



Perfect side gait demonstration. Powerful, completely efficient, with correctly positioned head on a strong neck flowing into correct slightly sloping topline. Perfectly set tail carried in a correct waving plume. And below, demonstrating balance and power with correct reach and drive. Complete efficiency with perfectly timed footfalls. Head carriage correctly held, strong neck flowing into a correctly slightly sloping topline. Correct waving plume tail.



This bitch has correct, moderate angulation, creating good reach and drive. But she is too short in coupling (loin), hence her compensating by over-reaching ... from front and rear she will be 'crabbing or 'side-winding'. Other dogs with this same problem can be moved slower as to give the appearance of being correct, and footfalls with in fact be correct. But a lack of correct reach and drive ('mincey' movement) will then become apparent. NOT completely efficient. Head carriage is too high.



A slight lack of length in upper arm creates an imbalance in the movement of this dog. He has correct rear angulation and overall proportions but the weakness in the front creates lack of reach (measure distance between the 2 front legs compared with distance between the 2 back legs ... this should be equal), throwing the timing out causing the need for the rear leg to 'hang' (back leg higher off the ground than the front leg) in compensation. NOT a balanced gait, NOT completely efficient. Below, over reaching.



National Dog - The RingLEADER Way Breed Feature

## MOVEMENT IN THE ALASKAN MALAMUTE

The age old argument of movement vs type has no place in discussions regarding the Alaskan Malamute. Movement is, MUST be, an integral part OF type. If you have any doubt as to the validity of this statement, let me draw your attention to the following statements which appear in the breed Standard:

In "General Appearance": *The Alaskan Malamute, one of the oldest Arctic sled dogs, is a powerful and substantially built dog with a deep chest and strong, well-muscled body. The Malamute must be a heavy boned dog with sound legs, good feet, deep chest and powerful shoulders, and have all of the other physical attributes necessary for the efficient performance of his job. The gait must be steady, balanced, tireless and totally efficient. The Malamute is structured for strength and endurance, and any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with the accomplishment of this purpose, is to be considered the most serious of faults.*

In "Characteristics": *Important: In judging Malamutes, their function as a sled dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else. The legs of the Malamute must indicate unusual strength and tremendous propelling power.*

In "Hindquarters": *When viewed from the rear, the legs stand and move true in line with the movement of the front legs, not too close nor too wide*

The entirety of "Gait/Movement": *GAIT/ MOVEMENT - The gait of the Malamute is steady, balanced and powerful. He is agile for his size and build. When viewed from the side, the hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-muscled loin to the forequarters. The forequarters receive the drive from the rear with a smooth reaching stride. When viewed from the front or from the rear, the legs move true in line, not too close nor too wide. At a fast trot, the feet will converge toward the centreline of the body. A stilted gait, or any gait that is not completely efficient and tireless, is to be penalised*

In "Size": Desirable freighting sizes. *When dogs are judged equal in type, proportion, and movement, the dog nearest the desirable freighting size is to be preferred*

In "Faults": *The degree to which a dog is penalised should depend upon the extent to which the dog deviates from the description of the ideal Malamute, and the extent to which the particular fault would actually affect the working ability of the dog.*

Serious Faults: *Any characteristic of the individual specimen..., which interferes with his strength and endurance is to be considered the most serious of faults. Any indication of unsoundness in legs and feet, front or rear, standing or moving.*

Faults under this provision would be: • *ponderousness • Straight shoulders • Lack of angulation Bad pasterns • Cow hocks Splay-footedness • Stilted gait, or any gait that is not balanced, strong & steady.*

All of these things are matters which affect movement. The very purpose of the dog revolves around its ability to move, to haul freight, or carry a pack.

Of course, any dog, no matter the breed, can move and demonstrate soundness. This we hear all the time in the old argument I mention before. Of course, we are not talking about any dog, we are talking about the Alaskan Malamute, the dog bred to work in the Earth's harshest environment.

**CORRECT** Malamute movement comes from correct Malamute structure. Correct Malamute structure includes a correct, slightly sloping top line, as opposed to a receding top line, usually associated with an incorrect front assembly, and often a lack of balance between front and rear.

**REACH.** Quite clearly we want "smooth" reach. The front foot should be placed on the ground directly under the jaw. To assist this, the head should be forwards, not held high in the air. The rear foot should be placed on the ground immediately behind the front foot, and as the front foot is leaving the ground. This is part of the essence of the statement *"the hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-*

## THE WAVING PLUME

It has often been said that when a particular breed characteristic begins to disappear, opinions form that the trait is no longer important. Tail-set and tail carriage of the Alaskan Malamute has become such a prolific problem that it is not unusual to find only one or two correct tails in a ring of 25 or more dogs. Ringside observers, including some prospective judge, have frequently asked me what is wrong with a certain dog's tail, only to discover that the dog in question was the only one with a correct waving plume!

The Standard states that the tail is moderately set and follows the line of the spine at the base. It is carried over the back and is not snapped or curled tight against the back. Likewise it is not short-furred like a fox brush. The tail should be well furred and give the appearance of a waving plume. To the 1935 Standard gave the tail 10 points out of 100 on the scale of importance. In 1982 the description of the tail was clarified, but the numerical figure was dropped to 5 points on the scale. In retrospect I feel that may not have been a wise decision, as it indicated to breeders and judges that tails were the lowest importance. The correct Standard no longer uses a point scale, but the description is complete and easy to understand.

Common faults include tails that are tightly curled or even double curled, tail that lay flat on the back of the dog, and tails that hang sharply down one side. In addition, some tails lack sufficient fur length, and many are too high or too low to be carried properly. Another problem that unfortunately is gaining notoriety is the tail that is too short or stubby. Some actually give the appearance of being half-tails. Many of these short tails cannot curve toward the back at all.

The ideal Malamute tail will curve nicely over the back, and only the hair on the tip of the tail may touch the back slightly. When standing naturally, the tail may hang down. This is not an indication of an incorrect tail set (in fact, quite the opposite), but rather an expression of mood when the dog is bored, tired, or resting. When moving, the Malamute may carry the tail up in the waving plume or may trail the tail behind.

Malamutes concentrating hard when sledding or weight pulling will often trail their tails or carry them low. Tails also perform the function of "rudders" in balancing the dog when making hard turns or negotiating uneven terrain. If you doubt this, watch any geriatric Malamute that is becoming weaker in the rear and is having more difficulty walking. Invariably the dog will use his tail like a rudder, stiffening it from side to side for balance and steering.

The tail of the Malamute is considered to be an important survival characteristic. A long, well-furred tail serves as an insulator from the cold. It is generally felt that the tail should be long enough to at least reach the hock or slightly below in order to perform properly and efficiently. Without sufficient length and fur, the Malamute cannot effectively use his tail to protect his nose and other vital organs in severely cold temperatures. In extreme cold, the tail can be tucked between or under the rear legs. The dog then folds into a tightly curled position, covering his nose and eyes with his tail. The tail also serves as a mood indicator and communication tool: It can display fear, playfulness, happiness, nervousness, and aggression. There's nothing prettier than a Malamute gaiting around the show ring with a correct waving and wagging in the breeze.

The argument that *"they don't pull sleds with their tails"* lacks merit. It can likewise be said that Malamutes don't pull sleds with their coats, ears, eyes, bites or heads, yet each of those features combined correctly give the Malamute breed type and are important elements in the standard of perfection.



Correct, moving with tail up and with tail trailing



Incorrect tail moving



Correct tail standing or tail may just touch back



Incorrect tail standing



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