

MOVEMENT REVISITED

Because we don't often see great movement, does that make poor movement acceptable? Absolutely not! The Borzoi is a breed about movement.

As I have mentioned in an earlier column, the Borzoi standard's opening paragraph says "*special emphasis is placed on sound running gear.*" Further, the 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.*"

Why would you breed a long, lean, athletic and up-on-leg dog that would not cover ground in an effortless and smooth gait? No other purpose than movement and athletic strength would create a tall, elegant dog with a silhouette of curves, angles, and smooth transitions from head to toe. To see a Borzoi mincing around the ring lacking reach and drive or a dog moving from the elbow rather than the shoulder is incorrect. One of the breed characteristics is having a large dog that is effortless in movement. They need to be light on their feet, with springy pasterns and strong hocks—not sickle, but flexing well out behind. The dogs have to be strong and agile to do their job of bringing down game in the field, whether hare or wolf.

These dogs ran with horses to the field and had to reach the destination miles from their homes and still do their job with energy to spare. If they cannot cover ground in an efficient manner, they would not be able to have the endurance to hunt.

In the case of Borzoi, *efficient* does not mean compact or stifled movement but movement that is true and clean. Elbows tight, pasterns strong, hocks parallel, no interference front and rear, and easy ground-covering movement.

Front legs must reach well out in front as the standard states means extension from the shoulder not the elbow. The whole front assembly should be flexible and strong with low reach well out to the nose which is carried neither too low nor too high. Power comes from rear with well-bent stifles and broad hocks. I have seen Borzoi reach out, grab the ground and pull themselves forward while driving off the rear all in one effortless stride that shows power, elegance and agility. It is a shame to see a beautiful Borzoi standing and as soon as they move it appears they are in pain with restricted movement. Think runner, not weight-lifter.

It is imperative that we never lose sight of the function of the breed—not just on the field or in the show ring, but the total function of the Borzoi to travel to the field, fulfill the hunt, and return home, all with sound running gear. Picture what the words mean: effortless power, endurance, speed, agility and smoothness and grace. The picture the words of the standard illustrate should be of one of a Borzoi as beautiful in motion as they are in repose.

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