that smooth continuous curve from nose to tail. A general observation is that soundness on the down back has not improved over the years, but we can hope. One personal criticism was that too many dogs changed shape on the move. Standing they may have looked fine but moving their shape was entirely something else. I want to see a borzoi as beautiful on the move as they are on the stack. This is not a breed to be sculpted but show naturally, yet clean and tidy about the head feet.

As usual, the class bitches were better, with more depth on average than the dogs. Proportion and silhouette are improving, as well as depth and breadth of chest. Tails are an ever challenging issue for this breed. Many were set too high with steep croups, and carriage was gay. This year it was surprising that the length of tails on average was short. The standard calls for the tail to reach the hock, but many went only just to the hock and a good long tail was exception.

One of the deciding factors for my winners was that they had a beautiful shape standing and moving. Often a Borzoi standing will look lovely, but when they move the topline drastically changes or the hips are higher than the withers or the tail is carried too high. The Borzoi breed needs to move in an effortless ground covering gait. There also has to be beauty and elegance with a look of a swift hound that can easily accomplish its task.

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