

The material in this booklet has been approved by the Board of Directors of the Afghan Hound Club of America for distribution as study material for judges of Afghan Hounds. It contains articles regarding the Afghan Hound Standard and judging of the Afghan Hound written by breed experts.

APPEARANCE: An aristocrat; dignified, aloof; no trace of plainness or coarseness; exotic expression. striking: distinguishing characteristics set him apart from all other breeds

EARS: Long, set approximately level with outer corners of eyes

NECK: Long, strong, arched, running in curve to shoulder

BACKLINE: Practically level from shoulders to loin, falling away toward stern; hip bones very pronounced; well-defined, short-haired saddle in mature dogs

LOINS: Strong, powerful, slightly arched; well-ribbed; tucked up in flanks

TAIL: Set not too high, curve or ring at end; never curled over, resting on back, or carried sideways; not bushy

HINDQUARTERS: Powerful, well-muscled, great length between hip and hock; hocks well-let-down; legs bowed from hock to crotch

HIND FEET: Broad, of good length; toes arched. All feet in line with body, turning neither in nor out

SIZE: Height, males 27"; females 25" (plus or minus one inch). Weight, males about 80 lbs; females about 50 lbs

COLORS: All colors permissible, solid or in combinations

HEAD: Good length, showing much refinement; slightly Roman nose; little or no stop; prominent occiput

EYES: Dark, almond-shaped

NOSE: Large, black

JAWS: Long, punishing; mouth level or scissors bite

SHOULDERS: Long, sloping, well-laid-back; plenty of angulation

BRISKET: Well-let-down; medium width

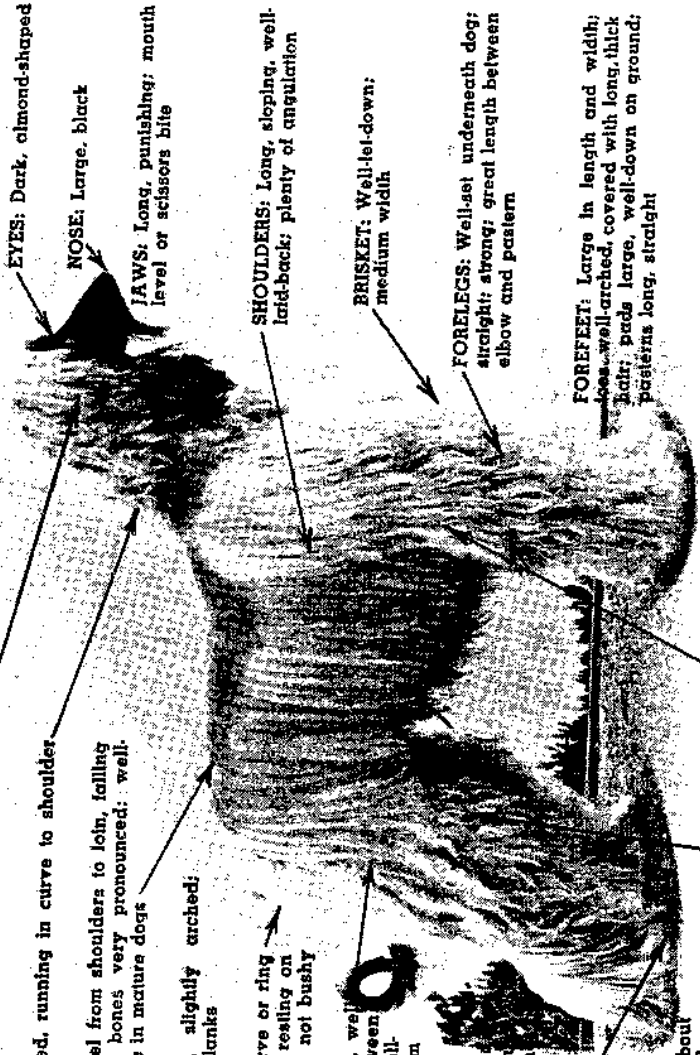
FORELEGS: Well-set underneath dog; straight; strong; great length between elbow and pastern

FOREFEET: Large in length and width; toes well-arched, covered with long, thick hair; pads large, well-down on ground; pasterns long, straight

COAT: Thick, texture fine, silky; topknot long; ears and feet well-feathered; back smooth, hair short, close; never clipped or trimmed

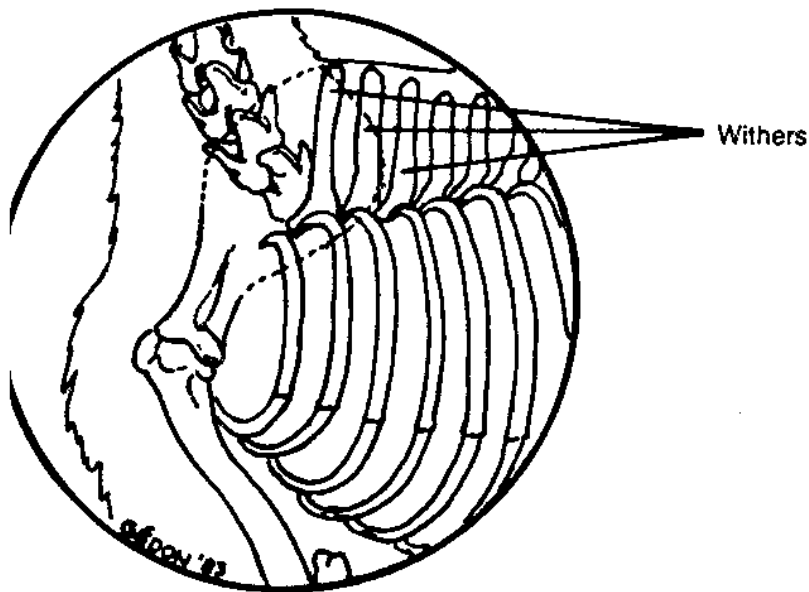
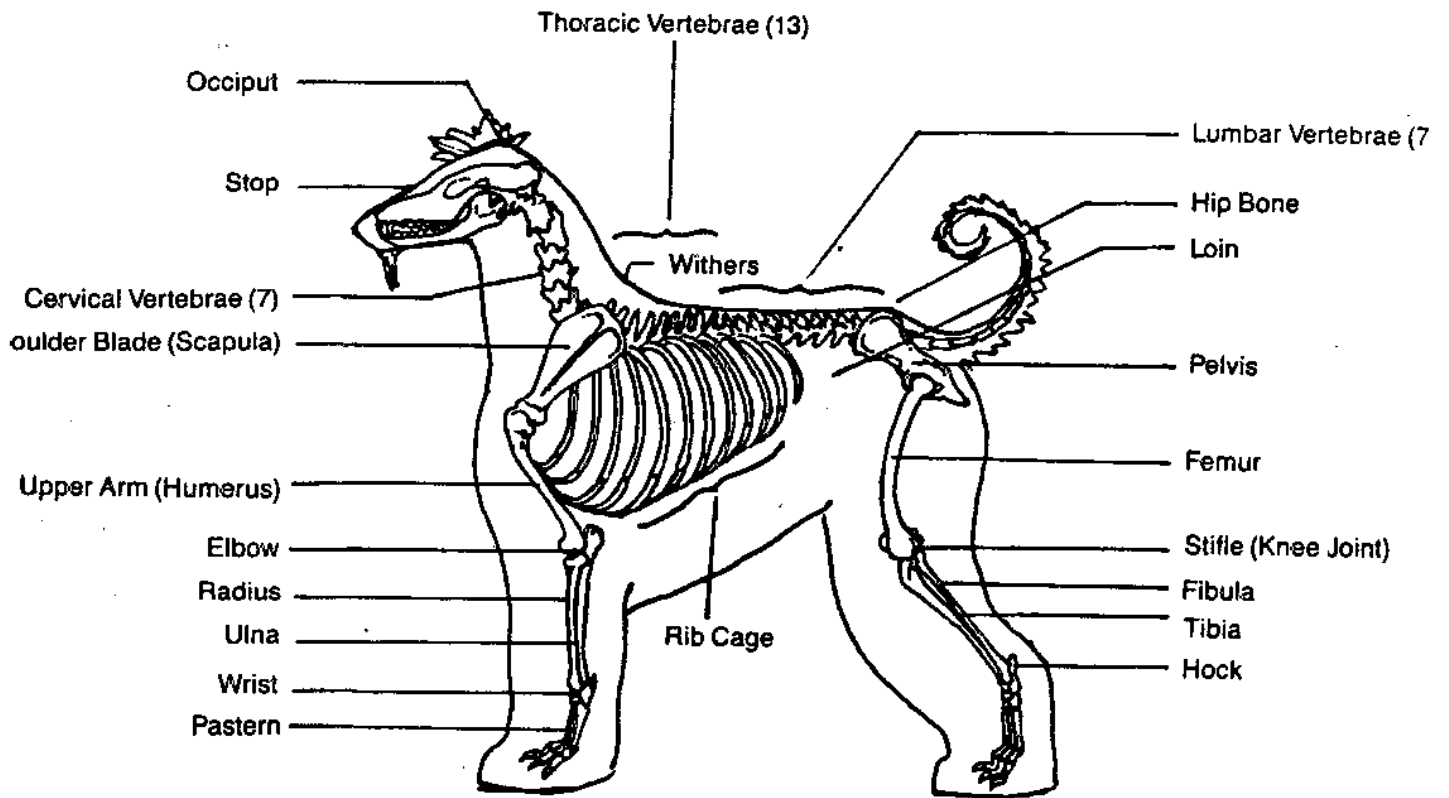
STIFLES: Well-angulated

ELBOWS: Well-held in

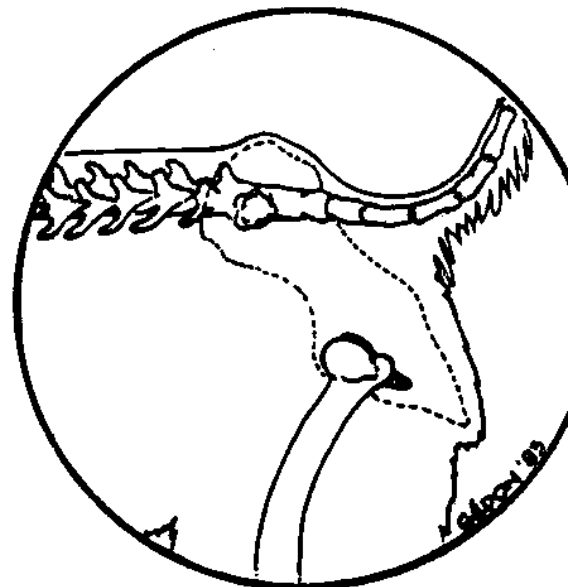


AFGHAN HOUND standard visualization, modeled by AM. & CAN. CH. CROWN CREST MR. UNIVERSE

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 FROM DOG STANDARDS ILLUSTRATED (1975)
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The withers are the first three thoracic vertebrae.



The word croup refers to the angle of the entire pelvis (shown in dotted outline). Notice how the tail is a continuation of the spinal vertebrae.

These illustrations are taken from the booklet
Introduction to the Afghan Hound,
 published by the Afghan Hound Club of America

THE AFGHAN HOUND

by Barbara Skilton

INTRODUCTION

Let us begin by asking "What is an Afghan Hound?" You will already know that he is one of the oldest breeds of dogs and a hunting dog of some renown. Legend has it in Afghanistan that the Afghan Hound was the dog to be taken into Noah's Ark indicating that the hound has been in that country from time immemorial. Be that as it may, the origin of the breed is now lost in the mists of time and can only be a matter for conjecture.

That the Afghan Hound is a hunting dog of outstanding ability goes without question. He is mainly a sight hunter but has the ability to pick up and hunt by scent when required. He is built to travel at high speed over rough and rocky terrain and to twist and turn with amazing agility when in pursuit of his prey. His main use in Afghanistan today is to hunt mountain sheep, goats and gazelle, although he is courageous enough to be a match for a mountain lion if the need arises. In the case of mountain sheep and goats he is required only to knock down and hold the game thus allowing it to be shot. The tribesmen's faith does not allow him to eat meat killed by a dog. In the case of gazelle the hound is required to overtake it and knock it down by hitting it with his chest when running at full speed.

His Royal Highness Shah Wali describes the Afghan Hound or Tazi as he is known in his native country thus:

"It will be obvious that the Tazi must be a powerful dog with a deep chest, strong legs and big paws. The muzzle must be long and powerful and the jaws strong. 65cm at the shoulder would be an ideal height" i.e. approx. 26 inches so it is noted that the larger hounds would not be so well favoured in their own land.

We also hear of the Afghan Hound being used as a guard dog and in some cases for herd work by the Tribesmen. It would appear that these hounds would often accompany the camel trains across the North West frontier and would guard the merchandise. The hounds who guarded the fort at Chaman became quite famous for patrolling in pairs throughout the night without any human supervision or training - which gives a pointer to the breed's intelligence and individuality.

The hounds themselves differed considerably in type, probably due to the fact that the Afghan people were nomads, and hounds belonging to each group would be inbred and even possibly in some circumstances crossed with other breeds to suit them better for the particular region in which the tribe traveled or for some specific type of work they were required to do.

It is generally agreed that the best dogs were to be found in the mountains in the interior of Afghanistan. The Royal

Kennel in Kabul was about the last place to find pure-bred mountain type hounds and only the favoured few were allowed to see them and even fewer allowed to have one of those hounds. The last Afghan of Royal breeding to leave Afghanistan that I know of was taken to Italy by an Ambassador about 1960 and a few European Kennels now have his bloodline which appears to be blending well with their own.

All these points should be kept in mind when studying the breed, for once we lose sight of how the breed was developed and the work that was required to do it we are then in danger of losing breed type.

ZARDIN

Although Afghans were brought to England and exhibited from the 1880's it was not until late in 1907 when "Zardin" was imported by Capt. John Barff and exhibited by Mrs. Barff that the breed made any impact on the dog showing world. Here was the dog who became the model for the breed. His photograph (p. 5 in Clifford Hubbard's Afghan Hound book) shows a well coated strongly built well angulated hound yet with that air of quality and elegance that we still look for today. The early Standards both in England and America were based on the following description of Zardin in the Indian Kennel Gazette of 1906:

"Zardin came from Siestan Afghanistan to be shown at Quetta in India by Capt. Barff. Zardin is a light coloured hound almost white with a black muzzle (no doubt what we would call a black masked silver today). He has a long punishing jaw of peculiar power and a level mouth. His head resembles that of a Deerhound but with skull oval and prominent occiput, surmounted by a topknot, ears fairly large, well feathered and hanging to the side of the head rather than carried to the front.

He has a keen dark eye and little or no stop. A long strong clean neck, fairly well arched, running in a nice curve to the shoulder which is long and sloping and well laid back. His back is strong, loin powerful and slightly arched. He, as well as all this class of hound, falls away towards the stern which is set on low, almost destitute of hair and usually carried low. He is well ribbed, tucked up under the loin; forelegs straight and strong and covered with hair, great length between the elbow (which is straight) and ankle. The forefeet are long, fairly broad and covered with good girth of chest. Hindquarters very powerful with plenty of muscle; great length between hip and hock which is low and strong, a fair bend in stifle, hind feet not so long as forefeet but fairly wide and well clothed with protective hair, thick and fine in texture showing some undercoat. The coat on the back is shorter.

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He is a very handsome, strong and active moving hound, and can (I think) be regarded as a typical specimen. The characteristics are that he is smart and upstanding: a combination of speed and power. Great length of head, length and breadth of feet, which should be well protected with hair, and graceful outlines. The height of Zardin is 28" or nearly so." Another authority (Stock) quotes him as being 27".

It is most unfortunate that no progeny of Zardin survived to carry on his bloodlines but he remains famous as the now rather shadowy ideal for the breed.

BELL MURRAY (DESERT) AND GHAZNI (MOUNTAIN) TYPE

With the intervention of World War I all breeding discontinued and it was not until 1921 when Major Bell Murray and Miss Jean Manson imported twelve hounds to England that the breed appeared once more on the show scene. These hounds were mostly obtained from the border of Afghanistan and Baluchistan and differed considerably from Zardin. They were taller, more finely built and very sparsely coated.

However, in 1927 Mrs. Amps (who had been stationed in Kabul with her husband) brought a small group of hounds back to England with her, claiming them to be "the first true Afghans since Zardin." Certainly the now famous Ch. Sirdar of Ghazni which she brought with her closely resembled Zardin although he was somewhat smaller and bright red in colour. Like his Kennel mate Khan he was heavily coated but Khan (who was reputed to have killed a mountain lion in single combat) was even more heavily built. However, the bitches she brought with her differed considerably and some carrying almost as little coat as the Bell Murray hounds - though it must be considered that the seasonal fall of coat so many Afghan bitches are prone to could have been responsible in some part for this.

Rivalry between Mrs. Amps and Major Bell Murray became intense each accusing the other's dogs of being imposters. Generally speaking though, Mrs. Amps came out on top and became the acknowledged authority on the breed.

The next step was inevitable, although I've always considered it most unfortunate for the breed. That was the crossing of the two types of hounds to obtain better coats and temperaments on the Bell Murray hounds. It is, I consider, a significant fact that there are dedicated breeders who have endeavored to breed pure Ghazni type hounds but none to my knowledge who ever tried to keep the Bell Murray type pure.

It can safely be said though, that all British and American stock is now developed from a blending of the two types, although

we still see hounds which resemble one type more than the other, with very well to very badly balanced blends of the two.

THE STANDARDS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION

We now come to the modern day Afghan Hound to discuss how he compares with the Standard. I will make special reference to the development of puppies, as you will probably have realized the Afghan puppy is a far cry from the full matured adult. It is a disturbing fact that many of the older breeders are worried about a general deterioration in our breed. This was emphasized by the 1968 Crufts judge Miss Margaret Niblock who stated in her critique "A good 60% of the hounds were so untypical of an Afghan and had such glowing faults I feel this must be the penalty of the popularity from which the breed is suffering at the moment." She also went on to say that many of the breed characteristics such as ring tails, natural saddles, regal bearing and the oriental expression were being lost.

This is quite a serious state of affairs and one which we can ill afford to be complacent about. Both breeders and judges must pay attention to this - we cannot afford to consistently overlook the basic and finer points of the breed for most quantity of coat and showmanship or presentation.

CHARACTERISTICS

This section deals mainly with Afghan Hound outlook - the air of aloof dignity should always be present - however, you are not likely to meet the certain keen fierceness in the show ring unless one hound happens to attack another.

The Afghan puppy is not likely to show much dignity as a baby but he will acquire it with maturity. He may well be distinctly aloof though at an early age and care should always be exercised in handling the young pup. I have seen quite a number of babies whose show ring demeanor has been ruined by thoughtless and rough handling by a judge. Generally speaking I feel judges expect too much of baby puppies. My own personal feelings are that it is ill advised to train a puppy to show to perfection - rather let him enjoy a good day out and he will develop into a hound who is more likely to enjoy a show day rather than one who becomes bored and lifeless and shows it as he grows older - a certain amount of gaiety is desirable.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

It will be noted that the Standard puts General Appearance and Characteristics together and gives quite an accurate nutshell picture of what makes the Afghan different from all other breeds. Although we hear a great deal about "outgoing" temperament being desirable in the breed it should be noted

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that "dignity" and "aloofness" are still the operative words in both standards.

HEAD AND SKULL

When we look at the skeletal shape of the head we are quick to appreciate the powerful long strong jaws with equally strong teeth so necessary to a hunting dog and the punishing scissor bite which is the accepted correct bite. The level of the standard being opposed to crooked jaw or teeth placement and over or undershot jaws (which are serious faults) as they would hamper the hounds ability to hold and slash his prey.

It will be noted that the eye is set midway between the nose and the occiput and that the bone is chiseled in front and above it to give the clear outlook required by a sight hunter - the skull which is slightly domed also recedes slightly - it is at its widest where the zygomatic arch, which protects the eye, passes over the lower jaw attachment. This helps to give the eye the human setting and outlook.

The nearly triangular rather deeply set eye is essential for the inscrutable Eastern expression characteristic of the breed. Full, round and bulgy eyes or loose lids with haws showing are very bad faults - completely ruining the typical outlook. Although dark eyes are preferred, golden eyes are allowed and a fetish for dark eyes should not be allowed to affect your judgement on more serious points.

Ears are set well back on the head, carried flat to it and are approximately level with the outer corner of the eye. However, an Afghan has a very mobile ear and if some strange noise attracts him while in the ring he may well appear to have high set ears.

Large nostrils for a free and rapid intake of air are vital.

The beard grown by some Afghans is not mentioned but is looked upon with favor by most fanciers.

The Afghan puppy will not begin to break up and develop chiseling of the head much before he is six months old and the head will lengthen for some time after that. Correct eye shape and setting will be obvious and the head will be always balanced proportionally, although the heavily bewhiskered pup will give the appearance of being short and heavy in foreface.

The more common head faults today are the overlong, overfine head with a weak underjaw, or the overlong head which has too much depth for balance. These overlong heads have the eyes set more to the side hampering the clear forward outlook, and the expression is thus altered giving a look of misery. The exaggerated Roman nose is also appearing on these fine heads

giving a distinctly Borzoi type to the head which is most undesirable.

On the other side of the scale is the heavy deep setter type of head and the broad skull which is too wide to balance the foreface or the short broad foreface which gives the head a blockish shape rather than a wedge shape.

NECK

Little can be added here - the vertebrae of the neck are long giving the necessary reach and plenty of hard muscle gives the strength. Short necks are sometimes caused by short cervical vertebrae but in most cases a faulty shoulder placement (where the shoulder is placed too far forward) is the cause. Pups with a wealth of hair around the neck often look shorter in neck than they are but it should be remembered that the neck is the last part of the body to grow and a puppy will not acquire its full reach of neck until it is about 18 months of age.

FOREQUARTERS

The most important basic feature of construction is the well placed shoulder and its angulation with the humerus. There are more than enough bad shoulders in our breed today and if breeders and judges alike would only concentrate on weeding them out our breed would soon show a vast improvement.

The shoulder blade must be well laid back with the upper arm correspondingly angulated bringing the elbow beneath the body. Quite often we find a well placed shoulder blade but a short upright humerus which seriously restricts the reach of the forequarters in movement and is, to my mind, the worst constructional fault in the breed, and is becoming more evident. There should be a width of three fingers between the points of the shoulder blade so as not to inhibit the movement of the neck.

Forelegs must be strong and straight, with oval rather than round bone. The chest must be well developed with a hand's width between the elbows from the front - though the elbows must be held close to the body. The sternum can be felt protruding slightly and the reason becomes obvious if you think back to the way the Afghan hunts - if he hit game while running at high speed and lacked good chest development the jar on his shoulders would no doubt lame him. Plenty of strong muscling is also indicated.

As a good shoulder is bred, not developed, it is obvious from birth and should be looked for even in the youngest puppy.

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BODY

The withers and the hip bones must be at approximately the same level to give the level topline called for. A downward or upward slope is not desirable. With a well laid shoulder there will be a graceful curve from the set on of the neck to just behind the withers a definite slip behind the withers is a sign of weakness. The ribs are well placed giving plenty of depth of the rib cage which should reach the elbows in maturing - however, the rib cage should not be too barreled inhibiting the movement of the elbows, or too flat restricting lung and heart room, but more pear shaped.

The loin is fairly short, approximately one-third body length - broad and strong and there is a good tuck up. The whole body should be able to feel the strength and power of the dog from this when you run your hands over him.

The Afghan does take a long time to mature in body. The good bodied baby will often incline to a barrel, but which will flatten to a good pear shape as it deepens - generally speaking the very narrow shallow flat sided puppy rarely develops a good body.

HINDQUARTERS

The prominent hip bones are an essential feature of the breed's construction. You should be able to lay a hand between them and feel the hip bone on either side of it. This with the low set tail and formation of the pelvis gives the characteristic "monkey" rear.

Good angulation is essential to give the powerful drive from the hindquarters, and a well bent stifle with a strong second thigh should be looked for - the hock is short in comparison.. We should however avoid the exaggerated hindquarters which are becoming evident in the breed - these are over-angulated and instead of supporting the dog are stretched so far behind they appear almost to be stuck on as an afterthought - they certainly cannot provide the necessary drive and are usually weak and wobbly often tending to cow-hocks. Straight hindquarters also lack drive. Another bad fault now creeping in is the lack of pelvic angulation with high set tails. Cow hocks are of course as objectionable in our breed as in any other.

Again hindquarters take some time to develop and let down but the puppy showing some width across the rear is one preferable to one with a narrow weak and wobbly rear.

TAILS

The usual question about tails - "How long is" "not too short?" A rough guide is that the tip of the tail will reach within an

inch of the hock when straightened out - but providing the tail appears to balance the dog and is not too short to act as a rudder that is all you need worry about. It should sweep in a graceful curve from a low set on to ideally a full ring at the end and should be carried just above the level of the back when in action - never over the back. Please note that it is quite legitimate for the Afghan to drop his tail when standing. The heavily feathered setter type tail and straight tails are objectionable so too is a high set tail carried over the back.

One must beware of confusing good tail and hindquarters with those of a hound who has faulty hindquarters and due to a lack of muscle span is unable to move unless the tail is carried high.

FEET

Feet are large with long strong arched toes. A splay foot may look large but is weak with spread toes and should be as heavily penalized as a small tight foot. The pasterns are long and springy, acting as shock absorbers when the hound is traveling over rough terrain. They should be straight when viewed from the front although the spring of the pastern will cause the foot to turn out slightly. From the side the pastern slopes forward bringing the large pads well down on the ground. The American Standard calls for a straight pastern (although it probably meant when viewed from the front it is difficult to understand why they did not clarify this point) as a straight pastern from the side is usually short and lacking in spring, which brings the foot up into a small tight one, which all corresponds to a straight shoulder.

The young puppy will have large but rather loose feet and until firmed and strengthened his feet will turn out more than when matured.

COAT

The standard gives an accurate picture of how the Afghan should be coated and please note it says "the Afghan is shown in its natural state not clipped or trimmed." Nowadays with an over emphasis on coat the practice of stripping saddles etc. is commonplace but should be penalized.

The coat should enhance but never hide the beautiful outline of the hound and it should be fine and silky. A well cared for coat with a shimmer of health is truly a thing of great beauty. Short hair on the pasterns is permissible and should not be penalized.

The long shaggy topknot is a characteristic of the breed and we should endeavor to preserve it.

The Afghan puppy more often than not has fluff on its saddle and should not be penalized for it. The fluff will come out with

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normal grooming as the pup matures if it has the correct coat pattern. Puppy coats are woolly at first but as they grow the soft silky sheen appears. Some puppies grow face whiskers but these too will disappear usually before 12 months of age.

It must be noted that heavily coated bitches when growing new coat after the seasonal fall or rearing a litter will sometimes grow face whiskers and fluff on the saddle but this will drop naturally when the coat reaches a good length again. As so many of our best bitches drop coat after every season providing they show that they do carry a coat they should not be unduly penalized for lack of coat length.

COLOR

Please do try to judge all colors impartially - a good Afghan just cannot be a bad color and nowhere in the Standard is the black mask given preference. The Standard gives white marking on the head as undesirable but they are not often found. A wider range of colors is now being seen in this country which makes the Afghan benches more interesting but we must beware of sacrificing quality or allowing constructional defects to creep in for the sake of some of the rarer and more unusual colors. White feet, tail tips, etc. are permissible.

SIZE

Great size is no criterion of a good hound; in fact a big clumsy Afghan is a bad Afghan; a well made balanced hound of minimum height should always be placed over a larger but not so well made hound. The Afghan should be approximately square measuring from the withers down and across the body from chest to buttocks.

GAIT

The Afghan that really moves as an Afghan should is quite breathtaking with head and tail high he appears to be almost floating, with feet barely touching the ground in a long striding effortless trot. It will be appreciated that the Afghan needs room to show his paces to advantage and if you are given a ring of inadequate size when you judge Afghans I hope you will insist on more room being given.

Some people seem to have the impression that the faster the Afghan moves the better its movement - this is entirely false and I refer you again to Miss Niblock's Crufts critique in which she states "at least here was to my interpretation of the Standard a real Afghan Hound..who moved with the unhurried grace of the aristocrat."

Viewed from the side the foreleg is moved forward from the shoulder not the elbow, to ensure maximum reach. The drive

comes from the hock and second thigh and the hind foot will appear to go into the footprint of the forefoot. If the hound is too short his hind foot will go outside and in front of his forefoot print and if too long there will be a gap.

Coming towards you you will appreciate the reach and pull of the forelegs as they move smoothly forward in a line from the shoulder - they move back slightly under the body and the springy pasterns bend and spring back pushing off again.

From the rear you again see the drive from the hock and second thigh with the bones in a straight column from the hip. Hind feet will converge to take the weight of the body.

It must be seen that good muscle tone with firm strong muscles throughout the body is essential to maintain this smooth springy action. For those familiar with horses it can best be compared with the extended trot of the horse.

Apart from poor muscle tone, faulty shoulder conformation is responsible for most bad action.

The hound without a good lay back of shoulder blade or with a short upright humerus will not have the reach and this faulty shoulder construction is allied very often with lack of hind angulation too - he won't have drive either - you will find he will have a proppy action with a short stride which of course is a bad fault. If this shoulder conformation is allied to a good hindquarter you will find he will over reach i.e. move his hind legs outside his front, because his front legs won't be able to reach far enough to take the drive from the rear.

The dog who lacks muscle span will take small mincing steps which can look very effective in a small ring where the better moving long striding Afghan just cannot get going. Again you won't have the reach in front but a prancing dancing on the spot gait; from the rear you will find the lack of muscle span brings the tail well over the back and the hind legs will be brought up high, sometimes almost level with the back while the dog that is "tied" in muscle will have a cramped, stilted action lacking drive.

Short pasterns lacking spring are often allied to a straight shoulder and in the worst cases you can practically feel the jar when the foot hits the ground. They will lack spring entirely and often a hound so affected develops a high stepping gait. The splay foot will also absorb all the spring from the gait and the dogs look flat footed. The dog that is well angulated but lacks spring and elasticity in action just swings his legs too and fro like pendulums appearing to make grooves in the ground and this is most undesirable.

Any type of flapping, paddling, high stepping, front action and weak wobbly rear action is wrong and we should seek to

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eliminate it as rapidly as possible - once you have seen and appreciated the correct Afghan movement nothing less will satisfy - unfortunately it is all too rare and this point must call for more attention to it.

The young Afghan is more like a colt when it goes through the leggy stage and seems never to be quite sure what to do with his legs. All puppy action is inclined to be more bouncy than the correct adult action, but there should be signs of reach and drive with correctly angulated shoulders and good muscle tone. Weak wobbly action is all too often evident in the puppy classes.

CONCLUSION

In seeking the perfect Afghan overall balance is essential. It is absolutely useless having a lot of near perfect bits that don't fit together and coordinate.

A heavily built mountain type hound will require a heavier head for balance than the light racier dog and so on. Perfect balance is only achieved when you realize you could not alter anything about the hound without putting him off balance.

Exaggerations in any form are detrimental to a breed and none more so than the Afghan. The well made well balanced Afghan should be able to stand naturally with all four feet under him - not the leg at each corner effect we get with so many badly balanced hounds.

Good muscling throughout is essential and more note should be taken of this. Although exercise is vital to develop muscle good muscling has to be bred for just as much as good bone, body or ring tail.

With this graceful outline, where elegance, strength and speed are combined, his head held proudly as he gazes into the distance, and his superlative movement, the Afghan is truly the king of dogs.

NOTE: Permission has been granted for the editing and reprinting of this article. It was originally written for a judges seminar in Australia, and was reprinted in 1979 by the A.H.C.A. correspondent, Herman Felton, in the A.K.C. Gazette.

YOU BE THE JUDGE THE AFGHAN HOUND

By Robert Cole

Three of these six Afghan Hounds are real-life Group winners, in fact, two are Best In Show winners. These three serve to illustrate certain characteristics which set the breed apart. They also serve to illustrate three personal type preferences. You can, but it is not necessary that you do, correctly identify which three are the real-life winners.

The other three are graphic departures based on the real-life Afghans. Two represent departures from the official description and one represents a departure from depicted reality towards the worded ideal. Combined with reality, these three also help formulate an image of ideal.

You be the judge. Let's pretend they are all real-life Afghan Hounds and this is their first show. They are competing in the Open Dog Class. To minimize distraction I have given them all a short, close saddle (a traditional breed characteristic) over beige without any white (white markings are undesirable). Select a First Place, a Second Place, a Third Place and a Fourth Place.

• FIRST PLACE

Based on a breed Standard which calls for: "Height at the shoulders to equal the distance from the chest to the buttocks." I would have to go with Dog A. This Afghan Hound's height-to-length ratio, in profile, must be close to ideal; however, it is not one of the BIS or Group winners. Dog A is one of the imaginary examples.

Dog A is actually real-life Dog C with a piece taken out of the center of his body equal to the width of the back of the hand illustrated supporting the tail. This dog may exist in reality but

I have no published photographs of square Afghans taken at right angles to the camera (I do have some photographed at a three-quarter angle but from that angle the dogs are optically square). Nothing I have on file exactly matches this square dog's outline, the short, deep body made to appear ultra short by his high withers. Of the six, this square example most closely resembles the worded ideal. Judged to the exact wording in the AKC Standard, this graphically improved Afghan stacked would place First.

• SECOND PLACE

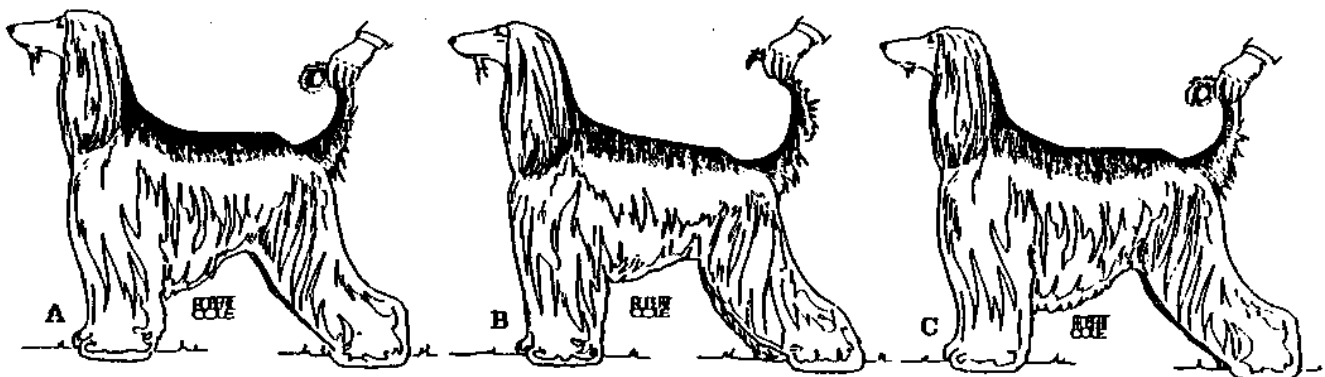
This multi-BIS Afghan came close to being an all-time top winning Hound. Second Place Dog C sets himself. Aside from tail support (there is nothing in the Afghan Standard requiring this carriage -- only in action is it raised -- but it does help to optically shorten the body) he was photographed free standing. Whether the tail is supported or not, in profile he can be seen to be longer than tall, long by the width of the back of the exhibitor's hand. He stands 28 inches tall and weighs 63 pounds (dogs are to be 27 inches plus or minus an inch and bitches 25 inches plus or minus an inch; dogs about 60 pounds, bitches about 50 pounds).

In profile this aristocratic head, as with Dog A, can be seen to be well chiseled and refined, neither lacking stop nor possessing too much stop. The slightly Roman muzzle is equal in length to skull and set on parallel planes, the head surmounted by a topknot (also an outstanding Afghan characteristic) of long, silky hair. The long ears are set on low and well back. The dark eyes are almond-shaped. The nose is black, bite is scissors (may also be pincer, current Standard gives pincer preference).

The straight forelegs are longer than the body is deep, the elbow level with the deep brisket, the pasterns slightly sloped, the feet large. The hindquarters are powerful and well-muscled with great length between hip and hock; the rear pasterns short. There is good angulation at both stifle and hock.

• THIRD PLACE

My choice for Third Place is between the other two real-life winners, Dog B and Dog E. Each have certain virtues and certain faults which have to be weighed one against the other; then one dog's virtues and faults against the other's. Having



done so, I shall go with the BIS and BISS winner over the Group winner, not because I like his type -- I don't -- but you go with what you have.

A real-life BIS winner is Dog B, I call him the Borzoi-Setter type. This dog has been stacked (by preference) so that the topline slopes downward like a Setter's. To do this the exhibitor has had to stretch the rear pasterns back at an angle (rather than correctly perpendicular), effectively lowering the rear. This subterfuge, unnecessary here, is usually resorted to when the rear raises because the pelvis is flat, steep, or the front is low.

The Borzoi part relates to this Afghan's type of head, which in addition to resembling that of a Borzoi in profile, is also narrow viewed head-on, as well as having fill in front of the eyes.

• FOURTH PLACE

Goes to real-life Dog E. Obviously he is not without virtues, but we have talked about virtues -- let's talk about this dog's faults -- there are four which tend to disturb. The first is a very heavy head bordering on coarse. Second is a short neck. Third is an abrupt break at the juncture of neck and withers. Fourth is an overly long rear pastern (hocks too high). The uneven topline is not a fault -- a rule of thumb says that just the tops of three vertebrae should stand above the topline as evidence of proper weight.

• DOG D

I have taken graphic license with what once was a real-life BIS Afghan. One thing I did was reduce the height of withers to the height of those I remember decades ago. This tends to optically lengthen the body. Many breeds would be extremely pleased to possess the height of withers I left. Also, it may well be that in removing this example's characteristic hip bones I have added to the appearance of body length.

The head lacks underjaw. The Standard advises, "the underjaw showing great strength." Further, this dog has too much stop and a round, bulgy eye.

Lastly, I have given extra length to the second thigh, a current trend that is causing many breeders concern. [Unlike a horse, a dog can move off from a standing position without first having to bring a hind foot forward to take the weight off the front.] When you assess an Afghan stacked in profile you should have the impression the dog has only to lean forward to take a step with a front foot. Not so with this Afghan or any Afghan which has to position or is positioned in a "park stance."

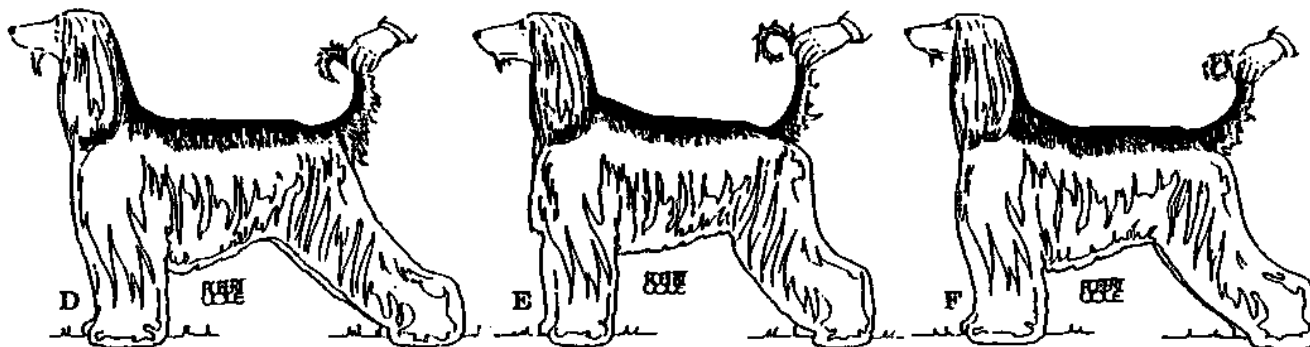
• DOG F

The third make-believe Afghan -- based on Dog C, I have only made three changes in the form of departures. Beginning with the head, the muzzle is too short. The muzzle and skull should be of equal length. Given that ratio, the head should also fit the body.

Second is the high set tail. The Afghans's tail should not set too high on the body. A straight tail (one without a ring or curve on the end) is not a serious fault; a tail that curls over the back is. A high set tail can contribute to curl over the back, however, in this instance the question is: does the tail set high because the sacrum is too horizontal or more seriously, is it because the pelvis is too flat? The answer is that the sacrum, rather than following the angle of the pelvis, is too horizontal.

The third, and functionally (as a Sighthound) the most serious departure, is that his legs are two inches too short. To excel at the fast double suspension Sighthound gallop, the Afghan's foreleg from elbow to ground (the elbow level with the bottom of the chest) must be longer than the body is deep. This dog may excel in the show ring at the trot, he might even win if he is thought to be too long in body rather than too short in leg. With the profuse coat, part of the enjoyment in judging a class of Afghans is determining how short is too short in leg and how long is too long in body.

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TROTTING AFGHANS

by Robert Cole

The Afghan Hound Review

May - June 1985

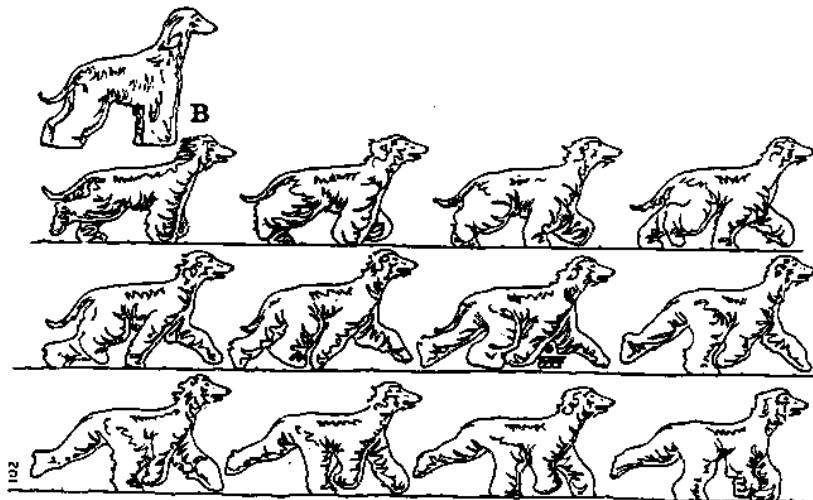
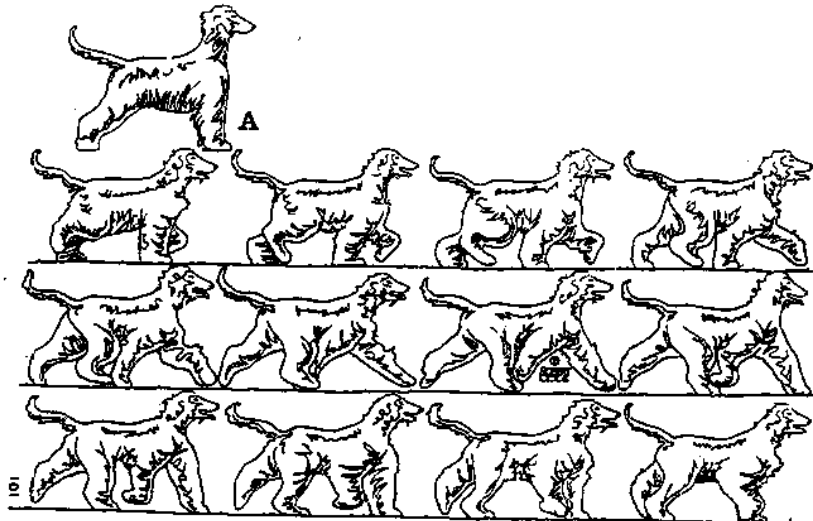
The action of the square-in-profile Afghan in the show ring is much different from that of most Sighthounds. A square, long-legged, endurance galloper, the Afghan owes its reputation to the ability to excel over rough mountainous terrain. Well angulated front and rear, the Afghan's original purpose, its unique sighthound conformation and man's assistance in the show ring, combine to produce action at the trot quite different from that of most Sighthounds.

A visual phenomenon, the Afghan's distinctive action at the trot is best described using a graphic form. From my library of motion picture film footage I have selected four competitive Afghans, each moving in profile at a speed deemed by its respective handler to be most complimentary to the dog. Using a technique many film animators employ to transfer live action on film to realistic drawings, and an illustrated sequence format I designed, the individual action of each of these four Afghans can be discussed and compared phase-by-phase.

Afghan action at the diagonal trot is complex. It seldom conforms to the description in The Complete Dog Book (AKC) which defines the trot as: "A rhythmic two-beat diagonal gait in which the feet at diagonally opposite ends of the body strike the ground together; i.e., right hind with left front and left hind with right front." Afghans, due to factors we will discuss, seldom conform to this description, the beat being four-time rather than two-time. Also, regardless of speed, there is always a brief period of suspension where all four feet are free of contact with the ground, adding to its complexity.

The Afghan Standard, to its credit, attempts to reduce this complexity by describing the trot -- ... with mixed results. It reads: "When on a loose lead, the Afghan can trot at a fast pace; stepping along, he has the appearance of placing the hind feet directly in the footprints of the front feet, both thrown straight ahead. Moving with head and tail high, the whole appearance of the Afghan Hound is one of great style and beauty."

Moved at the speed most Afghans are trotted in the show ring, only one of the four real-life examples I have chosen conforms to this description, and of the four it has the poorest forequarters. This does not mean the Standard is wrong. The intent of the Standard is right, but for a judge to find the most typical Afghan posed and moving, without having to continually slow each class down to a speed at which many



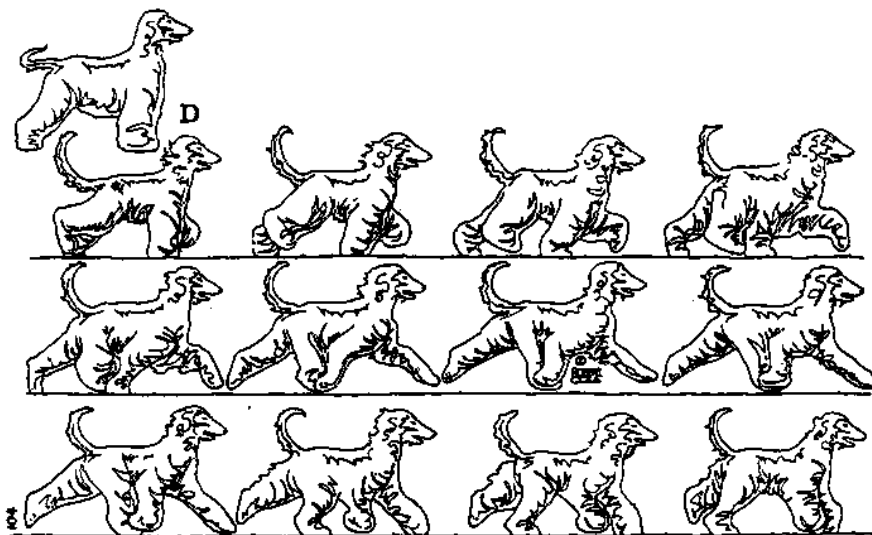
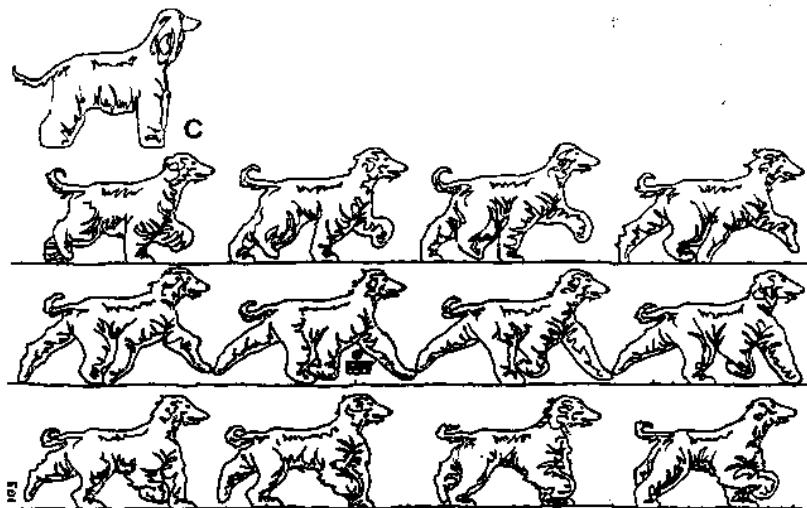
Afghan exhibitors feel they are at a competitive disadvantage, he or she should be aware of the influence certain factors, including speed, have on Afghan gait. These factors and their effect on locomotion relate to square profile, foreleg length and angulation.

TROTTING AFGHANS

by Robert Cole

The Afghan Hound Review May - June 1985

Before describing each example and discussing movement, you may wish to study and compare this Open Dog class of four, decide how you would place them and why. Your decision should only be based on physical structure, conformation and movement -- the bone, veins, character and beauty of the head being worthy of a detailed illustrated comparison in itself. Notice that none of these real-life Afghans are square. All four are slightly longer than high even though they may "appear" square.



AFGHAN A.

This Afghan is sound as a dog but not as a sighthound. On occasion it has been said to be too long in body. In actual fact its forelegs are too short; they are only of moderate or average length. The Standard does not define foreleg length, only -- for good reason -- advises: "Forelegs...with great length between elbow and pastern..." If I were to define the ideal Afghan foreleg length it would be as...greater length from elbow to

ground (the elbow level with the deepest part of chest) than the body is deep, measured from the withers to the brisket. This is the ratio that would be required for an Afghan to excel as an endurance sighthound at the fast double-suspension gallop.

Even with a shorter than ideal length of foreleg producing a rectangular rather than square type of conformation, this well-angulated specimen still over-reaches at this show ring speed. This isn't unusual. Most breeds, even endurance trotters, will over-reach when moved at a speed where left to their own devices they would break into a trot.

AFGHAN B.

Not the best mover of these four competitive Afghans but certainly the most controversial. Controversial because its action is man-made. I selected this particular specimen because it exhibits a synthetic show ring form of the trot found in certain Afghan lines.

Without fanciers fully knowing why, this very dramatic synthetic style is quite popular in some quarters. Very little has been written within the breed describing the form this synthetic action takes.

The reason for this form of synthetic action is to promote maximum angulation front and rear in order to achieve great length of stride within a framework of square proportions -- without the necessity of over-reaching to avoid leg interference.

Afghan B., in adopting this form of synthetic action, exhibits dramatic reach in front and extension in rear in phase 7 without the necessity of over-reaching to avoid leg interference under the body at this fast speed. This synthetically moving Afghan is seen as a good mover when the judge only bases his or her assessment on

how much the lateral legs on the near or far side of the dog reach and extend.

The ability to adopt this form of synthetic action is dependent on the possession of one of two specific structural features, or as in this case, a combination of the two. The two structural features are: an extra long second thigh, and/or a flat pelvis. Afghan B represents a combination of a slightly overly long second thigh and a slightly flat pelvis, a situation more difficult to recognize than a single obvious departure.

TROTting AFGHANS

by Robert Cole

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To further appreciate how an overly long second thigh or a flat pelvis contributes to synthetic action, compare the delayed position of this dog's right hind leg in phase one to the first phase of examples A, C, and D. The greater the disharmony is between diagonals best seen in the first phase, the more synthetic the action.

The trot is a diagonal gait and consideration must be given to diagonal pairs of legs as well as the two legs moving in opposite directions on the near and far side of the dog. This dog is not moving well, because its right hind leg in phase 7 (where a brief period of suspension occurs during change over of diagonals) is not reaching forward an equal distance and in harmony with the diagonal front left leg.

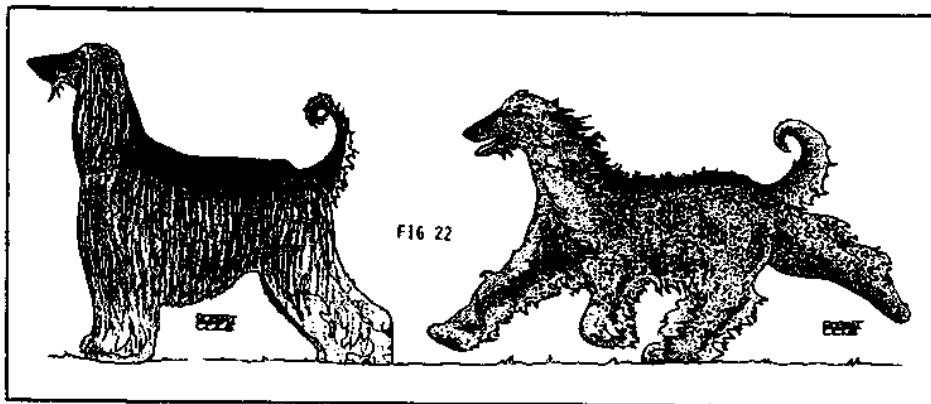
AFGHAN C.

This example is better constructed in rear than in front. In front the shoulders are steep and are lifted wastefully high in phases two and three. This wasteful lift serves to extend the timing of the front leg enabling it to better harmonize with its superior diagonal hind leg.

The over-flex of this Afghan's right front pastern in phases 6, 7 and 8 often goes unnoticed, as it does in other breeds. The full significance of this over-flex relates to other parts and ratios, how is not yet fully known, but this departure is not always due to steep shoulders. Interestingly, this Afghan with its structural problems is the only one of the four examples that does not over-reach at a fast show ring speed (the hind leg reaching fully forward). Part of the reason is the wasteful front leg lift, part is the over-flex of the front pastern when it relinquishes support.

Four Time Beat

Many square Afghans with too long a second thigh employ as Fig 22 is doing, another form of action adjustment. Instead of diagonal pairs of feet striking the ground together twice during a stride (two-time beat), each foot strikes the ground independently (four-time beat). If the viewer's attention is attracted only to the reach and extension of the two legs on the near side of the body and not to what is happening under the body this form of action adjustment can have great appeal.



AFGHAN D.

I saved a consistent winner till the last. This is a square-appearing Afghan, due in part to high withers and profuse coat. This example possesses the best balanced angulation. Its forelegs are long, its brisket is level with the elbow. Its neck is also of correct length. This type of Afghan (heads are not part of this discussion) appeals to both the specialist and the multi-breed judge.

At the fast trot this Afghan's head and tail are carried high, all four legs reaching and extending equal distances. Moved at a slower, natural trot this dog might over-reach as it is doing here, but reach and extension would be far less dramatic. This fact presents no problem for those familiar with correct Afghan conformation, structure and the effect on total action at the trot of these factors and speed.

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The action of the square-in-profile Afghan in the show ring is much different from that of most Sighthounds.

THROUGH THEIR EYES

The 1995 Judges Education Committee of the Afghan Hound Club of America asked past judges of the Afghan Hound Club of America National Specialty to describe their ideal Afghan Hound in 150 words. We would like to thank all those who participated in this endeavor. We feel that their descriptions will particularly help those interested in judging the Afghan Hound as well as be of interest to those who already judge the breed.

MICHELE L. BILLINGS

My ideal Afghan Hound is unique among all Hounds and perhaps even among all breeds due in part to an almost ethereal beauty and unrivaled majestic air.

The long, well chiseled, narrow head is greatly enhanced by a strong underjaw and dark almond shaped eyes correctly placed in the skull. Attached is a neck of great length that flows smoothly into a well laid back shoulder with no visible, knobby protrusions at the intersection. The back is relatively short, flexible but firm. The sloping croup falls away from the prominent hipbones.

A most important feature and breed characteristic of this great Hound is the tail which should be carried straight out and upward at a right angle ending in the ideal complete ring. Equally important breed characteristics are a smooth natural saddle and straight, thick flowing coat of a silky texture.

The bone and body are substantial with good depth of brisket. Correctly built, he spans the ground well, standing on large feet and long, powerful, well-angulated stifles. The bone in his ideally short hocks is equal to that of the foreleg.

In motion, he exhibits a straight forward, ground covering, athletic trot with head held high imparting a look of gay exhilaration and FUN. In retrospect, my ideal Afghan Hound is one of the most beautiful of all God's creatures and, unfortunately, is seldom seen among the exhibits of today.

JUNE E. BOONE

My ideal Afghan Hound is a King, a mighty hunter. He is his own dog. His head is carried high and his eyes gaze into the distance, mysterious, all-knowing and wise. I am assuming my ideal Afghan is also correctly built according to the standard. His neck is of good substance with a beautiful curve into the withers and thence to the back with no bumps or sharp angles. His topline is level

and firm but with spring when at the gallop. His feet are large with thick pads, of tremendous importance for that effortless trot that could go on all day. When moving, the Afghan should have what I can only describe as levitation with feet touching the ground as seldom as possible for the space covered and he should give the impression that he can still do all the things he was originally bred for rather than a dog bred solely for the show ring.

ELIZABETH BRISSELL

My ideal Afghan Hound has balance, balance, balance! Without harmony between the parts he cannot move with elasticity, style and grace.

A sighthound must trot effortlessly for miles and then summon the energy for a final burst of speed to secure his prey. If angulation is straight or exaggerated, fore or aft, wasted motion will ultimately cause him to bread down. Too long or short a back, lack of brisket, weak pasterns, or long hocks will reduce stamina. Type, as stated in the standard, has purpose not separated from soundness. Length of neck, tail length and form, dark eye, refined head, are all components affecting the smooth flow of the animal. Even the unusual coat pattern has purpose in the harsh climate of his homeland.

Temperament and attitude also affect Afghan balance. Mentally he should be alert, observant, enthusiastic, dignified and even a little arrogant. He is, after all, king of dogs.

ARCHLYN CLOT

My ideal Afghan Hound begins with an impression of the profile of the entire dog that displays correct proportions and proud bearing.

It continues with the head having good balance between the muzzle and backskull, a small dark, properly shaped and set eye, a strong bite, a smooth zygomatic arch and the distinct long, silky topknot.

From this point on my ideal Afghan has excellent balance, both standing and moving, without noticeable exaggeration; a soundness which allows function to follow form; angles flowing into angles without lumps or bumps; during a moderate gait, there will be a kick when viewed from the rear, reach when viewed from the front and a level topline when viewed from the side; and, along with proper size, both agility and elasticity of movement.

THROUGH THEIR EYES

Lastly, my ideal Afghan would have a wonderful, long, silky coat that never matted and would be a black masked red.

KENT DELANEY

The ideal Afghan Hound is that of a very active, intelligent and elegant appearing dog, squarely built, well proportioned, moving soundly and carrying himself proudly.

The Afghan Hound has about him an air of distinction and aloofness which makes him stand apart from all others. To insure the desirable squarely built appearance, the height at the shoulders equals the distance from the chest to the buttocks.

The ideal Afghan Hound has a highly dynamic body, capable of handling the varying stresses of athletic activity. Their bodies should be supple, efficient and balanced. Balance depends largely upon the perfect cooperation between the fore and hind quarters in supporting and propelling both halves of the body in unison.

Coat texture should be thick, very fine and silky. On adult animals there should be a natural short haired saddle starting from in front of the shoulders and on the sides of the neck as well. Afghan Hound faults and virtues are covered by coat. Careful examination is required by hand.

CAROL ESTERKIN

The Afghan Hound exudes an aura of elegance, arrogance and haughtiness.

His proudly carried head is garbed with a crown of silken hair that continues down the long neck, avoids the almost level bony back, fully clothes the sides of the body, legs (pasterns may be excluded), feet and pays scant attention to the tail.

His is an outline of angles, softened by the curve of the neck, drape of the coat and the curve at the end of the tail. Angularity is emphasized by the short hair on the back which allows sight of some vertebrae, the prominent hip bones, the long sloping croup and the low set tail.

The silken exterior camouflages the hard, sinewy body of the hunting sighthound. With high head and tail carriage, his collected movement exhibits the combination of power and agility possessed by no other hound.

JUDITH S. FELLTON

My ideal Afghan Hound should appear gender-definite -- the female smaller and daintier than the male. Both should appear square with deep chest and long legs (ending in big feet). Bone neither light nor heavy.

The head is strong, but refined, with almond eyes and good underjaw, plus proper dentition. Good angulation at both ends, which match -- no great overdone rears for me! The neck should be strong and long enough -- not swanlike and weak. Ribcage long and deep, with a short back and a hand's worth of croup, ending in a strong tail, with either a ring (not handmade) or a strong curve.

The coat is a crowning glory and should be soft and silky, with a harder saddle. No shaving permitted on the saddle or anywhere. I especially like those places on the neck where the hair is short!

Gait, at the trot, effortless and graceful, head and tail high.

Long hair on low-set ears, plus good topknot, left natural.

SANDRA FREI

The Afghan Hound is a King. He owns the ground he stands on. He should look through you with his dark almond eyes not at you. He is strong, powerful and agile.

Balance is a key word when talking about the Afghan Hound. He has a balanced head with a slightly roman nose. He must have good underjaw with a level or scissors bite. He must have a long silky topknot with a prominent occiput. His neck is long and well arched and flows into his well laid back shoulders. He has a level topline with prominent hip bones. He has a sloping croup with a long strong tail with a ring or a curve that should reach to the tip of the hock. He must have good return of upper arm and a deep brisket. His loin must be well muscled and powerful. His rear is powerful and his hocks are well let down. His coat is long and silky. He has large feet with thick pads. He possesses a short saddle with patterning on the neck and pasterns. When looking at him, you must not be prejudiced by his color as all colors are acceptable.

He is a square dog and should appear balanced when standing and when in motion. His topline should be level. He should move with his head and tail carried high. He is sound coming and going. He has an easy floating gait and should never ever be raced around the ring.

When judging him treat him with the dignity he deserves.

THROUGH THEIR EYES

HELEN FURBER

To produce the style of high order that gives this breed the appearance of the King of Dogs, the head and tail must be held proudly. The head, similar to other Sighthounds, is long, refined, but must not be snipy. The effect of this skull shape should render the eyes slanted slightly to the side of the skull.

An Afghan Hound should show dignity, with an aloof expression. Unlike other breeds, when a judge snaps his fingers, rattles keys or makes something squeak, the mature Afghan should not rivet his attention on that item. Once the identity of the object has been ascertained, the Afghan normally averts his gaze to something else. The mature Afghan has the ability to look at and through one. This ability to be "aloof" is a true hallmark of the breed. (Don't expect to see this in a young puppy.)

In profile, one expects the muzzle and the skull to be of equal lengths; a neck from occiput to withers to be approximately the same length as the total length of the head (this might not measure up if the withers are set too high and/or too far forward); the height at withers of correctly laid back shoulders to the ground to be equal to the distance from the forechest to the rear point of the rump.

The Standard calls for speed, smoothness, power and spring (spring is something that goes hand-in-hand with the proudly held head). The mechanics of Afghan movement are different from most other breeds. Looking at the German Shepherd, one notes they must also have great length between hip and hock, but because they have a longer body than the Afghan Hound, they have no difficulty in placing their hindfeet directly in line with the footprints of the front feet. However, the body of the Afghan Hound is shorter, so in order that the hindfeet do not hit the forelegs, the CORRECT moving Afghan adjusts by springing the forelegs out of the way of the hindfeet, a fraction of a second earlier. This is something best achieved when in conjunction with a proud head carriage.

EDWARD M. GILBERT, JR.

The outline must be that of an Afghan Hound - regardless of sex they must appear as the King of Dogs. Sex differences must be apparent. The whole appearance is one of dignity and aloofness, square (height at shoulders equals distance from chest to buttocks), proudly carried head, exotic expression, head of good length (backskull equal in length to foreface), strong underjaw, dark almond shaped eyes with clear outlook, chiseling on a

slightly Roman appearing muzzle, long silky topknot, prominent occiput, strong arched neck of good length which flows smoothly into a level back line (shoulders to loin), strong slightly arched loin, very prominent hipbones, tail set not too high with a curve or ring, the impression of a somewhat exaggerated bend in the stifle due to profuse trousering, front legs well set under, short saddle from in front of shoulders, and backwards from the shoulders along the saddle, with short hair on cuffs of legs, large feet with feathering coming forward, an underline showing depth with a tuck-up.

The muscle must be firm and supple to touch -- this is an athlete. A silky textured coat. Shoulder and upper arm properly laid back, chest reaches to the elbow and front legs are straight (viewed from front), elbows well held in, with approximately a hands width (without thumb) in a 27 inch specimen. Ribs well sprung. Loin area tucked-up, strong, and slightly arched. Rear powerful with firm muscle, viewed from rear the muscling slightly bowed from crotch to hock with broad hocks.

Moving on a loose lead with head and tail high there is a slight spring in a smooth, powerful stride. The King ignores the peasants and has a style and beauty that says "I'm the only ONE."

LOU GUERRERO

My ideal Afghan is balanced in outline and angulation, elegant, and sound in body and mind.

The head is balanced, long, chiseled, and refined with a strong underjaw and dark almond shaped eyes.

Topline is level with a long arched and well set on neck, angulated shoulders and a well set under front with pronounced hipbones. Ring or curve tail, set well on a moderate croup. Powerful hindquarters well bent and slightly bowed with short hocks.

My ideal Afghan would cover as much ground as possible with little or not wasted motion, be balanced with a spring in his stride and carrying the head and tail high.

GEORGIE GUTHRIE

My ideal Afghan Hound is a very standard, correct dog -- never trendy or extreme. He is balanced in angulation front to rear, has a hard topline, good hipbones, nice angle to the croup and a low set tail. A dog radiates elegance, pride and masculinity; and a bitch is elegant

THROUGH THEIR EYES

and confident. I don't want to have to feel a hound's back end to determine its sex.

The Afghan should have a small dark almond eye set in a head refined enough to be typey and attractive, yet well balanced and with a strong underjaw.

To achieve proper movement, he should have the seldom seen good set under of the upper arm so that he can reach out with his forelegs, balancing the drive from the rear. He must move soundly with no laboring, no rotating of pasterns or hocks to be seen when he is coming or going. His movement MUST be light on the feet, powerful and effortless.

DICK GUTHRIE

Did someone mention the word "balance"? By that I mean not only the overall picture of the dog but in each of its parts, and how those parts relate to each other. And particularly those parts which characterize the Afghan Hound, to wit, shortness of back, very prominent hip bones (widely set), long silky topknot, angular forequarters, croup, stifle, hock, and profile of topline/bottomline. To that I would add a lower jaw visible in profile.

To that I would add condition and soundness. Body should be lean, with good, firm muscle in shoulders and hindquarters.

Finally, movement -- smooth, powerful, effortless, a movement which indicates the ability not to tire in the field over long periods of time.

HELEN M. HAAS

The Afghan was bred to hunt, this is the look I want.

This look says "I see it - I am capable of the hunt."

This means balance -- no exaggeration.

This is strength - not bulk.

This is an eye that looks through me.

This is a jaw that will hold game.

This is a chest deep enough to hold a heart and lungs.

A short, broad loin to give power to the stride.

An angular hunter in a silk coat -- no poodle this!

BETSY HUFNAGEL

Whenever I imagine my ideal Afghan, the creature who comes to mind is a balanced, angular, long-boned animal with an arched, long and strong neck, prominent hipbones and croup. His hocks are low and his tail long - hopefully ringed. My Afghan appears to be athletic, a bit primitive, and has a natural coat pattern - or the

appearance of it. Most importantly, his topline is level and very strong - no sag or crash behind the withers, no roach, no weakness. When he stands naturally with rear legs under his body, his top is still practically level - the withers and hipbones of nearly equal height. His handler should not have to stretch out his rear legs to achieve a level top. His loin is short, muscular and strong.

My Afghan would prefer galloping freely, but, faced with the reality of a show ring and a person at the end of a lead, carries himself upright with a long and springy stride. He looks as though he is on reconnaissance. He carries his head elegantly and does not need to have his collar wrapped around and around to achieve this carriage. He most certainly will not have the generic show dog gait with exaggerated lift in front and kick behind. He does not have to be the fastest trotter.

BETSY PRIOR

Handsome, proud, never extreme.

The skull is balanced with the foreface; never snipey; the ear leather reaching almost to the end of the nose; scissors-bite preferred.

The neck is arched, running down to the scapula, which is well-laid back, and meets the upper arm which in turn angles back to end directly under the start of the scapula.

The forelegs go straight down from the end of the upper arm; with elbows in line with the body; a slight bend in the pasterns; all four feet large, with arched toes and covered with long hair.

The body is square, from breast bone to buttocks, and from withers to the ground; the brisket is deep and not slab sided.

The topline is level from withers to hipbone, with slight arch over the loin; the tail is placed slightly below the start of the croup, with a ring or curve in the end - always held vertically.

The hind legs have strong thighs, and a slight outward bend from second thigh to the well-let down hocks.

The coat is silky, and long, with a long topknot; the saddle is short, smooth, and shining.

The movement is powerful with head up, topline never dropping, and tail up.

The size should be compatible with correct build - preferably not over 30 inches.

THROUGH THEIR EYES

RICHARD SOUZA

Hard and lean. Sharp angles and long muscles. Dry. Pronounced finishing points. Not heavily coated but heavily patterned. Noble, not pretty. Cautious. Keenly attentive when provoked or interested. Tolerant not subservient. Affectionate, with parameters. Benevolent but fierce, if appropriate. A reconnaissance gait and ground covering movement with minimal effort. My ideal Afghan counters trends. He knows he's a winner, but may not win ribbons. He is great because he thinks he's great. My ideal Afghan is a feral hound. He can't win Groups and Best in Shows today.

BOB STEIN

The Afghan Hound: Balance, dignity, lack of exaggeration, standing four-square on the ground he owns and moving with no excess effort. The refined head, dark almond eye and expression should depict the far-away look so distinctive and important in our breed. The long neck flowing into well-angulated shoulders with adequate bone in the forelegs and large feet. The body should be square with good spring of rib and well tucked up. The croup must be at the proper angle with prominent hip bones for the correct set of the long tail characteristic only to the Afghan Hound. Level topline with strong short loin blending into well, but not over-angulated rear quarters. Low hocks and large rear feet are necessary. The gait should be free with good reach and drive in a balanced fashion. The coat and coat pattern are important and more is not necessarily better. Good stable temperament is a must. The standard speaks well for size and should be adhered to as much as possible.

BETTY STITES

The written description of the Afghan Hound, our standard, describes a dog that evolved for a purpose. To be ideal, the dog **MUST** be a functional, all terrain, long range, multi-gaited, maneuverable hunter blessed with endless endurance and able to work in all temperatures. Spare and angular, he must be an athlete. He must have power and strength for the hunt and a short joined, **SQUARE** body for maneuverability. His long, strong, legs and big feet are for speed, terrain and endurance. His topline, the drive shaft that transmits power from rear to front, **MUST** be strong and level. Adequately angulated shoulders are set well on to his body, not hung out in front. Temperature extremes have dictated his peculiar coat pattern, long sides for warmth, short haired back and neck to diffuse heat. His neck must be powerful and

crested to give strength for the hunt. He must be a king, proud, arrogant and aloof. Despite his exotic appearance, he is not a dog of exaggeration. His gait, like his body, should be collected and functional. If the dog you see before you is **NOT** square, strong, leggy, angular, aloof and fit, he does not fit our standard. If he is soft backed, long bodied, flat crouped, steep shouldered with flailing legs flying and loose floppy tail banging on high back, he is to be pitied.

DR. WILLIAM L. WASKOW

My ideal Afghan Hound is one who reveals the standard. A dog with character, a sense of awareness, dignity and good manners. He should have dark pigment without prominent haws. Standing or in motion he should portray great power, ability to cover ground with little expenditure of effort.

I like a strong low set tail capable of a whiplash across an opponent's face or to offset his balance. We must avoid the stylized Afghan Hound and preserve our standard of a great athlete.

LILA WADSWORTH

My ideal Afghan is first of all an independent thinker...regal and self-confident in attitude, he owns the world! He moves with the unique Afghan gait that is unforgettable and rarely seen these days...powerful, smooth, supple, effortless and breathtaking!

He is athletic, with mental and physical qualities that would enable him to hunt and survive as his ancestors did. Any unsoundness, weakness, over-refinement or over-exaggeration is contrary to the breed's original purpose and to the Standard.

His head is balanced, with a topknot, prominent occiput, dark eyes and a strong, punishing underjaw. He has a powerful neck tapering into well laid-back shoulders, angulation that sets his front legs well under him and a deep moderately wide chest. His hindquarters are well but not over angulated, with low hocks and huge feet. He has a level topline, prominent hipbones, and a ring tail well set on his sloping croup.

His coat is silky with a natural saddle. At first glance there is no doubt as to his (or her) gender. He is square, balanced, and angular in outline.

SYMPOSIUM

“A day with the Afghan Hound Standard”

General Appearance

by Betty Stites

The review of this symposium was printed in the March - April 1982 Sighthound Magazine

The first paragraph of our standard contains the essence of the Afghan Hound. Dealing with essences is vague and ethereal, but ultimately rewarding when they are finally unraveled to reveal the beauty and meaning of the breed. If we could save only one paragraph of our standard, having been forced by vile external beings to give up the rest, in my estimation, this is the one paragraph that most succinctly describes the total Afghan.

The Afghan Hound is an ARISTOCRAT. That word is the ultimate essence of our breed. Without the ability to look at and through, a person, without the ability to convince the owner that the dog is the one in command, there is no Afghan Hound. An Afghan Hound owns the world, and that includes the owner he walks ON, and the couch or bed he commandeers. He owns the terrain over which he runs, and the ring in which he stands. If you don't get that feeling from the Afghan Hound you see before you in the ring, you don't have a correct Afghan. There is no trace of coarseness or plainness. This statement does not apply, as many seem to think, only to the head. There can be no coarseness of body or spirit, no coarseness of gait or attitude. It must be light, be spare, be airy: It must have stamina, force and style. He must be a king in full command.

We talk a great deal about the “exotic” or “Eastern” expression. A far away look, a hard, flashing, mysterious, almond shaped eye, dark and piercing, that says this dog is truly of another world, another time, another place. “Eyes gazing into the distance as if in memory of ages past.” The eye can't be round, soft, light or reminiscent of all the friendly old “Fidos” we have known. The Afghan is scarcely even kin to these dogs, and his glance alone should put them in their place. The head is surmounted with a long, silky topknot. This topknot, mentioned at least twice more in the standard, is peculiar to the Afghan, a vital element of type, one setting him apart from the rest. His coat pattern, peculiar only to him, includes long, silky hair covering the legs, lower body and head, the required short saddle, and the optional patterning of

either long or short hair along the fronts of the pasterns, giving the appearance of Turkish trousers, and the short angel wings frequently seen on either side of the neck. Our standard states that this patterning will be NATURAL, it will not be put there by the Great God Oster with his number 4 blade. This coat heightens the impression of large feet, but be aware that under that coat there must BE large, thick feet, not flat nor splayed, which enable him to maneuver and turn on uneven terrain and dissimilar surfaces. These feet are his snowshoes and his Adidas. It is also his coat that gives him the required exaggerated rear. PLEASE note that when our standard calls for an exaggerated bend of stifle, it continues to state that this exaggeration is due to profuse trouserings. It is due to the COAT! We don't want Afghans with such extreme rear angulation that they appear to be walking on their knees. They aren't, and shouldn't be, German Shepherds. With over angulation to the rear they can't corner, can't maneuver, or perform the functions for which they were bred. Those who feel that sentence is calling for EXTREME rear angulation are doing a disservice to our breed. Balance is what is called for here. Balance -- one of the absolute key words. Balance in angulation between front and rear, balance in measurements both vertical and horizontal (body length to height at shoulder), balance in movement, balance in relationship of neck and tail. Balance and symmetry - the building blocks on which we must base our breed.

Our standard calls for a king of dogs, one that has held true to tradition through the ages. He is ethereal, he is a spirit, he is mystic, and he is real. Unless you incorporate all these intangibles into his being, and unless you give him the powerfully balanced body and mind he needs to pursue the physical functions of the sighthound, unless you have a KING with far seeing eyes, a far ranging mind, and a far reaching gait, you don't have an Afghan Hound. THIS is his general appearance. This is his reality and his essence.

The Afghan Hound Head

by Judith S. Fellton

GENERAL: The standard says "head of good length, showing much refinement." This means that the head should not be coarse in any way, but it does not mean that it should be as narrow as possible. Muzzle and skull should be of approximately the same length, although a muzzle slightly longer than the skull adds elegance. The head should slope gradually to the muzzle with little or no stop. The "slight prominence of the nasal bone" or slight roman nose has unfortunately been almost lost in today's dogs. In all ways, and from every angle the head should be aesthetically beautiful.

JAWS AND BITE: There is nothing in the Afghan Hound standard which does not indicate a strong head. We must not forget that the word "refined" is relative and does not mean "weak."

Because teeth which are set in a level bite tend to wear down very quickly. I prefer a scissors bite, which is not only more punishing, but doesn't as easily turn into an underbite when you have puppies with level mouths at age six months or so. A slightly overshot mouth in a young puppy will usually correct to a scissors as it grows.

In order for a bite to be penalized, all incisors must be overshot or undershot. One or two teeth out of line may appear unattractive but should not be penalized in an otherwise good bite.

TEETH: The subject of missing teeth has caused some controversy in the fancy. There is no disqualification for missing teeth in our standard. Because the bite is the only reference to teeth in our standard a judge does not have to inspect the entire mouth of an Afghan if he doesn't want to.

I feel that it is desirable that a dog have the correct number of teeth properly placed in the jaws. We may disregard a few missing teeth, but, in my opinion a large number of missing teeth should be penalized. Until there is a change in our standard, however, we cannot ask judges to do this. The insertion of the sentence "Missing teeth should be penalized" (as in the Borzoi standard) would make a great deal of difference and allow us to ask judges to pay more attention to the number of teeth.

Teeth should, of course, be kept clean and regularly inspected for the fine hair which tends to wind around individual teeth and cause great discomfort to the dog.

EYES AND EXPRESSION: "The eyes should be almond shaped -- almost triangular" as the standard says -- and dark in

color. The word "dark" is another relative term. Hazel eyes in a black dog might be objectionable, whereas in a red dog may be pleasing. The shape of the eye is of great importance. A round eye gives too soft an expression and a bulgy eye of any color is always unacceptable. Although we tend to favor dark brown eyes in American Afghans, a lighter eye which blends with a red coat color is quite acceptable in other countries.

You may wonder what is meant by "exotic, or Eastern expression, gazing into the distance as if in memory of ages past!" Your guess is as good as mine! This is one of the poetic flights of fancy which appear in many breed standards and may be interpreted in your own way. Actually, the reference to temperament in our standard "aloof and dignified, yet gay" describes the expression of the Afghan as well. He is cool and distant to strangers; warm and loving to friends.

Light haws appear fairly frequently in Afghan Hounds. The "haw" or third eyelid is usually dark and is necessary for the proper protection of the eye. Therefore, it should never be removed. Removal is considered cosmetic surgery and could cause the dog to be disqualified.

If the eyes are the correct shape and color, a light haw detracts only a little from the true and proper expression. Some judges find the light haws disturbing while others aren't bothered by them at all. Each judge has to decide how much importance to attach to this slight difference in expression in an otherwise superior animal. It is very easy, by proper breeding, to cut down substantially on the incidence of light haws.

EARS: There is very little to say about ears further than described in the standard. Ear leather "reaching nearly to the dog's nose" is rarely found after the age of three or four months. A low ear set, however -- is very important to the proper Afghan expression.

Most of us prefer the Afghan Hound with his ears down, yet the practice of baiting Afghans and making them get their ears up has gained some favor. It should be abolished by exhibitors along with the "strung-up" head. Judges, looking upon these practices with disfavor, could cause them to be abolished by exhibitors. However, some judges will bait dogs in group and BIS competition, and this is to be deplored.

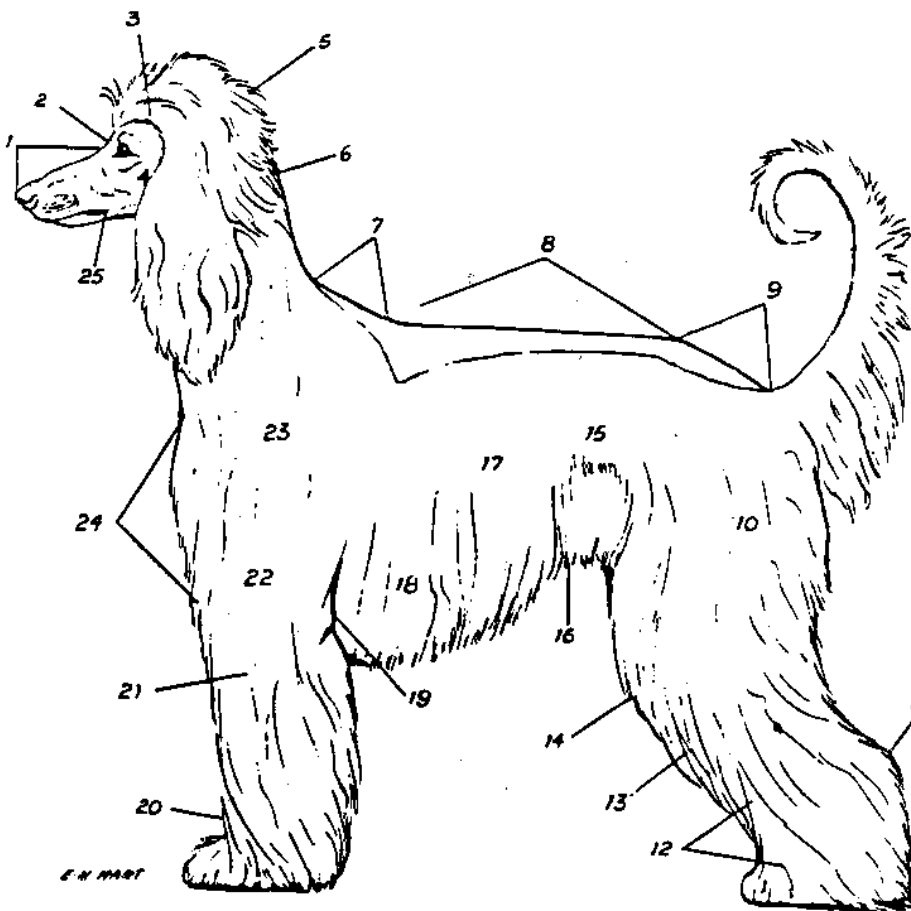
Photographers often try to get an Afghan's ears up by throwing things or making noises. They should be asked not to do this.

LIPS AND NOSE: Our standard says only that the nose should be of good size and black in color. Some self-masked dogs

may develop a light brown or pinkish nose, and this should be penalized.

Although the lips aren't referred to, lippiness is quite unsightly, and most of us prefer dark lips and eye rims to go along with the black nose.

TOPKNOT: A long silky topknot is stressed in our standard as an outstanding characteristic of the breed. It isn't necessary to tease this hair or to part it in the middle. It should fall naturally -- however it falls it will look lovely.



1. Foreface (including muzzle). 2. Stop. 3. Skull. 4. Cheek. 5. Occiput. 6. Crest of neck. 7. Withers. 8. Back (or saddle). 9. Croup. 10. Thigh. 11. Joint of hock. 12. Metatarsus (front of hock). 13. Lower thigh. 14. Stifle joint (knee). 15. Loin. 16. Tuck up (abdomen). 17. Ribs. 18. Brisket. 19. Elbow. 20. Pastern. 21. Forearm. 22. Upper arm. 23. Shoulder blade. 24. Forechest. 25. Lip corner (flaw).

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EXTRAS: "Chiseling" is the appearance of bones and veins in the muzzle. It adds beauty and elegance to the dog's appearance, but is not required.

"Mandarins" are another plus found in some Afghans. They are long silky "mandarin whiskers" which grow at the end of the lower jaw. They add to the exotic look of the Afghan Hound and are to be appreciated, but are not called for.

CONCLUSION: Even the most correct and beautiful head must be in proper proportion and

relationship to the rest of the dog. Therefore, we must stress balance and symmetry.

The Afghan Hound Front Assembly

by Herman L. Felton

You have all heard the expression, "to move right, a dog has to be built right." you have also no doubt heard some judges comment that they can pick their winners as they move into the ring -- only having to go over the exhibit to confirm what their "eye" has already told them -- and to check for finer details, such as bite and eye color. What that means is that general conformation, balance, and soundness is relatively easy to see, if you know what you are looking for. However, nature is very

clever at compensating for the mistakes we make in our breeding. The Afghan, in particular, with his long, flowing coat, will get away with structural defects and a lack of balance which would not be tolerated if it were a smooth-coated breed.

The Afghan Hound shoulders are "long, sloping and well laid back... They have plenty of angulation so that the legs are well set underneath the dog." Ideally, the shoulder blade is laid at an

angle approaching 45 degrees to the ground -- this is the most functional for any long striding dog.

Ideally, too, the humerus will be of equal length and also at a 45 degree angle to the ground -- meeting the scapula with an approximate angle of 90 degrees. These measurements should be determined by an arbitrary system usable in the show ring.

The scapula has no bony attachment to the body, but is firmly attached to the rib cage by strong, elastic muscles which form a complex network from the neck to the withers and along the rib cage, assuring the dog is able to move smoothly and easily in a forward direction, as opposed to a rolling fore action, as employed by some Afghans with inadequate muscling.

Faulty muscling in front can also produce elbow faults, where the elbows are loose and swing outward or are tied in, causing the leg to be moved in a stiff outward arc. The muscles also act as a cushion to absorb the shock of the foot hitting the ground.

We move down the leg, which has strong, comparatively heavy and somewhat oval bone, to the long, springy pasterns which slope forward a bit, bringing the heel pad well down on the ground. It also acts as a shock absorber and gives lift to the gait, snapping the foot back and up out of the way of the hind foot. This is referred to as daisy clipping in most Gazeounds, but is not so easily seen in the Afghan with heavily coated legs and feet.

Most experts on the Afghan interpret the standard to require a long-striding, square dog. The long stride and the level running action is still required in the Afghan in his native country. In the field the Afghan employs his long-striding, effortless trot to conserve energy until he breaks into a gallop after sighting his prey. In the gallop, the front is equally as important as the rear in propelling the dog.

The Afghan also uses his front to help pull himself over much rougher and steeper terrain than a Greyhound, for example, would be used over. With these thoughts in mind, then, we would look for a more acute angle between the scapula and humerus than is accepted in most Gazeounds.

The dog is said to be in static balance in front when a straight line can be drawn from the top of the scapula down through to the large heel pad which takes the weight. Unless your dog has good forequarters, it doesn't matter how good the rest of him is, he will never obtain true balance, either static or kinetic.

Too straight a shoulder, which is often coupled to a shorter upright humerus and a forward-set front assembly, is a very common fault in Afghans these days. It is a serious fault and one that should be rectified if we are to retain the typical Afghan movement. As you can see, a steep shoulder seriously affects the reach of the foreleg. It causes a jerky up and down

movement, ruining the smoothness of gait which we require. Some handlers try to conceal this shortcoming by moving their dogs so fast that the dogs move in a flying trot, rather than a normal trot.

As this type of front will also affect the length of the muscles, particularly the long brachi muscle from the neck down to the foreleg, we will find that the hound will adopt more of a high-stepping, hackney-like action. This action can also be caused by a too-tight lead which puts stress on this muscle. When the scapula is so upright as to be virtually situated on the dog's neck, other muscles will also be affected, and the forelegs will paw the air and fall short of the point of maximum reach.

Let's compare the Afghan Hound and Whippet Standards. Each wants long, well laid back shoulders, but the former has the forelegs set well beneath the body, while the latter has the forelegs not set under the body. Unless we assume the words "long, well laid back" to mean different things in each Standard (a not impossible but highly unlikely conclusion), the answer must lie in either the length or positioning of the upper arms -- or both.

We can postulate that the Afghan Hound should have upper arms which are equal in length to the shoulders and which form a 90 degree, or nearly 90 degree, angle at their junction. This would bring the Afghan's forelegs well under its body, while the Whippet's legs would be well forward on the body.

(A long upper arm, so positioned, would raise the Whippet's body, so that the brisket would not be as likely to reach the level of the elbows.)

This difference between the upper arm configuration of Whippets (and Greyhounds, I might add) and of the upper arms of Afghan Hounds (and, in my opinion, Salukis) makes sense when we consider the differing functions we have assigned these breeds. A long sloping shoulder which forms a 90 degree angle with the upper arm so that the legs are well under the body is conducive to endurance.

A long sloping (possibly a little less so) shoulder which forms a more open angle with the upper arm so that the front legs are well forward on a long-legged dog lends itself to greater speed over shorter distances. We have designed (rather arbitrarily, as man is wont to do) the modern Whippet and Greyhound to be short distance racers, while the Afghan Hound and the Saluki require the agility and endurance to perform their designated task -- course game.

The Afghan Standard asks for "pads of feet unusually large and well down on the ground." This is a breed characteristic which we have lost to a great extent and are in danger of losing entirely.

Coat, Height, Weight and Color

by Bob Stein

The subject of coat certainly needs to be touched upon, although as we all know, coat does not make the dog and has probably been overemphasized since our present standard was approved in 1948. References are made in the standard in several sections to long and silky coat and fine in texture. While it does not say that a curly or wavy coat should be penalized, I think we all know that it is distracting to an otherwise good specimen.

References are also made in many sections and emphasized strongly that an Afghan Hound should have a long, silky topknot and the head should be surmounted by this topknot. We see in the ring today quite a number of dogs lacking in this department. The standard again makes short hair on the cuffs on either front or rear legs permissible. This breed characteristic is being seen less and less, and through breeding for more and more coat, could be eliminated. We do not want to eliminate the coat characteristics that make our breed unique. Keep the Afghan Hounds looking like what they were meant to be, capable of hunting and coursing.

I do not believe that coat amount should be overemphasized. Breeders, exhibitors and handlers are trying to save every little hair, and dogs are being shown with far too much coat. Often times, I will judge a dog or bitch under two years old and find the amount of coat quite pleasing at that stage. Movement, as well as the animal's outline, can be easily seen.

Sometimes I will see this same dog or bitch two years later, and the side coat is almost to the ground. To me this is distracting, and the dog would probably trip over himself in the field.

Last but not least, it is clearly stated that the dog should be shown in its natural state, not clipped or trimmed. The sculptured dog should be penalized. This is not to say that an otherwise good specimen should be put down to a poor specimen with proper coat, but the trimmed dog should be faulted, the exhibitor warned, and scissoring and trimming be strongly discouraged.

When I started showing dogs, the breeders and exhibitors might even up a saddle with their fingers, but the scissors and clippers were not in the tack bag.

Coat texture does not seem to be as big a problem as in years past, but let's keep them fine and silky. Not only will they be much easier to care for, but will not collect near as many leaves and general debris. Proper texture of coat gives the dog the added flowing look when moving, as well.

Color is clearly stated in our standard as "all permissible." I don't think personal opinions on this subject are important, as the standard is very explicit. The white blazes on the head, of course, should be discouraged. I don't see too many in the ring today with this problem. I am sure there are many around sold as pets, and hopefully, the ones in the ring are being shown without touch-up. Breeders are only fooling themselves if they continue to breed dogs with bad blazes, as this fault seems to multiply itself rapidly.

There are many more exotic colors shown today, and I think it makes the breed even more interesting to see a large class with the wide range of colors. However, even though I dearly love the beautiful self-masked creams, good dark pigmentation of the nose, eye rims, and lips should be strongly encouraged. This is even more disturbing to me when you see large numbers of these dogs with poor pigmentation in the middle of the summertime, when it is obviously not a winter-nose problem. Eye color is equally important -- an otherwise good dog can lose its faraway look and expression with the light yellow eyes.

Height and weight seem to go together. What happened to the 27" dog and the 25" bitch? Obviously some deviation as allowed by the standard and even a little more is probably acceptable, but let's not breed horses! The 32" dog and 29" - 30" bitch are improper and should be strongly discouraged. These animals are generally not agile and would not be capable of hunting or coursing game.

There does not seem to be too much problem with Afghan Hounds being too small, but many, although they are the proper size, appear small, because they are long-bodied and out of proportion. Balance of the Afghan Hound cannot be overemphasized, as a dog out of balance can appear to be too small or too large, even though this may not be the case.

Weight normally goes along with size, so if you solve one problem, you would generally solve the other. I don't know why anyone would weigh a grown dog, unless a medical problem would exist, and even though weight is referred to in the standard, it would seem to be a guideline to go with the size so described. To me, the importance should be put on breeding dogs of medium bone, not too fine or too coarse, and proper weight will fall into place.

I believe the total picture of the Afghan in reference to coat, color, height, and weight should be a dog within the standard, ample but not ridiculous coat, fine and straight in texture, and any color with good pigmentation to go with it. If we have

these characteristics, we can see the dogs properly in their natural state.

One of the prime reasons why you see so much more sculpturing and trimming is because many dogs have too much

natural hair and lose their outline if not touched up with the scissors and clippers. Let your dog run in a mowed yard or run. The little coat he loses will not hurt anything, and he will have proper muscle tone without too much coat.

Gait and Temperament

by Virginia Withington

Gait. (From the Standard) "When running free, the Afghan Hound moves at a gallop showing great elasticity and spring in his smooth, powerful stride. When on a loose lead, the Afghan can trot at a fast pace. Stepping along, he has the appearance of placing the hind feet directly in the foot prints of the front feet, both thrown straight ahead. Moving with the head and tail held high, the whole appearance of the Afghan Hound is one of great style and beauty..."

In the Afghan Standard, the words used are *elasticity* and *spring*, and used only when the Afghan is running free, not in the show ring or on lead. Like watching the Afghan during a lure course or running free in one's backyard. This is when you should see a lot of elasticity and spring.

In the show ring, I want to see the Afghan moving out, on a loose lead, not like racing in a derby. Not being dragged or pulled by his handler. His front legs should reach out and drive along with a good, driving rear. I want to see the rear feet moving in to take the place of where the front feet take off.

Too many Afghans today are sidwinding because they would trip on their front feet, because the front feet can't get out of the way of the back feet. I do not want to see cow hocks or the front feet turning out -- East and West. All four feet should point forward. When an Afghan is moving smoothly and properly, you should almost be able to balance a cup of water on its back.

I don't wish to see the front legs thrown out almost like Hitler's goose step. They should reach out and drive in. The head held high, not like a pointer racing after prey. The tail should also be up, not tucked under the tummy.

Temperament. (From the Standard) "Aloof and dignified, yet gay. Faults: Sharpness or shyness..."

We have all seen some sharpness and a lot of shyness in the ring today. Nobody likes this, and all we can do is try our best to breed it out. I feel that some shyness is caused by judges that approach the Afghan much too fast or wear some outrageous get-up. The Afghan is not a breed to approach in a fast manner. I love to see an Afghan look right through you and act like he owns the ring.

The Afghan Hound

An address given at the 2nd Northern California All-Hounds Judging Seminar, January, 1976.

• By Constance Miller •

The format of the ALL-HOUND SEMINAR deals, at least incidentally, with the DIFFERENCES, as well as the SIMILARITIES of rather related breeds. In SIGHTHOUNDS we tend to accept the GREYHOUND as the prototype -- or at least the most SPECIALIZED of the running breeds, and make comparisons from that point. It is not enough to know "greyhounds" to be able to judge AFGHAN HOUNDS sensibly! The most useful written comparison I have found appears in *Sporting Dogs* by A. Croxton Smith ("Eastern and Russian Greyhounds" chapter, Publ. 1938) in which Mr. Amps, importer of the "Ghazni" hounds that proved to be the cornerstone of Afghan imports into England, wrote that he had recently attended a coursing meet in India where, "The Maharajah of Patiala kindly asked me to stay for the coursing, so I took four dogs down with me. His Highness was particularly keen to see what the Afghan Hounds could do in coursing with his greyhounds, and he arranged some special heats for these. The coursing was held on a large OPEN GRASSED PARADE GROUNDS AS FLAT AS A BILLIARD TABLE. This was a very different set of conditions from what the Afghan Hounds were accustomed to. IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY THEY ARE USED TO ROUGH, STONY PLAINS AND ROCKY CRAGS, AND I HARDLY EXPECTED THEY WOULD DO THEMSELVES JUSTICE ON THIS SMOOTHLY CUT TURF. The results, however, were much better than I had anticipated. The greyhounds were, of course, faster on the straight, but the Afghans were EXTRAORDINARILY QUICK ON THE TURNS. I am not an expert on coursing matters myself, but those that are keen on the sport were most impressed by their performance. The Afghan Hounds ran with a *keenness* and *zest* which surprised them. Had a test taken place over a rough country of Afghanistan, there is no doubt they would have had the advantage. THEIR WHOLE CONFORMATION IS INTENDED TO GIVE THEM THE MAXIMUM OF STAYING POWER UNDER THE MOST ARDUOUS CONDITIONS and they are frequently out the WHOLE DAY after hares and foxes and are as fit at the end of the day as they were in the beginning." (All-caps are mine for emphasis -- cm).

As a result of that trial the Maharajah of Patiala bought a supply of "Ghazni" Afghan Hounds, and replenished them from time to time for his less formal hunting expeditions.

The Afghan Hound "type" is best approached by thinking of him as a FREE-RANGING, QUICK-THINKING, HIGHLY INDEPENDENT HUNTER, and never as a gentleman's polite "coursing" hound. Additionally, in some of the small

nomadic tribes these hounds spontaneously volunteered, or were called into duty, to fill auxiliary roles of herd, guard dogs to freely patrol the flocks of fat-tailed-sheep and/or long-haired goats that sustained the tribe but were vulnerable to predatory leopards and jackals.

To fulfill this versatile role the Afghan Hound, as a breed, developed TWO WORKING GAITS of remarkable importance. Like all the Sighthounds, once they were close enough to their victims to make a "rush" pay off, they used a double suspension gallop of power and scope. But on their home grounds -- hilly, unstable and obstacle-ridden, these rushes comprised not only of a flat-out gallop, but a number of GREAT BOUNDS, with balance changes, propelling them up ridges, across stones, talus and ravines, often necessitating abrupt changes of direction in mid-air. Jackals were chased straight up the face of vertical slopes that defeated other greyhound-types. Downhill bounding was accomplished with equal facility and remarkable lack of injuries to feet and legs.

There was no formal pattern to Afghan Hound hunting "packs." Reports vary from the kills made by a LONE HUNTING DOG, to large packs (two to ten hounds) working in natural unison -- sometimes with the aid of hawks trained to harass and slow speedy local varieties of deer, or the nimble ibex. There was similar great variation in hound size, with the smaller bitches frequently being the speediest, but the larger and more powerful males better equipped to make the final kill on relatively large game.

The working gait of the Afghan Hound, that we should see in the SHOW RING, is its rather distinct RECONNAISSANCE TROT -- which, when properly executed, is an exceptionally adroit ever-watchful, energy-conserving method (in contrast to the physiological drain of the full gallop) of keeping on the move while constantly surveying near and far terrain.

It is a study of this TROTting GAIT, together with pertinent points written into past and present STANDARDS for the breed, that should teach us the "differences" between the Afghan Hound and the undiluted "greyhound-type" built primarily for galloping speed.

In England, circa 1925, a Standard for the breed was put forth by the Afghan Hound Club -- actually a loose description of a particular admired specimen who had been seen at shows in the Miscellaneous Classes about 1907. Excepting for mention of long ears, very large feet, some long-coated areas, and a suggested size, that Standard would fit any member of the

The Afghan Hound

2nd Northern California All-Hounds Judging Seminar, January, 1976.

Constance Miller

Gazehound family with equal and fair comfort. For judging purposes to aid differentiation between correct TYPE within various hounds, it was very little help at all!

In '27 a different Standard was drawn up by the newly-formed rival club, the Afghan Hound Association -- with text inspired by the President, Mrs. Amps, one of the few importer/breeders with actual working knowledge of these dogs in their native land. The changes, or additions, in this AHA Standard, clearly aimed to point to areas where preferred Afghan Hounds differed from the specialized greyhound-types.

Under HEAD the phrase "not too narrow" was inserted, to illustrate that "headed like a snake" was untypical of this *sturdy mountain breed* and was further supported by the demand for a "fair spring of ribs" and "well-boned forelegs." Rather than using the term "arched," the loins were described as "straight, broad and rather short." The differences in the standing and trotting carriage of the Afghan Hound were stressed by the stipulation that the HINDQUARTERS be "well under the dog" (for quick springing into action) and that, "in motion, his head and tail are carried high" as he moves with a "springing gait." And, in case the significance of these points were missed they added, "THE OBJECT OF THE DOG IS TO HUNT ITS QUARRY OVER VERY ROUGH AND MOUNTAINOUS GROUND IN A COUNTRY OF CRAGS AND RAVINES. FOR THIS, A COMPACT AND WELL-COUPLED DOG IS NECESSARY RATHER THAN A LONG-LOINED RACING DOG WHOSE FIRST QUALITY IS SPEED."

I must explain that these clarifying phrases appeared in one of the several private club Standards then in use -- until the British Kennel Club, in 1947, put an end to a most confusing state of multi-club rule by insisting that only ONE OFFICIAL STANDARD, registered with the B.K.C., be binding on all breed clubs.

With some interplay across the ocean, and a bit of infighting on each side of the Atlantic, eventually the current English Standard was adopted in Britain, and a new American Standard was accepted by the AKC in 1948. Both of these current Standards busied themselves with what were badly

needed greater details on superficial preferences in eye color, expression, coat pattern, textures, etc. Both also carry the same IMPLICATIONS of correct BREED TYPE as delineated by the older AHA Standard but neglected to include the explanatory paragraph I have included in all-caps above. From my personal vantage point in 1975, I consider this omission unfortunate, and probable reason for much of the confusion in breeding, exhibiting, and judging the breed today.

As my part of this seminar presentation is based primarily upon VISUAL MATERIAL (slides and movies) I am submitting this as background to the subject of "CORRECT BREED TYPE." Through the use of slides of breed specimens down through the years, from earliest importations, I wish to point out the great danger in the breed TODAY of falling further and further from CORRECT BREED TYPE. This tendency is evident in many TOP WINNING Afghan Hounds, at the Group and Best in Show level. A major deviation from "type" is being seen, in a longer, more narrow, bone structure than is correct for this breed. We see far too many over-exaggerated profiles, quite without the correct look of COMPACTNESS, and often lacking the all-important BROAD and POWERFUL LOINS that were an absolute "must" in this breed. Older breeders have become distressingly aware of the growing tendency for incorrect hind leg placement, where, rather than being set close to, or actually under the dog, they are posed to trail behind it -- German Shepherd-like -- in an unbalanced stance from which they could not possibly "spring."

As a true characteristic of the breed (rather than a badge of "showmanship") the head and tail of the Afghan Hound should be carried high, NATURALLY (loose lead) at a trot. There is no historical reason ever to ask that the tail be held high when the dog is *standing still*. This proud and far-seeing head carriage combined with well-used (good flexion) joints of hock, stifle and shoulder produce the basics for a trotting "style of high order" (English Standard) so necessary to navigate obstacle-ridden terrain. The correctness of this gait can best be assessed at a MODERATE SPEED that promotes MAXIMUM ENDURANCE and AGILITY to overcome the rigors of an all-day Afghan Hound tour of duty.

Afghan Hounds

“LEG” by Georgie Guthrie

At a recent show I shared a canopy with a longtime Afghan breeder from another area. We had an interesting discussion on the state of the breed. I said I had to come up with another *GAZETTE* column soon and asked if she had any ideas. She said, “Write about leg. I feel like a dinosaur, as if I’m one of a very few people in the breed who think Afghans should be up on leg.”

At the last Afghan Hound Club of America specialty we had an educational workshop. Each speaker, whether their topic was breed history, type, movement or current problems in the breed, emphasized that our breed is supposed to be a square dog. “Square” implies -- demands -- that the Afghan be up on leg. There is no way a dog can be square without length of leg. Our standard says, “height at the shoulder equals the distance from the chest to the buttocks.”

Historically and functionally, the Afghan has been a square dog. Curtis Brown’s classic *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis* says, “The object of the Afghan Hound found in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan was to hunt quarry over rough and mountainous ground -- for this a compact and well-coupled dog is necessary, rather than a long-loined racing dog whose first quality is speed. This type of activity in this terrain required a bounding type gallop, a squarer build and uphill leaping muscle development. For its structure the trot was not long striding and had an apparent up and down motion of the topline.” This is a pretty good description of the original dog and why it was built the way it was.

Breeders in Europe and Australia have kept the original outline of the breed but not we inventive Americans. At the same time that Afghans became more popular in the US, breeders saw that longer-striding dogs were more successful in the show ring and began to lengthen the dog so it could have an attractive “open” side gait. According to Brown, we now have “long-striding Afghans who trot in a manner at variance with that of an uphill or level terrain galloping dog.”

Breeding a longer dog also helps avoid some of the gaiting problems a shorter-backed dog may have. If a dog has too much push from the rear and not enough reach in front it may compensate by pacing, crabbing or over-stepping, while a longer-backed dog with two ends that don’t work together won’t have to do any of these things.

The longer-bodied, longer-striding Afghan is what many newer exhibitors and judges are used to looking at, although some more seasoned judges keep asking, “Why has the Afghan gotten so long?” Whenever the Afghan is judged by someone who really knows the breed, whether a longtime breeder or a veteran judge, they will always go for the correctly balanced dog. It is a pleasure to watch or show to such a person.

A longer dog, whether the length is in the loin or the rib cage or both, can still be up on leg, but its lack of balance is generally manifested by a poor back line. Other dogs that appear long are simply short-legged.

When standing far enough away from a line of dogs in a class, it is immediately evident which are square and up on leg and which are not. If, as you run your eye up and down the line, one dog almost seems to make your eye click as if you were taking a picture, chances are this animal is well-balanced, square and with parts that are in harmony.

The friend who said to write about leg mentioned a dog that was winning on the West Coast when she began in Afghans as epitomizing the concept of square and up on leg. Ch. Sandhi Joh-Cyn Taija Baba was not a perfect dog by any means, but he did make your eye click. There was never a picture of him that showed him other than up on leg and beautifully square.

After the conversation about leg and squareness I went back to some of the old magazines. Sure enough, almost every Afghan pictured was up on leg and, interestingly enough, most of the show pictures were full-profile shots. A few years later the show pictures began to be taken from the three-quarter angle. Were we aware that we had to do this to show our dogs to the public as being better balanced than they really were?

There has been some improvement recently in overall balance, but as long as we continue to pursue the long side gait we will continue to breed at variance to the standard. Well-balanced, square dogs are still such a minority that those who haven’t studied the breed well enough may think they are not correct.

What I’ve been discussing is not the only departure from the standard. We have quite different heads, vastly different movement, some changes in eye shape and other things to which we ought to pay more attention. We have an excellent and very explicit standard. Why don’t we pay more attention to it and breed to it? Let’s read it more often and give some real thought to what it says. ■

Reprint permission has been granted. This article appeared in the June 1994 issue of the AKC Gazette.

"The Breed That Was"

The Hounds Tale

by Georgiana Guthrie

In the May, 1972, issue of *The Hounds Tale*, published by Afghan Hound Club of California, Georgiana Guthrie wrote, in part, in her article "The Breed That Was:"

"The Afghan Hound used to have a more or less 90 degree angle of the shoulder blade and the upper arm, with the forelegs set well under the body, allowing the dog when moving to reach out and grab the ground with his forepaws, his front assembly moving in unison with the springing drive from the hindquarters. How many dogs does one see nowadays who can move this way? We the breeders and we the judges have allowed our beloved hounds to deteriorate into pretty toys with super-refined snipey heads and tons of hair in super exotic hues, who are so unsound and unbalanced that one foot can barely get out of the way of another, and who could never begin to do what the breed was designed to do -- RUN after game.

"We are breeding for lots of hair and pretty heads and for blues and dominos without much regard to the fact that we are losing shoulder angulation and the good depth of chest and brisket which make for a properly moving front end...Can't we the breeders and we the judges of a RUNNING breed remember that truly efficient movement does not mean paddling, weaving, crabbing or crossing over, and make a real effort to show and put up the dogs that move properly."

In the Spring, 1972, issue of the English magazine *Afghan Review** there appeared two excellent articles. These were written by English fanciers, of course, but are equally relevant to Afghans in our country. The first, by Marna M. Dods, whom many of you know, is titled "The Afghan Hound from Zardin to the Seventies" and contains these observations:

"During the last twenty-six years that I have been in the Breed, I have seen many changes. The matter which worries me most is the change in type. Where is the 'proud aloof hound of truly regal bearing with that certain keen fierceness who looks at and through one?' Where is the triangular eye-set and the chiseling of the head rather than the round eye and soft expressions we see so often today...Strong punishing jaws are hard to find, and weak underjaws are a common fault, possibly on account of over fine heads and too refined a skeletal structure altogether.

"Speaking of pasterns, we are also tending to lose the correct sloping pastern and of course the true Afghan large, long and broad front feet with arched toes. This fault, of course, is coupled with the straight shoulder and foreshortened forearm...Coat and coat preparation have become almost a fetish in the Breed today and some people lay far too much stress on glamour and not enough on the muscular condition underneath.

"To sum it up, what have we lost? The aloof, truly Oriental hound, with true springy gait. The eye shape and chiseling to a certain extent. The coat pattern, in particular the saddle. The correct feet, the bodies, due to bad rearing and lack of exercise and the ring tail. What have we gained? A friendly, glamorous status symbol."

The other article by Roy Elmore, a keen student of our breed, is "Will The Real Afghan Hound Please Stand Up" and states:

"One could understand the development of a light, sparsely coated 'Sakuki' type of Afghan with prancing gait which would be more efficient over the rough desert areas like those I have crossed in Uzbekistan, but I totally disagree with the commonly held view that this 'desert type' would be representative of a dog suitably equipped for life in the Afghanistan area.

Breeders and Judges who believe that light-weight, pathetically powerless and coatless Afghans are typical of a breed of dog suited to the tough mountain life with vast changes between daytime and nighttime temperatures, should, I suggest, modulate their opinions in the light of actual environmental and survival requirements, and perhaps we may eventually see fewer of the abysmally poor specimens which abound in the present day show ring and consistently win the classes.

"The Afghan Hound should be strong, it should be immensely powerful and elastic in movement, with a broad, well-muscled loin. It should be well-angulated fore and rear for a good stride, and to cushion the shocks transmitted along the bones by hard rock terrain...This means that the dog needs plenty of lung and heart room to retain stamina..."

What Will We Make of Our Breed?

By Betty Stites

It might be well to take stock of our Afghans now that the breed is experiencing more popularity than ever before. Whether you feel this popularity is a plus or a minus is entirely up to you. Also up to you however, is the future of this breed that has survived for so many hundreds of years. It is for you to decide if the changes we seem intent on making are justified.

To me it seems that the Afghan can survive in its true form only if we as breeders and exhibitors remember that the breed originated to serve a purpose. The Afghan's basic structure evolved to enable him to survive in a hostile environment; needless to say, few of our present dogs are forced to survive in the unfriendly environment that the mountains and deserts of Afghanistan demanded. However, if we want to maintain the true Afghan, it is necessary to understand that he did develop for and with a purpose. It would seem a bit elementary to elaborate on this purpose, but from the dogs we are seeing in the rings these days, it would seem that there are a great many who have no idea why we have a beast with the structure and temperament of the Afghan. Originally of course, he was a hunter. What did he need to carry out his hunting needs in his native environment? He needed a balanced, powerful body with good strong bone for endurance. He needed large, thick padded feet. He needed depth of brisket and spring of rib to give him the lung capacity demanded of a runner. He needed keen eyes to sight game, and he needed a powerful head and jaw to pull down and kill game. He needed angulation of shoulder and rear to enable him to run and move correctly. This, combined with his pelvic assembly, enabled him to maneuver. He needed coat of some sort to cope with the tremendous temperature changes experienced in the climate of Afghanistan.

He also needed a keen and composed mental attitude. He had to be an independent thinker, able to make his own decisions without command from a higher authority. He needed a calm, quiet serenity, a totally unflappable outlook so he could sit back and survey the entire situation before coming to a decision as to what to do about it. After deciding, he needed the drive, both mental and physical, to allow him to carry out to his advantage whatever the situation demanded. In short, he needed stable mental health. This is not to say that he was not to become aroused. Indeed, he would have to have the total ability to protect himself against anything, any situation and any aggressor. He would have to be able to fight to maintain himself, and to fight quickly, strongly and effectively. He would also have to have the mentality needed to do this swiftly, intelligently and on his own. He was a king, both mentally and physically.

And what have we made of this marvelous animal? In some cases it's sad to contemplate, and sadder still when it's viewed in the show ring. How can we condone the wispy little

creatures we see each weekend, with barely enough bone to allow them to stand, and often scarcely the muscle tone needed for any kind of movement? How can we condone the extreme over-refinement of head, lacking both power and brain space, with little or no underjaw? Such an animal could never, in its wildest dreams, bring down and kill an animal, and undoubtedly wouldn't stand a chance of catching it. How can we condone the unsound movement, legs flipping here and there, the amazing lack of reach, due in many cases to overly straight shoulders, and the almost complete loss of correct springy movement? How can we condone the shallow weedy bodies with little or no brisket and lung capacity or the long, soft, floppy backs, scarcely serving any purpose?

What of our temperament? Where is the fierce, cold-eyed independence? Where is the inherent Afghan drive to sustain and protect himself in all conditions? Where is the keen, independent thinker who knew no master but himself? Sadly, all but gone. We now have a race of soft-eyed, waggy-tailed, vacant minded, unthinking automatons.

We have done this to our breed, and in some cases it would seem that we have done it on purpose. We, as breeders, have made our breed what it is today, and in all too many cases, that seems to be simply an unsound coat carrier, soft of mind and muscle, who is able only to go into a ring, wag his tail, dance about, and win. Who in the breed can really believe that all we want is a hairy, prancing crowd pleaser? If this is the case, it would seem we might better have considered another breed.

This has come about both intentionally and unintentionally. Certainly as long as we continue to breed excessively unsound and overly-refined dogs, we will be doing this purposely. We are, however, also unthinkingly leading to the downfall of our breed. Who can expect a dog who is kept in a crate or tiny dark basement for 8 hours a day and 16 hours a night to have any kind of sound mental outlook, or any muscle tone? How can a dog who never sees anything but four silver metal walls develop into a keen and independent thinker? How can he ever imagine that he is a king? How can he ever be anything but a vacant-minded automaton? By turning his mind off, he has probably enabled himself to survive a totally horrible and uninteresting existence. To make matters worse, what do we do with those of the breed who do show true Afghan independence? We find that they are incorrigible and uncontrollable. They will not remain in their crates day after day without a great deal of protesting and fuss; they destroy things in their attempt to be free. They are not amenable to our commands, so we get rid of them. It is the meek, the quiet, the soft -- both of mind and body -- that we keep.

How many Afghans have seen or hunted anything in the field? How many have ever experienced the feeling of being free? How many have ever been allowed to race, to course? How many have ever been praised for those things that are inherent in our breed and should be preserved instead of purposely being bred out? How many have been allowed to romp and play instead of being exercised via the mind-dulling repetition of any indoor mechanical marvel?

Certainly we must realize that our dogs are not living in the wild. They do not have to hunt to sustain life. There are few snow leopards on the streets of New York City, San Francisco or Chicago. We and our dogs have had to make changes to live in civilization, and this often is for the good. However, there are still many ways our breed can be continued as an Afghan, instead of being adapted into something else. There are always places where a dog can be allowed to run, to see the world, to

realize that there are things to hunt. There are places where he can race, where soundness can be appreciated, where keenness can be developed. It is the responsibility of the owners to find these places.

With the wildly increasing popularity of our breed, we have come to a crossroads. We can make of our breed what we want. If what we want is an Afghan, keen fierce independent and sound, an aristocrat with the look of eagles, we had better take stock right now. If what we want is a mincing, dainty, coat-carrying, mentally and physically unsound crowd pleaser, then we can have that. It is up to the breeder, the exhibitor, and unfortunately, the judge. Whichever we get will probably be what we deserve.

From the *Afghan Hound Review* September/October 1994.

By Stephen Wheeler

... Please watch eyes; it was quite obvious from this entry that breeders are not paying enough attention to correct eye placement, shape and color. Remember, this is an Eastern breed and requires a slanting appearance from the inner corner to the outer corner. Large, round and full eyes detract from the correct expression. Your standard is quite explicit with color: DARK; many of the dogs shown to me had light, and some almost yellow, eyes. This also detracts from a correct expression.

A considerable number of dogs lacked underjaw, strength in this area is vital to the purpose of this breed.

Without a doubt the problem that was most common and evident from the first class I judged was overall balance. Great attention must be paid to the overall shape of this dog. From a judge's eye, the first impression should be balance; a hound with long head, long neck, long legs, long tail, and squareness of body -- not short backed but square. I can't find the so-called "wide open side gait" in any standard; the overall length of this breed has suffered badly. Many of the exhibitors had

way too much length, some from extended length of rib cage. Others excessively long loins. Both these problems are major concerns and attention should be paid to both.

Wide open side gait is not the required gait of this breed. Balanced reach and drive with front legs thrown forward and push from the rear together with spring from the pastern is a sight to behold! It is the desired lift with balanced movement that will give the appearance of effortless, easy, free flowing and light gait. This is what sets this breed apart from all others in movement.

If we continue to breed for this extended gait it will certainly be to the detriment of this breed; it will change the overall shape of this hound. For an Afghan to move correctly they not only need to be built correctly, they also need to be balanced.

Your standard is far more specific in detail than the English standard; take some time to read it through; it's there in black and white, and it tells you the shape of this great breed.

The above comments were included in comments by Stephen Wheeler regarding judging the Afghan Hound Club of Greater Chicago Specialty Show,

Reprint permission has been granted by Mr. Wheeler.

Another look at the Afghan Hound Standard

It's Better Than The Book by Ruth Tongren

Ideologically, a judge is well versed in all aspects of a breed before applying for approval. Ideology is purist but unfeasible. If each judge were an expert in each breed before he applied, the implication is that he has devoted years to learning the whims and idiosyncrasies as well as the basic fundamentals and is able within a two minute span to assess the relative values of type and structure and in that short time to apply the variables to the age old question, "Can he do what he was meant to do?"

If each show were to boast this kind of expertise for each breed, there would be precious few with the right to pass on more than a few breeds. Obviously, no one could claim the right to judge Groups or Best in Show. So concessions must be made and it is up to breed clubs to help judges learn all that is possible. Seminars and slide presentations are fine but often impossible for some to attend. The written word is the most help a judge can have, not by standard alone but a well thought out clarification of these standards that a judge can work over and renew in his mind constantly.

Some standards are so explicit and wordy as to be inapplicable to dogs by a judge on a limited schedule. The Great Dane standard has pages of definition and precise measurement; it would take a judge a half hour to comply with all the requisites. On the other hand, the German Wire-Haired Pointer is given 14 short lines and tells just that here is a medium-sized dog with a wire coat.

Some fall in between these extremes and many are magnificently indecisive. How about a head that is described as having a "pleasing expression?" Pleasing to whom? A head that pleases a Rottweiler breeder is sure not going to tickle a Borzoi breeder. Another pet peeve is anatomical parts described as "Not too long not too short." What does that mean? Too long or too short for what?

I have always thought that the Afghan Hound standard is a model of descriptive phrase. Though precise in its mores it allows license for thoughtful interpretation. The words flow

I have always thought that the Afghan Hound standard is a model of descriptive phrase.

with the lines of a dog who is a "King of Dogs." The often mocked phrase, "Eyes gazing into the distance as if in memory of ages past" is a jewel of clarity to anyone with any degree of aesthetic perception. It describes a proud aristocrat of fluid grace whose eyes reflect the wisdom of antiquity and whose linear definition sets him apart.

As standards go, I have always felt that this is one of the few that defines to the reader the "feel" of the dog. Well, that is how I feel, but there are too many approved to judge the breed who cannot apply these elegantly lyrical words to the dog. But then I suspect that to these people art is a Hallmark greeting card.

Some time back I received in the mail a plain manila envelope with the sender unidentified but containing a splendid clarification of the Afghan standard. I hope that whatever it is, it will be made available to all fanciers and judges of the breed.

Written as a dialogue between two voices, it is apparently devised for an educational function of some kind. The manuscript defines the standard in the second voice and then comes a marvelously comprehensive interpretation by the first. There is so much value in the words that I am going to take the liberty of quoting some of it and hope that I won't be out of line.

... the patterning lends an exotic look and is quite characteristic for the breed.

Starting with the head, the first voice emphasizes the chiseling as a hallmark of the breed and, in a precise definition of the ideal, goes on to explain the whys of the importance of the

words and explains how a punishing mouth is vital to a hunting hound.

There is much wordage on the eyes and expression, the first voice explaining why "a sight hound is farsighted and will pull his head back when focusing on near objects," but in no way advocates this as correct posture.

This very facet of the sighthound make-up is in large part responsible for one of today's greatest fallacies. The regrettably straight front assembly that we see so much of is due to a predominance of straight shoulders which have become so commonplace that they are accepted. In fact, in some dogs this lack of shoulder angulation almost produces ewe neck, resulting in a very stylish head carriage with the head held way back, and in fast action the shoulders will precede the head. This is often admiringly termed "showmanship."

The body of the Afghan is referred to as being composed of sharp angles, as opposed to the rounded curves of most dogs. The topline is called level but broken by prominent hip bones; how often have we heard a dog who boasted hipbones criticized by a judge as being "out of condition?" The typical definitive tracings of the spine are also jumped upon and derided by critics.

Bless my anonymous donor, there is space provided in this fine script for a croup; a most distinguishing feature of the breed but almost non-existent. The word is unknown in many circles.

A full description of the tail and the variances of each is followed by my favorite line which says, "Nowhere in the standard does it call for the Afghan's tail to be up at any time except when the dog is in motion," which means that the death grip exhibitors have on a tail is an unnatural and undesired artifice. To me a dog standing with his tail at ease presents a far more dignified figure than one who appears to be held together by a handler propping up each end.

I have long decried the manipulation of handlers in stacking a dog with the hindquarters extended so far behind that it is nothing short of a miracle that the dog can maintain his balance. The hind feet should be placed directly under the dog's tail, not yanked so far out that it has to be tortuous. There is a description of the hind legs, calling them "wishbone" in shape, an appearance precluded by exaggerated extension: a practice currently prevailing that contrives to make a class of Afghans into grotesque pitiable caricatures, distorted by handlers and honored by undiscerning judges.

My knowledgeable author includes some weighty words about coat and trimming, which he (she) points out is a flagrant violation of the standard, which calls for a natural dog. This is coached so well that I am going to quote directly from the manuscript.

"The Afghan's coat pattern is both his glory and his nemesis. The traditional pattern of short-haired face, saddle and neck is for a mature hound. At a year many Afghans are fuzzy, gawky teenagers, so over-anxious exhibitors will artfully trim a saddle (neck and underline) for the show ring. An overabundance of coat may not conform naturally to the required pattern and can mask the angular hunter underneath. The standard clearly calls for short hair on the neck and allows for bare pasterns and hocks."

... how often have we heard a dog who boasted hip bones criticized by a judge as being "out of condition?"

This last sentence points out something that has become a major problem in the breed. There are some of us who go so far as to feel that the patterning lends an exotic look and is quite characteristic of the breed. There have been too many times when otherwise beautiful dogs have been severely penalized in the ring for what is natural and attractive. Judges have admitted the superiority of dogs which they have put down for being patterned. Though the standard is quite specific on this point, it is one of many issues that might well benefit by clarification in the form of additional material, such as the Yorkshire Terrier Club and others have put out for the edification of those judges who may be taking on additional breeds.

"Nowhere in the standard does it call for the Afghan's tail to be up ... except when the dog is in motion.

The subject of color is well covered. It is my personal feeling that the standard should be changed to eliminate the part that says that white markings are undesirable, or at least be more thinking in the wording. I am sure that many prospective buyers have diligently read the standard and perhaps shied off because of white markings. I have seen very few puppies that didn't have a white chest, toes or a tip on a tail, most of which are blended into the adult coat in time.

On size "The oversized Afghan can be an insidious evil, as he clearly stands out and impresses. It is up to the judge to train his eye on specimens of proper size as to recognize those that are too large -- or small. Any great size variation must be

handled as any other deviation from the standards requirements.”

Our correspondent should be listened to on the topic of temperament, an ever prevailing problem. It brings tears to my eyes to see my breed cringing in panic at the approach of a stranger. It says, “The aloof Afghan may not make friendly overtures, but it is unacceptable for him to panic or be nasty.”

“The Afghan Hound is by tradition and heritage an independent hunter and will make his own friends. He is usually friendly when allowed time to take the measure of visitors, but will not be forced. Once acquainted, he is a true friend. In the show ring he is the epitome of dignity and style, standing and moving.”

**It brings tears to my eyes to see
my breed cringing in panic at the
approach of a stranger.**

In essence the anonymous script says it all. Having batted my head on the stone wall of indifference for many years, it is good to know that someone, somewhere, is joining the fray. I am sure it is an exercise in futility to hope, but I will keep on praying that some of our more thoughtful fanciers may take heed.

The Search for Truth in Afghan Hounds...

Excerpts from 'The Search for Truth in Gazeounds,' published as part 22 in The Gazehound magazine, July/August 1980, by Constance D. Miller.

INOW POINT to the Afghan Hound as an example of how flagrant disrespect for breed integrity can evolve. As of the 1970s and into the '80s many ill-proportioned animals appearing (and winning) in the rings could be credited, at least in part, to a misguided acceptance of a dishonest, but stylish, *fashion of presentation*. This fashion began with a change in the exterior outline but came to have marked ramifications of the interiors of the dogs as well.

As famed orthopedist Dr. Riser said (personal comment), "The protoplasm of dogs can be changed and is changed very easily. It is necessary to select dogs with extreme care to keep them within the Standards." It is equally necessary to present dogs with extreme care to preserve a guiding *symbol-essence* from one generation to the next.

The magnitude and nature of the misconceptions in Afghans became screamingly evident in its art! In no breed has the anatomical divergence from reality become more startling. Mildly aware of gradual trends towards novel caricatures in the '70s, I was forcibly struck by its intensity only when a non-doggy friend admired samples of recent Afghan art and self-consciously asked, "Are these supposed to be dogs?" On seeing the pieces through her eyes, the question was utterly sensible.

Whether sculpture or graphics, the outline was unvaryingly that of an ultra-tall animal, at least at the forepart, with a giraffe-like neck as long as, or longer than, the span from withers-to-tail, and twice as long as the head perched atop it. The rise-of-withers, having become part of the neckline -- instead of the back line -- caused the rest of the back length to be ultra short and, if not quite flat, tended to slope towards a tail that was overlong and very high-curved. Forelegs were shapeless broad columns. Hindlegs flowed dramatically back from the body in a long sweeping curve which made them an unrealistically elongated counterweight to the neck. There was an element of balance to the pieces -- but of *design elements* only. These artifacts originated from different regions (even different countries) yet revealed a common stylistic outline that runs seriously counter to the working nature of the Afghan Hound breed.

This is a contemporary twist for this breed. The Northern California Afghan Hound Club, Inc. Logo, executed in the late 1950s, dates from a time when the Afghan was still a "rare

breed," before its popularity explosion. The model for this logo (my own Ch. Crown Crest Topaz) had, ironically enough, a very long neck and somewhat over-angulated rear quarter. But, in the art of the day, Afghans were correctly portrayed in a 'gathered' pose with all four feet firmly planted on the ground -- just as they were expected to stand in the ring.

THE SOURCE of the new look is very easy to pinpoint. In the early 1960s, two dogs, one in the East and one in the Midwest, both in the hands of professional handlers well-known for their winning sporting dogs -- did some well-advertised winning and, as it turned out, trend-setting.



"Logo of Northern California AHC"

In truth, Afghans first fell prey to handler-corruption back in the 1930s when the practice of "topping and tailing" (hand-holding head and tail high) appeared -- from the *terrier rings*. It so happened that early influential Afghan fanciers such as Shaw McKean, B. Warren, F.P. Miller and H. Florsheim were all "terrier men" whose dogs were shown by specialized terrier-handlers. At that time the (now obsolete) Standard-line "tail set not too high on the body similar to a greyhound" was ignored in favor of displaying a high hooked tail similar to that of Ch. Badshah of Ainsdart; that tail, incidentally, being the *least-liked* aspect of the dog before he left England. His American owner defended his vertical tail carriage with written nonsense about high tails allowing "hunters on horseback" to follow the dogs through "thickets" in Afghanistan - an arid country as devoid of "thickets" as any region can be.

Tail-holding was not welcomed by everyone. Venita Vardon Oake asked, in 1930: "Why do the Afghan exhibitors insist on holding up the Afghan's tail? This method of showing an Afghan is incorrect and does not permit the dog to show itself to its best advantage. There is little to be said in its favor, and much against it." In 1942 she was "gratified to see that exhibitors respected my wishes...and did not hold up the dogs' tails." But this had only been a humoring of her, the silly habit had taken persistent root. Muriel Boger, on behalf of the Afghan Hound Club of America, in a 1947 *AKC Gazette* column, decried the ridiculousness of tail-propping with words which were lost to the four winds.

As for the tail, itself, Cy Rickel foretold, "If tail-propping continues, it is certainly going to ruin tail-carriage in Afghan Hounds." He was correct. Gradually the expressive flowing

and naturally end-curved tail became replaced by limp ropes, or stiff teapot handles, neither correct for the breed, but both easily manipulated by hand.

I WOULD CONSIDER this a fairly innocuous trend, had it not the insidious effect of creating a false outline which further set the Afghan Hound as breed apart from its rightful place as a relatively conservative member of the Gazehound family. Instead the breed became a caricature which a report for *Life* magazine (Nov. '45) claimed to be "unrelated to any other dog." Its already unique image was given quite a boost when, in the mid-1960s, a totally anti-gazehound method of presentation was adopted. The "new style" Afghans were not only "topped and tailed" but, as an added wrinkle, were stacked and gaited in the manner of sporting dogs.

It so happened that Setters, Pointers and Spaniels had undergone gross presentation changes much earlier in the century, in line with the widening chasm between field and show stock. Their 'show stance' was, in fact, symbolically based on a field attribute -- the "point" or "set" used to acknowledge the presence of birds (to be shot by the hunter). This pose was a natural captured moment of the *stalk*, in which dogs who have sighted birds dropped low and silently crept forward, one foot at a time.

The Sporting-dog show pose was taken from such dynamics, right down to the flow-back tail with, in the early days, the hind legs split so that one extended behind the dog, and the other angled beneath it (a la German Shepherd Dog.) Subsequently, both hind legs came to be stretched as far back as the dog could take without falling down. This produces deleterious internal ramifications, and is physiologically indefensible as a prolonged stance in any breed. In a moderate form the pose is reminiscent of the "park stance" of the parade horse, with its express purpose of holding a restive horse in place. But "parking" a dog is not the same as "parking" a horse. This "stack," already fashionable in several Sporting breeds, was absurdly superimposed onto the Afghan Hound: a breed whose natural activity was the antithesis of the passive "set." The Afghan's leaping agility and special forte of split-second springing forwards or upwards required hindlegs to be placed more under the dog, nearer to its center of motion. It was at this period that the line dropped off from an early English Standard -- "Hindquarters...well under the dog" -- became most sorely missed; this having been one of the breed's most salient features.



"Logo of AHC of Dallas"

Eta Paupit, on describing Afghans at a show in France in 1958, used words that caught my eye, but did not become truly meaningful until decades later: "Here you see the soft outline of the Borzoi with the long heads, long legs, small feet, and long tail. Quarters are not placed under the body...they have first to do some steps behind and then the front ones come into action only to have the body roll over...the old breed is very soon spoiled."

I, like other fanciers, saw the dogs posed in the dramatic new stance as more amusing than dangerous. Their success at the Hound Group level, along with well-published photos, gave the breed a popularity boost that, at the time, seems a good thing. Breeder-handlers, who made up most of the ranks of successful exhibitors of that day, did not rush to adopt the new stance. But other circumstances were quietly converging towards a common point.

A PERSISTENT CRY for "more angulation" was sounded in the 1950s in the face of newly imported European Afghan Hounds on both East and West Coasts; dogs with thicker bodies, heads and coats plus greater *apparent* joint-angles than typical of most American-bred specimens of the day. The new imports, with the added "thickness" of coat and form tended to appear lower-stationed (a facet unwanted in America) when their angled, but columnar-appearing, hind legs were swathed in coating. This was counted by a drawing back of hindlegs and a holding bolt-upright of head and neck. The amalgamation of these imported animals into older American lines produced a remarkable number of big winners which came into the public eye at the Hound Group level. However, they also threw formerly accepted concepts of "correct type" into genuine confusion among breeders and judges alike.

This upheaval occurred during a period of dramatic upsurge in registrations for the breed. With it came a proliferation of new looks. Many of these were passing fads, but each came to be considered the type-province of some admired "line" made recognizable by a kennel name. These "names" attracted satellites who carried forth "The Word" according to their acquired biases. The untouched American lines did not lie quiescent. Out of self-defense (and the vagaries of fate) many moved towards those fringe types formerly disdained as "unbalanced" -- in order to compete with the ballyhooed "improvements" which were flooding the rings.

During this transitional period breeders ceased choosing pups on the basis of natural upstanding quality, tight bodies and early agility. Rather they looked to those little-understood factors claimed to be portents of "improvements." Breeders,

seeking to added "refinement" in some features, and more "substance" in others, challenged Nature's developmental rhythms in ways that they did not understand. Hence, puppy-picking became more puzzling than ever before. With stud-fees and puppy-prices on the rise the chosen solution was to sell all "well-bred" pups as "show prospects" -- in hope that they would end up as happy combinations of the best features of each parent.

THE GENETICS battle of the 1960s was to gain substance and "angulation," without the sacrifice of

l o n g
narrowed heads, necks and tails. This was the age-old struggle between *coarseness* and *refinement*. The end result -- *rampant imbalances of parts*. Pups, chosen for apparent increases of rear leg "angulation" too often finished

with stringy poorly muscled long-boned leg segments and dreadfully long hock-lengths. Dogs became taller (partly the result of "out cross vigor"), and with selection towards lengthened necks and skulls came the corollary of narrow rib cages (long thin ribs) slack loins and general decrease in firm musculature. To conceal this array of structural problems on otherwise eye-catching animals the solution fell to the precedent already set - the propping up of the dog's forehead and pulling back of its hindlegs! The "square" dog was lost. When covered with draping coat, this manipulated outline not only produced the *impression* of great rear quarter "angulation" but was a sneaky way of controlling toplines which otherwise signaled unbalanced leg lengths.

Few stopped to realize that this stance was not one of "angulation," but of "extension" which, with the femur's attempt to hold itself under the joint, produced a bend of stifle of no value to a running hound. A number of relatively well-balanced dogs, when force trained into the "new stance," added a partial stoop which put their femur into a perpendicular line with the pelvic joint, causing toplines to flow downhill in result. Ironically, a number of judges penalized the "ski-slope" toplines but, in the baffling silhouette game, rewarded loosley-strung "high withered and straight-shouldered" animals with artificially leveled loins. Forehands and toplines sustained compensatory muscular loosening as a mode of self-defense. The greatest loss was in the all-important "slightly arched loin" so essential to all gazehounds. However, the common mode of concealment fell to the adoption of a fast-forging-gait in which momentum replaced balance, thereby substituting *flashiness* for balanced control of moving parts.

Because the smarter, and more-tightly strung, Afghans hated the exaggerated "stack" and defiantly leaned backwards in their superior wisdom, handlers retaliated by training dogs to these disastrous styles of standing and gaiting at younger and younger ages. This brought an unwitting choosing of pups, not only on the basis of increased potential malleability of joints, but also of mind!

THE BRAVE NEW LOOK, its tentacles once fastened, settled over the show ring and the art forms like a shroud. It insidiously blacked out everything that had

"Many ill-proportioned animals appearing (and winning) in the rings could be credited, at least in part, to a misguided acceptance of a dishonest but stylish fashion of presentation..."

once legitimately set the image of this proud-bearing, square-stanced, incomparably-agile breed apart -- except for its hair-growing talents.

As newly formed clubs came into being, their logos, and concepts of correct outline, were inspired by advertised distortions. By photographing dogs from off-angles, talented photographers unwittingly had a hand in further image-making. The rugged, rebellious, rough-cut hunting dog of the steppes dropped into the shadows as the ultra-elegant SILLY PUTTY Afghan took over center stage.

Further tragedy was provided by the numbers of knowledgeable exhibitors who climbed onto the outlandish pose-and-gait bandwagon in the attitude of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!" -- *thereby automatically removing from the rings any properly presented Afghan Hounds for new judges and noviced fanciers to use as models*. Many long-time breeders, after seeing my "Evolution of the Afghan Hound" slide presentation, with the documented advances/changes, wistfully say, "I agree with your points completely, but do what I have to -- to win." Their own compromises have led the very cycles they claim to deplore.

HISTORICALLY, the Afghan hound arrived with the image of a very sturdy and relatively unspecialized trotter/galloper particularly well suited for rough terrain not easily negotiated by pure speedsters. Scrawny specimens appeared among early specimens, but they were not thought to be correct by anyone. The 24" Ch. Sirdar of Ghazni (patriarch of the breed) was noted for his power and

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by Connie Miller

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compactness, increased substance was the immediate aim for the taller Bell-Murray type and a conservatively built Gazehound type remained the ideal for many years.

But, in both England and America, "elegance" came to be a status buzzword for the breed. Therefore, in the matter of "improvements," not only did a longer, more silken (but less



1. Smooth Afghan in bad "stack"

insulating) coat become preferred, but a trend towards a more elongated bony structure became a covert part of the package. This was not a deliberate change of direction. Breeders agreed on wanting a dog with a powerful long lean headpiece, but

also a very substantial and muscular framework of body, legs and feet which was, unfortunately, hidden under an oddly patterned coat that produced an unique silhouette in dogs.

General Saluki morphology came to be similarly "elegantized," although at a much later date, by means of taller, slimmer and sleeker winning specimens. Both the mountain kind and his lowland tribal cousin became foppish symbols of western luxury -- just as the Borzoi had become decades before them. Despite "correct type" in both Afghans and Salukis having been unwaveringly defined as -- *the look of strength and activity, a maximum combination of speed and power*, the more sturdy and compact qualities admired in earlier dogs filtered out of hand. In word-description, "elegant" became the highest praise, with "coarse" (or "plain") the new anathema.

Justification for these trends lie in the exhibition desire to make each breed appear uniquely distinctive through exaggerated 'elegance' and 'refinement.' Of these words only "refinement" appears in the Afghan Standard, and then just with reference to the head. It meant, not a narrow structure, but one devoid of surplus skin or disconcerting bumps and bulges. Elsewhere the Standard specifies, or infers, great strength and substance packed into a compact frame. Possibly "elegance" became confused with a rather similar but more Standard-defensible word: *arrogance*. This word implies *hauteur* -- a dignified, aloof and inbuilt "I-own-the-ground-I-stand-on" attitude that the Standard does reflect, but supposedly made manifest by natural pose.

Afghans in the rings today are elegant indeed, but rare is the natural look of arrogance, keenness, latent power, split-second agility or compact breed balance!

MISGUIDED practices in the presentation (and training) of this breed have corrupted its show ring image to where the outline of properly presented Afghans now appear alien (and 'plain') to many an eye. Although some exhibitors argue otherwise, these trends not only run counter to the word and intent of the Standard but they have precipitated far deeper problems than obvious on the surface. To be precise, I refer to the belief that the hindlegs of an Afghan should be "stacked" far behind the body, that the neck should form a right angle with the back line, and the 'face' should be tilted up into a right angle with the latter.



2. Smooth Afghan in better (more natural) stack

I submit two views of a "smooth-coated Afghan" (from normal-coated parents of some show success) to illustrate my point. Such "smooths" are not as rare as the reader might think, but seldom are their pictures aired. The *bad* picture (Pic. No. 1) discloses a ewe neck, high withers, upright shoulders, lack of back rib depth, slack loin, and incredibly long hock-length -- all features the Standard specifically deplors. The "point of chest" comes down to the elbow, and gives the impression of roominess, but the animal is "herring-gutted" with the all-important back ribs (for diaphragm expansion) woefully inadequate. A torturous pose of hindlegs shows that what passes for "angulation" (i.e. flexion) on coated animals is, in fact, an extension of muscles and joints.

The *better* picture of the same dog (Pic. No. 2) tells a markedly different story. The neck has lost its "ewe" flatness, the shoulders are lower, smoother and better "laid back," the back line no longer appears "low," the loins are now "slightly arched" as they should be. The hock joint is no longer hyper flexed, and the animal stands more upon full hind foot than tip-toes.

Well-meant but ignorant training of Afghans to accept the extreme "stacked" pose without protest now begins in puppyhood. Hindlegs are hand-set into what is mistakenly called "angulation," but which is really the placing of lower-leg segments into an extended post (behind the hip-joint) that is never a healthy resting-point for an immature dog. By shrinking Achilles tendons, stretching opposing tendons, throwing the entire vertebral column out of correct alignment and forcing the dog to stand more on hind toes than full foot,

the pup is saddled with all the problems incurred by women who wear high heeled pumps. In total, it distresses the soft-tissue of forelegs, scapular/withers connection, topline, hip joints and every segment of the hindlegs. This is not an innocuous trend!

To the pragmatic question of just where should the hindlegs be placed, the fundamental answer remains: *a dog is in a balanced stance when it can release a foreleg for motion without having to first bring one or both hindlegs forward.* Modern preservation of Afghan hound that are variable in the length of hindleg segments has made this a matter of individual differences. But most "stacked" Afghans in the rings cannot lift a foreleg until they have either been given a quick backward push by the handler (which readjusts the hindleg joints) or the dog first brings both hindlegs up underneath him.. Few exhibitors who emulate these styles realize that because wrong muscles (extenders rather than flexors) have been teased into play by holding this stance, awkward movement naturally results (a problem that professional handlers counteract with some interesting techniques).

IT IS the "high withers and low back," so obvious on modernly-posed Afghans and Salukis, that present the greatest contrast in outline with admired dogs of yesteryear. Although intimately connected with contrived postures, this demands independent discussion. *Withers*, as the spinous bony processes atop seven cervical vertebrae, are a fixed part of the central body and cannot move by themselves. However, the *soft-tissue* of the withers area is subject to

"Presentation and training of this breed have corrupted its show ring image to where properly presented Afghans appear alien to many an eye."

movement. If the 'withers' are hauled upwards, the entire rib cage will automatically tilt downwards (towards the tail) making a "low back" by contrast. The *bad* pose of the smooth Afghan illustrates this not only in the topline, but in the chest that has dropped to elbow level due to the elliptical shape of the entire rib cage.

Because (to date) "high withers" are uncharacteristic of Greyhounds, Whippets, Borzoi and Deerhounds, the question has modernly-arisen as to whether our lop-eared Near Eastern

" 'Elegance' came to be a status buzzword ... (Afghans) became foppish symbols of Western luxury... "

hounds might have longer bony "withers" processes? The radiographic answer is that they do not! The working Greyhound has very long "withers" spines above a vertebral column buried deep in the body. Surface breadth at the base of the neck indicates strong and relatively massive musculature at the withers junction. These regulate and coordinate the conjunction of neck, shoulder and central body mass.

It so happens that the thicker greyhound musculature over the withers-area aids flexion and extension of a long flexible "backbone" in the gallop but, in so doing, makes it somewhat more difficult to hold the neck in an upright position. This posed no disadvantage to gallopers held on leash until released by humans. But the use of native Afghan hounds (and to a lesser degree, Salukis) as open-field "seekers" required a somewhat higher-headed trot. This predisposed *slightly* freer (palpably thinner) muscles on the sides of the neck.

Unfortunately, selection for hyper mobile giraffe-like necks continued to whittle away at all the muscles leading into the withers region. This has brought "loose shoulders" which are palpable as prominent knobs at the neck juncture.

The connection of "loose shoulders" to weak soft-tissue at the withers was made evident to me by a young Greyhound bitch which had broken a leg and been crated for the better part of the last three months of her

first year. I saw her and her siblings when she had just been released from further confinement. The leg healed perfectly but, in contrast to her sibs, she exhibited the sort of bobbing shoulders and thinly-muscled withers that have become typical of exhibition Afghan Hounds. Her breeder, an experienced hound person, was of the opinion that the problem was the temporary result of the unnatural confinement. I was quite skeptical, but she proved to be right. Two years later, after time and plenty of exercise, I saw the bitch again. Her neck and shoulders had grown strong and firm, no longer thinned-

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muscled, and without the knobby scapular-tips I had previously felt.

The accentuated slope of high withers, as seen on posed Afghans and Salukis, has been precipitated by the modern style of stance. But it could not be achieved (to the degree evident in the rings) without a certain amount of muscular "laxity" at the junction. Attendant hypermobility is put into play by lifting the head unnaturally high and pulling back the hind legs. This props the forelegs into a stiff ("straight-fronted") position. It also forces the shoulder-tips forward and up, causing the ribcage to tilt backward and down. Significantly, the "withers" on the most "extreme" dogs drop into a basically level position the moment the dog is given freedom of head and allowed to gait on a loose lead. The factor of "loose withers" (by comparison with Greyhounds) began as slightly breed-desirable for "seeking into the distance," but through exaggeration, mismanagement, and misunderstanding of the

complex "withers" juncture, it has become an endemic structural weakness.

To those who do not get the picture, I suggest a practical experiment. Put yourself down on all fours, let your legs trail out back of the body and lift your head bolt upright. Stay in this position until discomfort sets in (which will not take long). Note that all weight is on your arms, but it is the base of your neck and middle of your back that hurt. Then drop your head into a comfortable position and bring the legs up into a weight-bearing point. As the 'load' becomes redistributed, not only do loins and rearlegs take the stress off your back, but an arm can now be lifted off the floor for crawling forward. Admittedly, dogs are not constructed precisely like humans, but this test honestly illustrates the strain on "withers" and "anticline" caused by the withdrawal of body support by rear legs.

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Judging Sighthounds

Respect for the Past

by Bo Bengtson

The judging of Sighthounds in the show ring is a matter which should be approached with caution and a certain amount of respect. The basic conformation of these dogs has been shaped by many thousand years of selective breeding, making them by far the oldest known distinct type of domesticated dog, and it would be presumptuous for a modern-day judge to disregard the long, colorful and frequently quite illustrious history. This is an integral part of how these breeds appear today, whether this conforms with present notions of what is "pretty" or not. It would be to our civilization's everlasting shame if the unique characteristics of the sighthound breeds were lost, swallowed up into the gaping jaws of that all-around, non-specific "show dog" monster which the present emphasis on multi-breed and Best in Show judging sometimes seems to create.

What then *is* a sighthound? Basically, any dog which hunts by sight as opposed to scent is a sighthound, and the interpretation of which breeds belong to this select group is determined differently in different parts of the world. In some countries there is a separate Group competition for sighthound breeds, but the AKC (as well as other English-speaking kennel clubs) relegates most of the Sighthounds into what is rather loosely known as the Hound group. A sighthound may not have much in common with scenthounds such as Beagles or Bloodhounds, or with a Nordic Hunting Spitz such as the Norwegian Elkhound, but one might as well be reconciled to the fact that modern-day attempts to classify breeds of dogs have more to do with convenience than with scientific and historical facts.

It is sometimes difficult even for the experts to determine just where "sighthound" type ends and other breeds begin. Nearly everyone agrees that the Greyhound and the Saluki represent the most basic, original sighthound; their form has remained unchanged throughout the centuries to such a degree that artistic representations of 8,000 years ago from the Middle East may almost equally well serve as illustrations of current dogs! The other undisputed sighthound breeds are the Whippet, the Scottish Deerhound and Irish Wolfhound, the Afghan Hound, the Borzoi, the Ibizan Hound and the Pharaoh Hound -- all of them regionally adapted versions of the "original" and sometimes crossed with other canine types in order to make them more suitable for local hunting needs.

Judging these dogs requires a thorough understanding of the unique characteristics of Sighthounds and an appreciation of their rich heritage and their forever changing development.

Some controversy surrounds the Italian Greyhound which should, strictly speaking be labeled as a "Toy Sighthound;" in spite of its small size, a good specimen of this breed shows extreme sighthound type. Indeed, the Italian Greyhound competes on equal terms with the larger members of the group in countries where Sighthounds form an officially recognized group, and will both race and course enthusiastically if given half a chance. Basenjis are sometimes included as well. They differ in several fundamental ways from the "basic" sighthound and are classified as "Spitz" in Europe; however, they compete for the same field titles as other coursing breeds in the United States and are included in sighthound specialty shows in Canada. A lone voice is sometimes raised even for the Rhodesian Ridgeback as a sighthound, but while there is undeniably some Greyhound blood far back in its pedigree, most experts agree that in general appearance as well as in use, the Ridgeback definitely is on the other side of that border which would have placed it inside the sighthound group.

Ability To Hunt By Sight

The outstanding characteristic of all true Sighthounds is their instinct and ability to hunt by sight, to "course." Keen eyesight has always been a requirement in these breeds, and a fast-moving small object at the far end of an open field will make any sighthound worth his dinner stand up and take notice -- straining at the leash, muscles taut, ears pricked (metaphorically or otherwise), and the normally soft, gentle expression of the eye transformed into a burning desire to hunt -- as many a hare (or cat, or even car...) has found to its detriment.

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Some knowledge of the ancient sport of coursing ought to be mandatory for anyone actively involved in Sighthounds, however much "show oriented" one is as an exhibitor, breeder or judge. It helps to know what these hounds were originally bred for: to independently, seldom singly but often in braces, pursue, pull down, and frequently

kill their prey. Watching some coursing also proves that there is very little truth in the "form follows function" theory: any type of conformation fault can be found in some of the top coursing hounds, but they all have an air of high-powered speed and elegance which in its own way is at least as important to true sighthound type as the sleek, well-groomed glamor of any show winner.

What is now a fascinating and controversial sport originally started as something of a necessity several thousand years ago. Until the relatively recent advent of firearms, no other means for providing wild game for the table was quite as efficient as a brace of coursing Sighthounds. The thrill of the chase and the colorful ritual which soon came to accompany it provided a spectacle which assured the popularity of coursing among the ruling classes long after there were more strictly efficient means of hunting. Whether you slipped Salukis after antelopes in Arabian deserts, Greyhounds after hares in ancient Greece (where the historian Arrian wrote a still useful treatise on coursing in the second century A.D.), Deerhounds after stags in the Scottish Highlands, or Borzoi after wolves in czarist Russia, this was a sport that by its very nature catered to the rich and the powerful. Elizabeth I coursed both deer and hare with great enthusiasm, and her unfortunate cousin Mary, while still in her heyday, participated in a 1563 Scottish hunt which resulted in a bounty of 360 deer and five wolves. Coursing in Russia was on an even larger scale: before the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the largest kennels counted several hundred Borzoi, and even in the beginning of the 20th century there were kennels, whose Borzoi hunts resulted in several killed wolves and foxes as well as hundreds of hares every year. The intricate current rules of the National Coursing Club in England date more than four centuries back, and some of the still active coursing clubs there were started in the 18th century.

In modern days, the so-called "blood sports" have fared less well: the classical coursing meetings in England -- notably the Waterloo Cup, run annually since 1836 -- have several times been upset by demonstrators. But regardless of one's individual feelings about the sport, it is important to know that

our Sighthounds today can still do what they were originally bred to do.

"What's desired in each of the sighthound breeds is not necessarily what is generally considered attractive or even acceptable in 'the great American show dog.'"

And don't let anyone fool you into believing that your gentle show-bred pet cannot "work." It is purely a matter of choice what you decide to do, and most of the show-bred Sighthounds perform quite admirably in their natural habitat if given the same training and opportunities as the "pure working" hounds. When I lived in more rural surroundings than I do now, my "pack" -- which consisted entirely of show Whippets and Greyhounds -- proved to be devastatingly efficient in the field and could have kept me in rabbits for the pot forever (even deer, if the truth be told), had I so wished. By far, the most efficient courser I had was a super-refined little bitch, rather shy and exhibiting most of the exaggerated "show type" conformation faults -- but show her a rabbit-tail and she was transformed, proving again what serious coursing people have always known is true: it isn't so much conformation that matters as what's inside -- the "desire" to hunt.

It is a sobering, rather scary experience to see one's civilized house dog suddenly transformed into the murderous hunting machine it was once designed to be, and I have every understanding for those who choose not to participate in the sport. Modern inventions such as lure coursing and track racing (that commercialized bane of the modern Greyhound's existence) do not in any way test the dogs' intelligence or skill as much as the real thing, but they are wonderful ways of keeping your dog in good muscle tone, letting them experience the joy of running without much danger to themselves or anyone else.

In The Ring

So what has all this to do with how today's Sighthounds are judged in the show ring? Quite a lot.

What's desired in each of the sighthound breeds is not necessarily what is generally considered attractive or even acceptable in "the great American show dog." To begin with, Sighthounds in general are a pretty independent-minded lot (a heritage of their way of hunting, far less influenced by man than other hunting breeds) and tend to be rather arrogant,

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Bayeux Tapestry (1073-88) (top), preceded by his hawk, falcon on the list, Harold rides to Bosham; Hunting Dogs (center) from The Unicorn Defends, fourth tapestry of the series, Hunt of the Unicorn (probably Flemish, 1500, Metropolitan Museum of Art); Deer Harassed by Wolves (bottom), Wolf Defends, 1500-1575, Museo del Prado.

looking down their noses superciliously at the judge instead of wagging their tails ingratiatingly. Many of them just barely tolerate the poking fingers of a stranger, and although certainly aggressiveness should not be tolerated any more than in other breeds, a certain amount of shyness, at least in the Eastern Sighthounds -- especially young bitches -- is to be expected. I would not fault a Saluki puppy as severely for only reluctantly allowing me to handle it as I would the same behavior in e.g., a Deerhound or a Whippet, where the "normal Westernized" mentality should make them more extroverted. Indeed, as long as the dog will let me touch it, I would rather put it on the plus side if a sighthound treats me like my hands were dirty...Arrogance is the order of the day for all these breeds -- except maybe a friendly, casual and somewhat condescending lick from a Wolfhound.

Physical Features

Although as mentioned earlier, Sighthounds can perform well in the field without possessing all the standard's requirements, a perfect physique certainly helps them to do their work, and a sighthound without the major characteristics would certainly have a rough time trying to course live game in the field. Among the peculiarities is the fact that many of them are required to be a little higher in the rear than in front (at least when standing naturally), and all of them need to have a slight rise to the loin; not a wheel back certainly, and more the result of strong muscling than anything else. But it is sad to see so many handlers obviously trying to erase any sign of these two traits by over-stacking their dogs and pulling the hindquarters way out behind. These are features that, regardless of everything else, you will find in most successful coursing dogs. It only makes sense; look at the topline of a cheetah, an antelope, or a thorough-bred horse -- nowhere will you see the front being higher than the hindquarters, giraffe-fashion. And the strong loin is perhaps the single most important feature in a running hound. The Whippet's *slightly* shorter and more accentuated rise indicates that it is built

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more for short bursts of tremendous speed than the longer-staying Greyhound. (I always hesitate to mention this difference, since it is so easy for the uneducated observer to assume that the short-loined caricature wheel backs are desirable in Whippets; perhaps it's better to say that we want long Whippets and even longer Greyhounds -- as long as there is strength and a slight rise to the loin. After all, Greyhounds used to be known simply as "longdogs.")

Necks should be long in practically all Sighthounds, which makes sense since they are expected not only to be able to see their prey from afar, but also usually to be able to reach down and grab it -- or at least use their neck as a balancing tool when turning their prey. Obviously, you don't need a particularly long neck to catch a deer or a wolf, but you need a *strong* one, which, quite simply, is why the latter characteristic is more important than the former in Deerhounds, Borzoi and Wolfhounds. (Although the historical purist will add that there is probably less than 10% of real "wolfhound" blood in the modern Irish Wolfhound; the rest is a carefully reconstructed combination of Great Dane and Deerhound blood from late in the 19th century.)

Legs and feet are about as fundamental to a sighthound's functional ability as strength of loin. Certainly, powerful angulation in the hindquarters is required, but only if balanced by similar angles in the shoulder and upper arm. Many of the top coursing dogs get by with far less angulation than one would expect, but the secret here is balance; with too much overdrive and power from behind the dog will almost literally fall on his face. Strong feet and pads are another feature of all good coursing Sighthounds; the desired, almost ridiculously huge feet of the Afghan Hound are superbly useful for the rocky terrain where it was expected to perform (against snow leopards, according to a legend which may be rather more hype than reality), and the Saluki's tufts of hair between the feet were supposed to be a protection against the burning sands (it is almost tantamount to mutilation to ask an exhibitor to "tidy up the feet a bit"). Early descriptions of native Salukis actually describe them as toeing out a little, something which was defended on the rather fanciful grounds that "they got through the sand in the desert better" that way. Of course, no Saluki, Arabian horse or gazelle could ever perform in the loose desert sands, where no bedouin in his right senses would think of hunting anyway.

The long, punishing jaws required by all sighthound standards need no further explanation in hounds that were required to catch and sometimes kill their own prey. But the emphasis on legs, feet, muscle and strength means that in some of the sighthound breeds, there has traditionally been much less emphasis on eyes, ears and head shape than in many other breeds. There is a present trend towards dark eyes in most AKC sighthound standards. Originally, lighter eyes were

"Some knowledge of the ancient sport of coursing ought to be mandatory for anyone actively involved in Sighthounds, however much 'show oriented' one is as an exhibitor, breeder or judge."

acceptable in practically all these breeds, and it is definitely a sign of the time that we are now seeing more and more dark eyes ("because it is so pretty") incorporated into the various standards. Fortunately, the Pharaoh Hound and the Ibizan Hound standards specifically request amber and "amber to caramel" eye color respectively. (I just wonder, perhaps cynically, how long it will take for the "prettifiers" to get to these breeds just as they have done with Whippets, Afghans, Greyhounds, et al.) Anyone with a historical perspective on these breeds would certainly put eye color fairly low on the list (except perhaps Deerhounds, where the dark eye has always been a main feature).

Ear shape again is more superficial than strictly functional, but perhaps because of vaguely remembered infusions of foreign blood a fine, neatly folded ear is still considered the ultimate mark of breeding in Deerhounds and Wolfhounds as well as in the invariably smooth-haired Whippets and Greyhounds. Head shape in general is usually not considered to be nearly as important in e.g., Greyhounds and Whippets as in Salukis, Borzois and Afghans, as long as you get an elegantly streamlined outline without overly exaggerated width of cheeks or narrowness between the ears. In the former two breeds you may be quite satisfied, while in the latter breeds the exact angles, the "dry" look with visible veins, the perfect eye-set and the zygomatic arch, the tilt of the ear and the occiput, are all matters of extreme importance to every purist. The Borzoi skull is easily the narrowest, while the Saluki's is slightly broader than the Afghan's.

(I am aware, of course, that there will be cries of outrage from breed fanciers who have studied their AKC breed standard and wish to make a case for the fact that, for instance, almost 20% of the AKC Whippet standard deals with head properties. I do not wish to contradict this in any way, but simply to put it into an historical perspective. And I will always feel that the Whippet or Greyhound judge who makes his final placement on heads instead of on basic conformation has his priorities wrong.)

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Preserving History

Finally, there are any number of breed idiosyncracies which need to be preserved not so much because they were a part of that breed's usefulness but simply because they are unique to each specific breed and thus necessary to maintain breed type. Quite possibly, these features were also identified with strains that were particularly outstanding in the field, and although not necessarily genetically linked to hunting abilities they came to be regarded as typical of the best strains and therefore highly valued. Today, they may be mere oddities, but since they are part and parcel of breed history, let us try to preserve them. They also serve well to distinguish one sighthound breed from another: how could anyone mistake a sparsely coated Afghan for a Saluki, as long as the former carries its ridiculous little sparsely feathered donut-ringed tail proudly over the back, while the latter has a luxuriously fringed, only slightly sickle-shaped tail carried in a dignified manner which almost sweeps the ground. If all else were equal one should still be able to distinguish the Borzoi from any other breed by its uniquely flat bones and dramatically sweeping topline; the Deerhound by its harsh, shaggy mane and tiny, soft "mouse-skin" ears; the Wolfhound by its unique combination of massiveness in a sighthound frame: the Italian Greyhound on the other end of the scale by its ewe neck and high-stepping movement, totally unlike that of any other sighthound; the Pharaoh Hound by its rich red coat and "truncated cone" head; its cousin from Ibiza by having, as one observer put it, "what's wrong in every other breed as a virtue" -- meaning shallow brisket, light eyes and pigment, upright angles, and that hovering, springy type of movement. Those who feel that the Basenji truly is a sighthound consider that a "small gazelle" is the type to aim for, and the Whippet and Greyhound should look quite

"When you are involved in Sighthounds in any way -- as a judge, breeder, exhibitor, or even spectator -- you are taking part in the last stage of a long, forever changing development."

different from both a large-scale Italian Greyhound and from each other, even size apart. Both have a more forward head carriage than their smaller cousin as well as proportionately stronger bone -- the Whippet even more so than the Greyhound, in addition to the previously mentioned slightly different body properties.

It should be obvious by now that there is a lot more to judging the various sighthound breeds than just learning to recite the AKC standards by heart. Like it or not, when you are involved in Sighthounds in any way -- as a judge, breeder, exhibitor or even spectator -- you are taking part in the last stage of a long, forever changing development. It is up to us to make sure that this rich heritage is in good hands.

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Understanding Flexibility and Soundness

by Patricia Gail Burnham

As a beginning student of dogs, I did what many novices do; I studied books and articles about them, especially about their structure and movement. In these articles a few ideas were repeated again and again. One was that 45 degree shoulder layback is desirable and possible. Another was that a dog without good shoulder layback will have restricted front reach because the steepness of the shoulder will prevent him from extending the leg very far forward. Since both of these ideas were written about by authorities and were widely quoted by others, I believed them for a while.

Then one day I realized that real dogs did not support either theory. Real shoulders on live dogs did not behave the way the theories said they should. There are no 45 degree shoulders on any of the long-legged dogs, from setters to Sighthounds. Perhaps 45 degree shoulders existed on horses or on some types of dogs back in the mid-1800s, when the myth of the 45 degree shoulder first appeared, but modern dogs are normally equipped with much steeper shoulders.

After finding out that one of the dog world's articles of faith was a myth, it was easier to examine the next one. This rule said that dogs with steep shoulders should have little front reach. But observation shows that dogs exist that have very steep shoulders and a great deal of front reach. And there were dogs with lovely laid back shoulders that moved with highly restricted, choppy and even hackney fronts. So shoulder layback cannot be the factor that controls front reach.

For a while I was disillusioned about making any general statements about how a dog's build affects its movement. I saw dogs that were beautiful standing still and yet moved painfully poorly, and dogs that were unremarkable standing still and were stunningly beautiful moving. By this time I was down to the last two rules that I believed about movement and conformation.

First, I believed that dogs with inflexible backs will have restricted movement and, if they are Sighthounds, will also run very poorly. That is because the double suspension gallop that is used by Sighthounds and other long-legged breeds like Standard Poodles, requires back flexion. Second, I believed that dogs with hackney fronts do not run well.

However, these two theories came from observing dogs and their movement and were not found in the literature about dogs, so I began to suspect that reading about dogs was no

An in-depth discussion of one theory on flexibility, movement and soundness.

substitute for studying them in the flesh. For over 100 years people have been reading and re quoting the words about 45 degree shoulders with only occasional observers pointing out that such shoulders do not exist. The myth dies hard.

That still left unanswered questions: If shoulder layback does not control front reach, what does determine it? Why do some dogs have little front reach while others have lots? Why do some breeders' lines have restricted front reach while others' lines have long, flowing front reach? What is the inheritable factor that controls reach? Very young puppies may have trouble lifting their feet; but, once they grow into those feet, their reach does not change much until old age slows their gait to a shuffle. In a litter, the puppy with the most reach at the age of three months will be the dog with the most reach as a three-year-old. The fact that a dog's ability to reach stays quite constant is remarkable considering that the front legs are only attached to the body with soft tissues; muscles and ligaments. The rear legs have a ball and socket hip joint to help support them, but the shoulders are only fastened to the body with an intricate network of muscles, tendons and ligaments. So perhaps we should look at these tissues for the answers to questions about reach.

Looking at Muscles

Many books on movement treat dogs as if they are walking skeletons, mere collections of bones hiking around. This is understandable because it is easier to draw bones than soft tissues. And also there are only 321 bones in a dog's skeleton. By contrast there are over 250 named voluntary muscles in a dog's body and many of these muscles are matched pairs with one appearing on each side of the body. So there are in the neighborhood of 500 voluntary muscles, plus those that are too small to deserve a name of their own. But they make up more than half a dog's body weight. Trying to study movement while ignoring the action of the soft tissues neglects half the dog.

Front Reach: Testing a Theory



When the dog is standing normally and relaxed (1), the front leg is raised until it is parallel to the ground (2), and is extended forward as far as comfortably possible (3).



Then fold the paw under at the knee (4), and move the elbow back underneath the body (5,6,) still with the forearm parallel with the ground. As the elbow moves back toward the brisket, the shoulder will rotate, and you can feel the internal resistance to doing so.

Bones are also popular because they are easy to preserve and study. Veterinary schools love them. They are durable. They can outlast the teaching staff and be used by generations of students, while soft tissues are difficult to preserve and exhibit. They do not show up well on X-rays. They are difficult to measure accurately and to study even if you are prepared to study them on a living animal. All of this makes it easier to base theories on the skeleton than on the supporting soft tissues. And this means that the parts of the body other than the skeleton often seem to be left out of studies of movement.

But a dog's skeleton cannot move at all. It is only the structural framework that keeps its body from lying in a heap like a jellyfish. The rigidity of the skeletal structure enables vertebrates to stand up off the ground. But it is the muscles that

provide all of the mobility needed for the owner of that skeleton to walk, run and jump. The comparative ease of studying bones has led to the neglect of the other parts of the body. And it is this that may have led to the conclusion that the angles of the shoulder bones control front reach.

If the shoulder angle theory is not valid, then what else could be responsible for the fact that reach does indeed seem to be inheritable? Two parents with lots of reach can produce puppies that also have lots of reach, and two parents with restricted fronts will produce more puppies with restricted fronts. But why?

Relationship: Fault and Virtue

At the same time that I was trying to find an answer to this question, there appeared what seemed to be a separate problem. There were two dog breeders who had interesting combinations of faults and virtues in their lines: Breeder A, who has long been deceased, had dogs that were noted for their lovely long reach and side gait. But the breeder generally expected at least one or two puppies with cow hocks in each litter. And topline turned up occasionally that were a bit slack. Breeder B hated cow hocks and rarely produced a cow-hocked dog, but instead she had a fair proportion of very restricted fronts. Hackney front action was also turning up, along with inflexible backs. Both kennels produced some excellent dogs. We are concentrating here on the faults because each kennel was getting families of faults, groups of faults that seem to be related to each other *and to the kennels' virtues*. So the question became, "Is there a reason why extended front reach seemed to be related to occasional cow hocks and slack backs while strong rears seemed to go along with a larger than usual proportion of tight, restricted fronts, and inflexible backs?"

The answer to the puzzle came from an article on human sports medicine. It seems that a person can be helped to select a sport that he will do well in by evaluating his body and fitting it to the requirements of the various sports. The body is evaluated for size, strength, reflex speed, and flexibility, among other qualities, and these are matched with the needs of the various sports.

Gymnasts and ballet dancers, for example, need excellent flexibility, while runners and weight lifters need little. Weight lifters do not need much reflex speed, while handball players need lots of it. Although the article was not concerned with dogs, it contained some information of importance to dog breeders: flexibility is an inherited quality and something that differs from person to person -- and from dog to dog. Some people can bend over and place their entire hands flat on the floor. Others, like me, cannot get within six inches of the floor. With practice anyone can improve his flexibility somewhat but it is much easier for those born with good genetic flexibility than to have to work and stretch a genetically inflexible body into a flexible state. So, a highly inflexible person would be well advised to choose a sport other than gymnastics or karate where flexibility is essential.

Ballet is one of the best examples of the relationship between flexibility and range of movement. Dancers start with superior genetic flexibility and then spend years of stretching exercises increasing that flexibility to easily achieve a range of motion that average people cannot approach. While bones that are regularly stressed will remodel their shape slightly, the skeleton of a dancer is not greatly different from yours or mine. What is greatly different is the length and flexibility of their ligaments and tendons. Ballet dancers, were they dogs, would have a great deal of front reach. The same principles apply to

dogs except that, since dogs do not practice ballet or yoga in an attempt to increase their range of movement, their flexibility is determined only by their heredity and physical fitness.

What Is Flexibility?

It is the length and stretching ability of the muscles and connective tissue, the tendons and ligaments. Tendons connect muscles to bones while the ligaments connect bones to bones and hold bones and organs in place. Some people and dogs are very tightly strung. They have short, inflexible tendons and ligaments, so they have strong but restricted movements. Others are highly flexible. They have long elastic tendons and ligaments, and this gives them the ability to bend and stretch easily which allows them a wide range of movements.

So this is the answer to the puzzle; dogs with lots of front reach have long, flexible tendons and ligaments which allow the leg to reach forward freely. The problem is that you cannot just have flexible tendons and ligaments in the shoulder. If a dog has them there, then he has them all over. And if they are excessively flexible, then the topline may get a little slack, and

"Trying to study movement while ignoring the action of the soft tissues neglects half the dog."

there may not be enough support in the rear quarters to prevent cow hocks. On the other hand, if a dog has very tight, inflexible tendons, he will indeed have a strong rear, but if the tendons are too short and inflexible then the dog may have a restricted or hackney front, and can also have an inflexible back.

Since breeders want considerable front reach on dogs that also have strong, sound rears, it may help them if they realize that those qualities are opposed. If one breeds for unlimited front reach and the flexibility that allows it, then that quality is likely to be accompanied by a tendency towards cow hocks and slack topline. If the choice is to breed for super strong rears and the short, tight tendons that support them, then the breeder is likely to have to excuse some very restricted fronts and inflexible backs. What is actually desired, of course, is a dog with enough flexibility to give it considerable front reach, while he still has enough inflexibility to support a strong rear. And, while that is a lovely dog when it does appear, breeding for it is like breeding for a razor's edge between the two extremes.

Flexibility Outside the Ring

Extreme inflexibility does not seem to exist in racing or coursing Sighthounds. I have never seen one with a hackney front, a rigid inflexible back, or the degree of front restriction that some show dogs exhibit. On the other hand, no racing dogs have the maximum degree of front reach that can sometimes be found in the show ring. There is no reason to breed racers for it. It looks pretty in the ring, but it does not make the dog any faster at the gallop. I have seen a large number of successful running dogs that were level backed and slightly cowhocked, which makes sense as these are the faults that go with lots of flexibility. Examining action photos of running dogs will show that, in order to run the double suspension gallop successfully, a dog has to be able to flatten his back and to flex it through a surprising range of position. A dog with an inflexible back cannot run this gait properly.

There are some breeds of dogs whose normal working abilities would require little flexibility. Terriers come to mind, and the toy breeds, and Bulldogs and Rottweilers have no use for the double suspension gallop. But most of the medium-sized and large breeds that have a talent for running would find that information on flexibility applies to them as well as to the Sighthounds. Doberman Pinschers, Standard Poodles, Collies, Irish Setters, and dogs of similar builds would all fit into this group.

Testing a Theory

Back to the consideration of front reach. Since this is a different explanation of reach than the old shoulder-angle theory, is there any way to test it? There is an interesting exercise that can be done with one's own dogs. By manipulating the front leg on a standing dog it is possible to *feel* the amount of resistance to rotation that the shoulder assembly has. If you try it on a group of dogs that have a range of different front reaches, you may find, as I did, that the dogs with the most reach have shoulders that offer little resistance to rotation, while dogs with little reach feel tight and you have to really pull on their leg in order to overcome the resistance of the tight tendons and rotate the shoulder.

With the dog standing normally and relaxed (*photo 1*), the front leg is raised until it is parallel to the ground (*photo 2*), and is extended forward as far as comfortably possible (*photo 3*). Then fold the paw under at the knee (*photo 4*), and move the elbow back underneath the body (*photos 5 and 6*), still with the forearm parallel with the ground. As the elbow moves back toward the brisket, the shoulder will rotate, and you can feel the internal resistance it has to doing so. You do not raise or lower the leg. The leg and your hand stay the same height above the ground (the height of the dog's elbow). You are just moving your hand toward the dog and then pulling back toward yourself. I usually repeat the maneuver a couple of

times to be sure that the dog is relaxed and not tensing-up to resist. If the dog is tense, then what you will feel will be his voluntary resistance instead of the built-in resistance of his shoulder.

I am using shoulder here as a general term for everything from the withers to the elbow. But the photos show that the shoulder blade itself, the scapula, only moves when the leg is first picked up (*photos 1 and 2*). In all the rest of the pictures it stays in the same position. What moves during the test exercise are the shoulder and elbow joints, and the upper arm (the humerus) that lies between them. In order to get the scapula to rotate, lower the leg and extend the paw towards the rear.

...It is educational to try the test exercise with a number of dogs whose front reach varies widely. The front legs of dogs with lots of front reach can be moved easily and moved through a considerable arc, while the legs of dogs with little reach, move through a much smaller arc and with greater resistance. The shoulder of a dog with a lot of reach will rotate as if it is on ball bearings, while you really have to use some strength to rotate the shoulder of a dog with a restricted front.

This technique is surprisingly sensitive. I demonstrated it at a seminar, and compared a dog with a lot of reach to one that was restricted. A few weeks later one of the participants asked me for another display of the method. I used the same dog for the example with lots of reach. But when I tried a second dog, a restricted one, the shoulder resistance felt different from what I remembered from the seminar. Afterwards I was puzzled enough to ask a friend who had been at the seminar if she recalled which dog had been used and was pleased to find that the shoulder should have felt different. I had been using a different dog to demonstrate restriction, and even after the passage of weeks, the difference between the shoulder resistances of the two was distinctive.

It is useful to understand the hereditary nature of flexibility and its effects on the way a dog moves. It is even more helpful to understand the relationship between flexibility and a running dog's working ability. But there is a more serious aspect to understanding flexibility. There is a good possibility that a breeder who breeds for the extreme flexibility that allows extreme reach may be breeding for the joint laxity that results in hip dysplasia.

Hip Dysplasia

I thought that might get your attention; it certainly got mine when I first realized it. Hip dysplasia is not *caused* by malformed hip sockets. Yes, X-rays are taken to diagnose dysplasia, but what the X-rays enable us to see are the results of dysplasia, not its cause. Puppies that will later become dysplastic are born with perfectly normal hip joints. The bones are fine. But they are also born with ligaments so weak or flexible that they do not hold the head of the femur securely in

the hip socket. Because the head of the femur is not held securely, as the dog grows and uses his leg the femur slides around in the socket, and the resulting pressure remodels both the hip socket and the femur.

Bone changes shape slowly in response to the stresses placed on it. So after a few years the bones will have changed shape enough for those changes to show up on X-ray, and a diagnosis of dysplasia can be made. The result is a shallow hip socket and an eroded femur head, but those are the result of the problem, not the cause. The physical cause was the joint laxity that allowed the erosion to take place. But the underlying cause may well have been the breeder's deliberate selection of breeding stock that would be likely to produce the flexibility needed to allow a dog to perform a trot with extreme front reach.

With that information it becomes less surprising that dysplasia first became endemic in breeds whose fanciers and judges highly value extension at the trot. By contrast, the sighthound breeds for many years have been relatively dysplasia free. What is different about Sighthounds? They are lightly built, strongly muscled dogs, who have never had a great deal of shoulder layback and, possibly because they did not have lots of layback, were not expected to have nearly the extension at the trot that is asked of some herding and working breeds. But we are seeing more and more extension in some of the sighthound breeds and if that trend continues, it would not be surprising to see a rise in the incidence of dysplasia.

Another factor that may have saved Sighthounds from dysplasia is their light build. The heavier the dog is, the more weight is going to bear on the femur head to make it slide around. When discussing front reach it is important to specify which breeds are being used for a frame of reference. I once engaged in years of correspondence with a noted authority on dog movement during which he advocated moderate reach for

Sighthounds while I protested that I liked a lot of reach on my Sighthounds. When agreement looked impossible, I finally sent him a photo of a dog showing what I considered to be the upper level of good reach for a sighthound and it solved all our problems. We had never really disagreed. What we had was a semantics problem, and he readily agreed that the photos did show the upper limit of good sighthound reach. But he did not consider it to be extreme reach because it was very moderate when compared to the extension of many working and sporting dogs...

How Much Is Too Much?

So how much flexibility and reach is desirable and how much is dangerous? No one wants mincing, restricted dogs. No one wants dogs so tightly strung that they cannot run the double suspension gallop properly. And no one loves a strong, controlled, extended trot more than I do. I admire it and breed for it. In moderation it is a beautiful gait and there is nothing wrong with it. Many judges reward it, particularly at the group level. The problem only arises when it is carried to excess. When, if a little is good then more is considered better, and soundness and even the dogs' health can be sacrificed in pursuit of an extreme. The key is to know when enough is enough. If a moderate extended trot is attractive, then a more extreme one with even more reach and the feet flying out in front like they are only loosely connected to the body is not better. It is worse both genetically and orthopedically.

Because I find long reach personally attractive, in breeding a bitch that has a great deal of reach, I try to curb my natural desire to breed her to a dog that also has lots of reach, and instead select one with more moderate flexibility. The only solution that seems promising is to breed for the middle ground between the extremes of excessive restriction and excessive flexibility.

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Sighthounds as Athletes

Poetry in Motion

by Mary Beth Arthur

Sighthounds are one of the most structurally functional groups of dogs for a specialized purpose. Their purpose is to sight, chase, and run down game. Greyhounds and Whippets have been further developed for speed to race competitively. Structurally, Sighthounds are true athletes. They have been selectively bred for those attributes that produce speed, strength, agility and quick reflexes.

Many of the Sighthounds were developed to hunt a specific animal (rabbit or wolf) in a specific environment (desert or rough terrain). These facts helped determine their size and structural characteristics. For example, the Afghan Hound was often used to hunt in rough terrain; the Scottish Deerhound hunted the Red Deer in hilly country; the Whippet was originally used as a rabbit catcher and racer in England.

The criteria used in determining if a breed is a sighthound or not are open to debate. Traditionally, the Afghan Hound, Borzoi, Greyhound, Irish Wolfhound, Saluki, Scottish Deerhound and Whippet have been categorized as Sighthounds. Other breeds that hunt by sight, as well as scent and listening ability are the Basenji, Ibizan Hound, Pharaoh Hound and Rhodesian Ridgeback. Although some purists might question whether these breeds are true Sighthounds, they will be considered as such in this article. The Italian Greyhound of the Toy Group is a Greyhound in miniature, but because of its small size, is not really used for coursing.

Value Of Aerodynamic Structure

Although there are differences between sighthound breeds, they possess many common traits that favor more aerodynamic structural features, since lots of bulk and body would lessen speed and agility. Heads are long and lean; bone is thinner, lighter and flatter yet still strong; the body is narrower, bodies are flexible and elastic as well as longer to increase stride length at the gallop. Generally, the body of Sighthounds is lean in outline with a definite tuck up, yet well covered with muscle. Muscle mass is increased in the rear quarters, through the topline and forequarters to add speed and strength to deal with the stresses created by high speed and quick turns. Muscling is long and strong, not thick, bunched or undeveloped. Sighthounds utilize the double-suspension gallop, the swiftest of canine gaits, with speeds up to 40 mph in the Greyhound and 35 mph in the Whippet.

As the name implies there are two periods of suspension when all four feet are off the ground (see Fig I.). One phase is when the dog is completely tucked up with the topline curved; the other phase is when the dog is completely extended with the topline flattened and the entire body almost parallel with the

ground. This extreme flexibility is not possible without strong musculature over the back and loin to bow and straighten the body.

As in all dogs, sighthound structure begins with the skeleton, which is held together by muscle, ligaments, and tendons. Instead of being solid, the skeleton is articulated and gives at

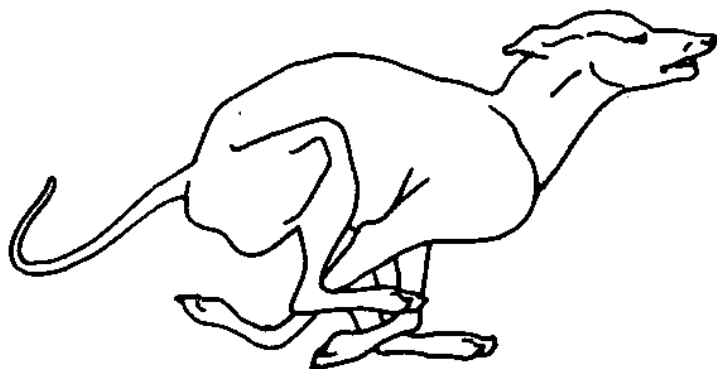
The functional structure of this group reflects their selective breeding to be true athletes.

a great number of points and in various directions. To a large extent, the musculature determines how a dog will move. In addition, other factors such as attitude/temperament, general health and physical condition will influence movement. The skeleton is important, but too much emphasis should not be put on skeletal influence. Quoting Steve Copold from the January/February 1976 *The Gazehound*, "The most perfect bone structure is worthless without adequate muscle to make it function properly." The skeleton provides the basis for support and the muscles, ligaments, and tendons create the action of movement among the various parts of the dog. The skeleton and musculature must be strong enough to deal with stresses that are as strong in an upward, lateral or downward direction.

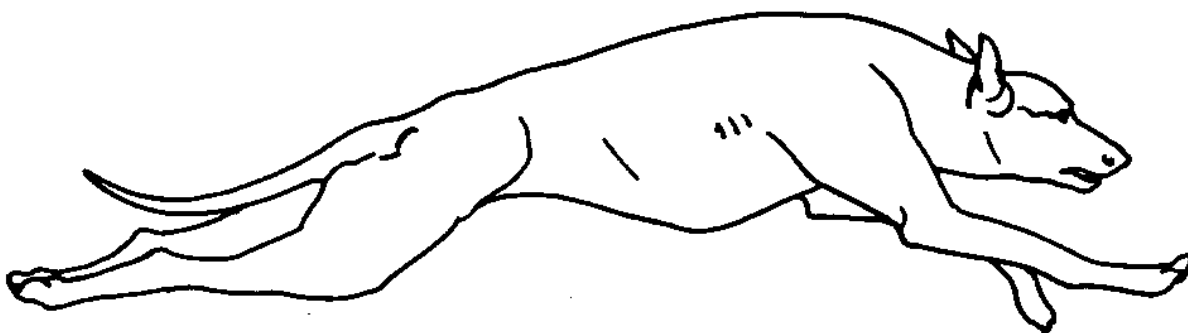
The sighthound's forelimb is used for thrusting upward and for forward propulsion. The shoulder/scapula is connected to the thoracic vertebrae by muscle, much like a sling. Each front leg is independently suspended by muscles.

The persistent belief that a 45 degree shoulder angle is desirable on Sighthounds has been disproved by a number of authorities, e.g., Rachel Page Elliott, *The New Dogsteps*, Curtis Brown, *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis*, and Connie Miller, November/December 1975 *The Gazehound*, among others. Quoting Rachel Page Elliott, "A 45-degree slant, or layback, would be workable if the blade were a stationary bone with a more or less fixed joint from which the upper arm moved forward and back. But this is not the case. What we have failed to recognize is the great mobility of the shoulder blade as partner to the action of the upper arm, which serves as a lever in lifting and transporting the central body forward as smoothly as possible." Because of the extreme mobility of the shoulder, forward motion is not determined by

Figure I Double Suspension Gallop



With speeds up to 40 mph in the Greyhound and 35 mph in the Whippet, sighthounds utilize the double-suspension gallop which is the swiftest of canine gaits. There are two periods of suspension when each of the four feet are off the ground: one is when the dog is completely tucked up with the topline curved; the other is when the dog is completely extended with the topline flattened and the entire body almost parallel with the ground.



the standing angle as previously thought, This is not to approve of a very straight shoulder however, as it is incorrect.

Exact degree measurements of the shoulder are not necessary. Instead, just categorize the sighthound's shoulder angle as straight, moderate (approximately 70-degrees off the level or 20-degrees off the vertical) or well laid back (approximately 60-degrees off the level or 30-degrees off the vertical). It is very difficult to determine exact shoulder angle without proper equipment, and the angle will vary from moment to moment with the tiniest posture change of the dog.

The length of the upper arm/humerus should be at least as long as the shoulder blade/scapula, or 1:1.

It is important for the sighthound to have width between the blades at the withers. In a Whippet, the width between blades should be greater than two fingers and more on larger Sighthounds. This width will allow the head freedom to be

lowered. The Borzoi standard calls for shoulders to be "fine at the withers" and the Deerhound standard states "not too much width." These two breeds were used to hunt large game instead of scooping up small prey.

Greater leg length is a sighthound adaptation for speed as pointed out by Curtis Brown. He states, "Increasing leg length up to a certain point tends to increase stride length...Swift traveling dogs have a lower leg length about 1.3 times longer than the depth of chest...Dogs displaying endurance at the gallop have a lower leg length about equal to 1.2 to 1.25 times the depth of chest."

Pasterns must be strong yet elastic. During the double suspension gallop, the pastern is incredibly bent, laying flat on the ground. It's strength helps to break the falling motion of the dog as well as help it spring upward.

Sighthounds as Athletes

Poetry in Motion

by Mary Beth Arthur

Importance Of Flexibility

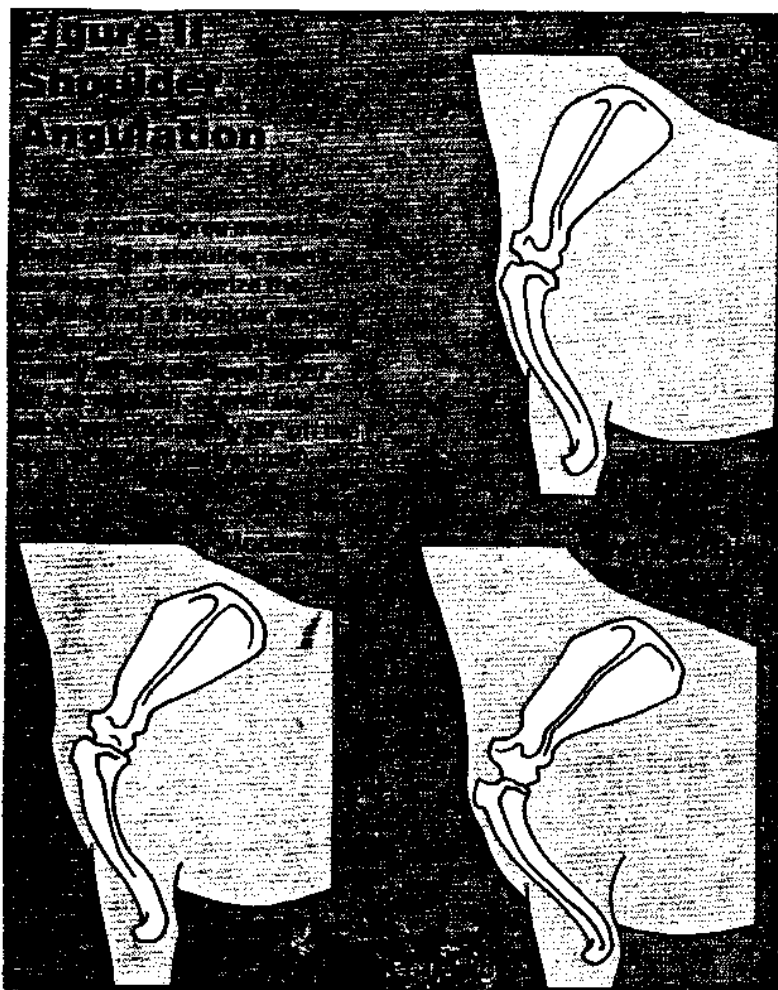
The body of the sighthound should be supple. Any inflexibility inhibits freedom of motion. The flexible, powerful back and body musculature must bow and straighten during the double suspension gallop. Mr. A. Brazier Howell concluded in his book, *Speed in Animals*, that in a body which has much bending of the trunk, such as Sighthounds, a long body is an aid and is desirable. Body length is, for the most part, determined by the length of the individual vertebrae. A long body is obviously a speed adaptation in the Greyhound and Whippet; however, in some of the Sighthounds (Afghan Hound, Basenji, and Pharaoh Hound) a shorter, squarer body is desirable where agility and endurance are critical. It takes more energy to bend and straighten a long body.

The Basenji and Pharaoh Hound have level topline. The Sighthounds resembling the Greyhound prototype have a topline with a noticeable arch. This arch should *not* start at the withers. The arch actually begins in the thoracic region, after the anticlinal vertebrae where the vertebrae change direction from pointing backward to forward. Beyond the anticlinal vertebrae, the vertebrae point forward. This change in direction of the spines creates a slight "dip." This dip is normal; however, an accentuated dip is incorrect. This arch is most obvious in the lumbar area of the topline. The highest point of the arch should not be any higher than the highest point of the withers.

In Sighthounds, underline is just as important as topline. Curtis Brown states, "during swift galloping, when the flexible back is used, a stomach without a tuck-up hinders spine flexing...It is the Sighthounds and other breeds designed for swift galloping which should have a tuck-up."

The angle of the pelvis helps to determine the ability to extend the hindquarters behind the body in conjunction with the musculature. If the pelvis is steep, the hindquarters are usually restricted in their backward extension. Curtis Brown notes that agility may be aided by a steeper croup, but musculature causes rearward extension.

Mr. Howell observed, in *Speed in Animals*, that adaptations for speed involve the hind limb more frequently than the



forelimb. Hindquarters provide most of the forward propulsion at the gallop. Sighthound hindquarters are well constructed for speed and suited for leaping. When viewed from behind, the hindquarters are muscular, carrying down to the hock. When viewed in profile, the upper and lower thigh should be broad with noticeable muscling.

Rear angulation is the ratio of the upper thigh (femur) to the 2nd thigh (tibia). The ratio should be 1:1. Excessive angulation is a detriment to the sighthound as it requires excess energy to move. A slight bend of stifle is called for in the Basenji and Pharaoh Hound. The Ibizan Hound calls for hindquarters nearly vertical.

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Evaluating A Trot

We have now addressed many of the various structural characteristics that make Sighthounds a unique and specialized group. But what about their gait and movement? In the show ring sighthound movement is evaluated at the trot. The trot is a natural gait in Sighthounds and they should be efficient at it. Although the trot will not reveal galloping ability it is the only practical way to determine how the limbs move, whether they are coordinated, properly made, balanced, healthy and conditioned. Sighthounds have a lighter trot with more spring than non-Sighthounds. It should not be labored or plodding. When viewed on the down and back, the sighthound's movement will converge toward a center line. The legs should remain in a straight line from the hip to the paw.

Curtis Brown states, in *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis*, that good galloping dogs (Sighthounds) will not be good trotting dogs like German Shepherd Dogs due to differences in construction. His studies and observations have led him to conclude that Sighthounds have shortened reach due to the straighter shoulder. However, some of the sighthound standards (i.e. Whippet) call for a long low trot with reach and drive to indicate efficient movement. Mr. Brown observes, "Dogs designed to be superior gallopers should be expected to trot differently from those designed to be superior trotters." Also he concludes that if sighthound breeds are selectively bred to be efficient trotters, they will decrease their ability to gallop. Some objective evidence is presented by Mr. Brown to substantiate his statements. Further discussion among breed experts should be done to determine exactly what is the proper movement in the sighthound breeds.

We are indeed fortunate to have present-day canine anatomy and movement experts using modern techniques to enlighten us. (To better understand sighthound structure and gait, see *References below*.)

Although much has been written on structure and movement in dogs, words never quite fully convey the dynamics of

sighthound structure and movement. The best way to appreciate Sighthounds is to watch them in action, galloping in the field or coursing and racing on the track.

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"The body of the sighthound should be supple. Any inflexibility inhibits freedom of motion."

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