

Borzoi Borzoi Off Lead

Is it possible to walk a Borzoi off lead? The answer is yes—but is doing so being a responsible pet owner? Possibly no.

The day and age where Borzoi were used solely as dogs to rid the wilds of wolves is now past. Today the primary use is as a companion, and Borzoi have filled the couches of homes in America with style, grace, and beauty.

Replacing the Grand Hunts of historic Russia are coursing events held on fields or parks. There still are live hunts in some of the Western states, but for the most part, coursing of live game is outlawed in the majority of the U.S. Here in Michigan the hunting of wolves even became an item on a recent state ballot, and not without controversy. So I will leave that discussion out of this column.

Some of my dogs are totally trust-

worthy off lead, but in an unfamiliar or urban environment I use extreme caution and keep them on lead. One of the reasons I trust them is that I have put endless hours of training so that they will come on call. That training always starts in a controlled environment of a large fenced area that both the dog and I know.

One of the reasons that you should always use a lead is that the dog will react to things that may seem ordinary to you but to the dog can be startling. The second is that a sighthound is wired to focus on movement, and they can focus on something in the distance that we may not observe. In the animal kingdom, human senses are a far cry from the senses dogs possess. Dogs not only see with their eyes but can have “three-dimensional sense” of combined hearing, smell, and sight. We often use our senses independently, while dogs use all three to home in on their prey. They use their senses with rapid speed. Their reaction is far faster at putting all those inputs into action, versus us listening to our GPS to tell us to turn in 1.5 miles.

The reactions as well as the speed of a sighthound are superior to our ability to catch them, so that extreme caution should be the norm.

It is disheartening to hear of someone said to have bred their Borzoi to be so keen that they could never let them off lead. Today with all the zoning and vicious dog laws, any dog should come on command and should obey their owner to stop, no matter the activity. I wonder if they put the time into that same dog to train and do obedience, would he still be so primal as to not respond to his owners? I know for a fact that there are two breeders in Indiana who now have generations of obedience, conformation, and coursing champions. At our national we even have a triathlon event for dogs titled in all three events.

Responsible dog ownership is not just the feeding, care, and housing of your Borzoi, but the training to make them a good canine citizen. The thought of two gorgeous Borzoi on the catwalk with a tall, slender model in high heels being suddenly dragged off the stage should a cat run through the crowd gives me nightmares. In reality, any Borzoi should be under control and trained so that we can have them in public places to show their elegance to society.

Off lead or on, all our dogs should know the difference, but it is up to us to be their guardians and do the right thing.

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Borzoi Club of America website:

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