



Exploring The Whippet Breed Standards

By
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The Breed Standard

The breed standard is a Blue Print describing appearance, characteristics and temperament of the breed. This enables breeders to cement in the detailed hallmarks, to pass onto future generations.

Research shows the whippet breed was recognised by UK Kennel Club in 1891, and the first whippet breed standard goes back to 1904. Although nowhere as detailed as our current standards, it was focused on the hallmarks of the breed. The breeders of that era bred selectively, not based on colour or looks, but purely for function.

The breed was preserved from most genetic problems plagued by many pure bred dogs. A message here for modern day breeders where some breed for colour, and selectively breed for cosmetic reasons, and not for workability.

Remember: Just because it is, doesn't mean it should be!

	General appearance and characteristics	Temperament	Head and skull
Whippet Club standard as quoted by Freeman Lloyd in 1904			Long and lean, rather wide between the eyes, and flat on the top.
English Whippet Standard (June 2006)	Balanced combination of muscular power and strength with elegance and grace of outline. Built for speed and work. All forms of exaggeration should be avoided. An ideal companion. Highly adaptable in domestic and sporting surroundings	Gentle, affectionate, even disposition.	Long and lean, flat on top, tapering to muzzle with slight stop, rather wide between the eyes, jaws powerful and clean-cut. Nose black, in blues a bluish colour permitted, liver nose in creams and other dilute colours, in whites or parti-colour a butterfly nose permissible.
FCI Whippet Standard (March 2007)	Balanced combination of muscular power and strength with elegance and grace of outline. Built for speed and work. All forms of exaggeration should be avoided. An ideal companion. Highly adaptable in domestic and sporting surroundings	Gentle, affectionate, even disposition.	Long and lean, flat on top tapering to muzzle with slight stop, rather wide between the eyes. Nose black. In blues a bluish colour. In livers a liver nose. In isabel, creams or other diluted coat colours any colour except pink. Only in whites or parti-coloured a butterfly nose is permissible but not a completely unpigmented nose.
USA Whippet Standard (January 2008)	A medium size sighthound giving the appearance of elegance and fitness, denoting great speed, power and balance without coarseness. A true sporting hound that covers a maximum of distance with a minimum of lost motion. Should convey an impression of beautifully balanced muscular power and strength, combined with great elegance and grace of outline. Symmetry of outline, muscular development and powerful gait are the main considerations; the dog being built for speed and work, all forms of exaggeration should be avoided.	Amiable, friendly, gentle, but capable of great intensity during sporting pursuits.	Long and lean, fairly wide between ears, scarcely perceptible stop. Muzzle should be long and powerful denoting great strength of bite, without coarseness. Lack of underjaw should be strictly penalized. Nose leather to be entirely and uniformly pigmented. Color to be black, dark blue or dark brown, both so dark so as to appear nearly black.
Canadian Whippet Standard	A dog of moderate size, very alert, that can cover a maximum of distance with a minimum of lost motion, a true sporting hound. Should be put down in hard condition but with no suggestion of being muscle-bound.		Long and lean, fairly wide between the ears, scarcely perceptible stop, good length of muzzle which should be powerful without being coarse. Nose entirely black.



General Appearance

The GA should convey the major hallmarks of the breed. The UK, Australian and FCI version could add to match the American Standard;

- breed should be of medium size
- symmetry of outline, with a powerful gait.

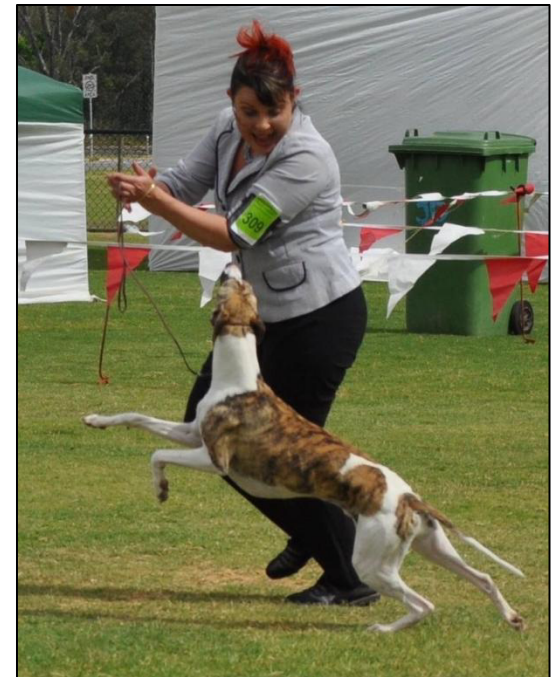
The Canadian standard I think could be a tad more descriptive; as no mention of balance; elegance or muscular strength.





Temperament

For me I think amiable , friendly and gentle describes a whippet perfectly. And yes they do get very excited when being involved with any sporting activities, be it out coursing or even sighting the neighbourhood cat.





Head and Skull

This width between the eyes dictates where the eye is set. Sight hounds need all round vision so the eyes are set on the outside edge of the skull. If the width is lacking here; the eyes are set with a forward view strengthening the width of skull and altering the eye shape to round.

I do question here why the American / Canadian Standard states “Wide between the ears” where the current country of origin states; wide between the eyes!





Head and Skull

All have long and lean, with UK, FCI and Australian versions have flat on top tapering to the muzzle.

We must stress that the head qualities are an important hallmark, and defines breed type and quality.

I think the addition in the American standard of the importance of strength to the under jaw is a hallmark that shouldn't be overlooked, Also the depth from the top of the head to the bottom jaw is imperative in a snap dog giving power, and strength.



Standard - Eyes, Ears, Mouth

	Eyes	Ears	Mouth
Whippet Club standard as quoted by Freeman Lloyd in 1904	Bright and fiery.	Small, fine in texture, and rose shape.	The jaw powerful yet cleanly cut. Teeth level and white.
English Whippet Standard (June 2006)	Oval, bright, expression very alert.	Rose shaped, small, fine in texture.	Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.
FCI Whippet Standard (March 2007)	Oval, bright, expression very alert.	Rose shaped, small, fine in texture.	Jaws strong, powerful and clean cut, with a perfect scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.
USA Whippet Standard (January 2008)	Keen intelligent alert expression. Eyes large, round to oval in shape. Small and/or almond shaped eyes are undesirable and to be faulted. Eyes to be dark brown to nearly black in color. Eye color can vary with coat color, but regardless of coat color dark eyes are always preferred. Light eyes are undesirable and yellow eyes are to be strictly penalized. Blue eye(s) or any portion of blue in the eye(s) as well as both eyes not being of the same color shall disqualify. Fully pigmented eyelids are desirable.	Rose ears, small, fine in texture; in repose, thrown back and folded along neck, fold should be maintained when at attention. Erect ears should be severely penalized.	Teeth of upper jaw should fit closely over teeth of lower jaw, creating a scissors bite. Teeth should be white and strong. Undershot shall disqualify. Overshot one-quarter inch or more shall disqualify.
Canadian Whippet Standard	Eyes large, intelligent, round in shape and dark hazel in colour, must be at least as dark as the coat colour. Expression should be keen and alert. A sully expression and lack of alertness to be considered most undesirable. Light yellow or oblique eyes should be strictly penalized.	Ears small, fine in texture, thrown back and folded. Semi-pricked when at attention. Gay ears are incorrect and should be severely penalized.	Teeth white, strong and even. Teeth of upper jaw should fit closely over the lower.



Eyes

Having width between the eyes allows a setting for the correct oval eye shape.

Country of origin currently requires the eye to be oval, bright with an alert expression. No mention of colour of the eye in FCI standard; only that the eye should be keeping with the coat colour.

* The American Standard requires a dark brown to nearly black in colour.

This old chestnut has for decades been controversial, and has generated some heated debates between the fancy, on other continents.

Although a dark eye is, I admit, aesthetically pleasing, it has no real function whatsoever!





Ears

All standards agree here that the ears should be small, fine and rose shaped. Being the finishing touch to the head; and a breed hallmark. A thick, large ear lacking a neat crisp fold should be avoided! As are pricked ears!



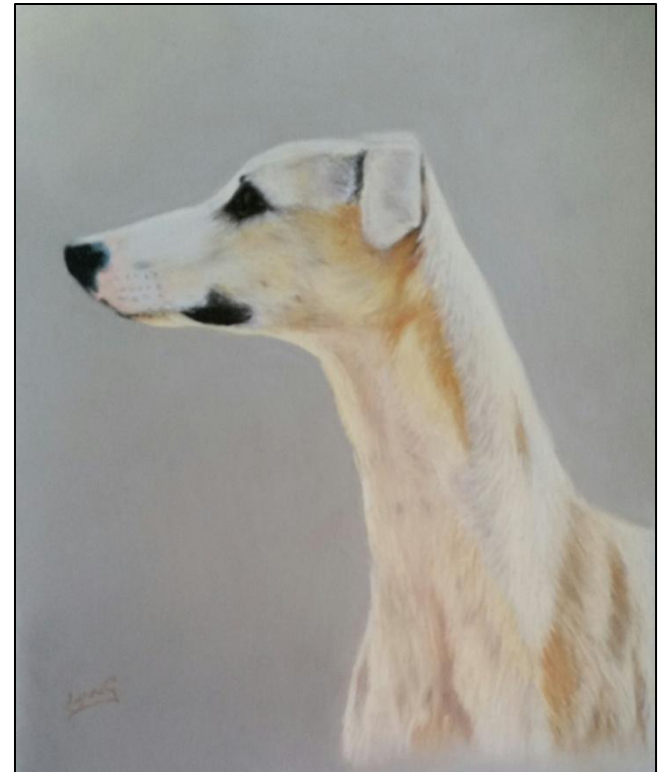


Mouth

Mostly all standards are on the same page with mouths. The American standard has a disqualification for undershot bites. And an allowance for 1/4 inch for overshot bites.

I feel the “Set square to the jaw” a very worthy addition from FCI UK standard. I wonder if many actually look for this in their dogs bite.

Squaring the jaw gives a strength to the snap, compared to a rounded off bite of the lower jaw that can contribute to a weakness and is often snipey.



Standard – Neck, Forequarters, Body

	Neck	Forequarters	Body
Whippet Club standard as quoted by Freeman Lloyd in 1904	Long and muscular, elegantly arched, and free from throatiness.	Shoulders oblique and muscular. Forelegs rather long, well set under dog, possessing fair amount of bone.	Chest deep and capacious. Broad and square back, rather long, and slightly arched over the loin. Loin should be strong and powerful
English Whippet Standard (June 2006)	Long, muscular, elegantly arched.	Shoulders well laid back with flat muscles. Moderate space between the shoulder blades at the withers. The upper arm is approximately of equal length to the shoulder, placed so that the elbow falls directly under the withers when viewed in profile. Forearms straight and upright with moderate bladed bone. Front not too wide. Pasterns strong with slight spring.	Chest very deep with plenty of heart room. Well filled in front. Brisket deep. Broad, well muscled back, firm, somewhat long, showing graceful arch over the loin but not humped. Ribs well sprung. Loin giving impression of strength and power. Definite tuck up.
FCI Whippet Standard (March 2007)	Long, muscular, elegantly arched.	Shoulders oblique and muscular, blades carried up to top of spine, where they are clearly defined. Forelegs straight and upright, front not too wide, pasterns strong with slight spring, elbows set well under body.	Chest very deep with plenty of heart room, brisket deep, well defined. Broad well muscled back, firm, somewhat long. Topline showing a graceful arch over loin but the dog is not humped. Ribs well sprung. Loin giving impression of strength and power. Belly with definite tuck up.

Standard – Neck, Forequarters, Body

	Neck	Forequarters	Body
USA Whippet Standard (January 2008)	<p>Neck long, clean and muscular, well arched with no suggestion of throatiness, widening gracefully into the top of the shoulder.</p> <p>A short thick neck, or a ewe neck, should be penalized.</p>	<p>Shoulder blade long, well laid back, with flat muscles, allowing for moderate space between shoulder blades at peak of withers. Upper arm of equal length, placed so that the elbow falls directly under the withers. The points of the elbows should point neither in nor out, but straight back. A steep shoulder, short upper arm, a heavily muscled or loaded shoulder, or a very narrow shoulder, all of which restricts low free movement, should be strictly penalized.</p> <p>Forelegs straight, giving appearance of strength and substance of bone. Pasterns strong, slightly bent and flexible. Bowed legs, tied-in elbows, legs lacking substance, legs set far under the body so as to create an exaggerated forechest, weak or upright pasterns should be strictly penalized.</p>	<p>The back is broad, firm and well muscled, having length over the loin. The backline runs smoothly from the withers with a graceful natural arch, not too accentuated, beginning over the loin and carrying through over the croup; the arch is continuous without flatness. (Die Rückenlinie läuft sanft vom Widerrist mit einem anmutigen natürlichen Bogen, nicht zu sehr betont, über die Lende und durchgehend über der Kruppe; der Bogen wird nicht unterbrochen und nicht flach.). A dip behind shoulder blades, wheelback, flat back, or a steep or flat croup, should be penalized. Brisket very deep, reaching as nearly as possible to the point of the elbow. Ibs well sprung, but with no suggestion of barrel shape. The space between the forelegs is filled in so that there is no appearance of a hollow between them. There is a definite tuckup of the underline. Length from forechest to buttocks equal to or slightly greater than height at the withers. Moderate bone throughout.</p>
Canadian Whippet Standard	<p>Long and muscular, well arched and with no suggestion of throatiness, widening gradually into the shoulders. Must not have any tendency to an „ewe“ neck.</p>	<p>Shoulders long, well laid back with long, flat muscles. Loaded shoulders are a very serious fault. Forelegs straight and rather long, held in line with the shoulders and not set under the body so as to make a forechest. Elbows should turn neither in nor out and move freely with the point of the shoulder. Fair amount of bone, which should carry right down to the feet. Pasterns strong.</p>	<p>Back strong and powerful, rather long with a good, natural arch over the loin creating a definite tuck-up of the underline, but covering a lot of ground. Brisket very deep and strong, reaching as nearly as possible to the point of the elbow. Ribs well sprung but with no suggestion of barrel shape. Should fill in the space between the forelegs so that there is no appearance of a hollow between them.</p>



Neck

Again most standards have an equal view on the neck. However I feel the American standard finishes their description off with “no suggestion of throatiness”.

Also widening gracefully into the shoulder and penalising a short thick, or a ewe neck are both important additions.

IMO the standard should also read; an extremely long or weak stovepipe neck should be avoided.



Forequarters

Although all standards are similar in this area, I feel the American standard superior in explaining the front.

The faults included here will deflect from the hallmark of free low reachy front movement.





Body

The body is one of the breeds primary hallmarks. The deep chest, well ribbing back cutting up gently into the loin; sufficient fill in front, smooth topline with arch over the loin, and a well placed croup complete the picture of a whippet.

Topline and underline should be in harmony. The arch over loin completes the shape for the breed. It should never be high in rump moving. Many mistake a rump high silhouette moving as arch over the loin. The rear should never be higher than the shoulder. The arch is muscular rather than skeletal.

The UK FCI standard asks for a definite tuck up of the belly.

Again, I think the American standard covers this most perfectly!



Standard – Hindquarters, Feet, Tail, Gait/Movement

	Hindquarters	Feet	Tail	Gait / Movement
Whippet Club standard as quoted by Freeman Lloyd in 1904	Strong and broad, across, stifles well bent, thighs broad and muscular, hocks well let down.	Round, well split up, with strong soles.	Long, tapering and nicely carried.	
English Whippet Standard (June 2006)	Strong, broad across the thighs, with well developed second thighs. Stifles well bent without exaggeration with hocks well let down. Able to stand naturally over a lot of ground.	Oval, well split up between toes, knuckles well arched, pads thick, nails strong.	No feathering. Long, tapering, reaching at least to the hock. when in action carried in a delicate curve not higher than the back.	<p>Should possess great freedom of action. In profile should move with a long, easy stride whilst holding topline.</p> <p>The forelegs should be thrown forward and low over the ground. Hind legs should come well under the body giving great propelling power.</p> <p>General movement not to look stilted, high stepping, short or mincing. True coming and going.</p>
FCI Whippet Standard (March 2007)	Strong, broad across thighs, stifles well bent, hocks well let down, well developed second thighs, dog able to stand over a lot of ground.	Very neat, well split up between toes, knuckles well arched, pads thick and strong.	No feathering. Long, tapering, when in action carried in a delicate curve but not higher than the level of the back.	<p>Perfectly free action. In profile should move with a long easy stride, maintaining the topline.</p> <p>The forelegs should be thrown well forward and low over the ground, hindlegs should come well under the body giving great and powerful drive.</p> <p>General movement not to be stilted, high stepping, short or mincing. True coming and going.</p>

Standard – Hindquarters, Feet, Tail, Gait/Movement

	Hindquarters	Feet	Tail	Gait / Movement
USA Whippet Standard (January 2008)	<p>Long and powerful. The thighs are broad and muscular, stifles well bent; muscles are long and flat and carry well down toward the hock. The hocks are well let down and close to the ground. Sickie or cow hocks should be strictly penalized.</p>	<p>Both front and rear feet must be well formed with hard, thick pads. Feet more hare than cat, but both are acceptable. Flat, splayed or soft feet without thick hard pads should be strictly penalized. Toes should be long, close and well arched. Nails strong and naturally short or of moderate length. Dewclaws may be removed.</p>	<p>The tail long and tapering, reaching to at least the inside of the hock when measured down along the hind leg. When the dog is in motion, the tail is carried low with only a gentle upward curve; tail should not be carried higher than top of back.</p>	<p>Low, free moving and smooth, with reach in the forequarters and strong drive in the hindquarters. The dog has great freedom of action when viewed from the side; the forelegs move forward close to the ground to give a long, low reach; the hind legs have strong propelling power. When moving and viewed from front or rear, legs should turn neither in nor out, nor should feet cross or interfere with each other. Lack of front reach or rear drive, or a short, hackney gait with high wrist action should be strictly penalized. Crossing in front or moving too close should be strictly penalized.</p>
Canadian Whippet Standard	<p>Long and powerful, stifles well bent, hocks well let down and close to the ground. Thighs broad and muscular, the muscles should be long and flat. A steep croup is most undesirable.</p>	<p>Feet must be well formed with strong, thick pads and well-knuckled up paws. A thin, flat open foot is a serious fault.</p>	<p>Long and tapering, should reach to a hip bone when drawn through between the hind legs. Must not be carried higher than the top of the back when moving.</p>	<p>Low, free moving and smooth, as long as is commensurate with the size of the dog. A short mincing gait with high knee action should be severely penalized.</p>



Hindquarters

I like the UK & FCI where it asks for strong, and broad across the thigh, stifles well bent.

When judging I measure the first and second thigh, wanting equal length in both bones for balance. A weak longer second thigh is detrimental to not only balance, but the powerful thrust is compromised!

A short hock tops off a good powerful rear.





Feet

Nothing is more important to a running hound than the feet.

An oval foot, resembling half a walnut with arched knuckles and toes well split up (see photo) are the ideal.

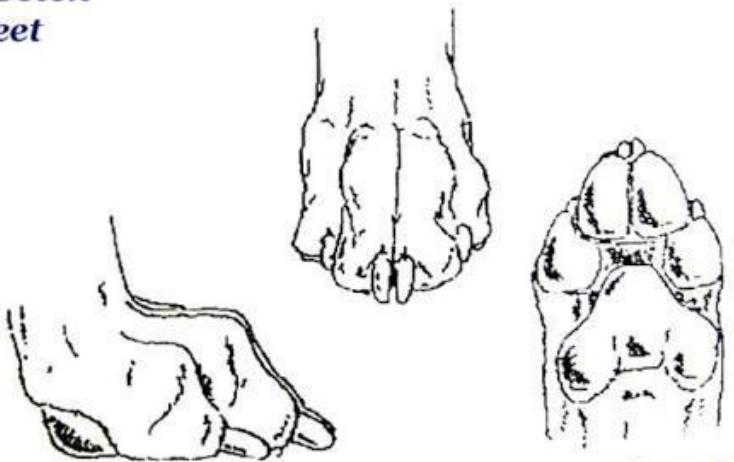
A round foot lacks flexion, and usually goes hand and hand with straight pasterns.

The American standard states hare foot or a cat foot is acceptable. Whereas I prefer the country of origin preferring an oval foot!



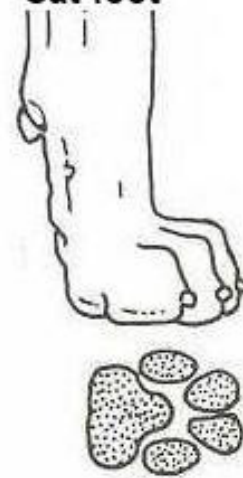
Feet

Voeten
Feet



Whippets.be

Cat-foot



Hare-foot





Tail

All standards are in tune in describing the tail.

A long tail carried low sets off a perfect silhouette.





Gait/Movement

The UK and FCI standard mentions that the front foot is thrown forward, low over the ground. I prefer this description for front movement as daisy cutting action is what we were led to believe to be correct.

I think all standards agree on the powerful thrust in the rear, overall freedom of action, and true coming and going. Anything other than soundness should be strictly penalised.





Gait/Movement



Standard – Coat, Colour, Size & Faults/Disqualifications

	Coat	Colour	Size	Faults- Disqualifications
Whippet Club standard as quoted by Freeman Lloyd in 1904	Fine and close.	Black, red, white, brindle, fawn, blue and the various mixtures of each.	Weight 20lb.-ca 9,1 kg	
English Whippet Standard (June 2006)	Fine, short, close in texture.	Any colour or mixture of colours.	Desirable height: Dogs 47-51 cm (18½-20 ins) Bitches 44-47 cm (17½-18½ ins)	Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.
FCI Whippet Standard (March 2007)	Fine, short, close in texture.	Any colour or mixture of colours.	Height at the withers: Dogs 47-51 cm (18½-20 ins) Bitches 44-47 cm (17½-18½ ins)	Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog. Eliminating faults: aggressive or overly shy. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.

Standard – Coat, Colour, Size & Faults/Disqualifications

	Coat	Colour	Size	Faults- Disqualifications
USA Whippet Standard (January 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short, close, smooth and firm in texture. Any other coat shall be a disqualification. Old scars and injuries, the result of work or accident, should not be allowed to prejudice the dog's chances in the show ring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colour immaterial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal height for dogs, 19 to 22 inches; for bitches, 18 to 21 inches, measured at the highest point of the withers. More than one-half inch above or below the stated limits will disqualify. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than one-half inch above or below stated height limits. Blue eye(s), any portion of blue in the eye(s), eyes not of the same color. Undershot; overshot one-quarter inch or more. Any coat other than short, close, smooth and firm in texture.
Canadian Whippet Standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close, smooth and firm in texture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colour immaterial. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideal height for dogs 19 - 22 inches; for bitches, 18 - 21 inches. These are not intended to be definite limits, only approximate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An undershot mouth shall disqualify.



Coat

I think FCI UK standard is better, stating 'fine, short close in texture'.

The skin too should be fine. A thick fleshy feel to the skin is incorrect as it would not cool down in a timely manner after a sprint.

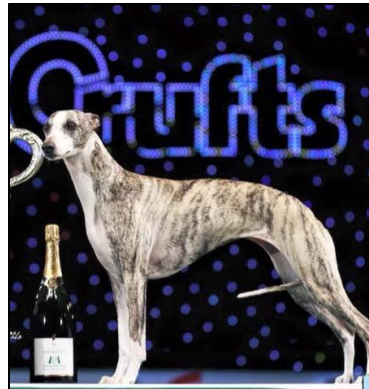




Colour

All standards agree any colour or mixture of colours.

‘Colour immaterial’ sums it up nicely!





Colour





Size

It's interesting that the earlier breed standard of 1904 mentioned weight and not size in the standard. 9kgs (20lb) is a very small whippet.

Today, in some instances the weight of a whippet can be up to, or well over 20kgs (44.9lb).

The standards have changed over many decades. Long gone is the original size restriction to a easier size to try to adhere to. I say "try" here as size is one section of the breed standard that, in my opinion, is one we all should strive to keep in check.

That being said, the American fancy have increased the size to 22inches for males, as I gather it became increasingly difficult to cap the size at 20"

So now in most cases, popping a whippet under our coat today would be almost impossible.



Disqualifications

- Disqualifications ;
- FCI standard does have disqualifications on abnormalities; either physical or behavioral.
- American standard states over or under size by one half inch , is a disqualification.
- Bite under or over one quarter of inch is a disqualification.
- As are blue eye/ or eyes.
- Any coat other than short, close, smooth and firm texture.
- Canadian standard disqualifies an undershot mouth.