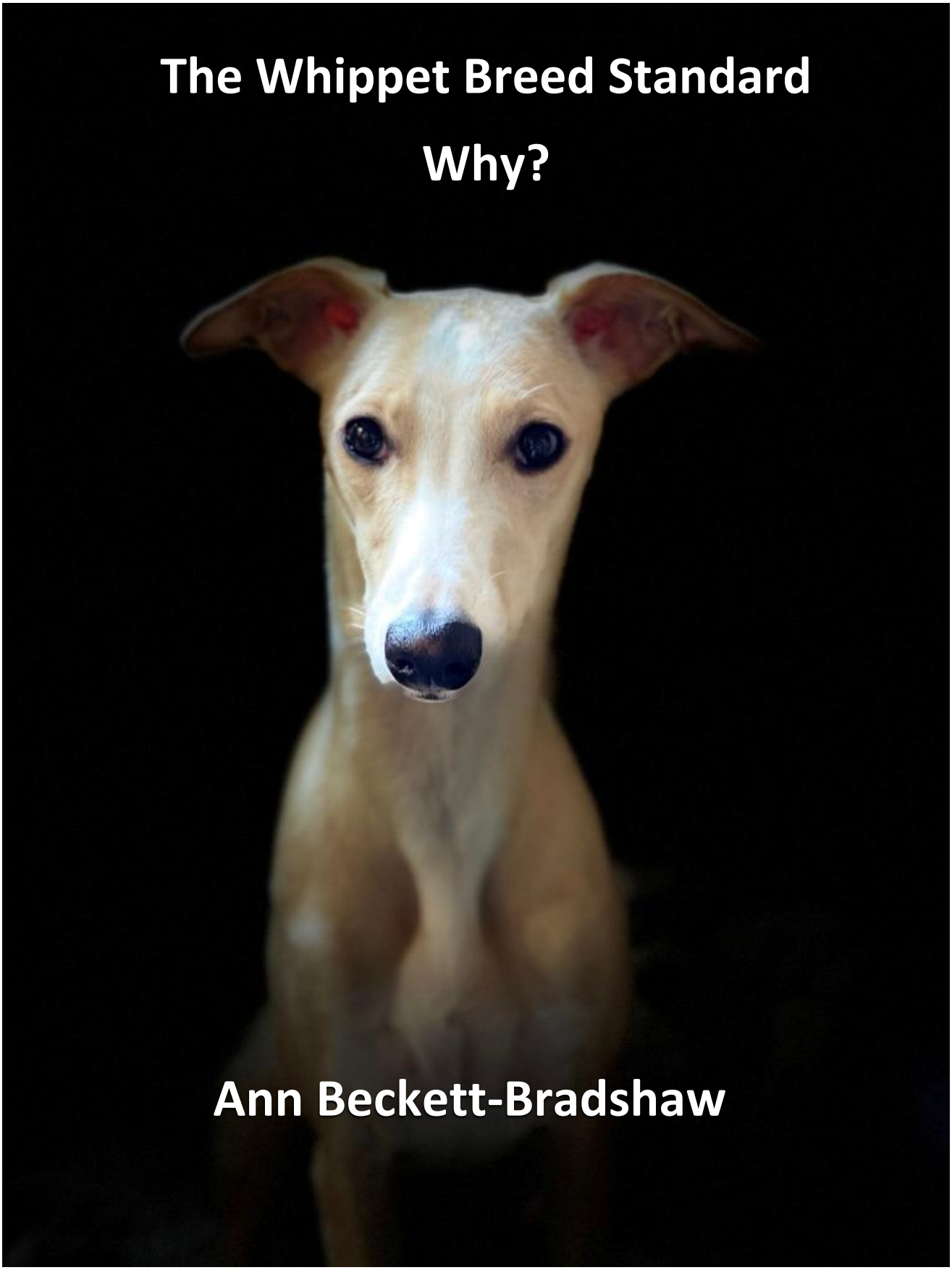
The Whippet Breed Standard

Why?



Ann Beckett-Bradshaw

The Whippet Breed Standard – Why? ©Ann Beckett-Bradshaw & UK Whippet Breed Council V2 2025

THE WHIPPET BREED STANDARD – WHY?

We know WHY we have a Breed Standard - it is the blueprint of any pedigree dog; it describes what you need to ensure that any dog is a typical representative of its' breed. What is not always clear, is the PURPOSE of the elements mentioned in that standard. WHY do we want shoulders with flat muscles, a head which is rather wide between the eyes, a desirable size definition?! What do these things DO?

The Whippet should be a functioning hunter, he wasn't intended to be 'just' a pet, although he is excellent in that regard.

It was anticipated that he would live in a small home with his family, provide sport, and sometimes bring home the family supper. So, he must be an easy-going little powerhouse, but successfully tenacious too.

His conformation must be correct so that he could function efficiently, both on the field and on the racetrack.

He didn't need to be 'pretty' but he must have his eyes positioned correctly, small fine, rose shaped ears and a correct bite.

He must have a fine, close coat and be streamlined to reduce any drag on his body which would force him into greater effort and therefore more energy loss.

He must have sufficient 'heart and lung room' for respiration whilst his body is under its' greatest stress.

He must be fed, and his muscles conditioned sufficiently to provide both energy and speed.

He must move soundly and true to prevent interference by his own feet when running.

His vulnerable points must be correctly made, and strong enough to prevent breakdown and failure.

Through photographs and illustrations, I have tried to explain some of the fundamental descriptions of the Whippet Breed Standard and how they affect both the purpose and function of this remarkable little sighthound.

Ann Beckett-Bradshaw

General Appearance, Characteristics and Temperament

Balanced combination of muscular power and strength with elegance & grace of outline. Built for speed and work. All forms of exaggeration should be avoided. CHARACTERISTICS-An ideal companion. Highly adaptable in domestic and sporting surroundings. TEMPERAMENT-Gentle affectionate, even disposition.

The Whippet must be a tough little 'powerhouse' – but small enough to live in a little 2 up 2 down miners' cottage along with the family.



Miners' cottages were, and still are very small. In most cases there are two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs.

Facilities were of course, outside!
This row of little cottages is only a few hundred yards from my home in Cumbria.







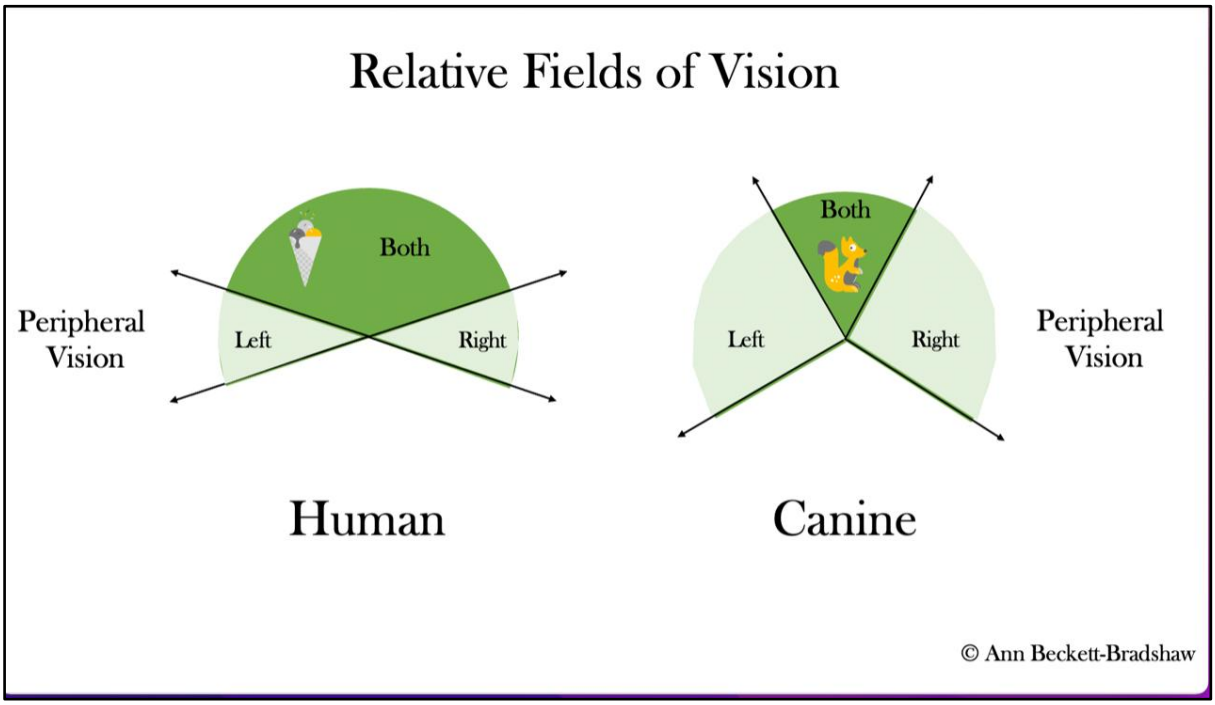
Whippets must be gentle enough to be of no risk to the family (particularly the children) but must also be able to assume their more sporting obligations.

This breed was developed to be multipurpose – to live with the family, race for sport and money, and still have sufficient 'prey drive' in order to catch game to 'Fill The Pot'.
Exaggeration produces weakness, whippets MUST be fit for purpose.
Dogs are 'genetically programmed' to develop physically for speed OR strength.

Head and Skull, Eyes, Ears and Mouth

Long and lean, flat on top, tapering to muzzle with slight stop, rather wide between the eyes, jaws powerful and clean-cut. Nose black or blue depending on coat colour. Nose liver in creams. In whites or particolours a butterfly nose is permissible. EYES - Oval, bright, expression very alert. EARS - Rose shaped, small, fine in texture. MOUTH - Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite; i.e. upper teeth overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

Most of this description is streamlining. Reduce drag and you have a faster athlete. The set of the eyes is important, not only to be able to see their prey in front, but to have some peripheral vision of it as it turns in a different direction, and to be able to locate the position of other members of the hunting unit. Dogs have greater peripheral vision than humans but less central focus.





This Whippet has overrun the lure, but still has it within peripheral vision.



These three Whippets are playing but you can clearly see what their peripheral and focal vision is aware of.



There is absolutely no question what these same three Whippets are focused on now!



Small fine rose ears will provide less wind resistance than large stiff pricked ears. The Whippet is a Sighthound so their ears are not required for hunting by sound, although they will use them if necessary.
A strong jaw with a correct bite is needed to catch, hold and dispatch prey.

Neck

Long, muscular, elegantly arched.

Muscles attached through the neck and front legs are some of the longest in the Whippet body.

A broad strong base is required to fit in with the shoulders and to be able to reach for and pick up prey.

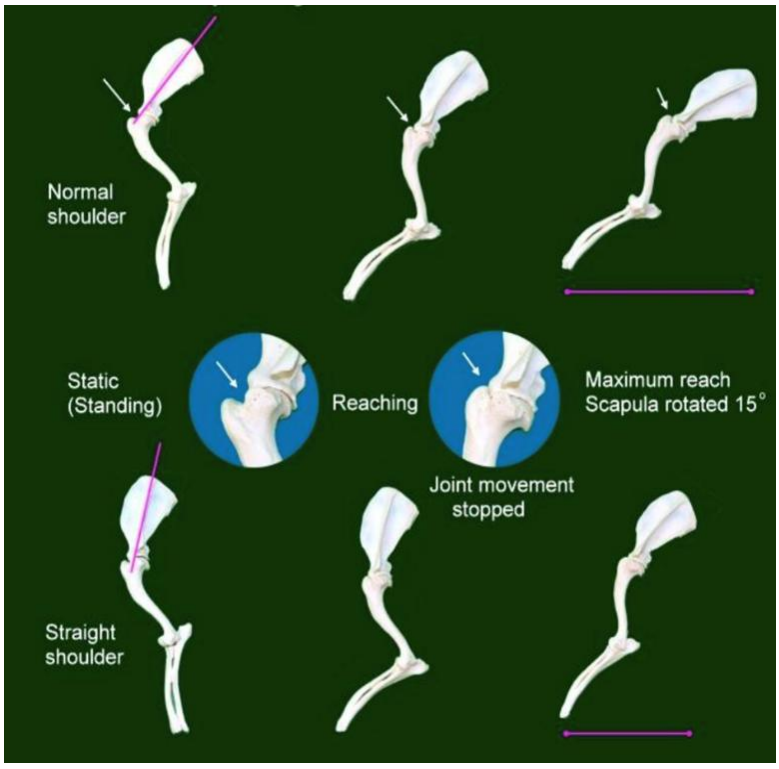
Not too long – this would be a weakness.

Too short - insufficient muscle reach.

Forequarters

Shoulders well laid back with flat muscles. Moderate space between the shoulder blades at the withers. The upper arm is of 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.

Shoulders must be well laid back for a greater arc of movement. The movement of the shoulder and upper arm contribute 60% to the length of stride.



The white arrow points towards the tubercle, a bony protuberance which will restrict the arc of the upper arm reach if the angulation is incorrect.



A well laid shoulder delivered less shock through the body. A system that was determined by riding hunters to hounds all day, as were many other conformational findings.

Flat muscles have better force direction & greater heat dissipation. They are more efficient for sprinting.

The diverse types of leg muscles of different athletes. (Easier to see in humans.)

Cyclist Weightlifter Bodybuilder



Genetic muscle disorder – The 'Bully Whippet' – 'Wendy' from Canada.
One 'bully' gene can give some athletic advantage. Two 'bully' genes can produce 'Double Muscle'.



This Whippet shows good layback of shoulder and excellent spring to her pasterns.



Some width is required at the top of the shoulder blades to enable the whippet to reach for prey. The blades close together at the top as the whippet's head moves towards the ground.

Moderate BLADED bone (elliptical) is necessary for sighthound speed, not ROUND bone which is for bulldog strength.

Pasterns are shock absorbers and have incredible spring flexion.

On the following page (9), you can clearly see the important role the pastern plays as it goes through its' cycle when the dog is moving at speed.



The right front foot has just made contact with the ground.



The pastern is just starting to flex downwards. The dog is continuing to move forward.



The pasterns are almost at full flexion. The toes are also almost flat to the ground.

4/7

The pastern is now at it's lowest point. Almost at right angles! The leg is perpendicular to the ground.



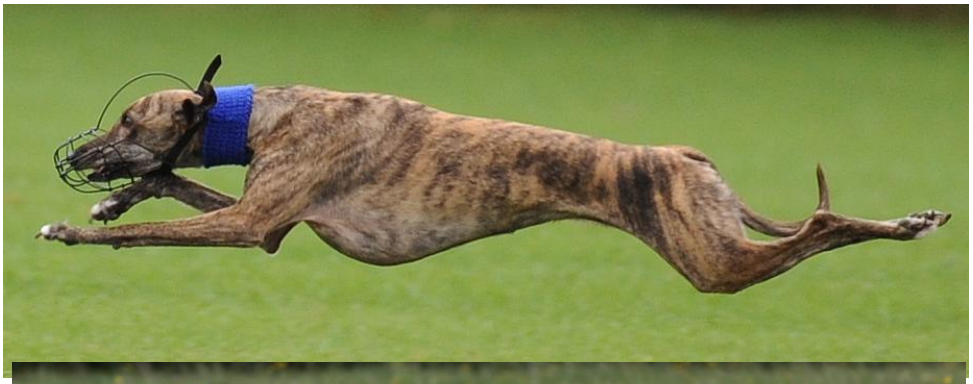
Now the elasticity of the pastern begins to spring upward.

6/7

The pastern is returning to shape whilst continuing to spring upwards.



The pastern has almost completed it's function and soon the left front leg will make contact with the ground.





The upper arm is the strongest bone in the Whippet but it does not move much beyond the vertical, when the leg is at full extension, at any speed. – because of the tubercle as shown on Page 6.

The dogs above show the upper arm position at full speed. The dogs below show the upper arm and the 'reach' of 5 whippets at the trot.





Body

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.

The lungs need to be able to expand for full function while in use, both in the depth and the spring of the ribcage.

Heart room is an expression we use, but whilst the heart will beat faster and stronger during exercise, it does not get any larger, in an otherwise healthy whippet.

The brisket should not be too deep, because excess depth is just extra unnecessary weight of bone and cartilage.

Below, you can clearly see the depth of chest whilst the dogs are at full stretch.





The Whippets' broad back leading into the loin gives the muscles a greater area for adherence either side of the spine.

A correctly arched loin provides both flexion (like a bow) and a strong support system (like a bridge). The loin should NOT be LONG or it becomes weak.

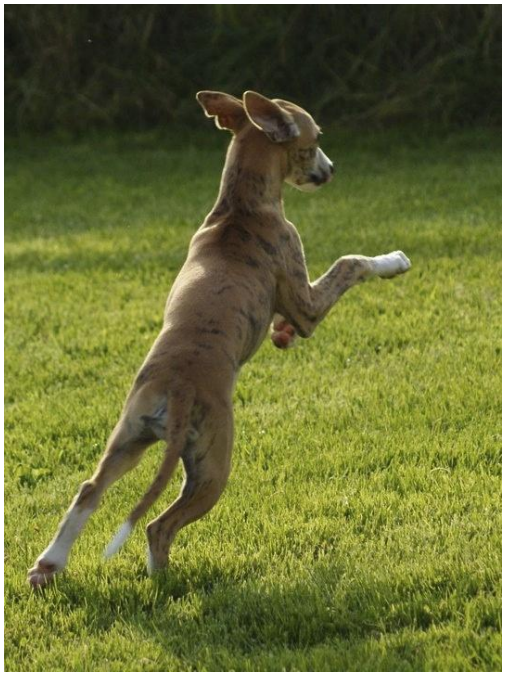






The canine diaphragm is attached to 11th & 12th ribs. When running, this affects respiration with a 'bellows' type action. The internal organs move forward expelling air when the whippet is fully contracted and is reversed when at full stretch. So the 'S' shaped underline is really important for respiration in relation to oxygen intake.

Hindquarters



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.

Whippets are, in vehicle terms '*rear wheel drive*' – all the thrust comes from behind.

On occasion the rear thrust is too great for control, and the whippet can demonstrate an eye catching 'wheelie'.



Whippets coming out of the traps, on their knees, because of the power of their rear drive. Their front legs have still to ‘catch up’. Keep your eye on the brindle dog behind number 6.



You can just see him here; his hocks are both flat to the floor.

The hock joint has tremendous flexion both at the start of acceleration and at full gallop and needs to be strong enough not to break down or cause injury



Visible behind dog No. 6, the brindle is now completely down on his stifles.



At long last he is beginning to use himself and he has managed to gain a little ground on dog No. 6. He is wearing a black jacket and a yellow muzzle.



The Whippet pelvis must be broad enough to allow the rear legs to ‘overtake’ the front legs – with no interference. You can see all three of these dogs above, doing exactly that, from different angles.



This Whippet has some rear leg interference.



The rear legs going INSIDE the front legs Instead of outside.



Broad thighs for muscle development and attachment. Angulation front and rear should be balanced, otherwise one will outperform the other.

Feet

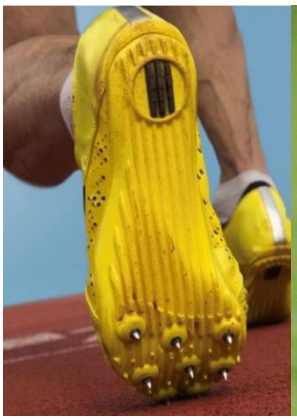
Oval. Well split up between toes, knuckles well arched, pads thick, nails strong.

Good feet are born not made, but injury can affect the foot negatively.

These descriptions of the feet, would help to ensure that the mechanisms of the toes are much less likely to suffer injury.

Thick pads produce cushioning.

Nails strong – NOT too short – these are the dogs running spikes and are needed for grip.





Tail

No feathering. Long, tapering, reaching at least to the hock. When in action carried in a delicate curve not higher than the back.

The tail length works as a counterbalance and helps the Whippet's agility during the chase. The tail is moved to different positions as seen in most of the previous pictures of running whippets.
Too much feathering on the tail could indicate other breed mixes.



Gait / Movement

Should possess great freedom of action. In profile should move with a long easy stride whilst holding top line. The forelegs should be thrown forward and low over the ground. Hind legs should come well under the body giving great propelling power. General movement not to look stilted, high stepping, short or mincing. True coming and going.

Freedom of action indicates both conformational and muscular correctness – the movement appears to be effortless.

Holding topline would suggest strength through the loin and correct musculature down the spine.

Low over the ground shows that no energy is wasted going up and down instead of forward.

True movement – the foot does not deviate from a forward line, otherwise there is likely to be interference of the feet with each other and further wasted energy. It may also be indicative of weakness or incorrect conformation.

The image below, although it is a still photo, does indicate many of the breed specific points with regard to correct movement of the Whippet.

Champion Nothing Compares to You At Crosscop (Hazel)



Coat

Fine, short, close in texture.

A close, fine, silky-smooth coat, would be easy to clean after a muddy working day and would point to there being less likelihood that the Whippet carried any crossbreeding of terriers or other breeds.

There is some evidence to support the idea that there is less 'drag' caused by silky coats and therefore more speed.

Competitive swimmers wear caps on their heads and running and cycling athletes shave their body hair etc. in order to go faster. Those small 'time bytes' may make all the difference in a race, or 'catching' the family dinner.

Colour

Any colour or mixture of colours. Merle unacceptable.

The colour of a Whippet is immaterial with regard to it's sporting ability. But liver (like a pointer) and black and tan (with no white - like a Dobermann) are not genetically natural whippet colours and would probably indicate cross breeding. Merle is also not a natural whippet colour, and indicates a lack of Whippet purity and additional potential health risks.



Size

Desirable height; Dogs 47-51cms (18 ½" - 20")
Bitches 44-47cms (17 ½ - 18 ½")

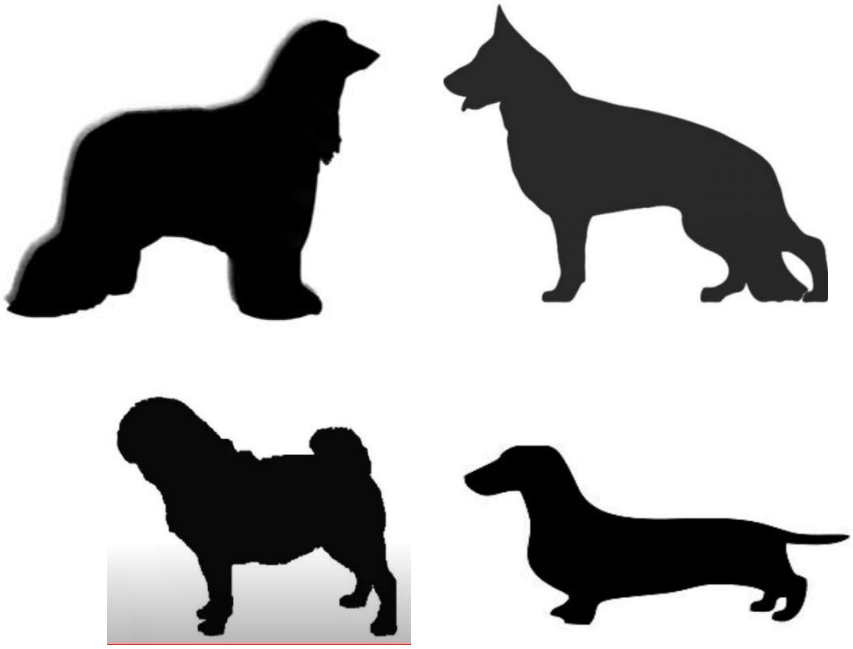
Remember the miners wanted smaller dogs so that they could live inside the house and because they didn't take up as much food or space as the Greyhound.

A Whippet could fit tucked inside the coat of a man, or under the skirts of a woman poacher without detection.

The standard height is DESIRABLE, not measurable.

Whippets outside of the standard – too big OR too small, COULD start to lose breed type.

These 4 'decals' have similar sized silhouette, but we can easily tell what breed they are because they have 'breed type'.



Judging, Breeding or Exhibiting

- **Remember that there is no detail in the breed standard that has been given a higher priority than any other.**
- **The Whippet was developed as a functional breed, who would often have to provide supper for the family. Always keep that in mind in your appraisals.**
- **Do not fall into the downside of fault judging. When assessing any whippet, take each dog in its entirety. – As a whole dog and ask yourself if it could fulfil the purpose it was developed and bred for.**
- **Judging is Forgiving. - To be a balanced judge of Whippets, your own or others', you will have to forgive.**

BECAUSE

THERE IS NO PERFECT WHIPPET

At the Whippet World Congress held in Italy in May 2022, Ann gave a presentation on this topic. She kindly gifted it to Breed Council so that a booklet could be formulated and printed to support the education programme for owners, breeders, enthusiasts, exhibitors and judges.

Many thanks to the following for their contributions, photos, support and encouragement.

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And of course – Google!