

Borzoï

MOVEMENT FOR DOGS AND HANDLERS

In the Borzoï standard, movement is an important key element to breed type. The standard says, *special emphasis on sound running gear*. A Borzoï is a sound, efficient sighthound whose intent is to catch and hold his prey over

diverse and difficult terrain at speed.

Why do handlers and owners show this breed as though they have to coax the dog to move? The show ring is not the same as the steppes of Russia, but we have to use the ring all the same to evaluate movement. Time and time again, when a Borzoï should be a sighthound who moves effortlessly with a ground-covering gait, we see dogs who mince and prance their way around the ring. For some it is lack of conditioning, while for others it can be just poor handling. A judge has two to three minutes to examine the dog and see the dog's movement.

For every great athlete it takes approximately 10,000 practice attempts to perfect a skill. Look at the great golfers, swimmers, and tennis players—do you think they became fluid with their sport by a once around the backyard and into competition?

Some of the great Borzoï specials took a year or more to really get into shape and condition and work as a team with their handlers. It is not just that a special starts to do well in the ring at 3 or 4 years of age; it is because they are maturing both mentally and physically, along with hours of practice, to get to that level.

Of course a young dog competing in the 12-to-18 Months class or less should not be overworked, but still they need to know what is

expected of them, and this comes with practice.

Also, what kind of physical shape is the handler in to show their dog? Are you able to run at speed that best shows your dog's gait? Do you have the endurance to make it through a large class, then to Winners, and eventually Best of Breed? If not, then consider using a friend who shows well, or a handler. On more than one occasion a handler has made a dog look lame because they themselves limped around the ring. Nothing is more disturbing than finding a good dog and having the handler screw it up because of their personal limitations.

In the handling classes I taught, I started the class without dogs. Just practicing running around the ring to get the pace down is a great way for you to start. Have someone video you to see if you can move fluidly before you even attempt it with a dog. If you cannot run, how can you expect your dog to move better than you? The best handlers in the ring are invisible—not a distraction.

A Borzoï should move clean on the down-and-back and cover ground with an effortless, smooth gait. Any deviance from this is an indicator that they would not hold up in the field on a long day's work. The handler should at best be able to show this in the ring—and if you cannot, think about the 10,000 practice

swings a pro golfer makes per year. How many practice attempts do you take before you show your Borzoï?

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