Judges Education Seminar
the Italian Greyhound

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Breed History

- Smallest of the family of sighthounds.
- Believed to have originated more than 2,000 years ago in the Mediterranean basin.
- By the Middle Ages (600 A.D. to 1600’s) distributed throughout Southern Europe, mostly owned by Nobility.
- In 1626, the Italian book *Treatise of Hunting* describes the “Greyhound of Italy” as being around 17 to 19 inches tall and details their form and function as companions and hunters.
- Due to its popularity in Italy it became known as the “Italian Greyhound”.
- Spread throughout Europe arriving in England in the 17th Century.
- During the Victorian era in England, smaller dogs were fashionable. The IG was bred to be a small companion dog and were no longer used for hunting.
- The Italian Greyhound Club of America was founded in 1954.
Foundation Stock

A true sighthound in miniature.
- His small size is the result of selective breeding.
- The Italian Greyhound is not a bred down (toy) version of the Greyhound, rather they share similar ancestors.
- No evidence that other breeds were used in the creation of the Italian greyhound.

The Italian greyhound was used in the creation and refinement of:
- Whippet
- Miniature Pinscher
- These crosses occurred during the 1800’s and early 1900’s.
- This is the reason for the black and tan and brindle disqualifications.
Breed Characteristics

(Purpose or Function)

- Difference of Opinion (likely he filled both roles)
  - Bred for hunting small game
  - Pet and companion

- A Talented Multi-Purpose Dog
  - Conformation, Obedience, Agility, Lure Coursing, Amateur Racing (Straight Line and Oval Track), Fly Ball, Therapy Dogs

An Air of Fragility Hides the Breed’s Hardiness
Anatomy & Temperament

Basic Structure is that of a Sighthound
- Should appear square to slightly longer than tall (withers to ground and point of forechest to buttock).
- Balanced, moderate angulation front and rear.
- The silhouette should be a series of smooth S curves.

Prized for their sweet dispositions.
- As adults they reserve their most affectionate and playful behavior for family and friends.
- They are bright, intelligent and active.
- Should never be snappy or aggressive.
- Will tolerate touch from a stranger, but not welcome it.
- Cold hands are strongly disliked and may cause a dog to pull away.
- Can occasionally be moody and reluctant to “give” ears.
Description

The Italian Greyhound is very similar to the Greyhound but much smaller and more slender in all proportions and of ideal elegance and grace.

- While similar in general appearance to the Greyhound, there are very distinct differences.
- Think symmetrical.
- Series of smooth S curves.
- Underline of chest and tuck-up most pronounced S curve.
- Line from the croup down the rear leg to the hock being the final S curve.
- Topline curves gradually from the start of the loin drooping gradually at the hindquarters.
Description – S Curves

1st S Curve

2nd S Curve
Correct Breed Type
Incorrect Breed Type
Head

- Narrow and long, tapering to nose, with a slight suggestion of stop.
  - Examine the stop by running your thumb between the eyes from the muzzle to the skull.
  - Slight suggestion does not mean NO stop or downfaced.
  - Ideally muzzle length should be equal to the length of skull.
  - Length of head should compliment the size of the IG.
  - Head from nose to occiput should be the same length as the neck from occiput to wither.
Head – Toyish
Head - Moderate
Head – Houndy
Skull

- Rather long, almost flat.
  - Think soft rounded edges.
  - Should not appear chiseled.
  - No flat surfaces or planes.
  - Coarse, wide back skulls are not correct.

Correct Skull Shape
Muzzle

- Long and fine.
  - Sculptured under the eye.
  - Fits smoothly onto the head.
  - No coarseness or cheekiness.
  - Should not appear as if stuck on as an afterthought.
  - Lips fit smoothly over the teeth.
  - Lack of underjaw is a problem in the breed.
Muzzles

Correct

Incorrect (Coarse)

Incorrect (Small)
Nose

- Dark. It may be black or brown or in keeping with the color of the dog. A lightly or partly pigmented nose is a fault.
  - Nose color should be as dark as possible.
  - A dilute dog’s nose will have pigment that is in keeping with the coat color of the dog (i.e. blue or brown).
  - A light or partly pigmented nose is a fault.
Noses

Correct. Nose is dark.

Correct. Dilute dogs will have dilute colored noses.

Incorrect. A Fault. Nose is not completely filled in.
Teeth

Scissors bite. A badly undershot or overshot mouth is a fault.

- Overshot, small crowded, crooked teeth, often with poor or rough enamel are breed problems.
- Dentition problems detract from a dog’s viability as a good companion.

Correct bite
**Eyes**

- Dark, bright, intelligent, medium in size. Very light eyes are a fault.
  - A pleasing expression is important. Good expression appears loving and intelligent.
  - Eyes should be as dark as possible, bright and alert but soft.
    - “Deer in the headlights” look is incorrect.
  - Small eyes give a hard mean expression.
  - Light eyes of pale brown, blue or gray tones cause a staring, hollow-eyed look, detracting from breed type due to a harsh expression. Blue eyes are not correct.
  - Dilutes will often have lighter eye color.
    - This is acceptable as long as the eye color is not lighter than the coat color.
Incorrect. Light eyes. A Fault.

Incorrect. Small eyes.

Incorrect. Blue eyes.

Correct. Dark eyes.

Correct. Coat color eyes.
Ears

- Small, fine in texture; thrown back and folded except when alerted, then carried folded at right angles to the head. Erect or button ears severely penalized.

- Examine the ear leather by running the ears through your thumb and fingers to feel the texture.
  - Feel for glue or scarring on the ears.
  - Should feel like a fine glove leather.
  - Heavy ear leather will not fold properly into a correct rose ear.
  - Erect and button ears still are a problem in the breed and are considered a Severe Fault.

- Alert the ears by using a soft sound.
  - Do NOT drop keys or other objects that will cause the dog to lower its head and the ears to open up. It is preferable to allow the handler to alert the IG.
Ears

Incorrect.
Large, low set ears.

Correct ears

Incorrect.
Erect ears.
Severe Fault.

Correct ears

Incorrect.
Button ears.
Severe Fault.
Neck

- Long, slender and gracefully arched.
  - Should fit smoothly into the shoulder.
  - Short, thick necks or ewe-necks lack elegance and are undesirable.
  - When the IG is moving the neck is carried more upright than a whippet or greyhound.
Body

- Of medium length, short coupled; high at withers, back curved and drooping at hindquarters, the highest point of curve at start of loin, creating a definite tuck-up at flanks.
  - The eye should be drawn to the withers as a measuring point for height and as a measuring point for proper topline.
  - Highest point of the topline curve (at start of the loin) should be level to or only slightly lower than the withers.
    - Hip bones should be significantly lower than the withers.
  - Think curves, not straight lines, flat surfaces or sharp angles.
    - Camel humps, wheel backs or extreme drop-offs are exaggerations and are not proper toplines.
- Never make final judgment of the topline while the dog is on the table.
  - Topline should be judged when the dog is moving and free stacking on the ground.
Body & Topline

Correct

Incorrect
Shoulders

- Long and sloping.
  - Shoulder layback should be moderate.
  - Angle of shoulder and upper-arm must match rear angulation.
  - Difference between the Italian Greyhound shoulder and Greyhound shoulder is that the Greyhound standard calls for a shoulder placed as obliquely as possible.
    - Italian Greyhound shoulder layback and placement is responsible for a correct unique high stepping gait.
Shoulders

Good moderate shoulder angulation

Straight shoulders
Chest

- **Deep and narrow.**
  - Viewed from the front the chest is oval.
  - Narrow, but not so narrow that it appears both legs are coming out of the same socket.
  - Chest should be well muscled.
    - Not wide or barrel-chested.
  - From the side, point of forechest should be seen and felt between the shoulder points.
  - The rib cage is long and carried well back in the body.
  - Lowest point of brisket should be as close as possible to the elbow.
Chest

Correct.

Incorrect. Too narrow.

Incorrect. Too wide.
Forelegs

- Long, straight, set well under shoulder; strong pasterns, fine bone.
  - Elegance is the key.
    - Think “Fine Bone”. Bone should be correct for size of the dog.
    - Round heavy bone is a problem in the breed.
    - Legs should exhibit oval bone.
  - Strong pasterns that must be flexible.
    - Does not mean rigid and completely upright or knuckling over.
Correct front and forelegs.

Incorrect.
East-West Front

Short legs, thickset front lacks elegance.
Hindquarters

- Long, well-muscled thigh; hind legs parallel when viewed from behind, hocks well let down, well-bent stifle.
  - Rear angulation must match front.
  - Thigh muscles should be “well-defined”, but not bulging (Am Staff muscling is incorrect).
    - Coursing and racing dogs will have very developed muscles.
  - A weak rear can be easily hidden on the table.
    - Check for weak rear when the handler is baiting the dog free stacked on the line, or when the dog has been moving and comes to a stop.
Hindquarters

Correct.
Good rear angulation with well let down hocks.

Incorrect. Lacks angulation.

Incorrect. Too much angulation.
Feet

  - The two middle toes are longer than the outside toes.
  - Cat feet and flat feet are incorrect.

Correct. Hare feet.

Incorrect. Flat feet.

Incorrect. Cat feet.
Tail

- Slender and tapering to a curved end, long enough to reach the hock; set low, carried low. Ring tail a serious fault, gay tail a fault.

  - Examine by holding the tail down along the rear leg to see if it reaches the hock.
  - Do not fault a bump or bend due to a break, this is very common.
  - Tails set too high and/or carried too high detract from the smooth S-curve of the topline.
  - Many puppies under a year old, will move with a high or happy tail.
  - A ring tail curls back onto itself and is a serious fault carried in any position.
Tails

Correct tail carriage and placement.

Ring tail, a serious fault.

Gay tail, a fault.

Broken tail. Not a fault.
Coat and Color

- Coat – Skin fine and supple, hair short, glossy like satin and soft to the touch.
  - Color Dilute Alopecia (CDA) may be seen in older dilute colored dogs.

- Color – Any color and markings are acceptable except that a dog with brindle markings and a dog with tan markings normally found on black and tan dogs of other breeds must be disqualified.
  - There is NO preferred color and no undesirable color other than the disqualifying ones.
Coat and Color
Disqualifying Colors

Tan Markings

Brindle
Action

Action – High stepping and free, front and hind legs to move forward in a straight line.

- High stepping and free gait is essential to correct breed type.
- A synchronous gait. Rhythmic and has a cadence.
- Hackney, goose stepping and daisy clipping are not correct high stepping and free movement.
- Correct movement has good reach in front and rear drive.
- Front and rear legs move on a parallel track, converging towards a center line as speed increases.
- Legs and feet should never cross or interfere with each other.
- Proper ring gait is a trot. Do not confuse fast movement with good movement.
- Moving an IG too fast is often used to cover up faulty movement – ask the handler to slow down.
Action – Correct Movement
Action – Incorrect Movement

Not enough lift.

Lacks lift. Downhill appearance on move.
Size

- Height at withers ideally 13 to 15 inches.
  - It is not uncommon to see dogs and bitches that are 15-17 inches tall.
  - It is important to note that sizes under 13” or over 15” are NOT a fault or disqualification. However, size other than the ideal 13” to 15” should be considered when judging the overall quality of a dog. Do not discount a larger dog that is the better overall specimen.
  - A good small dog is preferable to an equally good large one but a good larger dog is preferable to a poor smaller one.
  - The IG is a toy breed not a small whippet.
Size

IG & Whippet

IG’s 13” vs 16”

IG, Whippet & Greyhound
Judging the Italian Greyhound
Areas of Concern – not in any order

- Topline – low in the withers or flattens too much during movement.
- Body – long loin, curve from loin to hindquarters too extreme.
- Size – 13 – 15 inches is ideal.
- Tail – tails set too high/carry too high.
- Ears – ears that do not fold into a correct rose ear (button and erect ears).
- Eyes – small eyes, very light eyes are a fault
- Movement – loss of characteristic high stepping gait. Front may have lift, but many lack reach. Goose stepping and hackney gaits are wrong.
- Feet – harefoot with well arched toes, not cat feet.
- Head – short muzzles, lack of underjaw, no stop.
With the dog on the table, stand a few feet away to check the outline. Then approach the IG from the front. Use hands gently but decisively, not tentatively, to feel the structure.

The IG does not need or like to be manhandled on the table.