

Neck -- a key element of function and elegance.

One breed characteristic and an important functional part of a borzoi is the neck. The borzoi standard reads “**Neck: Clean, free from throatiness; slightly arched very powerful and well set on.**” The neck is a key element of breed type. The neck not only serves as a powerful connection from the shoulders and head, but gives the borzoi elegance by its length.

Why should the neck be slightly arched? First, the muscles that attach the head to the neck need to be both strong and agile, so that while the borzoi is coursing game the borzoi can react quickly to its prey. The length of neck also allows the dog the ability to overpower its prey with out sacrificing the loss of momentum while on the fly. Too short a neck, and the dog becomes muscle bound and inflexible. The neck needs to be slightly arched so that the muscles are properly attached to the skull, resulting in a dog that can react quickly to the changing direction of its prey. On the other extreme, is a neck that is too long and almost becomes spindly. A long neck with no arch is equally as much of a fault as a short neck with too much muscling.

How the neck fits into the shoulders is extremely important for a proper borzoi outline. If the neck rises abruptly out of the shoulders a ewe neck is created, which is not strong but weak, and losses the ability for the dog to hold its prey. You can almost tell how well a borzoi is constructed by just feeling how the muscles fit into the shoulder. A smooth transition from the neck to the shoulder and back is a telling key to just how well the dog will be able to function.

On the move, a borzoi should carry its head anywhere from level to slightly elevated, never at an abrupt upright angle. In judging, it is the balance between strength and elegance that you should consider, too short and thick and you get a weightlifter, too long and fine, and you get a runway model. Elegance is a balance of power and beauty, and understanding the function validates what is proper and correct. Elegance also comes from a throat that is clean. Too much thickness can cause the dog to lose its elegance, but, be careful to consider in the evaluation the effects of coat and texture. A male borzoi can carry a profuse rough around the neck, and also longer and abundant coat on the shoulders. This can change the outline of a borzoi, and proper evaluation needs to be done with your hands.

The over-use of the word “balance” can lead to a common, and under angulated borzoi, but balance is really meant to mean balance between form and function. If the borzoi head and neck is well set with a slight arch and smoothly connected to the shoulders you will create a look that is elegant and functional.

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