

IL PICCOLO LEVRIERO ITALIANO

(The Italian Sighthound)

Comments to the FCI standard



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Drawings by Bitte Ahrens

Il Piccolo Levriero Italiano

“The Chieftains friends”
from the 14th century



- Almost no breed has been found painted and sculptured in the history as much as the Italian Sighthound.
- The Italian Sighthound was developed mainly through Italian, French and German influence. In France and Germany the breed was used for hunting small games together with falcons. In Italy it was mostly used for hunting rabbits or as a companion dog. In the early 20's, some Italian pioneers, i.e the Marquise Montecuccoli degli Erri (kennel Peltrengo) and the count Emilio Cavallini (kennel di Solcio), restarted the breeding in order to create more solid Italian lines and bring this breed back to its original type. The second World War was almost fatal to the breed and only since the 50's did the true renaissance of the Italian Sighthound begin with the founding of the Italian breed Club (November 21st, 1956). Then it was time for marquise Maria Luisa Incontri della Stufa (kennel del Calcione) to resume and admirably develop an important work, beside a few other Italian breed enthusiasts, and with the help from Austrian, German and French breeders.
- Today the Italian Sighthound is a very sweet and easy companion dog, but still has the passion of running and the will of hunting small games, just like the larger Sighthounds. It mainly hunts with its sight but its scent is as good as other dogs.
- Several Italian Sighthounds have done very well in obedience and some also in agility. In many countries all over the world, the breed also runs in lure coursing and racing. There are several dogs with Dual titles.
- The breed is today spread all over the world. Mind though that the breed standards differ a bit from the original FCI standard, in the USA, UK, SA and Australia, by allowing multi coloured dogs. In these countries they are competing in the TOY group.
- Always remember that this is a little SIGHTHOUND, Group 10 and does NOT belong to Group 9! The Italian Sighthound must be functional and sound, while keeping the typical elegance, the curvy outline and its unique kind of “dancing movement”.

The Italian Sighthound in Art & History...



1

1) Roman statue from the Vatican
2nd Century BC



2

2) Bronze statue of
Frederick II of Prussia (1712-1786)
He was a great admirer of Italian
Sighthounds and kept them close to
him throughout his life.



3

3) Painting - A Whole length of
Lady of Petrella, in the Kingdom of
Naples, exhibited 1762

Comments to the standard

General Appearance



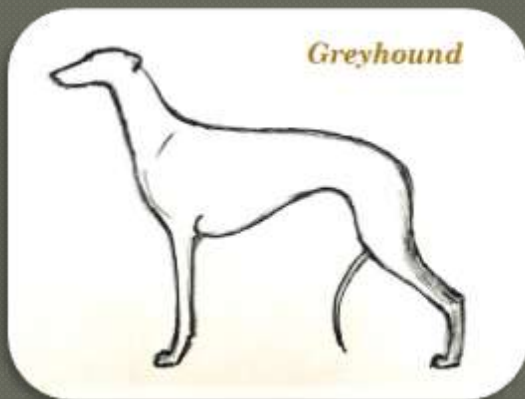
*** Important to remember!**

The Italian Sighthound must be considered as a “model of grace and distinction”

- It must always be very elegant and look like a little Sighthound but never with the head carriage or body proportions of the Whippet or the Greyhound (and absolutely nothing similar to a Miniature Pinscher!)
- The Italian Sighthound must be “high on its legs” and never short legged. The body proportions must be quadratic and it is considered as a rather short coupled dog.
- Elegant and with refined grace both standing and moving.
- The overall outline should be smooth without any sharp interruptions - so called “S-curves” are desirable.
- The unique construction combined with its elegant dancing gait, always with high head carriage, gives the breed its beautiful and so typical silhouette both standing and moving.

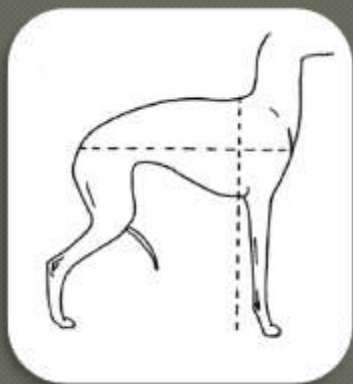
General appearances...

The **Italian Sighthound** must **NEVER** have the similar proportions as of the Greyhound or the Whippet!



The outline must be smooth, which means that the **Italian Sighthound should NEVER be underweight**. Spine, ribs and hip bones should be covered and just hardly visible! Young dogs can sometimes be a little lighter in weight, but **never** an adult dog!

General appearance... Correct body proportions:



Correct



Too long in loin
and too low on legs



A too long dog which only gives the impression of being short by making its top line extremely curved. Always have the dog moving before judging it ! The actual body length in Italian Sighthounds can change their silhouette just depending on temperature or wind!



Silver Atom - UK Ch 1924

An example of a lovely specimen of the breed!

Elegant, curvy with correct body proportions

Type and qualities, perfectly fitting also the present FCI standard .

General appearance...

Example of typical dogs



Female of excellent type and with ideal proportions. Correct outline, Nice neck and neck set. Well angulated and sound behind. Too much white for FCI standard!



Very elegant bitch, where it is easy to imagine the so called "S" curves. She stands well balanced with her rear slightly under herself, which is typical for the breed.



Correct short coupled bitch of excellent type. Correct angulations in front and rear.



Elegant dog of excellent type. Very nice head carriage. Correct top line and front but, although sound, he could be more angulated behind.



A very elegant dog of excellent type. Nice curvy outline and correctly angulated in front and rear.



A young dog with very typical silhouette. Could be slightly deeper in chest but otherwise very nice top line and underline. Correct angulations in front and rear. Stands with one front leg up which is very typical for the breed!

General appearance....

Behaviour/Temperament

- The Italian Sighthound must be curious and awake towards things around and should absolutely not stand still like a zombie when being shown. The gentle lively character is very typical for the breed.
- Many times their awake and sensitive character is confused with thoughts of nervous temperament.
- The Italian Sighthound does not have the calm quiet character of, for example, the Whippet. They often react strongly to loud noises and also to cold weather and wind, which might make it difficult sometimes to fairly judge them outdoors.
- **This breed should be judged on a stable and safe table in the ring .**
- It must be touchable and not afraid but they often can show a bit of the typical noble sighthound pride towards strangers.
- Terrified and untouchable dogs must never be accepted.



10 week
old puppy

Head



Correct Male head



Correct Female head

- The head is more chiseled under the eyes and the skull is slightly wider if compared to the Greyhound. This, together with the quite large roundish eyes, gives the Italian Sighthound its typical gentle but at the same time alert expression.
- Important to know! It is always easier to breed dogs with better heads on the slightly bigger dogs (37-38 cm.), than on the smaller dogs (around 34-36 cm.). Therefore, lovely heads on smaller specimens must be extra appreciated.
- We quite often see Italian Sighthounds with too weak under jaws. Pay attention, you very easy can be fooled, since the breed often shows a quite protruding nostril which makes it seem like a shorter and sometimes weak under jaw.

Head – different types



Beautiful head with excellent proportions . Perfect shaped eyes and ears correctly carried when in attention. Lovely neck with slight arch.



A beautiful well chiseled male head. Skull and muzzle parallel and of equal length.



Elegant male head with slightly marked stop. Correct under jaw. Thin and tight lips.



Small female with a “Toy” like head. Rounded skull and with a short snipey muzzle.



Male head which is missing the typical elegance. Wide skull with too strong cheeks. Shorter muzzle than skull.



Female with sweet expression but with too marked stop and a short muzzle. Ears are too low set.



Excellent female head with correct expression. Correct under jaw



Super feminine female head with lovely expression but tends to be too refined in the muzzle.

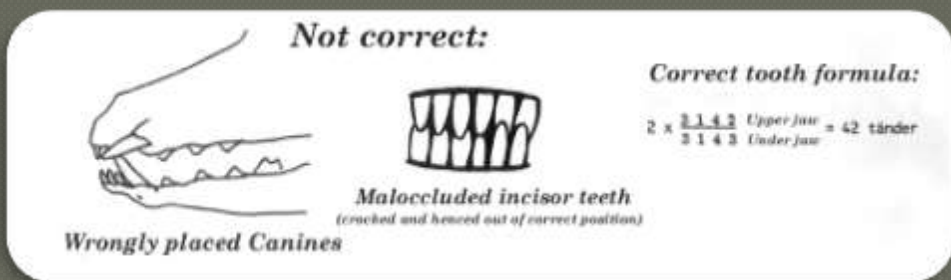
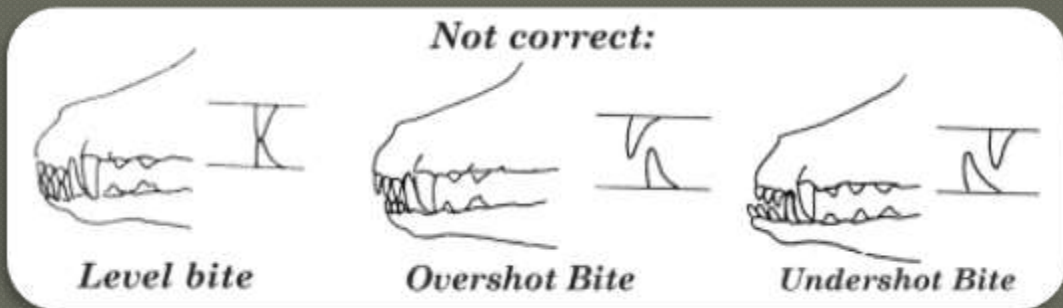
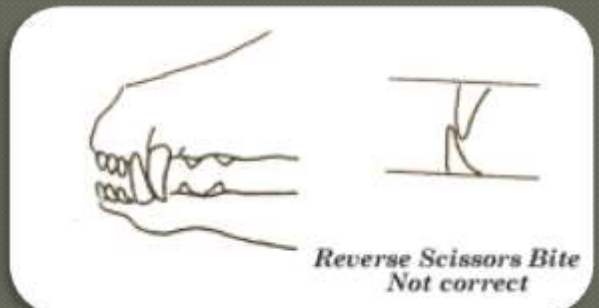
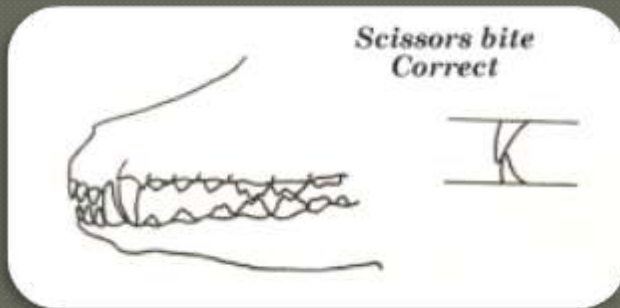


A wonderful male head with the typical curious expression. Correct ear placement and carriage.

Bite:

Dental defects to look out for in the breed

- Wrongly placed canines (like wild pigs) that are pointing forward
- Missing premolars – **quite common**
- Unlevel bite – seldom
- Overshot – seldom but seen in combination with weak under jaws
- Missing incisors – seldom



Bite: The bite is not only made by the teeth
but also by the jaws

Sometimes we see dogs with too short and weak underjaws. This must not be confused with a outstanding nose , which easily gives you an impression of a shorter jaw.



A male with excellent jaws
without being too strong



A female that could be
slightly longer in her foreface
but **with excellent jaws.**
Please observe how the nose
stands out a bit!



**A male with a very
nice head BUT with
too weak under jaw**

Eyes:

The eyes must be round and large but not profounded. This makes the breeds typical awake but anyway gentle expression.



The dog to the left has really nice round eye shape and of correct size. The dog on the right has too small almond shaped eyes and they are also slightly protruding.



Two isabella coloured dogs with lovely expressions.

Eyes: Some different expressions...

- Eyes should be as dark as possible. A too light eye usually gives a harder expression which is not at all typical for the breed. On the other hand, eye colour is less important than the shape of the eye.



A dog with a rather hard expression.
Small almond shaped eyes which are wrongly placed and with too light colour



A very pretty head with alert expression.
Nice roundish eye shape although eyes could be darker.

This female has **too small and untypical eyes ...**

BUT



Mind that the Italian Sighthounds often close their eyes a bit when being judged outdoors under the sun and it can seem that they have a more almond shaped eye.
If having doubts, try to get the dog in the shadow to correctly judge the shape of the eye and the expression.



EARS:



Correctly placed and shaped "Rose ear".
(particoloured American dog)



Correctly placed and kept ears when in attention, so called "Propeller ears". This dog also show correct size of ears which also is part of the dogs general expression



Too big and too long ears.



Correct size and carriage



Correct placed ears but the ears base is too big and wide



NOT correct
Upstanding erect ears are a serious fault!

* Remember that a bit light and unstable ears are quite often seen and are perfectly normal on puppies (3-6 months), especially when changing their teeth.

* Ears must never be thick or heavy!

* The Italian Sighthounds is **NOT** a breed that has to "show" ears in listening position when being shown!

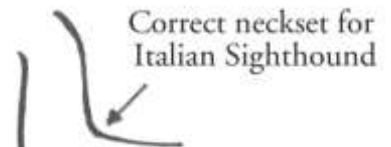


Normal puppy ears

Neck:

- The neck must never be short or heavy.
- One of the breed's hallmarks is the high held head and the beautiful elegant and slightly curved neck.
- Important that the head is high held also on the move!
- **The quite abrupt marked neck set is correct for the Italian Sighthound.**
- See the difference between the Italian Sighthound, the Greyhound and the Whippet!

The throat line should only be **SLIGHTLY** convex . It must not be too much convex, so that the neck seems thick or not elegant.



...to be compared with the more smooth neckset of the Greyhound and the Whippet



So called "Ewe neck" is NOT correct



Neck:

Here some examples of correct and less correct necks and neck carriage...



Ideal head and neck of equal length. Dry and elegant.



Correct neckset with nicely arched nape but a bit TOO convex throat line



Very elegant and typical young dog with excellent head and neck carriage



A dog with short unelegant neck which also is too forward and low set into the withers



The short and cobby necks totally destroy the overall impression of both these dogs



Body:

The body must give a shortcoupled quadratic impression.



Topline, Withers, Back, Loin, Croup, Chest ,Underline and belly:

- The **top line** of the Italian Sighthound should **never** be flat or be higher behind over the rump than over the withers in the front.
- You do not want to see any interruption from the top of the shoulders to the end of the croup – All must be a smooth curve line, which starts first with the straight back and then harmoniously become higher over the dorsal-lumbar region and then continue into a rather long sloping but wide and well muscled croup.

Important to notice that the croup is very sloping but is NEVER “falling off” in the same way as seen for example in the Whippet! The two outlines are VERY different.

- A too short and too steep croup will for sure make the dog look shorter in body than the perfectly square one who has a long, strong and correctly sloping croup. This can easily confuse the untrained eye.
- The steep short croup will surely negatively affect the ability for the dog to move with good effective drive in the rear movement.
- **The curvy top line of the Italian Sighthound must remain the same when the dog starts moving and must never get flat or become longer on the move.**

Body:

Topline, Withers, Back, Loin, Croup, Chest, Underline and belly:

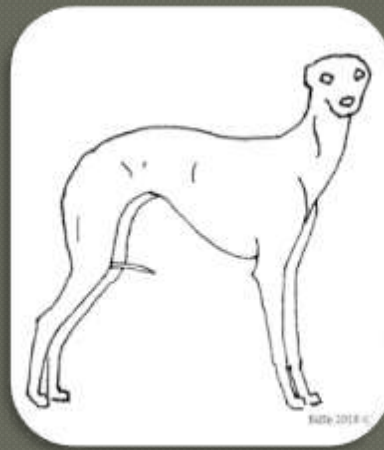
Unfortunately it is often seen dogs with either too flat topline or too overdone variations. Most common is the ones which are higher behind both standing and on the move, which totally destroy the typical outline of the breed.



Correct

Italian Sighthound outline

Elegant with harmonic, smooth “S” curves.
Correct body proportions, Nice head and neck carriage and excellent neck set, correct open front angulation with good length of legs.
Typical top line and underline.
A correct long sloping croup.
The rear is well angulated with good strength and a low hock.
This dog is built like a functional Sighthound and would most likely be a good mover as well,
both in the ring and as a galloping dog.



NOT correct outline!

Elegant and curvey – YES, but the proportions are totally wrong!

This dog has a untypical neck and neck set. It is over angulated in the front. Short on its front legs, overbuilt in the top line so it becomes higher behind than at the withers.
Steep short croup, too straight knee and hock angulations, thin thighs and too high hocks.
Most likely a poor mover with untypical front gait and no drive in the rear.

Only good point – smooth underline!

Body:

We often see big variations both in body proportions and outline!
Here a few examples...



Elegant young female that could be shorter in loin. Otherwise good proportions. Lacks a bit depth of chest.



Elegant male of excellent type. Could be more relaxed in its topline. A bit skinny in condition.



Quite **long** female which is affected by weather conditions!



Well proportioned male, which could be more elegant in his outline.



A quadratic elegant female, who gives the impression of being long, because of her rather flat topline.



A quite elegant dog but too overdone topline. This dog is **NOT** freezing! It lacks overall quality!



The distance from the ground to the elbow is too short compared to the length between the elbow and the withers. This makes her look long in body although she actually is quadratic!

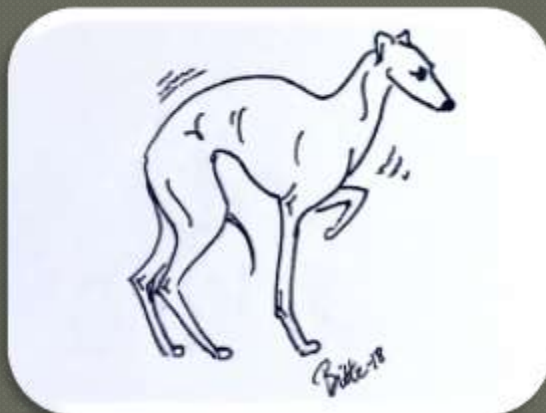


A male that is lacking breed type! Reminds more of a Greyhound in proportions. Rather heavy without the correct elegance.

Body:

- It is important to know and respect that the breed can be very sensitive when it comes to the environment.
- They react strongly if it is too cold and windy (or even rain). Very easy to get a wrong impression since few breeds can change their look as much as a freezing Italian Sighthound! A rather long flat dog might look very short coupled and curvy, meanwhile a dog with quite moderate angulations also might look well angulated just by kneeling down on its hocks.
- **The best way to see the correct REAL length and body proportions is when the dog is moving!**
- It can be almost impossible to fairly and correctly judge the breed if weather situation is not good.

The drawing below shows a typical example on how the cold or windy weather can affect the outline on an Italian Sighthound! This dog could actually be rather LONG with FLAT topline and with very moderate rear angulations! Instead, here it gives the false impression of being a very short coupled curvy dog with a lot of rear angulation!



Body:

Chest, Underline and belly...

The chest of the Italian Sighthound must be rather narrow in its front and in the bottom of the chest, BUT that does not mean that they should be like an upside down V!

They must not have the front fill like a Whippet or a Greyhound but not be totally empty as well.

The standard asks for a deep chest that should reach down to the elbow. In reality, there are very few dogs which present this desirable wish. Most Italian Sighthounds, even though they have a good depth of chest, seldom show their chest reaching down to the elbow, since the upper arm is rather long and since the front angle is very open.

Seen from above the breed, as typical also for several of the bigger sighthounds, must have just a slight spring of ribs but never a roundish volume.

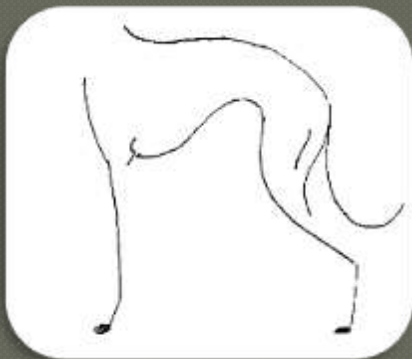
The underline is also extremely important for the overall shape. The length of brisket is shorter than the one seen in Whippets and Greyhounds.

Again, we are talking about the famous S – curves and here you want to see a short but very smooth brisket that accentuates and rises without any abruptness to the belly, which should be well tucked up.

Body: Chest ,Underline and belly...

CORRECT

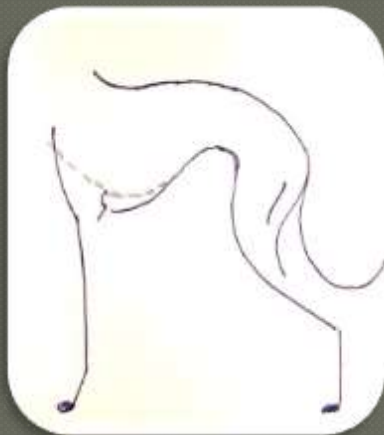
Smooth S - curved underline
with ideal depth of chest



Lacking depth and sternum
too short and abrupt rising



Lacking depth
in chest and is
too empty in front



Correct underline and depth of
chest but the Italian Sighthound
should NOT have the front fill
visible like this!



Tail:

- * The tail should be low set, fine and never with thick longer hair on its underpart .
It is absolutely correct and normal for the Italian Sighthound to keep the tail between the hind legs . It **does not** necessarily mean that the dog is timid or afraid.
- * It should be of such length that it reaches down to the top of the hock when stretched out.
- * A longer tail is better than a shorter one.
- It is quite often seen Italian Sighthounds with injured (broken) tail tips but it also happens (quite rare) that some are born with a kink tail (tail defect).
- It is rather common that Italian Sighthounds carry their tails a bit higher when it is very hot outside, BUT the tail must NEVER be carried over the top line at any moment.



Tail:



Correct



Correct



A bit too "happy" tail.

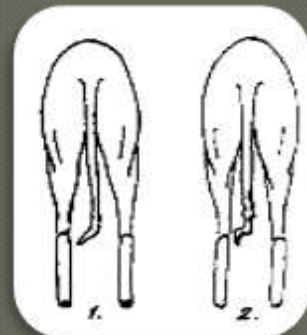
Very often Italian Sighthounds have the tail lifted up like this when it's very warm!



Disqualifying tail

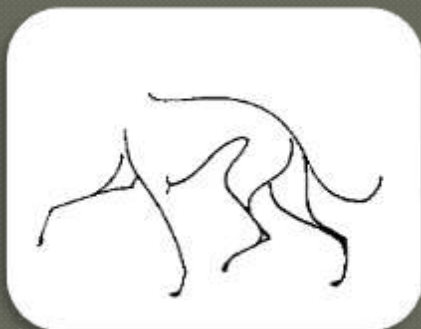


Tail which shows a healed fracture

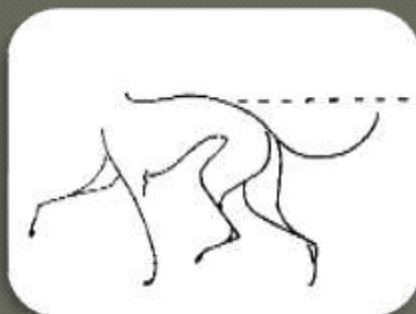


1. Very often the result after a tail fracture can look like this.

2. A real kink can often look like this, less or worst.



Both these pictures show dogs with **CORRECT** tail carriage on the move



Limbs:

Forequarters ...

Forequarters – General appearance :
The Italian Sighthound is a long legged dog.
Legs should be straight with lean muscles
and the bone must be elegant.

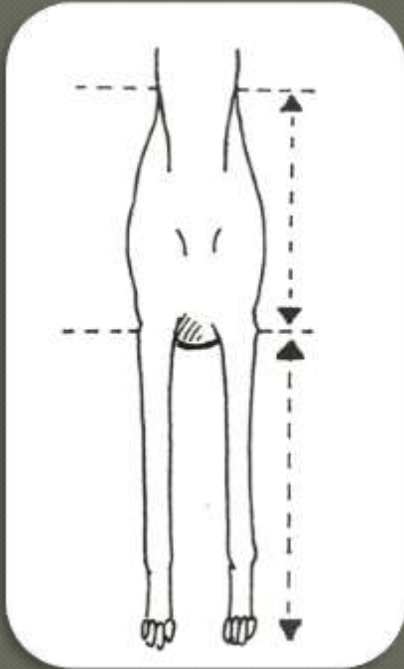
- Shoulders & Upper arm: The importance of the slightly sloping shoulder , the rather open front angulation, and the long upper arm cannot enough be pointed out since, without this, the Italian Sighthound will not have the typical unique front gait with lift and reach!
- On the other hand, it does not mean that the dog should be totally straight in the front!
If too straight, the movement will not have any reach at all and most likely it will give a hackney kind of movement which is not desired.
- * HACKNEY = is a very overdone trot with extremely high front action , without any reach.
- Elbows should be tight to the body .
- **The Italian Sighthound must never be wide in the front!**
- Forearm: The bone structure must be refined and always elegant. This is not the same as weak and fragile. On the other hand the bones are more “dry” especially around the carpus, if compared to the Whippet for example. The pasterns must not be weak or too straight. Since this is a running and jumping dog, it is important to have a slightly bent pastern.
- The feet are small with tight toes and OVAL in shape (more hare foot)
- – we do not want cat feet!

Nails should be well trimmed since the dog
otherwise easily gets more flat feet.

Limbs:

Forequaters . . .

CORRECT:



NOT CORRECT:



The Italian Sighthound must never be wide in the front!



Quite narrow front in the Italian Sighthound gives high risk for a crossing front movement. Instead, the dog should be expected to move parallel and sound !

Limbs:

Forequarters ...

Correct fronts where the distance from the ground to the elbow is slightly more than the distance from the elbow to the withers



Correct front – Open front angulation with good length of upper arm. Very nice depth of chest, reaching down to the elbow. **Correct bend of pastern.**

Could be more refined in bone structure!

Excellent shoulder and upper arm.

Nice dry and elegant bone.

Rather stiff in in pastern.

Chest could have more depth.



Correct front



Limbs:

Hindquarters...

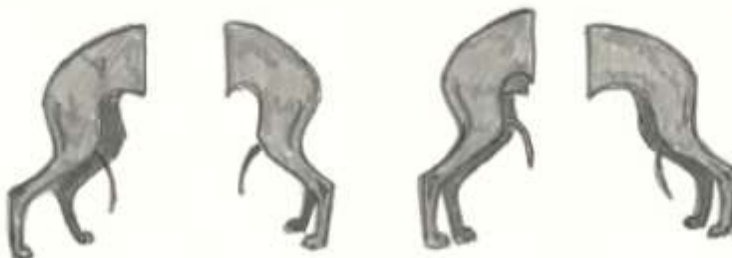
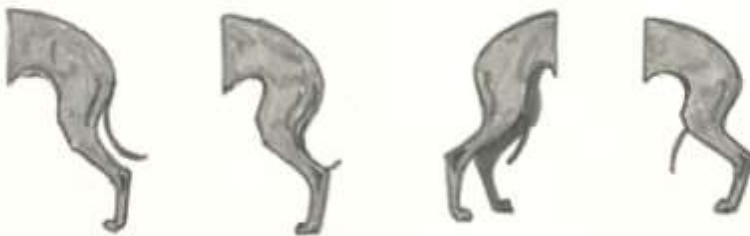
Thigh - Stifle(Knee) - Lower thigh – Metacarpus - Hindfeet

Hindquarters – General appearance :

Well angulated!



CORRECT
Hind angulation

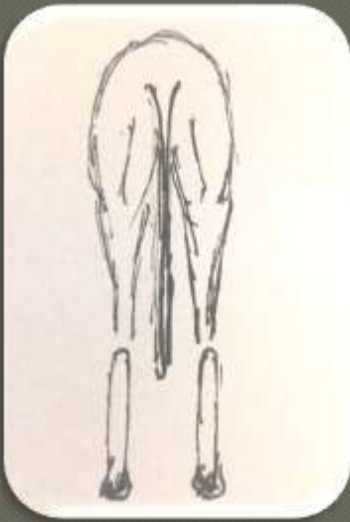


Pete '15

Limbs:

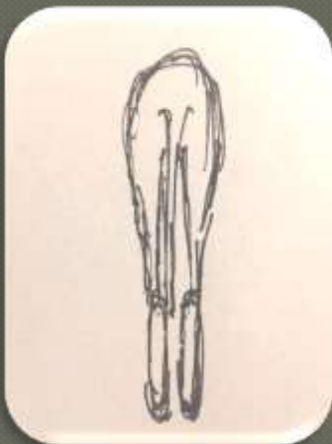
Hindquarters

Thigh – Stifle (Knee) - Lower thigh - Metacarpus – Hind feet



CORRECT
Seen from behind –
straight and parallel

NOT CORRECT:



Too narrow



Cow hocked



Turned out
hock

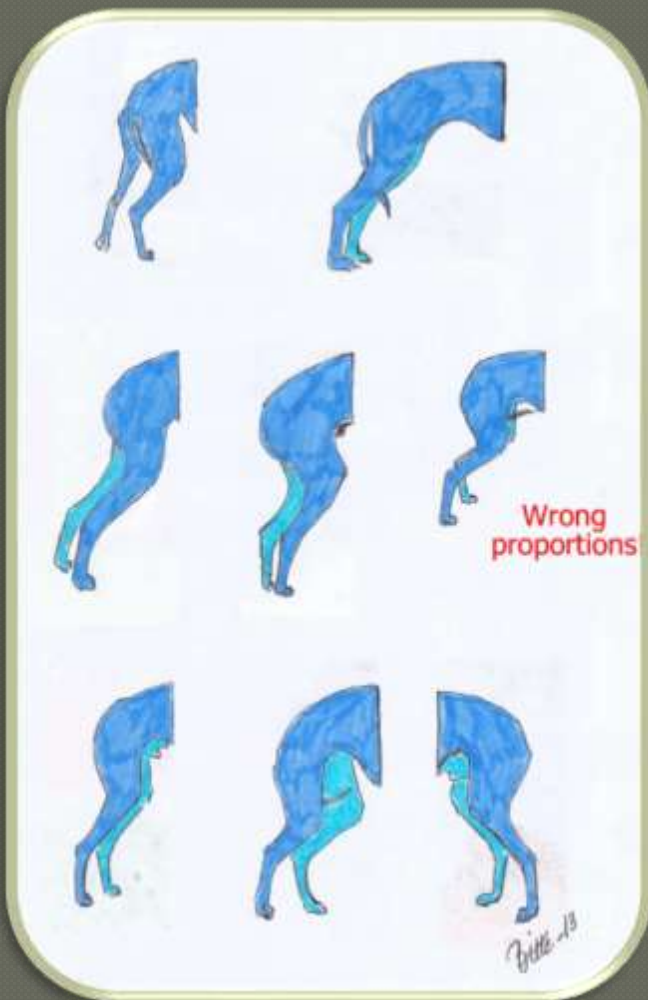
Limbs:

Hindquarters...

The Italian Sighthound is a galloping dog and it is of great importance that they are sound and strong in the hindquarters like the bigger Sighthounds. It should be able to move with a springy (dancing) trot, covering the ground with good drive in its rear.

To be able to do so, it must have correct angulations behind.

The Italian Sighthound is used both for lure coursing, agility and obedience, so this makes it also necessary to look for dogs which are sound and correctly angulated behind.



NOT CORRECT

Unfortunately bad hindquarters is one of the biggest problems in the breed. Far too many dogs are not correctly angulated behind, which affects negatively their soundness on the move. The drawings beside shows some often seen hindquarters.

Limbs:

Feet...

The standard is quite clear describing the feet.



Correct neat foot



Not correct – “Cat foot”

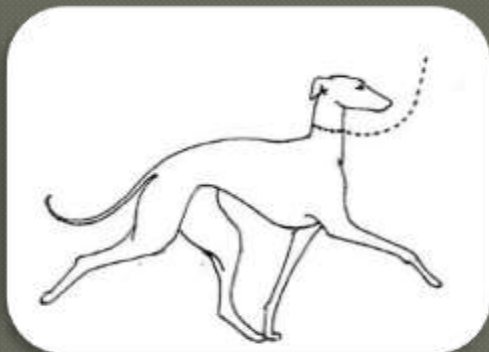


Too flat foot
- “Paperfoot”

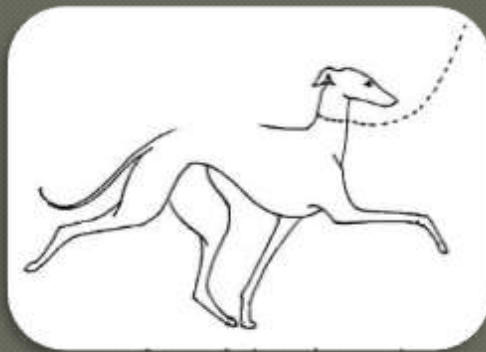


Sometimes too long nails
can affect the shape
of the feet!

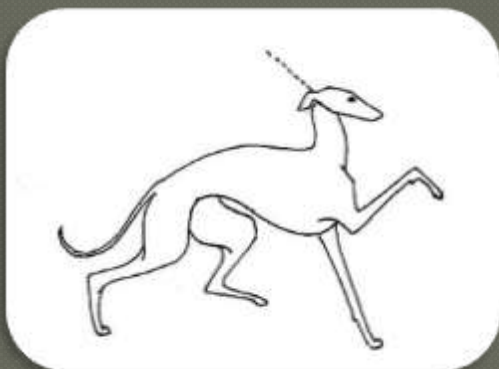
GAIT/MOVEMENT:



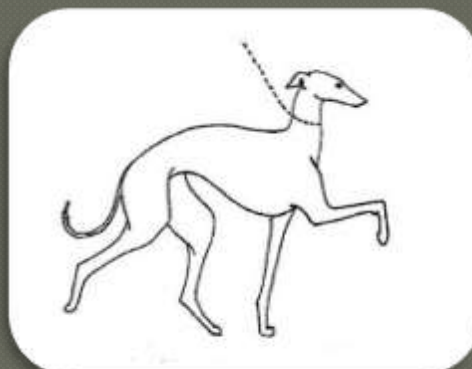
CORRECT : sound harmonious gait, however missing a little of the Italian Sighthound's typical front movement.



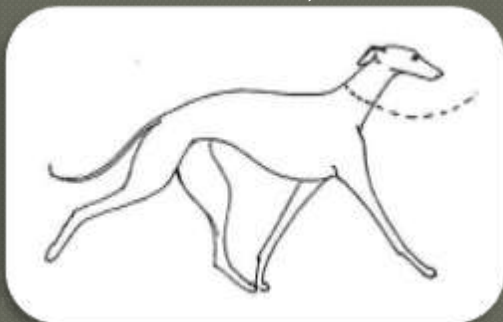
IDEAL: Springy, elegant gait with characteristic lift and bend of pastern, but without losing harmony and elasticity.



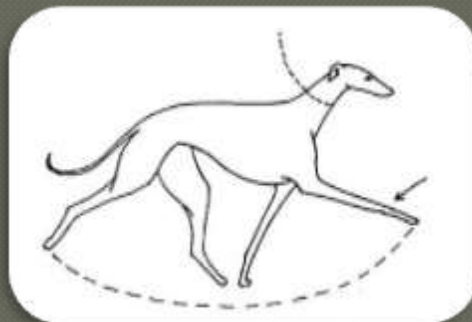
Fault: Overdone, so called "Hackney" gait. Very often made just by wrong handling (smart to let the dog show the movement on a loose lead if uncertain)



Fault: Short and restricted gait with overdone lift in the front movement. Not harmonious or effective.



Fault: Close to the ground movement with too low head carriage (Greyhound or Whippet gait)



Fault: "Goose-stepping" or paddling gait. Stiff pastern. Wrong neck carriage, flat top line. Lacking breed type.

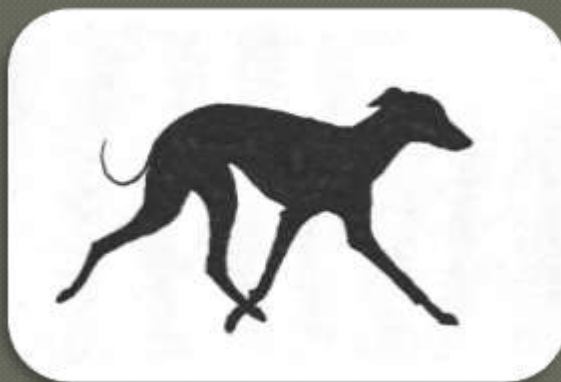
Gait/Movement:



Acceptable: Typical Italian Sighthound outline with lift and slight bend of pastern, without being too extreme. Curvy smooth top line. Just remember that the movement also must have reach in front and drive in the rear! It must never be short or just stepping. This dog could move with longer reach if being critical.



Correct: Springy, elegant gait with characteristic lift and bend of pastern, but without losing harmony and elasticity.



**NOT
CORRECT!!!**
(but very often seen !)

Fault: This dog is higher behind than in the front which gives a completely wrong outline. Head carriage and neck set are too low. **The movement is untypical and not elegant.** The dog is moving outside of the front legs. This dog does covers some ground, **but does not have either the breed typical outline or side gait!**

Size and Weight:

The standard is very clear about the size.

32-38 cm is a quite big difference for such a small dog.

Although the same size for males and females, it is certainly of great importance that the breed has a well distinct feminine and masculine appearance.

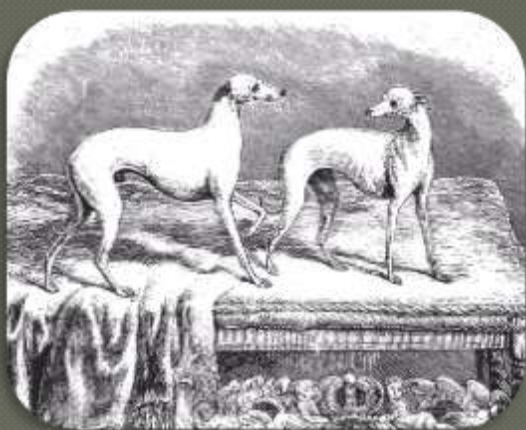
It is always easier to find good specimens near the top size limit than to find really quality dogs of the smaller sizes. With smaller size follows sometime a more toy like head and also a too fragile bone structure, which is not wanted in the Italian Sighthound although it should always stay very elegant. Weight should be relative to the dog's size and bone (not over 5 kilo) but the Italian Sighthound should NOT be kept skinny, to fit into the weight limit! The dogs should be in good condition, well covered with smooth outline. Not with hip bones and any rib visible.



Young female (34 cm) and male (36 cm)

Breed typical feature:

The elegant lifted front leg is a very typical pose for the Italian Sighthound, both when standing and sitting. It has been painted and pictured like this through the history of the breed, and it is a rather unique feature which breed enthusiasts want to keep!



The Greyhound or the Whippet does not normally stand or sit like this.

Skin & Coat:

The skin should be very fine and tight all over the body.

It is not so easy to describe the softness and the feeling of touching the Italian Sighthound coat. The coat should be very short, silky and fine in structure and also have a nice shine to it. The coat quality differ a bit between the different colours. The lack of coat , especially on the back and on the thighs, is a fault which also can be a health issue. Not to be mistaken for the very thin hair and on the throat and under the chest, which is absolutely normal.

The Italian Sighthound must not have any slightest trace of fringes on neck, on the back of the thighs or on the tail!

There must never be sign of trimming!

Colour:

Correct



Solid
Black

Acceptable



Black
Sable

Correct variations of Grey



Correct variations of Isabella



Acceptable
Blue fawn
(Grey with an
undertone of beige)

Correct variations of Isabella (Yellowish beige to light creme colour)



Mind that, to the more
diluted colours, the nose
and the lips might be
dark brown or blue!

Colours and markings:

Less desirable and disqualifying...

Less desirable colours:



The solid RED colour is not the same as an ISABELLA (Yellowish/Beige) Anyhow, it is kind of accepted and is more common out of Europe



The red or yellow dog with black mask and shadings is more common in Europe. It is not a totally correct solid colour but has always been accepted.



A sable dog with lighter shades all over the body is not a clean solid colour and therefore less desirable colour.

CORRECT:

White ONLY admitted on the chest and on the feet like the drawing shows.



Disqualifying white markings:

This is an Irish marked dog. Particoloured dogs are only disqualified in Italy and all FCI countries.



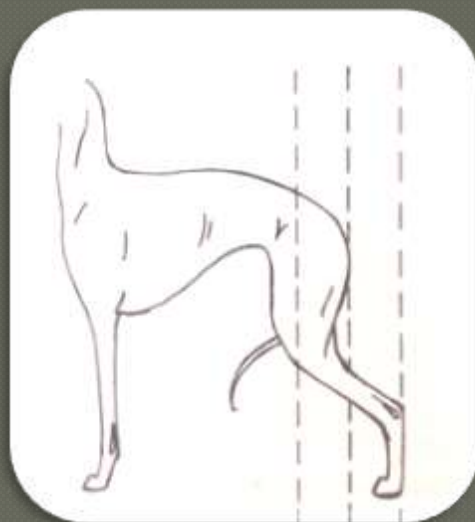
The way of handling of the Italian Sighthound can make a huge difference for its silhouette:

Correct



Many dogs stand naturally more comfortable like this. The more “old fashioned” way of showing:

Correct



A more “modern” way of handling. The normal stack when the Italian Sighthound is relaxed. Stands in good balance.

Not correct



On the left: Over stacked dog that loses the balance and the typical outline

