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Borzoi Movement

While preparing a Breeder's Forum for the Borzoi Club of America's 2006 National Specialty, it became apparent that it is time for a review of Borzoi Breed Type. There are several characteristics that make up breed type, but only one element at a time can be discussed in this format.

One of the most important elements of Borzoi breed type is movement (gait). The Borzoi Breed Standard reads "*Front legs must reach well out in front with pasterns strong and springy. Hackneyed motion with mincing gait is not desired nor is weaving and crossing.*" "*The overall appearance in motion should be that of effortless power, endurance, speed, agility, smoothness and grace.*"

The opening paragraph of the Standard states "*special emphasis is placed on sound running gear*". For the Standard to start, and end, with movement - it is safe to assume that the written Standard places correct gait at the top of the list of elements of breed type.

The terms "*ground-covering stride*", "*effortless power*", and "*smoothness and grace*" are in direct opposition to "*hackneyed motion with mincing gait.*" Bred for coursing live game in vast areas of the Russian terrain, the Borzoi must be able to cover ground. The Borzoi must have an efficient gait that does not waste precious energy so that at the time of most need, when the prey whether hare, coyote or wolf is taken, there is ample stamina to catch and hold that prey for the hunter to finish the kill.

The Standard states "*front legs must reach well out in front*" this is also in opposition to "*hackneyed motion with mincing gait.*" When viewed from the side the front feet should reach well out to the nose leading to the observation that the head carriage tends to be level, not upright. We all know that in good movement the left front leg and right rear leg form parallel lines and vice versa. It would follow that if the front must reach well out - so should the rear extend behind. While too much reach can cause interference, a balanced, effortless, smooth and graceful gait with proper foot timing is an important part of breed function and type.

The picture you should see in the ring is a borzoi with balanced graceful gait, exhibiting reach and drive in an effortless motion. I once explained this to a novice, that a Borzoi's gait looks is as if the dog were suspended like a monorail, on the move, no up-and-down movement, just an efficient effortless means of covering ground. As the Standard concludes, "*any deviation from the above described dog must be penalized to the extent of the deviation keeping in mind the importance of the contribution of the various features toward the basic original purpose of the breed.*" In future columns we will look at other breed elements that make this breed the elegant, athletic and graceful animal we know as the Borzoi.

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