

## JUDGING THE BREED



### GENERAL APPEARANCE

The "General Appearance" portion of our standard is very well written and needs little elaboration. However, judges should be reminded that when evaluating this breed they take into account its original working/sporting purpose as a hunter and racing animal. Breeders (as should judges) place significant emphasis on the importance of physical conditioning in the breed. This "fitness" is an important aspect that judges should not overlook. Defined muscles, particularly in the shoulder, loin and hip area, should be apparent, so long as they are not bunchy, loaded or thick. These dogs are athletes and not lap dogs and should carry sufficient muscle and condition so long as the muscling is not excessive and/or overdone.

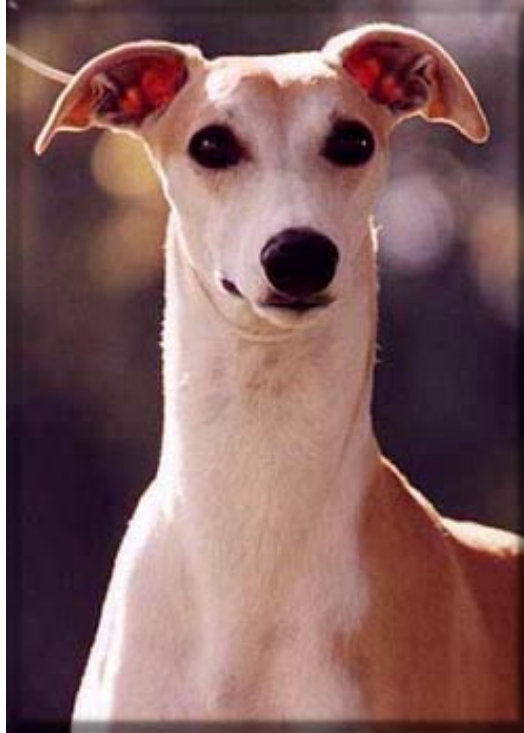


### SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Judges should take note that the Whippet standard allows for a wide range within its acceptable heights. From the smallest allowable bitch (17 1/2") to the largest allowable dog (22 1/2") there is a difference of five inches which is substantial on a dog of this overall size. **ANY HEIGHT WHICH FALLS WITHIN THIS STATED RANGE IS EQUALLY ACCEPTABLE.** No preference should be shown for dogs or bitches at either the top or bottom of the height standard. Very simply put, in is in and out is out - in any measurable breed this is very clear cut. It should also be noted that judges are encouraged to measure any dog whose height you feel may be in question. **PLEASE, DO NOT HESITATE TO MEASURE ANYTHING IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION IN YOUR MIND AS TO THE EXHIBIT'S HEIGHT.** Better to measure and know than 'think' a dog may be 'out' and leave it out of the ribbons.

Length to height ratio in this breed should be equal to, or slightly greater than height at the withers. Judge's should be aware that even a dog who measures dead square will appear slightly longer than tall due to the curvature of the topline and the dog's angulation fore and aft.

As Whippets should possess equal parts elegance and athleticism, bone and substance should be moderate throughout. Bone that is too fine or conversely, too coarse, will impede the dogs' ability to do its job with maximum efficiency. Judges should also be reminded that color (particularly solids) can affect the perception of bone and substance with dark colors, particularly black, diminishing this perception and light colors, particularly white amplifying the perception of the same.



## HEAD

While it should always be remembered that Whippets are not a 'head' breed, certain head properties do define elements of breed character.

Eyes should be large and dark and the expression should be soft and not hard bitten (though expression will be intense when the dog is in hunting mode). Though still dark, eyes on blue and cream dilute colored dogs will have a different undertone than those of black pigmented individuals. Blue dilute dogs will tend to have a slate undertone to the eye while cream dilutes tend to have a gold undertone. However it should be noted that dark eyes within these tones are very achievable from a breeding standpoint and are definitely preferred. Fully pigmented eye rims are desirable, but missing eye rim pigment is not a 'deal breaker' on an otherwise good dog.

A 'rose ear' can have many different incarnations and still be correct, depending on the set on the head, the length and weight of the ear and the location of the 'break' - the point at which the ear folds. In a perfect world, we like high, fine, crisp 'gull wing' ears, but so long as the ear falls into the definition of 'rose' it should not be faulted unless a judge is splitting hairs between two otherwise equal specimens. Erect or 'prick' ears are to be severely penalized. Equally offensive are large, heavy, low set 'hound' ears with little or no 'break' or 'fold' on the upper contour of the ear. In terms of use of the ears, remember that a Whippet should not be penalized for not 'using' its ears. It is perfectly acceptable for a Whippet to perform in an animated or more stoic fashion while in the show ring and neither should be given preference.

Judges should remember that the standard calls for a skull which is long and lean, yet fairly wide between the ears, being neither narrow and Borzoi like nor round or cheeky in the backskull. The width between the ears accommodates the characteristic large, correctly shaped eye. Head planes should approach parallel (neither down faced nor dished) and muzzle is approximately equal in length to the backskull. As part of the

breed's function is to catch and hold prey, a strong powerful underjaw with 'great strength of bite without coarseness' is of great importance.

The Whippet breed as a whole has very few bite/mouth issues. An 'off' bite, particularly one that appears before you in the show ring, is a rare exception. Judges should also note that our standard only addresses the occlusion or bite, there is no need to dig into the sides of the mouth during your exam to count teeth or check for missing teeth as Whippets are not accustomed to this as part of the normal exam process.



### NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

The outline of the Whippet is arguably it's most important and distinct feature. A correct and smooth melding of topline and underline with proper body length, combined with well made running gear fore and aft makes for a beautiful and efficient running machine. The body and outline of the Whippet should be a continuous series of 'S' curves, with the only hard angle found at the hock.

The proper topline is often a point of confusion for judges new to Whippets, particularly those who come from level backed/high tail set breeds. Often in the show ring you will see a number of different toplines on the dogs in front of you - which of those is most correct? Please remember first that, unlike most breeds (that require short coupling through the loin), Whippets must have length, breadth and elasticity through the loin. This is an adaptation in breeds of extreme speed, primarily Whippets and Greyhounds wherein the loin provides the 'hinge' and flexibility to successfully perform the double suspension gallop (\* see definition below) at speed. The topline possesses a smooth natural arc, analogous to the "curve of a well drawn bow", with the highest point of the arch never being any higher than the highest point of the withers. This smooth muscular curve, which is a hallmark of the breed, allows the transmission of power from the hindquarters through the loin and forequarters when running. It should be noted however that short coupled/steep crouped individuals are significantly more hampered in successful performance at a run than those who are slightly too long and/or flat as they are typically restricted in their rearward extension and thrust. Judges should also remember that the topline the dog carries standing should be maintained at a trot when in the show ring.

All dogs, running hounds or otherwise, will possess a small 'divot' in the topline in the thoracic region at the anticlinal vertebrae. This is where the vertebrae change direction from pointing backward to forward. This can also appear accentuated in dogs that are racing/coursing fit by development of the rhomboid muscle over the shoulder area. A small 'divot' is normal; however an accentuated dip is incorrect.

The underline is equally important and functions in concert with the topline during the Whippet's working gait, the double suspension gallop. Sufficient 'tuck up' allows for the spine flexion and the folding of the body during the overreach phase when running at speed.

The Whippet should have a smooth supple body with great flexibility. The body should be deep, capacious and oval -shaped (NOT ROUND), providing great heart and lung room and must complement the functional topline and underline.

The tail should reach at least to the hock when drawn down along the hind leg and low tail set is important as the tail functions as a rudder when the dog is running at speed. A high tail set typically indicates an incorrect short croup.

[\* "The word "suspension" means "airborne." In the single suspension gallop cycle the dog is airborne once; in the double suspension gallop the dog is airborne twice.]

Definition of double suspension gallop:

The double suspension gallop is a four-time gait with two periods of suspension during one complete stride. This is the only gait in which the dog is fully extended. The forelegs are fully extended forward and the hind legs are fully extended to the rear. Also in this gait the dog's back folds and attains maximum overreach; this is, the hind feet

extend in front of the forefeet and the forefeet extend behind the hind feet. When the feet pass one another, the forefeet are inside the hind feet. Dog's use their backs to attain speed. The most flexible spot is over the loin area and the tuck-up allow folding of the under part of the body. The hind legs overreach on the outside of the forelegs. The ability to flex the back from a straight position to a well-arched position is essential for fast dogs; a permanent arch is not flexible and therefore a serious fault. The double suspension gallop is a leaping gait; first the hind legs propel the dog into the air, then the forelegs take their turn. The engines are required: the muscles in the shoulder, the muscles in the "ham" and the muscles in the back. Although animals can run faster using this gait, endurance is sacrificed. Sighthounds and some cats can quickly overtake prey, but if the run is long, the prey escapes. Double suspension running dogs that have arched backs that will not flatten or flat backs that will not arch have serious faults."

Dog's with too much permanent arch or a permanent flat back will be limited on their reach and maximum speeds.]

## FOREQUARTERS

A well made front end on a running hound is critical to the dog's ability to function and remain sound. The forequarters bear most of the impact and shock absorption when a dog is running and turning at speed. For this reason the elements of sound front end construction are vitally important.

Whippets (and Sighthounds in general) will have a more open shoulder angle than conventional trotting breeds and is typically found to be 100 to 110 degrees. This does not, by any means, imply a straight shoulder/upper arm, just not the classic 90 degree scapula to humerus angle that is accepted and correct in most other breeds. As the brisket will reach to the elbow allowing for great heart and lung capacity, the chest area between the front legs should be well filled and not 'cut-up' or hollow. The shoulders and front will have defined musculature, but judges are reminded that well-defined FLAT musculature is desirable; coarse, round and bulging muscles are not.

In a running hound, the importance of correctly made feet and pasterns cannot be emphasized strongly enough. If these two areas are not well made, the dog will not be able to stay sound over time while performing the job it was bred to do. Pasterns should be slightly bent and flexible. As the pastern absorbs the lion's share of the shock when the dog is running and turning, flexibility and a proper slight bend are critical. A pastern that is upright and straight does not have the flexibility and suspension

capabilities required and will ultimately cause unsoundness in the running dog. Conversely too much angle in the pastern will cause weakness in the area and will also ultimately affect the dog's ability to stay sound.

Judges should also note that given the choice between a dog that toes out slightly and one that toes in to any degree, the dog that toes in runs a much higher risk of becoming injured/unsound if asked to perform at speed over any period of time. Toeing in is a much more serious functional fault than a slight toe out.

Strong, well knit feet are also critically important to a running dog. The foot is more hare than cat and a perfectly shaped foot resembles a half walnut shell lying flat. Open, splayed or soft feet as well as very upright 'cat' feet will not serve the dog well over time at speed.

### HINDQUARTERS

The hind end of a running animal is its "engine". It provides the power to propel the animal forward in a double suspension gallop. Therefore, correctly made hindquarters are crucial to the breed's ability to do its job. The hindquarters should be balanced, well angulated and muscular with both bend and depth through the stifle and a strong second thigh. Hocks are moderately low to the ground. All of these traits combined give the whippet a rear that is powerful with drive and flexibility which enhances speed and agility. Angulation behind should be in relative balance to the angulation of the forequarters. Both too much and too little angulation are impediments to a running hound – over angulation is a more frequently seen fault in the show ring, often in combination with a relatively straight front, and should be strictly penalized. Nothing says "I'm slow and can't turn quickly to save my life" like a weak, over angulated rear coupled with a straight front assembly.

### COAT

"Short, close, smooth and firm in texture. Any other coat shall be a disqualification." This wording was added to our standard a number of years ago when "longhaired" whippets (actually later determined to be probable Borzoi, Sheltie, Whippet crosses) began appearing. Hairless (or very nearly so...) whippets have also been seen. Any coat other than short, close, smooth and firm including the absence of a normal coat covering the body of the dog (hairlessness) should be considered a disqualification.

Whippets also have thin, tight skin which tears easily. Judges must be reminded that our standard specifically states that dogs should not be penalized for scars which are a result of either accident or injury.

### COLOR



### COLOR IMMATERIAL!

In the breed you will see everything from pure white to pure black with every color, marking and shade variance in between. Blue and cream dilution factors are also frequently seen and are equally acceptable.

Judges are cautioned not to be swayed by fancy or glamorous color or markings on an otherwise inferior dog.

Additionally judges must be aware that color and particularly markings can distort conformation either positively or negatively (i.e. make neck look short or long, distort topline, make overall dog look shorter or longer, etc.) and should not hesitate to have a look at the dog from the 'off' side to ascertain if what they see is actually conformation or an illusion due to markings. Darker colors, particularly black, tend to diminish the perception of size and bone while lighter colors, particularly white, tend to enhance or increase it. Black masks can tend to make the foreface appear snipecy.



## GAIT

Judges should look for ease of movement with 'daisy cutting' action with a minimum of effort. Remember that this is a running (sprinting) breed, not a trotting breed, so you should not be looking for 'TRAD' (Tremendous Reach And Drive) but rather efficiency of motion. When viewed from the side at a moderate trot, gait should be balanced and effortless.

When viewed coming and going, the legs tend to converge toward the center line as the dog increases speed at the trot but they do not single track.

It is important that the dog maintains its outline at the trot, not flattening out, but holding the proper smooth arched topline and underline. This is where the Whippet, a dog meant to be a double suspension galloper, is most markedly different than a trotting breed: They have a smoothly arched topline which blends into a gently sloping croup. This smooth muscular curve allows for the transmission of power from the hindquarters through the loin and forequarters when running. This also creates a pelvis that is set at more of an angle than that of an endurance trotter (that pelvis angle has its benefits – it makes the dog more agile and maneuverable at a run than a trotting specialist, and it allows for quick acceleration at the gallop, as the dog can get its rear legs easily far forward under its body due to this configuration).

Also the head will lower somewhat at the trot, but body carriage and topline should always be maintained. They should not carry an erect head like an Afghan or a Poodle, nor a low head like a Herding dog, BUT a powerful gait with forward momentum should cause the head to lower to aid the reach in front.

## TEMPERAMENT

Whippets are friendly and outgoing, though not necessarily overtly so, particularly with those that they don't know well. An extremely shy or spooky whippet is atypical as is a dog that shows any aggression towards other dogs or people, especially in the show ring and should not be rewarded.

Whippets can be and are often shown 'baited' and alert but judges must be cautioned that dogs that do not bait should NEVER be penalized in the ring. It is equally acceptable for whippets to use their ears or

not and no preference should be shown either for the animated dog or the more stoic exhibit. Both represent equally correct facets of the temperament of the breed.

### **DISQUALIFICATIONS**

More than one-half inch above or below stated height limits.

Blue eye(s), any portion of blue in the eye(s), eyes not of the same color.

Undershot.

Overshot one-quarter inch or more.

Any coat other than short, close, smooth and firm in texture.