The Borzoi In The U.S. Today

In previous Yearbooks, some important issues concerning all Borzoi owners were dealt with, such as local clubs and Parent Clubs, as well as the various aspects of Borzoi ownership, such as showing, obedience training, coursing and enjoying the Borzoi. These articles are worth reviewing, especially for the newcomer to Borzoi.

But what about the Borzoi of today? Where are we taking the breed, what lies ahead in future years for those who own Borzoi, and for the hounds themselves? Are we headed in the right direction, or should we stop and take a good long objective look at the breed in its present-day condition? Should we decide what we want to preserve, and what we want to eliminate in the modern Borzoi?

Certainly most Borzoi owners and breeders will agree that in his true state the Borzoi is the most beautiful of canine creatures. We revel in his handsomeness and in his aristocratic bearing. We adore each individual hound for the sweet gentleness of his nature in the confines of his family, and the graciousness with which he accepts intrusion of strange dogs and people when it is asked of him. We marvel at the many tales of Borzoi rising to the occasion of protectiveness when the situation demands. We know that family affection and companionable love are mutual. We stand in awe of his intelligence, we love his playfulness and his wish to please us.

The Borzoi is a most versatile dog. As a loving companion he excels. In the Show ring he is forever the object of praise from those who love his beauty. He responds skillfully to obedience training. Above all else he takes to coursing as his rightful work, which he enjoys. He models beautifully when asked. He offers his presence as protection to his family, but at the same time he is a most loving companion and family friend.

This is the state of the Borzoi as we think of him in retrospect. But as realists we know that there are deviations from this norm. We observe that as time goes on, as popularity increases and breeding becomes less carefully planned, certain aspects of our ideal Borzoi seem to slip away. Structure becomes more loosely defined; terrible afflictions such as PRA (Progressive Retinal Atrophy) permeates a portion of the breed; untrustworthy temperament is too often seen; as we allow the fad for over-size to influence a portion of his breeding, he begins to lose his ability to work and that wondrous grace with which the true Borzoi is endowed. As unschooled breeding spreads, such features as strong sound limbs, dark pigmentation, compact body shape, proper dentition, and even eye shape and expression tend to disappear. As over-population of the breed creeps upon us, in this fast-changing world of today, actual ROM for the Borzoi, resulting in lack of exercise and condition, becomes a problem for the breed. Broken homes through divorce cause many lovely specimens to be re-located in new, and hopefully more stable, homes through the aid of other Borzoi folk, or else the dogs from those split homes must be destroyed.

This is a sobering picture of the breed today, but it is one we all must face, together. One owner alone cannot solve these perplexing questions of today; one breeder alone cannot find the solution single-handedly. The WHOLE FANCY must act, and act as a group, to come to grips with those conditions which threaten our hounds, which could - if left to solve themselves - alter the Borzoi as we know and love him; could allow grotesqueness in place of beauty; could condone giant size to produce a lumbering ungainly creature to replace the swift and agile Borzoi we so
admire; could create a sharp tempered unpredictable Borzoi to replace the loving gentle one we know; could spread the disease of blindness so that no Borzoi is free of it; could allow modern lawmakers to force the large dog out of the towns and even from the suburbs; could permit hundreds instead of dozens of Borzoi to wander homeless and alone or to be shunted from owner to owner for lack of those who care enough.

But what can be done? A Code of Ethics is not enough. Action here and there by individuals is not enough. The Borzoi clubs, including the Parent Club first of all, must take positive action to thwart the many-sided erosion of the great breed we all own and love. Real, courageous leadership stemming from the Parent Club is sorely needed! A concerted program of education on the problems is crying to be born! Branch clubs must take responsibility in hand and organize their members to act on PRA, on rescue efforts, on solving the local problem of room for the hounds, on participating as a club in lure-coursing as a means of exercise for the dogs, on organizing study groups on these problems of the day, on offering to every Borzoi owner in their territory a program of education regarding Borzoi and the deteriorating dangers the breed faces.

If we accomplish this, if we all act together in a manner befitting a mature and concerned Fancy, if we seriously pit our efforts to preserve the Borzoi against the eroding effects of lassitude, WE WILL SUCCEED.

The Borzoi gives his life, his affection, his trust and loyalty to us. Can we do less for him?

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