

A letter from two sisters from Logan Village, Queensland reads "As novices we read, asked and watched, trying to see what was needed in correct movement in the Dachshund. So many think that if a dog moves like a train around the ring that it has good movement, and possibly you could throw some light on the subject.

"Our latest champion is Ch Laen Mountain Devil, who was judged by you at Brunswick Valley 1978, where you commented on his movement and compared him with Ch Leura Liberace when you presented him with runner-up in show."

Before Liberace's hey day, Dachshund of Mini Smooth, Standard Smooth, Mini Long and Standard Long varieties were always strongly supported by numbers and the Wire-haired were also trying to make their presence felt.

Even when Standard Smooth-haired Dachshund dogs more or less boycotted shows due to Liberace's almost ubiquitous presence and the dog challenge was almost a foregone conclusion, the other varieties and Standard Smooth bitches gave sterling support. Even after our Beagle, Ch Martinique Just Joe, put Liberace out of the ring after three straight group wins (though not out of the puppy class), Dachshund owners did not seem to recover in numbers in the showing. Maybe they had lost the habit of going to shows on Saturdays and Sundays!

Difficult to Isolate

The basic reasons for the drop off in numbers are always hard to isolate for any breed at shows, but while the other varieties maintained support, the Standard Smooths never seemed to approach their previous popularity again.

You may think I am wandering from your inquiry, but the point I am about to make is that with reduced numbers and the full range of quality, to isolate the wanted from the unwanted in any part of the dog, whether head, front, topline or movement is difficult for novices. The days of seeing thirty Standard Smooth-haired Dachshunds in one class with at least a third of them moving well are gone.

It was easy some years ago to pick the top quality and to see how it compared with other Hound breeds or all breeds. Today it is a case of an isolated dog or two, no matter which state you visit for judging or observing. You may say, "But isn't this the case with all breeds?" but I do not agree. Maybe the magnifying glass in one's mind causes me to think this way about Standard Smooths, having seen classes in the breed and variety at Sydney Royal shows where the first eight exhibits in the class were all high quality and little to separate them, and when you consulted the catalogue you found that first, second, fourth and fifth were by the same sire, or had some such similarity in type.

If we consult the Standard for each variety of the breed we find that they are almost similar, even if different wording has been used, but in each instance the desire is an active, agile, keen, hardy hunter that can acquit itself if not only above and below ground, but also in water.

For such a short legged dog to be capable of these things there must be a certain mechanical arrangement in its structure, and the Standards endeavour to explain this arrangement. As far as movement is concerned, apart from carriage of head, there is little need to discuss head properties. With this I think you will agree. Not that a judge doesn't consider all the features of the dogs when making his assessments, but only movement is being considered here.

The Standard of the Standard Smooth-haired will be taken as quoted for purposes of explanation:

Neck. Sufficiently long, muscular, clean, no dew-lap, slightly arched in the nape, running graceful lines into the shoulders, carried well up and forward.

Sufficiently long means that the neck must allow the dog to be able to reach downwards, sideways or forwards to grasp its quarry, without impeding his forward progress. In actual fact the neck is fairly long, for if we take the occiput as point A and the butt of the tail as point B, that distance can be regarded as a constant purpose of analysis. If the shoulders slope well back, then the distance from point A to the withers will be lengthy and from point B to the withers shorter than if the withers were further forward. Steep shoulders mean a short neck and an overlong back, while well angulated shoulders mean a lengthier neck.

Referring to forequarters, the Standard states: - Shoulder blades long, broad and set on sloping, lying firmly on fully developed ribs, muscles hard and plastic. Chest very oval, with ample room for the heart and lungs, deep and with ribs well sprung out towards the loins, breastbone very prominent. The front legs should, when viewed from the side, cover the lowest point of the breast bone. Forelegs very short and in proportion to size, strong in bone. Upper arm of equal length with, and at right angles to, the shoulder blade: elbows lying close to the

Movement in the Dachshund

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ribs but moving freely up to shoulder blades. Lower arm short as compared with other animals, slightly inclined inwards (crook), seen in profile moderately straight; not bending forward or knuckling over (which indicates unsoundness).

In short this means that the shoulder blade and upper arm at right angles to each other, or nearly so, and the bones are of equal length as in a German Shepherd. This means that the forearm will swing forward parallel to the shoulder blade inclination and the crook allows the feet to stand or be placed squarely in front of the dog with sufficient distance between them to support his ample rib cage in a stable fashion.

Because the forearm is short the dog's underline will be close to ground as the Standard says "the front legs when viewed from the side cover the lowest point of the breastbone." This does not mean that the rib cage only comes to the point of the elbow but actually below it. However, it should not be so low as to cause the dog inconvenience when working in rough country. There is a limit as far as lowness or clearance goes under the dog.

His forehead will definitely reach forward to support the dog adequately when in full chase after his prey, if he is built correctly. Short striders will develop, due to the inaccuracy in the shoulders and upper arm, loaded shoulders, which in turn will also cause misdirected activity in the dog and the dog will tire more easily. Bulkiness in the dog is not required, for he is to go to ground, and rabbit burrows and fox holes in many cases are quite small relatively.

You must always consider the origins of the Dachshund and his legitimate work. Even if never used on badger, rabbits or the like, the aim is to perpetuate what the breed architects required and stick to that ideal.

A lengthy muscular body with a slight depression behind the withers and a slight rising at the loins, with a corresponding moderate tuck up below, means in the perfect dog a strength of topline and a short-loined muscular body, without bulkiness in structure. By the rump being round, full and broad with lengthy hip-bones – well angulated not only downwards but away from each other – the hind legs will hang from their pelvic connection, straight and at the width of the rump so it is possible for the hindlegs to drive the dog along at a brisk pace.

This directed activity is assisted by the flexible spine and loin of the dog. A right angle assembly in the hip- and thigh-bones, as is the case in the forehead, means a balance in propulsion and motion as well as in structure.

It is a mechanical affair which means the dog is either active, agile and free-moving or it isn't.

Tail Set on a Clue

The set on of tail gives a clue to the accuracy of the dog's structure in topline. If the tail is too highset and carried flag-like the haunch setting is too flat, for sure. If the tail hangs down under the dog, you can be sure the rump is overexaggerated in rounding and the hind feet come too far forward the dog.

With the thigh-bone jointed to the pelvis at 90 deg and the second thigh short and also at right angle to the upper thigh, there is a tremendous drive through the hocks, which should be parallel to each other, standing reasonably wide apart to support the dog and allow him to twist, jump, turn or gallop without any loss of body stability. Activeness can only be associated with complete co-ordination and such cannot be the case if there is any weakness in pasterns, elbows, hocks or feet.

Cowhocked Dachshunds, straight stifled, highset hocked ones or sickle hocked ones are all mechanically disadvantaged dogs and their possible speed and agility is very questionable. When viewed from behind, the dog's legs are straight and the feet at the back are slightly smaller than those of the front which were developed for digging, as in the Scottish Terrier.

Because the Standard says, in referring to the feet "should

be full, broad and close-knit, and straight or very slightly turned outwards," does not mean that any Dachshund wants a huge foot. What is important is the pad and toenail development. How could a dog dig with thin pads or weak toenails? One must take a commonsense attitude to whatever the Standard says. Toes should have a decided arch and this is only possible where depth of pad exists.

If you see a dog lifting his feet and actioning forward with a real stride, going away with all four feet moving in unison and with a definite precision, his topline level and straight, you know he is built right and co-ordinated.

If he wriggles or wobbles as he goes, or takes short steps, or his hind feet turn in or out, there must be some error in either structure or joint attachments. A dog could be perfectly proportioned as far as bone structure is concerned but may move wrongly because of loose ligaments, muscle soreness, bruising or even sore feet. Before you commend or condemn any dog for movement, take the time to find out why.

The Reasons Why

I have been asked at shows why I sometimes flex a dog's legs in a breed such as a Borzoi, Greyhound or Saluki, and what am I discovering? With a professional Greyhound trainer, no dog would ever be trialed, let alone raced, without a thorough muscle check up. What is different about show dogs?

When a judge handles a dog he or she should know before the dog is actioned just how it is going to move. I send them for a walk to make sure that my handling assessment has been correct. If a dog actions differently to what I anticipated, I invariably make another check of the dog to discover where I erred, or what I missed in the routine check.

Novices may wonder why judges handle dogs – that is the reason, to determine just how soundly constructed any exhibit actually is. Flashy, showy dogs can be traps for young players. They may have a multitude of inaccuracies, but by clever presentation and handling the faults are often obscured. The judge is there to discover the good points in the exhibits and compare their quality.

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Above: Ch Leura Liberace
Below: Not Laen Mountain Devil mentioned in the article, but Laen Mountain Music, shown winning Champion Puppy in Show at Toowomba Royal 1985

