

= Whippet =

The Whippet ( also English Whippet or Snap dog ) is a dog breed of medium @-@ size . They are a sighthound breed that originated in England , where they descended from greyhounds . Whippets today still strongly resemble a smaller greyhound . Shown in the Hound group , Whippets have relatively few health problems other than arrhythmia . Whippets also participate in dog sports such as lure coursing , agility , and flyball .

Whippets were originally greyhounds that were deemed unsuitable for hunting because of their size . They were returned to their peasant breeders after being maimed so that they could not be used to hunt and break the Forest law . These maimed dogs were bred together and used to catch rats , and hunt rabbits . When the Forest law was repealed , these " miniature greyhounds " became popular in the sport of dog racing . This has led to Whippets being described as " the poor man 's racehorse . " They are still frequently used as racing dogs today , as they have the highest running speed of breeds their weight : 40 miles per hour ( 64 km / h ) and even challenge greyhounds for top speed . Whippets are , however , the fastest accelerating dog in the world .

= = History = =

Whippets were bred to hunt by sight , coursing game in open areas at high speeds . One can find numerous representations of small greyhound @-@ like hounds in art dating back to Ancient Egyptian times . Pharaohs bred a small sighthound dog related to the greyhound to keep in their palaces , and this dog may be the ancestor of today 's Whippets . In medieval England , a small greyhound breed became popular for use as a ratting dog . The first written English use of the word whippet with regard to a type of dog was in 1610 . However , the first dog to be called a Whippet was actually a greyhound @-@ spaniel cross and has little to do with the modern Whippet .

The original whippets were thought to be English Greyhounds that were too small for stag hunting in the forests of England . These dogs were frequently returned to their breeders , who were usually peasants and as such could not own hunting dogs under the Forest law . Because of this , dogs returned to them were maimed , usually by cutting a tendon in a leg or removing the toes on one paw . The breeders kept these dogs and continued to breed them , producing a smaller version of a greyhound that was suited for rat catching and hunting hares and rabbits . When the Forest Law was repealed , the " small greyhounds " became immensely popular . Whippets were then commonly known as " snap dogs " for their tendency to " snap up " nearby prey . In the picture by Jean @-@ Baptiste Oudry ( 1686 ? 1755 ) of two dogs presented to Louis XV , they are either whippets or small greyhounds , but are probably related to an early form of whippet . Oudry also painted a second painting of Misse with a different , non @-@ sighthound dog . There is a 1758 painting by Pompeo Batoni entitled Portrait of Charles Compton , 7th Earl of Northampton which features a similar whippet @-@ like dog .

In the nineteenth century , Whippet racing was a major sport in England . The Whippet was held in high regard in the northern parts of England and Wales , but was generally disregarded in the rest of the country . At the time , there were two varieties of Whippet . The first type had a smooth coat , was more popular in Lancashire , Yorkshire , and the Midlands , and became the modern Whippet . The other had a rough coat from crossbreeding with Bedlington Terriers , was more popular in Durham and Northumberland and was frequently referred to as a " rabbit dog " . Early specimens were taken from the race track by the dog fanciers of the time and exported around the world . John Taylor said that " In all the shapes and forms of dogges ; of all which there are but two sorts that are useful to man 's profits , which two are the mastiffe and the little curre , whippet , or house @-@ dogge ; all the rest are for pleasure and recreation . "

The age of the modern Whippet dawned in 1891 when The Kennel Club granted the breed official recognition , thus making the Whippet eligible for competition in dog shows , and commencing the recording of their pedigrees . In the United States , the Whippet was recognised in 1888 by the American Kennel Club . Whippets arrived in the United States with mill operators from England , and the first populations were established in Massachusetts . The Whippet is the 55th most popular

breed according to the American Kennel Club .

In 1964 , Ch . Courtenay Fleetfoot of Pennyworth won best in show at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show . In 1992 , Pencloe Dutch Gold won best in show at Crufts , and a Whippet known as Cobyco Call the Tune won in 2004 . In 2011 , GCh . Starline 's Chanel , a female Whippet , was chosen as the hound Show Dog of the Year by the Westminster Kennel Club .

= = Racing = =

Dog racing was originally an extension of hare coursing . Whippets began to be bred to race in the mid @-@ nineteenth century . The first form of the sport was a rudimentary form of coursing known as ' ragging ' , and dogs who participated were said to be ' trained to the rag ' . Dogs were kept on a leash by a person known as a slip , who was frequently also the race judge . The slip would release the dogs from their collars at the same time , and they would race towards their owners , who were standing at the opposite end of the track waving towels .

Whippet rags were a popular Sunday event in the north and Midlands at the time . There were also international events ; in Australia , at a track known as Gurney 's Paddock , there were races of more than 300 whippets every Saturday , and three nights a week at the White City track . Eventually , the sport evolved and dogs were divided into four groups : those who hunted rabbits , which was not governed by rules ; those who coursed hare , for which a set of rules was established ; those trained to the rag ; and those trained to chase a mechanical lure in a fashion similar to greyhound races . Few of the Whippets of any of the four types were purebred , as maintaining a purebred bloodline was not considered as important as breeding dogs that could win races . Many racing dogs were part terrier , part Greyhound , or part Lurcher .

In 1967 , the British Whippet Racing Association was established to bring around reform and consistency in race rules and procedures for races involving non @-@ purebred Whippets . A year later , viewing the non @-@ purebred dogs as a threat , the Whippet Club Racing Association was established exclusively for purebred animals .

= = Description = =

= = = Appearance = = =

Whippets are a medium @-@ sized dog weighing from 15 to 42 pounds ( 6 @.@ 8 to 19 @.@ 1 kg ) . There are two height ranges for Whippets , depending on whether or not the dog is being shown in North America . The Fédération Cynologique Internationale and The Kennel Club both call for heights of 18 @.@ 5 to 20 inches ( 47 to 51 cm ) for males and 17 @.@ 5 to 18 @.@ 5 inches ( 44 to 47 cm ) for females . Whippets tend to be somewhat larger in the United States and Canada as the American Kennel Club and Canadian Kennel Club standards are larger ; 18 @.@ 5 to 22 @.@ 5 inches ( 47 to 57 cm ) for males , and 17 @.@ 5 to 21 @.@ 5 inches ( 44 to 55 cm ) for females . Because colour is considered immaterial in judging Whippets , they come in a wide variety of colours and marking patterns , everything from solid black to solid white , with red , fawn , brindle , blue , or cream . The coat is short , smooth and close .

They are the fastest dog of their weight , capable of achieving speeds of 35 miles per hour ( 56 km / h ) . This is due to their unique way of running , which is referred to as a double suspension gallop . This gait results in four of the dog 's legs being off the ground twice in each stride , once when the legs are completely extended and again when they are tucked under the body .

= = = Temperament = = =

Whippets are quiet and not prone to barking , but require regular exercise . They are generally gentle dogs and may be content to spend much of the day resting . The AKC describes them as " quiet and dignified in their owner 's living room " and says they make " excellent house dogs . "

Whippets have been called a " poor man 's racehorse " by the colliers in Lancashire and Yorkshire .

Despite being bred for racing , Whippets can be couch potatoes . When not running around , they are usually asleep or cuddled in their owner 's lap . They are not prone to fighting but have been known to chase small pets , due to their sighthound nature . They also have a tendency to get up on furniture . Whippets are touch sensitive , meaning that they tend to jump or overreact when touched unexpectedly .

= = Health = =

Whippets course , work , and race ; they have been bred for these jobs for years . This has kept them a structurally sound breed which is predominantly free from the physical exaggerations that can lead to certain health problems . Whippets are , like other sighthounds , intolerant of barbiturate anaesthetics . This is in part due to their low concentration of body fat and their liver 's inability to metabolise the anaesthetics .

Given proper nutrition , exercise , and veterinary care , most Whippets live for 12 to 15 years . A UK breed survey puts the median lifespan at 12 years 10 months . They are generally healthy , and are not prone to the frequent ear infections , skin allergies , or digestive problems that can afflict other breeds . Genetic eye defects , though quite rare , have been noted in the breed . Because of this , the American Whippet Club recommends that breeders test for this defect in their breeding stock . Hip dysplasia is rare in Whippets , with only 1 @. @ 2 % of 161 evaluations performed by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals being determined as dysplastic .

The heart of a Whippet is large and slow beating , often being arrhythmic or even intermittent when the animal is at rest . This sometimes causes concern to the owner , or to the vet not experienced with the breed . Whippets will , however , demonstrate a regular heartbeat during exercise . In a health survey conducted by The Kennel Club cardiac problems were shown to be the second leading cause of mortality in Whippets .

A 2007 study identified a myostatin mutation particular to Whippets that is significantly associated with their athletic performance . Whippets with a single copy of this mutation are generally very fast ; those with two copies have disproportionately large musculature and are known as " bully whippets " . These bully whippets experience no significant health problems beyond those experienced by a normal whippet , but may be more prone to muscle cramping . The mutation has not been seen in Greyhounds or other sighthound breeds , or in heavily muscled dogs such as Bullmastiffs , Bulldogs , Rottweilers or American Staffordshire Terriers .