

# BREED PRIORITIES WHIPPET

BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

Medium-sized, elegant, athletic, and smooth-coated, the Whippet is one of the smaller of the traditional sighthound breeds. While Greyhounds were owned by the aristocracy in earlier times, the Whippet was known as “the poor man’s greyhound” and used for poaching, hunting, and racing. The breed was 61<sup>st</sup> among AKC’s registrations in 2017, but is often well and successfully represented in dog shows when compared to several other breeds that rank higher.

Sixty Whippet breeder-judges were found, and those with email addresses were invited to take a survey to identify their priorities in their breed. Forty responded and agreed to participate. Twenty-seven returned surveys.

The breeder-judges averaged almost thirty years in the breed and nearly fifteen years judging the breed. Most have judged Whippet specialties and many have judged their national. Some judge just Whippets; others judge the hound group and more.

## Prioritizing Virtues

The survey included a list of characteristics from the Whippet standard for the breeder-judges to prioritize from the most important to the least important. Below is the list of virtues in sequence by the breeder-judges’ average priorities, with 1 being the most important.

1. Balance of muscular power and strength with elegance and grace of outline
2. Symmetry of outline
3. Backline with graceful natural arch over loin
4. Cover maximum distance with minimum lost motion
5. Shoulder blades long, well laid back
6. Length equal or slightly greater than height
7. Definite tuck-up of underline
8. Neck long, clean, muscular
9. Very deep brisket
10. Forelegs straight – appearance of strength and substance of bone
11. Eyes large and dark
12. Stifles well bent

*This article is not intended to promote fault or part judging. Nor is it to imply that any characteristic called for in the standard is unimportant. Judging, and breeding, is about prioritizing and about what the judge or breeder will forgive. Discussing priorities can help in learning how to better evaluate a breed.*

Questions, Comments, or Concerns? Contact AKC Judge Ms. Nikki Riggsbee at this email address: [nriggsbee@aol.com](mailto:nriggsbee@aol.com)

13. Amiable, friendly, gentle temperament
14. Scissor bite
15. Rose ears, small and fine
16. Tail reaching hipbone when drawn through hind legs

One expert did the second page of the survey, but did not prioritize the lists. So we had twenty-six responses on the lists rather than twenty-seven. The Whippet breeder-judges were more consistent prioritizing virtues than they were with faults. Thirteen of the virtues had majority agreement, many more than on most surveys; six of the faults garnered majorities.

All of the experts put "Tail reaching hipbone when drawn through hind legs" (16<sup>th</sup>) in the last quartile, with seventeen ranking it at the bottom. "Balance of muscular power and strength with elegance and grace of outline" (1<sup>st</sup>) was in the top quartile for twenty-four, with half of the group placing it first. Second place "Symmetry of outline" was ranked first by eight, with twenty having it in the top quartile.

Next greatest agreements were on "Backline with graceful natural arch over loin" (3<sup>rd</sup>) and "Amiable, friendly, gentle temperament" (13<sup>th</sup>), with eighteen. Almost as many agreed on "Scissor bite" (14<sup>th</sup>), putting it in or near the last quartile. Six had "Bite" closer to the middle, which raised its average.

Sixteen experts concurred on "Shoulder blades long, well laid back" (5<sup>th</sup>), "Neck long, clean, muscular" (8<sup>th</sup>), "Forelegs straight – appearance of strength and substance of bone" (10<sup>th</sup>), and "Rose ears, small and fine" (15<sup>th</sup>). "Shoulder blades" (5<sup>th</sup>) were fairly important for the majority, but seven had it nearer the middle. "Straight forelegs" (10<sup>th</sup>) were middling important for the bigger number, but seven had it below average. "Rose ears" (15<sup>th</sup>) were unimportant for the majority, with nine thought it closer to the middle.

The smallest majorities similarly valued "Length equal or slightly greater than height" (6<sup>th</sup>), "Eyes large and dark" (11<sup>th</sup>), and "Stifles well bent" (12<sup>th</sup>). "Length/height" (6<sup>th</sup>) was in the second quartile for fourteen, but in the top quartile for eight. "Eyes large/dark" (11<sup>th</sup>) was below average for the majority, but above midpoint for eight. "Stifles" (12<sup>th</sup>) were in the third quartile for fourteen, but the last quartile for another seven.

Thirteen breeder-judges ranked "Cover maximum distance with minimum lost motion" (4<sup>th</sup>) third through sixth, and six placed it first or second. "Very deep brisket" (9<sup>th</sup>) was in the third quartile for eleven, but the second quartile for nine. Ten thought "Definite tuck-up of underline" (7<sup>th</sup>) above average importance, eight had it below average, and five had it near the top.

"Scissors bite" (14<sup>th</sup>) and "Rose ears" (15<sup>th</sup>) were less than a tenth of a point apart and so could be considered equivalently important. "Tail length" (16<sup>th</sup>) averaged three points lower than the adjacent virtue, confirming its place at the bottom.

## Ranking Faults

The survey also included a list of Whippet faults taken directly or indirectly or derived from the standard for the breeder-

judges to prioritize. Below is the list of faults in sequence by the average rank, from most serious to least serious, with 1 being the most serious.

1. Lack of reach or drive
2. Sickie or cow hocks
3. Short upper arm
4. Steep croup
5. Too accentuated arch over loin
6. Flat, splayed feet
7. Weak or upright pasterns
8. Hollow between forelegs
9. Elbows pointing in or out
10. Short, thick neck
11. Barrel-shaped ribs
12. Lack of underjaw
13. Tail carried higher than top of back
14. Erect ears
15. More than a scarcely perceptible stop
16. Light eyes

There was less agreement when prioritizing faults than when ranking virtues. Those without majorities has split opinions. Most of the agreement was on the less serious faults.

Twenty-one breeder-judges agreed on "Lack of reach or drive" (1<sup>st</sup>) and "More than a scarcely perceptible stop" (15<sup>th</sup>). Next most agreement was on "Erect ears" (14<sup>th</sup>) followed by "Light eyes" (16<sup>th</sup>).

"Tail carried higher than top of back" (13<sup>th</sup>) was similarly valued by seventeen experts. The smallest majority concurred on "Lack of underjaw" (12<sup>th</sup>). Fourteen ranked it fairly low, but seven placed it more around midpoint which raised its average.

Thirteen surveys had "Steep croup" (4<sup>th</sup>) in the second quartile, but nine ranked it in the top quartile, improving its rank. Thirteen also had "Elbows pointing in or out" (9<sup>th</sup>) midpoint or above, but six others thought it below average.

The following faults had twelve of the breeder-judges agreeing: "Sickle or cow hocks" (2<sup>nd</sup>), "Short upper arm" (3<sup>rd</sup>), "Flat, splayed feet" (6<sup>th</sup>), "Hollow between forelegs" (8<sup>th</sup>), and "Short, thick neck" (10<sup>th</sup>). "Cow hocks" (2<sup>nd</sup>) was sixth through ninth for the bigger number, but ten thought it much more important. The reverse was the opinion on "Short upper arm" (3<sup>rd</sup>), with twelve putting it in the top quartile, but eleven ranking it lower.

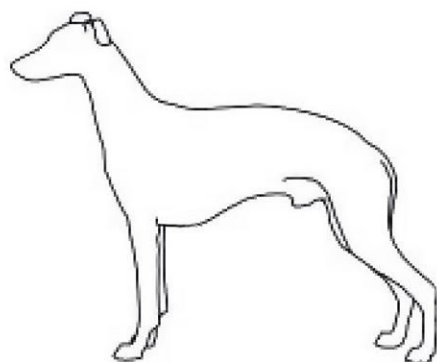
"Bad feet" (6<sup>th</sup>) had a split similar to "Short upper arm." "Hollow forechest" (8<sup>th</sup>) was midpoint or less serious for twelve, but nine thought it much more of a problem. Twelve had "Short, thick neck" (10<sup>th</sup>) in the third quartile, while seven had it in the second quartile.

Eleven surveys had "Weak or upright pasterns" (7<sup>th</sup>) around midpoint, but nine considered it much more serious. "Barrel-shaped ribs" (11<sup>th</sup>) was in the third quartile for eleven breeder-judges, while seven had it much more serious. Ten experts agreed on "Too accentuated arch over loin" (5<sup>th</sup>), putting it in the top quartile, and nine put it in the second quartile.

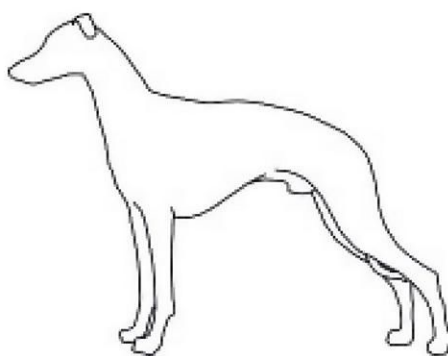
## Whippet Outlines

*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

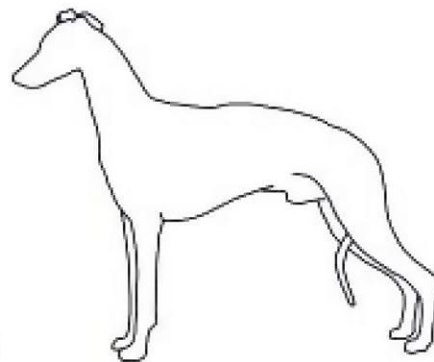
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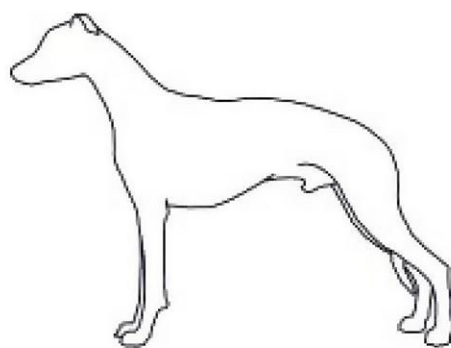
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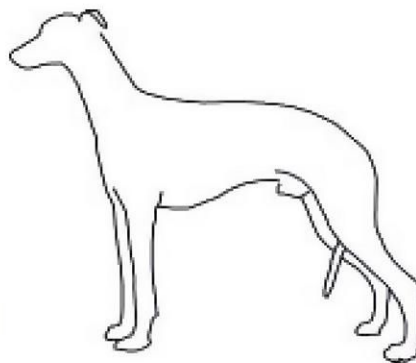
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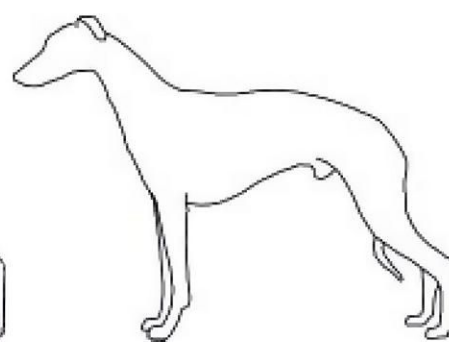
C



D



E



F

### Essential Characteristics

The breeder-judges were asked to name four to six characteristics that a Whippet must have when they evaluate the dogs. Their comments reflected their priorities in the lists above.

The Whippet breeder-judges overwhelmingly named side gait and outline as most important. Overall movement and balance were also listed as well as conditioning and head.

### Outlines

The breeder-judges were asked to place six Whippet dogs and six Whippet bitches based on outlines only. The outlines were of real dogs, so none was ideal. The breeder-judges' placements of the outlines were averaged to determine their collective selections. The placements might change if they were able to put their hands on the dogs and watch them move.

The top male based on the best average placement was Whippet "A," who had the best average rank and the most first placements among the boys. Those who liked dog "A" said he had "probably the best balance of front to rear," "smooth outline, good upper

arm layback, deep and long rib cage," "symmetry," "lovely turn of body with topline," "elegance, smoothness, and strength," and "most correct topline and Whippet shape of the males."

Next favored dog based on average placement was Whippet "B." Those who liked him said he had "a little better underline," "a proper outline," and was "set well under himself." The dog second to "A" in number of first placements was Whippet "C," who got these comments: "good length of loin, masculine, long neck, deep brisket, good angles," "symmetry of outline," "better overall balance, greater strength of underjaw and second thigh," "nice smooth curves, long lines, low hocks," and "properly placed topline, proper head."

The female with the best average placement of all twelve outlines was Whippet "Z." Those who like her said she had "length of loin, smooth curves, good angles and neck," "overall balance of outline," "elegance, fitness, strong second thighs," and was a "model for the breed with correct proportions."

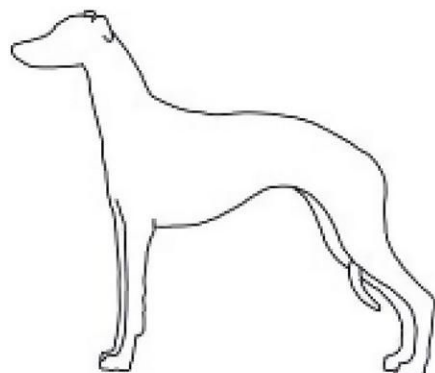
Right behind her in average rank but with 50% **more** first placements (more than any other outline) was Whippet "V." Comments from those who chose her first included "close to ideal in outline, plenty of curves, excellent front and rear, good underline,



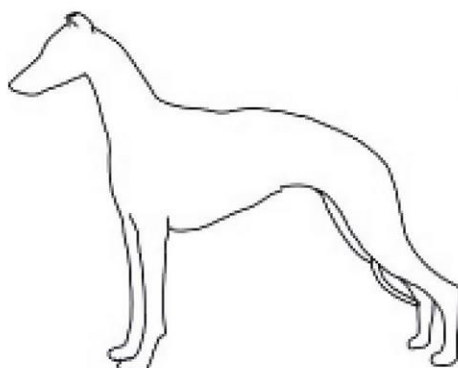
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*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

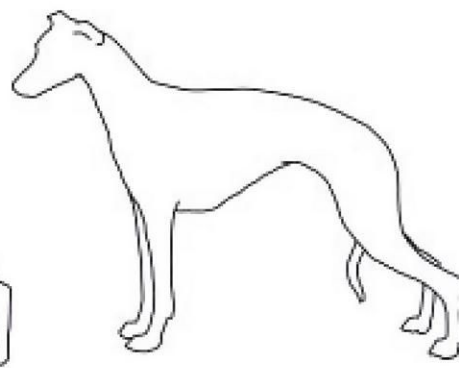
### BITCHES



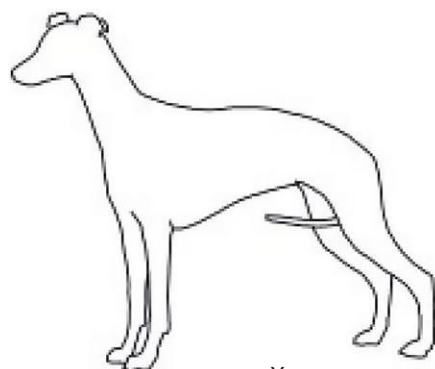
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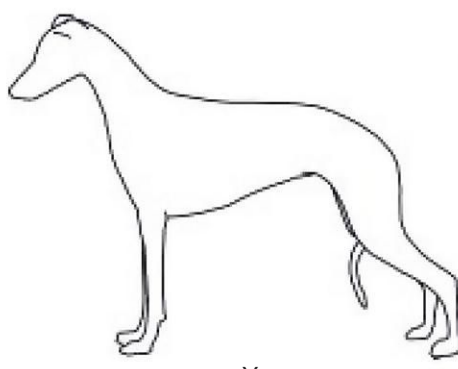
V



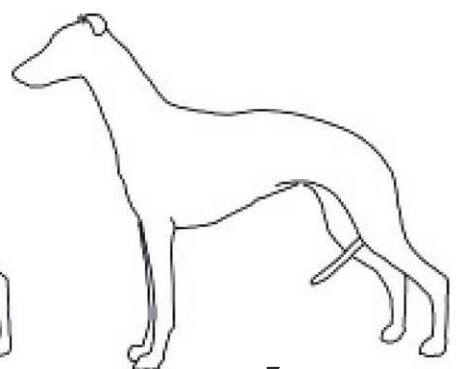
W



X



Y



Z

beautiful head and neck,” “better overall balance, good front,” “beautiful,” “most of the best,” “low hocks,” “very athletic looking,” and “feminine with good proportions.”

Best of Breed Whippet was bitch “V,” who was selected BOB three more times than the next highest, which was bitch “Z.” Only seven breeder-judges chose a Whippet dog for BOB, and dog “E” was the only male selected BOB by more than one judge. The bitches were preferred overall; the group thought the bitch outlines represented better type than the dog outlines.

Every male was placed first by at least two breeder-judges and was left out of the ribbons entirely by at least four of the judges. Dog “E” was unplaced on twenty surveys.

Only one outline, bitch “U,” did not receive any first placements. Every bitch was not placed in the ribbons by at least two of the breeder-judges. “U” was out of the ribbons for eighteen experts.

### Additional Comments

Some of the comments offered by the Whippet breeder-judges:

- Too many Whippets lack “S curves” and have narrow heads

with almond-shaped eyes.

- Don’t let color distract from conformation. Remember Whippets are a running breed.
- Whippets should be muscular and athletic without bulk or bulge, have smooth curves from nose to tail without interruption to the eye or hand, and have powerful, effortless movement – graceful and elegant.
- Whippets are athletes and must be shown in fit condition. They are about shape, balance, and powerful gait with no exaggeration.
- Whippets have become too long and big in recent years.
- Whippets that are long are usually over-angulated in the rear. The long, over-angulated dogs do not have the agility needed for lure coursing to make the tight turns.
- Whippets need improvement in several areas. Fronts are very upright. Bones are too fine. Heads are becoming too long and narrow with almond eyes.
- I like to see a graceful outline, but showing strength, no weakness or weediness.
- Most important are elegance and balance along with muscle and athleticism.
- Type is outline coupled with proper movement.

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## B R E E D P R I O R I T I E S - W H I P P E T

- If you are in doubt about height, MEASURE! It is a DQ and must be addressed.

Thanks to all the Whippet breeder-judges who shared their expertise.