

THE DECORATIVE DEERHOUND.

The Deerhound is one of the most decorative of dogs, impressively stately and picturesque wherever he is seen, whether it be amid the surroundings of the baronial hall, reclining at luxurious length before the open hearth in the fitful light of the log fire that flickers on polished armour and tarnished tapestry; out in the open, straining at the leash as he scents the dewy air, or gracefully bounding over the purple of his native hills. Grace and majesty are in his every movement and attitude, and even to the most prosaic mind there is about him the inseparable glamour of feudal romance and poetry.

From remote days the Scottish nobles cherished their strains of Deerhound, seeking glorious sport in the Highland forests. The red deer belonged by inexorable law to the kings of Scotland, and great drives, which often lasted for several days, were made to round up the herds into given neighbourhoods for the pleasure of the court, as in the reign of Queen Mary. But the organised coursing of deer by courtiers ceased during the Stuart troubles, and was left in the hands of retainers, who thus replenished their chief's larder.

Head:-

The head should be broadest at the ears, tapering slightly to the eyes, with the muzzle tapering more decidedly to the nose. The muzzle should be pointed, but the teeth and lips level. The head should be long, the skull flat rather than round, with a very slight rise over the eyes, but with nothing approaching a stop. The skull should be coated with moderately long hair which is softer than the rest of the coat. The nose should be black (though in some blue-fawns the colour is blue) and slightly aquiline. In the lighter-coloured dogs a black muzzle is preferred. There should be a good moustache of rather silky hair, and a fair beard.

Ears:-

The ears should be set on high, and, in repose, folded back like the Greyhound's, though raised above the head in excitement without losing the fold, and even, in some cases, semi-erect. The ear should be soft, glossy, and like a mouse's coat to the touch, and the smaller it is the better. It should have no long coat or long fringe, but there is often a silky, silvery coat on the body of the ear and the tip. Whatever the general colour, the ears should be black or dark-coloured.

Neck and shoulders:-

The neck should be long that is, of the length that befits the Greyhound

character of the dog. The nape of the neck should be very prominent where the head is set on, and the throat should be clean-cut at the angle and prominent. The shoulders should be well sloped, the blades well back, with not too much width between them.

Stern:-

Stern should be tolerably long, tapering, and reaching to within 1-1/2 inches of the ground, and about 1-1/2 inches below the hocks. When the dog is still, dropped perfectly straight down, or curved. When in motion it should be curved when excited, in no case to be lifted out of the line of the back. It should be well covered with hair, on the inside thick and wiry, underside longer.

Eyes:-

The eyes should be dark: generally they are dark brown or hazel. The eye is moderately full with a soft look in repose, but a keen, far-away gaze when the dog is roused. The rims of the eyelids should be black.

Body: The body and general formation is that of a Greyhound of larger size and bone. Chest deep rather than broad, but not too narrow and flat-sided. The loin well arched and drooping to the tail.

Legs and feet:-

The legs should be broad and flat, a good broad forearm and elbow being desirable. Fore-legs, of course, as straight as possible. Feet close and compact, with well-arched toes. The hind-quarters drooping, and as broad and powerful as possible, the hips being set wide apart. The hind-legs should be well bent at the stifle, with great length from the hip to the hock, which should be broad and flat.

Coat:-

The hair on the body, neck, and quarters should be harsh and wiry, and about 3 inches or 4 inches long; that on the head, breast, and belly is much softer. There should be a slight hairy fringe on the inside of the fore and hind-legs, but nothing approaching to the feathering of a Collie. The Deerhound should be a shaggy dog, but not over coated.

Colour:-

Colour is much a matter of fancy. But there is no manner of doubt that the dark

blue-grey is the most preferred. Next come the darker and lighter greys or brindles, the darkest being generally preferred. Yellow and sandy-red or red-fawn, especially with black points i.e., ears and muzzle are also in equal estimation.

Height:-

From 28 inches to 30 inches, or even more if there be symmetry without coarseness, which, however, is rare. Height of bitches: From 26 inches upwards. There can be no objection to a bitch being large, unless she is too coarse, as even at her greatest height she does not approach that of the dog, and, therefore, could not well be too big for work, as over-big dogs are.