

3 Ls, 3 Ss, 2 Fs — keys to judging Dachshunds

THE DACHSHUND is indeed fortunate in having had more breed textbooks written about it than perhaps any other breed. In the United States, the United Kingdom and here in Australia we have been blessed with people who not only have the enthusiasm but also the ability to put on paper their thoughts, generated from their knowledge, for the benefit of the serious breeder, the exhibitor and the judge.

Of these books, perhaps the best known and most referred to is *The Dachshund* by Dr Eric Fitch Daglish, the book being accepted widely as the Dachie 'bible'. The copy I have at present (having 'lost' several in the past) is the eighth edition, which speaks for itself.

Dr Fitch Daglish described the ideal Dachshund as being the possessor of the three Ls (Length, Lowness to ground and Levelness of back) and the three Ss (Substance, Soundness and Symmetry), simplifying the word picture of the breed and its requirements. Would it not be great if all breeds of dog had a simple equation like the Dachshund to describe it in a nutshell? Clever Dr Daglish.

Now, let us move on to the revised Standard of the six varieties, which for the first time includes a paragraph on gait/movement. Unfortunately, breed Standards cannot go into great detail when describing requirements such as movement, so perhaps we can include another equation, ie the two Fs (Form and Function). These could be taken into consideration when the dog is being assessed on the move, and could be possibly best described as the ability, or otherwise, of the dog to retain its shape while moving correctly.

The Dachshund adapts readily to being moulded into shape on the table or when stacked on

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the ground, and if it still holds the shape or form when it moves, great! Then it is combining, successfully, both form and function. For those who wish to assess the Dachshund on the move, a triangle of adequate dimensions is essential, with a good long second leg.

When the dog moves away and back, the Standard calls for the legs and feet to move parallel to each other with the distance apart being the width of the shoulder and hip joints respectively. Simple to see and simple to assess, particularly in the Smooth and Wire-haired varieties, but not quite so easy to define in Long-haired varieties because of the necessary furnishings. Weak pasterns, overdone crook, and narrow or bandy hocks will soon be obvious on the first and third legs of the triangle.

On occasion with a markedly rectangular ring, it is advantageous for the judge to place the examination table about half-way along the long side of the ring, so that a long second leg of the triangle can be achieved. The second leg of the triangle is of paramount importance because it is at this stage that form and function together are revealed during profile action.

The stride is required to be long, free and flowing, and if this is present then there will be a minimum up-and-down movement of the trunk and the head. The dog will truly flow, with the head held steadily but not rigidly at about 11 o'clock. The profile view of the dog on the move will further display the overall balance of each part in relation to the other, as well as length to height. It will demonstrate correct forequarter and hindquarter angulation in the length of the reach in the forehead, and in drive in the rear.

Dogs with general levelness of topline, with no exaggerated drop behind the withers and no more than the required slight arch over the loin, and certainly no running up in the hindquarters, should be straight. Those which run up behind are frequently very soft in front pastern, too long in the hock or too straight in stifle, or perhaps all three.

Tail set and carriage are of great importance, and never seen to better advantage than when viewed in profile with the dog on the move. The correctly set tail will come off in line with the spine, without being carried too gaily. The set is an indicator of the angulation of the dog's croup, and a croup which is too steep restricts the drive of the hind legs, resulting in the dog moving under itself, producing the action often referred to as 'tummy tickling'.

In summing up, I cannot emphasise enough the benefits to be gained in giving a Dachshund a long second leg of the triangle for the final evaluation of its form and function. So much is revealed, on both the debit and the credit side, from viewing the profile action, that certainly no judge can afford not to take advantage of the opportunity.

THANK YOU

Without the help of many Dachshund people this feature would not have been possible. To them, and to everyone who added interest through their advertisements, National Dog says — thank you.