

VISUALISING THE SCOTTISH DEERHOUND STANDARD



“ The most perfect creature of heaven.”
-Sir Walter Scott (*The Talisman*)

A presentation on the Scottish Deerhound by Barbara Heidenreich
www.fernhill.com for the St Lawrence Region Dog Judges Association,
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Historical Notes on Function:

The Scottish Deerhound is a breed whose antecedents may be as old as 2000 years depicted on sculpted stones dating to 800 A.D. and orally in Celtic legends. Historically, records as early as 1563 describe the “tainchells” held by Mary Queen of Scots where beaters would round up to 2,000 red deer and drive them for the royal event..... *“the Queen ordered one of the best dogs let loose on the deer”*. On that day it was recorded that 360 deer were killed and 5 wolves.

The “deerhound” antecedent was described in 1570 as follows:

“There is a kind of hunting dog which they call “leoporarius” and “emissaries” and also “vertragus”; we seek out those which are long in body, light and speedy, with short straight legs, with sparkling eyes, with muscular chest and with the rest of the members on the slender side, except those having rather broad hindquarters are more recommended, and with a long, light and smooth tail. Nevertheless we have seen some brought from Norway and the island of Thule of uncommon speed which in tail and body are quite rough haired. But to say the truth these are not used for their sagacity but for their speed. Of this kind are the British, valued for speed as well as strength, except that by their big body they are more suitable for chasing stag.”

Source: Conrad Heresbach, Cologne, 1570 (later the dogs in this passage are described by William Dansey who adds in a footnote to his translation of Arrian published in 1831, “ ..the latter are doubtless Caledonian deer-greyhounds”)

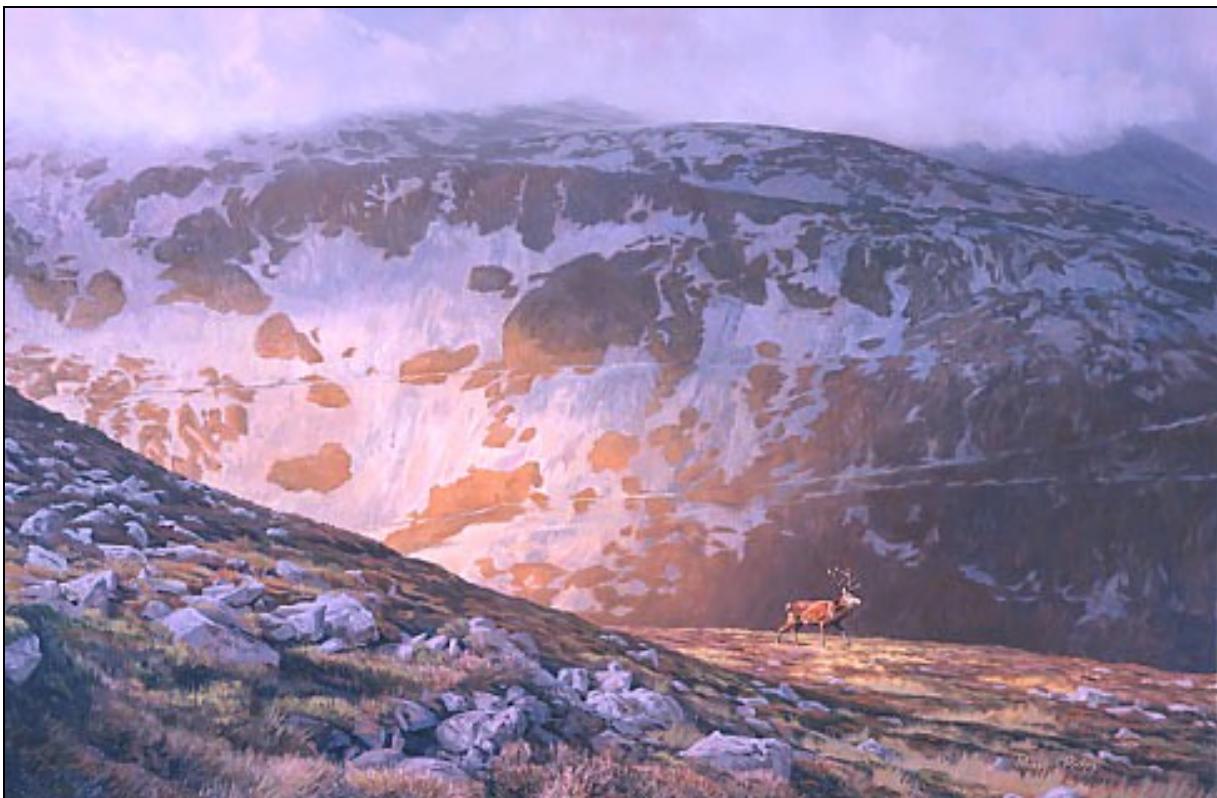
Two elements in particular have formed the Deerhound as a distinct breed:

Its quarry: the Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), the largest land mammal in Britain, has a size in the Scottish Highlands somewhere around that of a white-tailed deer. It can be 3 to 4 feet at the shoulder and weigh 250 - 300 pounds;





The terrain: Red deer habitat is rough bog, dense coarse heather, steep rugged rock hills, crags and burns and the Deerhound was expected to pursue and dispatch its quarry within three to four minutes maximum.





The Deerhound is a sprinter, designed to bring down (hunting in pairs) their quarry in a short swift chase in difficult terrain that ended within minutes with a leap for the jowl, ear or throat so that the weight of the dog and the speed of the running target caused the deer, ideally, to fall, breaking its neck and dying instantly. The technique is distinctive...any dog or wolf can hamstring or maim a deer. The Deerhound however was bred for the speed, agility, power and desire to make a clean kill by launching itself at the head, thus avoiding the horns, or with a body slam, bringing its prey down on impact. Failing a swift kill, Deerhounds would keep a stag at bay until it could be dispatched.



Graphic arts from the 1800's and 1900's show a dog that is very similar to the Deerhound of today with the exception of the "modern" (show) Deerhounds' increasing size and in many cases, more profuse coat.

The Standard

The *Official Standard of the Scottish Deerhound* written in 1892 by Messrs Hickman and Hood-Wright, attempted to describe the working Deerhound. The “Points of a Deerhound arranged in Order of Importance” added in 1914 to replace the prior judging of conformation categories on points - places *type* where it belongs.... first in order of importance. It also addresses the absence of a description of movement in the original Standard of 1892. However the 1914 addition of “Points in Order of Importance” also slipped in as # 3 “*as tall as possible consistent with quality*” and the new Standard upped the height by changing the lower height limits of 28 inches for males and 26 inches for bitches to the following... “*the height of dogs should not be less than 30 inches and bitches 28 inches at the shoulder*”. The AKC Standard in 1935 (and the CKC Standard) further increased the height by changing “not less than 30 inches” to “*from 30 to 32 inches or even more.....*”. The CKC Deerhound Standard is essentially the 1935 AKC Deerhound Standard, except it starts the breed description with size and color, while the AKC Standard begins, as does the 1892 Standard, with the head which a judge first approaches and then it moves along and down the body.

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(The OFFICIAL STANDARD of the SCOTTISH DEERHOUND is boxed throughout the text)

(1) Type:

Type is the sum of those qualities which are distinctive to the breed which make the animal not a dog, but a Deerhound...

Typical - a Deerhound should resemble a rough-coated Greyhound of larger size and bone.

...the overall first impression should be unmistakably that of a large Greyhound...**not** a giant Greyhound; **not** a small Irish Wolfhound. The outline is one of balance and smooth flowing continuous lines. The front assembly and angulation should seem balanced with the bulk and angulation of the rear. The underline should form an S curve starting at a pronounced fore-chest, then flowing down to a brisket at the elbow in a mature dog and then curving into a tuck up at the loin that is well drawn up but not resembling a wasp waist. Girth at the deepest part of the brisket should be at least two to three inches greater than the height at the shoulder indicating great lung power and strength.

The Deerhound is a natural breed that should be shown tidied up, but without any stripping or sculpting of the coat. Front dew claws are usually left intact and the nails should be short, but visible. Any show tendency to scissor, pluck or shave the coat should be discouraged.

Being a hunting hound, the Deerhound should be shown in a hard muscled condition. However, this is a considerable challenge given the soft, laid back temperament of the Deerhound, and requires serious road work and/or major acreage. A well muscled super fit Deerhound indicates a very committed owner.

To quote G.A. Graham (Vero Shaw, 1871 p. 229) on the general appearance of the Deerhound: “*....striking, elegant and aristocratic to a marked extent and nobility of carriage is a very strong feature of the breed*”.

(2) Movement:**Easy, active and true**

The Deerhound is a galloping hound and trotting about the ring simply shows off a dog's structure which only hints at how it may perform in the field. Deerhounds should be light on their feet, with a seemingly effortless ability to bound over rough terrain. Propulsion in the field comes from the rear assembly and drive from the rear with no hint of closeness or cow hocks is extremely important.

Deerhounds, unlike Greyhounds, gallop with their head up when after deer and spring (or bound) over the terrain keeping the quarry sighted in the long thicket-like heather. The dog bounds over heather; it doesn't gallop through it. Written reports from the 1800's (*Stonehenge, British Rural Sports*, 1875) note this head - neck carriage and describe it as a feature that distinguishes the rough Scotch greyhound from other regional greyhound types...

....the deerhound gallops with his head in the air, and his body raised off the ground, ready for a spring at the throat or ear...while the greyhound, with his head close to the ground, lies down ventre à terre; and he is also prepared to pick up his game, not pull it down.

The drive from the rear should be strong and balanced with the front. To achieve this, the whole shoulder assembly should move with a long reach which requires a long well laid back shoulder and longer upper arm. The front end movement should not be simply a pivoting extension of the foreleg upwards from the elbow or exaggerated show "TRAD" (tremendous reach and drive). A short straight shoulder and upper arm doesn't cover ground. It pounds on impact and a dog with this structure also tires quickly in the field. The entire shoulder assembly should work in unison with the rear. The topline should be maintained while moving and not flatten out. The overall appearance of lightness and effortless motion has been described as "the Deerhound float" and this lift when moving is a good indication of a fit hound with a balanced structure as noted above.

There is no guidance in the Standard as to whether a Deerhound should single track when it moves coming and going. Certainly in moving away there should be no sign of closeness or a hocky rear, nor too wide a swing of the hocks, all of which indicate lack of strength. In moving towards a person, some Deerhounds single track, some move parallel in front. A dog that single tracks or at least verges to the centre line moves more efficiently in the trot, but this is a galloping hound. Both going and coming the hound should appear to have only two legs. There should be no paddling of the pasterns, nor should the elbows be out or the front too wide although that latter fault is to be preferred in a galloping hound to a front that is too narrow with the legs appearing to come out of the same hole. Such a front, also described as "tied in front at the elbows", indicates lack of lung power, substance and conditioning.



(3) As tall as possible consistent with quality

This statement, the breed's nemesis, was slipped into the Standard sometime around 1914 and the result is an overall size increase over the past hundred years of several inches... well above the known functional height of the working deerhound. The original 1892 Standard by Hickman and Hood-Wright provided for:

Height of Dogs. - From 28in. to 30in., or even more if there be symmetry without coarseness, which is rare.

Height of Bitches. - From 26in. upwards. There can be no objection to a bitch being large, unless too coarse, as even at her greatest height she does not approach that of the dog, and, therefore, could not have been too big for work, as over-big dogs are.

Weight. - From 85lb. to 105lb. in dogs; from 65lb. to 80lb. in bitches.

We know the measurements of the best working Deerhounds...see Buskar and Bran (below):



Buskar (left pictured 1836):

Height at shoulder: 28 inches

Girth at chest 32 inches

Weight in running condition...85 pounds

The deer he killed that day in total weighed 308 pounds.

Source: Scrope (1839) *The Art of Deerstalking* p.347

Bran ("the famous" 1844-1845)

Height at shoulder: 29 inches

Girth: 31 ½ inches

"killed his first stag at 9 months (too early) and his last at 9 years".

Source: Vero Shaw (1879-91) *The Illustrated Book of the Dog*. XXXI. The Deerhound by G.A.Graham

Deerhounds greater than 30 inches at the shoulder are generally not functional on deer...that was a known fact. Those that were "overbig" and dysfunctional were, by the mid 1800s, being sent to England for dog show purposes. There was a very public battle in 1885 -1886 between Hickman, Graham, "Deerhound Breeder" (Parkes) and others like Hood-Wright, over height in Deerhounds. Hickman was a proponent of the working Deerhound and lamented that "*a race of show Deerhounds has been produced which the warmest advocate of size is compelled to admit having fallen away lamentably in the characteristics of the breed. This results from breeding for size alone ...in fact, they are coarse.*" (*The Stock-Keeper May 29, 1885*). Hood-Wright was a proponent of size and after their compromise of an upper limit of 30 inches "*or even more if there be symmetry without coarseness*", Hood-Wright joined Graham in the development of the Irish Wolfhound. Early reports from the 1800's describe both 28 inch males and 34 inch show males measured at the shoulder but those famous for their functionality were not more than 30 inches. The size battle continues, with the breed overall increasing in height an average 4 inches in the last century. Moderation appears to be the most reasonable approach if type is to be maintained.

(4) Head

Head-Long, level, well balanced, carried high.

Should be broadest at the ears, narrowing slightly to the eyes, with the muzzle tapering more decidedly to the nose. The muzzle should be pointed, but the teeth and lips level. The head should be long, the skull flat rather than round with a very slight rise over the eyes but nothing approaching a stop. The hair on the skull should be moderately long and softer than the rest of the coat. The nose should be black (in some blue fawns-blue) and slightly aquiline. In lighter colored dogs the black muzzle is preferable. There should be a good mustache of rather silky hair and a fair beard.

The preferred head has parallel planes (i.e. the part from the eyes to the nose should be in the same plane as that from the eyes to the occiput) with a slight rise up and over the eyes (but not a pronounced stop). The head should not look like a small Wolfhound head, but that of a large, strong jawed Greyhound. The length of the muzzle should appear and be, longer than the length of the skull as the jaws need length and strength to seize and hold the quarry.



(5) Body and (15) Chest

Body - Long, very deep in brisket, well-sprung ribs and great breadth across hips.

General formation is that of a Greyhound of larger size and bone. Chest deep rather than broad but not too narrow or slab-sided. Good girth of chest is indicative of great lung power. The loin well arched and drooping to the tail. A straight back is not desirable, this formation being unsuited for uphill work, and very unsightly.

Chest - Very deep but not too narrow.

A Deerhound is a “longdog” in hunting nomenclature...a dog that is slightly longer than tall. The croup should not be too steep nor too level: too steep a croup places the hindquarters too far under the galloping hound so all the power from the rear is lost; too level a croup forces the dog to work too hard to get sufficient leverage for a power take-off from the rear.

The loin, which is the area between the end of the ribs and the pelvis, should have a gentle curve, a topline which is not lost while moving. The loin should be muscular (not fat), providing strength and flexibility and propulsion in uphill work.



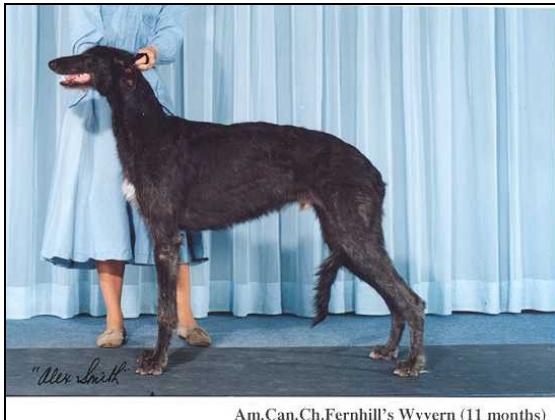
The Standard describes a mature Deerhound. A Deerhound generally isn't mature until 4 to 5 years and tends to look its best at 4 to 6 years. Most Deerhounds are shown between the ages of 1 and 4 years. This makes judging this breed very difficult.

What generally happens as the pup matures out between year one and four?

- the dog muscles up and develops more substance and depth of brisket;
- the movement tightens up;
- the leggy adolescent look should disappear as the chest drops;
- the croup drops slightly and rear angulation increases;
- the topline settles;
- the neck and chest fill out;
- the muzzle lengthens and head chisels out;
- the coat develops and some facial hair grows...

However, a young dog, while it will change as it matures, should have all the proportions, balance and overall movement of the adult.

Below a male: 11 months to 17 months



Below: 3 years to 6 years: →



Am.Can.Ch.Fernhill's Wyvern (3 years)



Am.Can.Ch.Fernhill's Wyvern (6 years)

(6) Forelegs (7) Thighs (8) Loins

Forelegs - Strong and quite straight, with elbows neither in nor out.

Thighs - Long and muscular, second thighs well muscled, stifles well bent.

Loins - Well arched, belly drawn up

Legs should be broad and flat, and good broad forearms and elbows are desirable.

Forelegs must, of course, be as straight as possible. Feet close and compact, with well-arranged toes. The hindquarters drooping, and as broad and powerful as possible, the hips being set wide apart. A narrow rear denotes lack of power. The stifles should be well bent. with great length from hip to hock, which should be broad and flat. Cow hocks, weak pasterns, straight stifles and splay feet are very bad faults.

Legs "broad and flat" describe the bladed bone that Deerhounds should have. Given its quarry, a Deerhound must have strong bones and good overall substance. Light, round bone breaks easily. Dense, bladed (shaped as an oval or egg in cross section) bone is necessary for this breed to be functional. Bitches are often considerably smaller than males, but dense bone should not be sacrificed even if size is not there. Light boned spindly Deerhounds whether male or female are a serious hazard to their health.

The hips are the driving force of the Deerhound, so the rear must be broad at the pelvis with wide parallel hocks. This is the number one fundamental requirement for a functional Deerhound due to its breed specific galloping style. Cow hocks, closeness behind and a narrow rear are very serious faults. Legs should be well muscled with a well defined and muscled first and second thigh. Bend of stifle should be moderate, neither too straight nor sickle-hocked as the former does not provide sufficient leverage for springing through heather and uphill work and the latter is too weak and inefficient, breaking down with hard use. To see the Deerhound constantly leaping in the air to remain sighted as it bounds through heather or tall grass is to understand why the Standard says about the rear "...as broad and powerful as possible, the hips being set wide apart..." .

(9) Coat

Coat - Rough and hard, with softer beard and brows

The hair on the body, neck and quarters should be harsh and wiry about 3 or 4 inches long; that on the head, breast and belly much softer. There should be a slight fringe on the inside of the forelegs and hind legs but nothing approaching the "feather" of a Collie. A woolly coat is bad. Some good strains have a mixture of silky coat with the hard which is preferable to a woolly coat. The climate of the United States tends to produce the mixed coat. The ideal coat is a thick, close-lying ragged coat, harsh or crisp to the touch...

There are striking differences in Deerhound coats today although the Standard specifies "harsh and wiry about 3 to 4 inches long". This is the mature coat of a 4 to 5 year old and a puppy exhibiting this length of coat will generally be over coated as an adult and need stripping to meet the Standard. Old prints show dogs with very little facial furnishings and short wiry coats which we would consider less than the amount specified in the Standard. On the other hand, early photographs of the show Deerhound offer both, some individuals with profuse coats and others with sleek coats. The function of the coat is described by Stonehenge in 1875: "...the rough coat is desirable to resist the cold and wet which would cripple a smooth dog while waiting for his master's shot...". The coat is simply to protect the hound from the elements and coarse underbrush. It should not be a liability by being too long and tearing and catching in the brush when running. Regardless of the length, the coat should be very hard to feel and that is difficult if it is overly profuse.

Stripping should never be necessary if the coat is correct. A Deerhound should grow a correct coat by inheritance and have the correct body shape without having to have it stripped, scissored, "furminated" and plucked onto the dog. Only the ears may need cleaning of the silver outer hair if this develops.

In 1871, Graham described "*The coat should be coarse and hard...a well covered head gives much "character"...Some breeders hold that no Deerhound is worthy of notice unless he has a good rough head, with plenty of beard and coat generally.....that the purity of the smooth skulled dog is to be doubted. Here, however they are at fault as several of the best known dogs have nearly smooth heads.*" (Vero Shaw, 1871 p. 229-230)

The comment about American coats in the AKC version of 1935 as reflecting the climate is, of course, total nonsense. Coats are a result of genes, not climate. As a noted British breeder once wrote..."I love a lot of coat as it can hide a multitude of faults"!

As for colour...that is easy...fifty shades of grey.

Colour is a matter of fancy, but the dark blue-gray is most preferred. Next come the darker and lighter grays or brindles, the darkest being generally preferred. Yellow and sandy red or red fawn, especially with black ears and muzzles, are equally high in estimation. This was the color of the oldest known strains-the McNeil and Chesthill Menzies. White is condemned by all authorities, but a white chest and white toes, occurring as they do in many of the darkest-colored dogs, are not objected to, although the less the better, for the Deerhound is a self-colored dog. A white blaze on the head, or a white collar, should entirely disqualify. The less white the better but a slight white tip to the stern occurs in some of the best strains.

While the Standard describes yellows, sandy red and red fawns with black ears and muzzles, these colours only appear in the prints of the 1700 and 1800s. Over the years all colour variations in Deerhounds have been lost. Today Deerhound colour is fairly uniform, being shades of grey from silver-grey to black with an occasional red or wheaten brindling in the coat of youngsters. This brindle turns to grey in the mature coat. White fore chest markings and some white on the feet is permitted. White on the head or as a collar is a disqualifying fault as it indicates impurity and stems from crosses in the past with collies and other breeds. It does not appear in the purebred Deerhounds of today.

(10) Feet:

Feet - Close, compact, with well-knuckled toes.

In 1870 Idstone wrote about the Deerhound foot:

“...the fault of the present day Deerhounds is certainly the open, loose flat foot. In proportion to the weight, the foot “goes” or deteriorates and the strain upon a Deerhound’s foot at speed amongst stones and boulders “in view” and roused to desperation is greater than that imposed upon any other domesticated animal. No dog but the “rough footed-Scot” could stand it”.

The Standard does not specify “cat” or “hare” feet, it says “close and compact”. The two middle toes in a Deerhound foot are always slightly longer than the side toes, but should be so strong and well knuckled that the overall appearance of the foot is small and tight in relation to the size of the dog. Long weak toes are a serious fault and break in rough terrain. The adult feet must above all be strong and tight with tough thick pads. Splay feet are functionally useless (however some puppies during teething may go down in the feet). As Miss A.N. Hartley describes in *The Deerhound* (1972), “*Feet are most important, the pads should be large and thick making the feet look almost as though they had little rubber balls under them*”.

(11) Ears

Ears-Small (dark) with Greyhoundlike carriage

Should be set on high; in repose, folded back like a Greyhound's, though raised above the head in excitement without losing the fold, and even in some cases semi-erect. A prick ear is bad. Big thick ears hanging flat to the head or heavily coated with long hair are bad faults. The ears should be soft, glossy, like a mouse's coat to the touch and the smaller the better. There should be no long coat or long fringe, but there is sometimes a silky, silvery coat on the body of the ear and the tip. On all Deerhounds, irrespective of color of coat, the ears should be black or dark colored.



(12) Eyes

Eyes - Dark, moderately full.

Should be dark—generally dark brown, brown or hazel. A very light eye is not liked. The eye should be moderately full, with a soft look in repose, but a keen, far away look when the Deerhound is roused. Rims of eyelids should be black.

A dark eye, slightly almond shaped, gives the Deerhound that wistful expression.



(13) Neck and (14) Shoulders

Neck - Long, well arched, very strong with prominent nape.

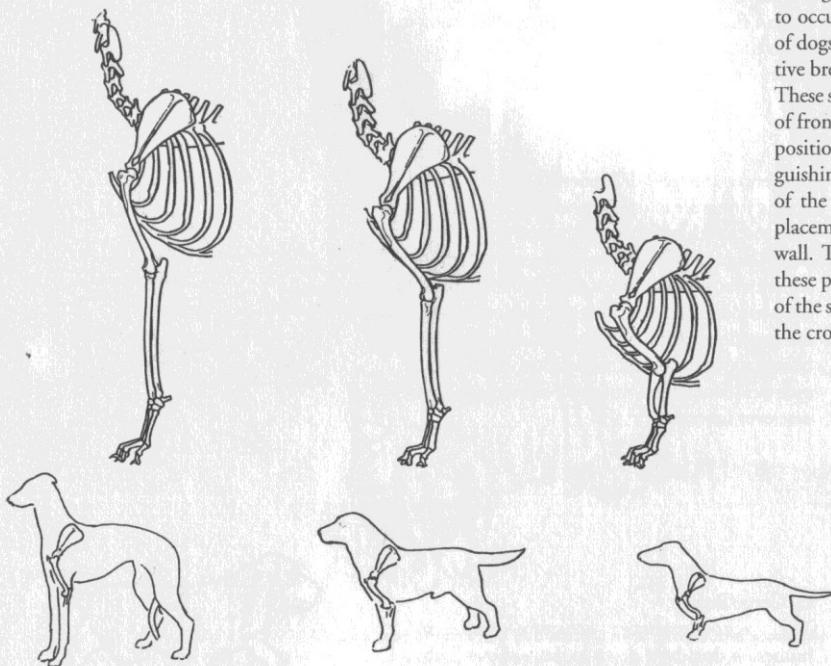
The neck should be long-of-a length befitting the Greyhound character of the dog. Extreme length is neither necessary nor desirable. Deerhounds do not stoop to their work like the Greyhounds. The mane, which every good specimen should have, sometimes detracts from the apparent length of the neck. The neck, however, must be strong as is necessary to hold a stag. The nape of the neck should be very prominent where the head is set on, and the throat clean cut at the angle and prominent. Shoulders should be well sloped; blades well back and not too much width between them. Loaded and straight shoulders are very bad faults.

Shoulders - Clean, set sloping

A strong well muscled neck is critically important. In taking down a deer, this hound leaps for the ear or jaw of the animal (thus avoiding retribution by the antlers) and the sudden weight of the dog tends to trip up the deer, causing the deer to break its neck. A 300 pound deer in full flight is essentially held by the neck of the dog and therefore as the Standard describes, strength is key and extreme length, while showy, is risky and unnecessary. A ewe (concave) neck denotes weakness. An arch or “crest” at the nape of the neck behind the ears is a functional indicator of a well muscled neck and adds considerably to the presence of the dog. The mane may give the appearance of a strong neck if profuse, but should not be used to hide a lack of muscling. The throat area should be clean and quality Deerhounds tend to grow their mane as a “ruff” that forms a V from either side of the jaw down to the fore chest (see cover photo).

Shoulders are low on the priority list (14) as befitting a galloping hound. The myth of the 45-degree shoulder angle as well as other misinformation on judging sighthound structure that had worked its way into the conventional wisdom of the last century has been debunked with the tools of modern science. Thanks to the measurements of Curtis Brown and modern photography, film, video, and the moving x-rays of cine-radiography done by Rachel Page Elliott (see below...p.63 *Dogsteps – A New Look* by Rachel Page Elliott, 2001) and others, we now have a better understanding of what makes a sighthound different from herding and other trotting breeds. Sighthounds, including Deerhounds will have straighter front shoulder and upper arm assembly angulation than the trotting breeds. The key is in symmetry or balance. A hound with a front that is matched by a complimentary degree of angulation in the rear will probably perform better at the gallop than one that is taken to extremes at only one end.

Three Comparative Types of Front Assemblies



Though countless variations in structure continue to occur through genetic mixtures, specific types of dogs have survived through centuries of selective breeding to meet our needs and preferences. These skeletal diagrams illustrate three basic kinds of front assemblies. While each indicates a good position and slope of the shoulder blade, distinguishing features reveal differences in angulation of the shoulder joint, set of the humerus and placement of the elbow in relation to the chest wall. The following page shows illustrations of these particular types showing not only structure of the shoulders, but also differences in outline of the croups and rear assemblies.

(16) Tail

Tail - Long and curved slightly, carried low.

Should be tolerably long, tapering and reaching to within 1 1/2 inches of the ground and about 1 1/2 inches below the hocks. Dropped perfectly down or curved when the Deerhound is still, when in motion or excited, curved, but in no instance lifted out of line of the back. It should be well covered with hair, on the inside, thick and wiry, underside longer and towards the end a slight fringe is not objectionable. A curl or ring tail is undesirable.

A thick, straight, well coated tail is preferred and as the Standard describes, it should hang below the hock within the area between an inch or so below the hock and above the ground. The Standard in specifying reaching to within 1 1/2 inches of the ground and 1 1/2 inches below the hocks, inadvertently misses the words “within the area” and as written could be interpreted as requiring a 3 inch hock, which is obviously not intended as the hock will vary in length to match the size of the dog . The tail is used as a rudder while running and thus has an important function. It should be strong and thick particularly at the base where the tail works with the rear to turn and brake the hound in flight. A thin rat-like tail is to be avoided. A curved tail is permitted but a ring tail is described as “undesirable”. Ring tails are unsightly but do not appear to be particularly dysfunctional. However, they spoil the overall appearance and the graceful flowing lines of the Deerhound. It is a gene that is difficult to eradicate and frustrating because a ring tail often do not appear until a puppy is 7 to 8 months old.

LESSONS LEARNED:

The Standard describes breed features which are both aesthetic and functional. A judge should always:

- ✓ Judge the dog, not the handler nor the “package”;
- ✓ Understand the difference between the functional points described in the Standard and why they are important and differentiate from those that are aesthetic – cosmetic;
- ✓ Reward dogs by placing a priority on functionality as this breed above all is a galloping hound developed for a specific prey and terrain;
- ✓ Avoid extremes in all points: extreme size, extreme bend of stifle, extreme roach over the loin, extreme depth of brisket, extreme coat...reward *moderation* as the best option for the long term health and conformation of the breed;
- ✓ Always remember that the Scottish Deerhound is not a giant Greyhound nor a small Irish Wolfhound; the Deerhound is **a rough-coated greyhound of larger size and bone.**



1904 Ch. Ayrshire



1992 Ch. Fernhill's Esprit