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HOUND GROUP



Afghan Hounds

REFLECTIONS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of my active involvement with Afghan Hounds. Many things have happened with the breed during this time, including the trend toward a generic show dog that is lamented by the enthusiasts of other breeds as well as our own. Temperaments are different, coats are different, and some aspects of structure are quite different from the Afghan Hounds of the past.

At one time there were a number of Afghans on the sharp side, primarily with other dogs but also with people, and sometimes this was coupled with shyness—not to be mistaken for aloofness. We often heard certain male hounds referred to as “stallion hounds” and, if I interpret the term correctly, I don’t think there are many Afghans who qualify for that title anymore. A stallion hound was a *male*, who owned the ground he walked on and barely suffered being touched. He was elegant, which does not mean refined. Besides attitude, the term also carried a physical connotation.

The old Afghan was a substantial, well-boned dog, not necessarily tall but with a strong head and underjaw that balanced and complemented the rest of the animal. The head is the most radically changed part of the modern dog, since the length of most present-day muzzles is way out of proportion to the skull. The other change is that the underjaw has become weaker and weaker. Little or no underjaw is a serious

problem today.

In the past, the Afghan was bred to be a functional hunter, and he looked the part. He was not bred to be a pretty show dog. There are now many Afghans who have been reduced in body to tubes, with thin stick bones and long carrot heads. The deep briskets evident on pictures of early dogs are seldom seen today. Contemporary dogs are the product of many generations of pure breeding, yet they are very dissimilar to their ancestors. It is hard to picture them having the stamina to run any distance after game—especially over rough country—or the strength of head and jaw to kill it.

At one time there was quite a lot of mismarking: white blazing on the muzzle, or long white stockings, or both—even dogs all over white with Dalmatian spotting. Most of the latter were put down or not bred from. Blazing still exists, mostly in blue or domino dogs. Added to the other changes, it is now accepted that an Afghan pursuing a specials career must have a big coat; this is even true for bitches. A special with an adequate coat well-draped to his body goes down to the huge coat. Ear hair is wrapped and made to grow so long that it becomes grotesque: Where is the hound?

The Afghan Hound has participated in the general trend toward upright fronts and overangulated rears. The humerus is short and not set under, making the front movement come only from the elbow. This results in the front legs flipping out rather than reaching forward—flashy, but very inefficient.

All these changes are particularly unfortunate, since many of the newer judges of our breed have never seen a correct Afghan Hound. —*Georgie Guthrie, 43077 Tenaja Rd., Murrieta, CA 92562* ♦