

# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL



## Extended Breed Standard of **THE AFGHAN HOUND**

Produced by  
National Afghan Hound Council  
in conjunction with  
Australian National Kennel Council

The Kennel Club (England) pre 1987  
Standard adopted by ANKC  
Breed Standard Extension adopted 2006  
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Country of Origin ~ Afghanistan

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## **THE AFGHAN HOUND**



## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AFGHAN HOUND**

The Afghan Hound is a member of the group of sighthounds known as Eastern Greyhounds. They are long-legged hounds, built for speed and endurance, who hunt small to medium-sized game by sight over rough terrain. They are keen hunters, noted for their independent spirit, who can work alone or as part of a pack.

The forebears of today's Afghan Hounds were imported directly from Afghanistan, where they were discovered by the British military in the nineteenth century. The breed still exists in Afghanistan, although in very small numbers.

The breed is an ancient one, but because Afghanistan's Islamic culture forbids the depiction of animals in art, there is no pictorial record of the breed. The only known early drawing is an etching done around 1813, of a native soldier with a dog which remarkably resembles young Afghans of today, indicating that the breed was very similar nearly 200 years ago.

The hounds of Afghanistan and their legendary hunting ability were mentioned in letters from the Afghan front in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and some may have come to the UK at that time. They were first exhibited at dog shows in the 1880's, and continued to appear in "Foreign Dog" classes up to World War 1. Some litters were bred, but it is doubtful that any survived the war years.

An early import (c.1895) was "Shahzada", a cream dog, whose body was preserved by the British Museum of Natural History. A later import "Zardin" (1907) was more important to the breed in that his description by the Indian Kennel Club was the basis for the first (1925) and subsequent UK Breed Standards. He was a heavily coated dog, identical in type to many of today's hounds.

In the 1920's the importation of Afghan Hounds gathered momentum. The first group to arrive in 1920 were mostly of the rangy, lightly coated type to become known at the "Desert" or "Bell Murray" (after their importer) type. In 1925 a Mrs Amps brought in another group, some of which were more compact and heavily coated, known as the "Ghazni" or "Mountain" type, of which a red dog "Sirdar of Ghazni" was undoubtedly the most impressive import to date, and became a very influential stud dog. There was great controversy as to which type was correct, but interbreeding took place, and the foundation of today's hounds is a combination of both types.

In the 20's and 30's the Afghan Hound went to Europe and America, and after a slow start, became very popular, as it was in the UK. In Australia it fared less well. In 1935 and 1936 Mrs. Olive Macdougall imported a male and two bitches from UK in whelp to top stud dogs (one an Afghanistan import) and it appears one of the resulting litters produced the first Champion in this country. Some half-dozen litters were bred up to the early 40's. However, the breed was considered a novelty and did not become popular, and indeed was considered a threat to stock by the pastoral community. These bloodlines died out after World War 11.

In 1950 a Mrs. Ward brought a male and a bitch in whelp into Western Australia, and these hounds formed the basis of the breeding of Afghans in Australia.

In 1954 Mrs Skilton (who had bred the two 1950 imports in UK) came to Tasmania bringing a male “Aghai of Hawkfield” who was a very successful show dog & sire. The same year Major Long brought to NSW his “Hookstone” dogs, of the more heavily coated type popular in UK., and in 1957 a group of Carloway-bred dogs of the same type arrived in Victoria.

From then on imports arrived at a steady rate, and by the mid sixties the breed was well on the way to popularity in Australia. In the seventies over-popularity brought all the problems of over-breeding, and since then the breed has declined in numbers, but still retains its reputation as one of the most successful breeds in the show ring.

## **AFGHAN HOUND BREED STANDARD AND EXTENSION**

### **• GENERAL APPEARANCE**

***The gait of the Afghan Hound should be smooth and springy with a style of high order. The whole appearance of the dog should give the impression of strength and dignity combining speed and power. The head must be held proudly.***

The gait of the Afghan Hound is distinctive and unique, and it is of paramount importance. When gaitting the Afghan Hound should display spring in its stride, but it should never be exaggerated into wasted bouncing motion. Rather a smooth effortless spring, in harmony with the strength and power of a reaching front and a balanced driving rear, is desired.

Strength is an obvious necessity to a hound capable of hunting game ranging in size from the hare to the snow leopard over rough and varied terrain. A dog with structural weakness would be incapable of this.

Speed and power are equally necessary. To quote from “The Complete Afghan Hound” by Constance O. Miller and Edward M. Gilbert Jr: “The Afghan is best known for his grand versatility. He must be large and powerful enough to pull down a stag gazelle, a cunning jackal, or his legendary foe, the snow leopard which is about sixty pounds of clawing dynamite. He must also be refined enough to stick on the heels of the illusive fox or agile hare.”

The dignity of the Afghan Hound is fundamental, and the breed should be able to move showing speed and powerful ground-covering action, while still maintaining a dignified demeanour. It should appear capable of springing into action after game in an instant, and carry itself with great pride and style. The head must be held proudly and this comes from the attitude of an intelligent animal that owns the ground it walks on, not just a head held high and back as a result of poor structure or over-handling.

- **CHARACTERISTICS**

***The Afghan Hound should be dignified and aloof with a certain keen fierceness. The Eastern or Oriental expression is typical of the breed. The Afghan looks at and through one.***

The Afghan Hound should be dignified, not a tail-wagging merry hound. The breed is aloof, and not demonstrative in its nature, and is therefore not friendly with strangers. The Afghan Hound resents an automatic assumption of familiarity, and will often draw back from a judge if approached too quickly. Sudden movements close to the eyes may cause a momentary distortion of vision because of the breed's far-sightedness.

This is a courageous hunting hound, and the eyes should be fierce and intense rather than soft and appealing. The Eastern or Oriental expression comes from the shape and placement of the eyes, which are triangular and set obliquely.

The breed is fiercely independent, and this demeanour should not be confused with nervousness or aggression. Because of this aloof and dignified character the Afghan Hound will not want to look at you, but rather stares into the distance as if you were not there.

- **TEMPERAMENT**

***The Afghan Hound should be dignified and aloof with a certain keen fierceness.***

The Afghan Hound is not a tail-wagging, soft spaniel. It has an air of confidence and pride as though it has a need for no-one—it deigns to acknowledge you. This aloofness is not to be confused with nervousness, and the fierceness is not a savage attitude—it is a great awareness.

(This section of the standard is included to conform with the ANKC format. It is a repetition of one of the requirements under "Characteristics" and is covered more fully in that section.)

- **HEAD AND SKULL**

***Skull long, not too narrow with prominent occiput. Foreface long with punishing jaws and slight stop. The skull well balanced and surmounted with a long topknot. Nose preferably black but liver is no fault in light coloured dogs.***

The skull and muzzle are of about equal length with the **slight** stop being the dividing point. The skull should not be too narrow or too broad, but should be significantly **longer** than broad. A prominent occiput is required for correct skull shape, as is a slight stop which will enhance the obliquely set eyes. However the stop should only be slight and never pronounced. (Fig.1)

This dog was used to hunt larger game, and needs to have a very punishing jaw, so the foreface should be long with a well defined underjaw. The side profile should illustrate a powerful jaw which should never be weak or snipey, or have a shark-like appearance.

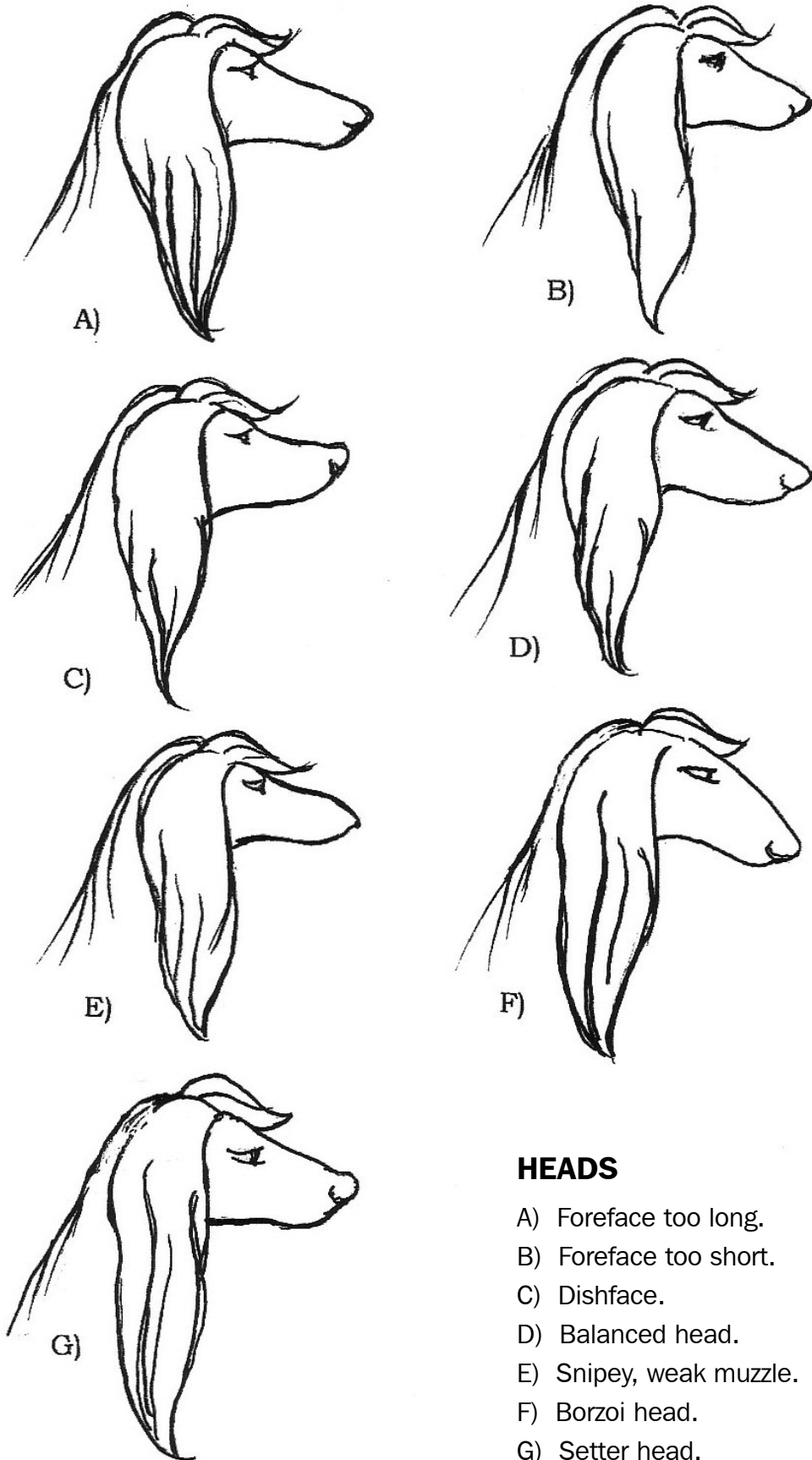
To quote from “The Afghan Hound: a definitive study” by Margaret Niblock: “The long muzzle allows a particularly wide opening jaw, essential in a hunting hound, for holding or crushing the prey. The jaw bones are reasonably deep and tapered at the nose end, providing a firm base for the long roots of the strong teeth— punishing weapons in the natural function of the Afghan for catching and eating its prey.”

The long silky topknot is a characteristic of the breed and is covered more fully under “Coat”. The nose is preferably black, but liver is acceptable in lighter coloured dogs, and should not be penalised. However parti or pink noses are not acceptable in the Afghan Hound. The nose is large for maximum air intake. There can be a slight prominence of the nasal bone structure creating a slight roman nosed appearance. A dish-faced or down-faced appearance to the head is unacceptable, as are flews and loose skin.

The head should be refined with no hint of coarseness or weakness. Chiselling is often referred to and is defined as follows in the Australian National Kennel Council “*Glossary of Canine Terms*” and in “*Canine Terminology*” by Dr.H.Spira: “Chiselling: clean-cut lines and contours, in contrast to bumpy or bulging outlines, especially about the head and foreface.” Dr. Spira goes on to say: “Such construction, particularly if enhanced by fine close-fitting skin, adds to an impression of refinement.”

Bitches should always have finer heads than dogs. Doggy bitches or bitchy dogs are equally wrong.

Figure 1



**HEADS**

- A) Foreface too long.
- B) Foreface too short.
- C) Dishface.
- D) Balanced head.
- E) Snipey, weak muzzle.
- F) Borzoi head.
- G) Setter head.

## ● EYES

***Dark for preference but golden colour not debarred. Nearly triangular in appearance, slanting slightly upwards from inner corner to outer corner.***

The eyes are the source of the Afghan expression. Most breed enthusiasts prefer dark brown eyes, although golden is permitted. However, golden does not mean bright yellow or orange.

The Oriental expression is enhanced by the triangular shape and exotic upward tilt at the outer corner, but if the eye is round, full or bulging, this expression is immediately lost. The Afghan Hound uses peripheral vision to minimise head movement, so the eyeball should lie in an oblique plane along the zygomatic arch, the oblique/slanting set allowing maximum range of forward and sideward vision.

No mention is made in the Standard of unpigmented third eyelids (pink haws), but they should not be so prominent as to detract from the expression.

## ● EARS

***Set low and well back, carried close to the head. Covered with long silky hair.***

The ears should be set on low and well back (approximately in line with the eyes), and carried close to the cheeks. The ear leathers should be reasonably long, reaching well down the muzzle when drawn forward, and covered with long silky hair in adult dogs.

## ● MOUTH

***Level.***

It is generally accepted that a level mouth refers to a regular mouth with good sized, even, functional teeth that may meet in a normal scissor bite, or in an edge to edge pincer bite.

Full dentition is desirable, while a wry or crooked jaw is unacceptable.

## ● NECK

***Long, strong with proud carriage of the head.***

The neck must be long, strong, well muscled, slightly arched and flow smoothly into the shoulders. The length must be sufficient to maintain the overall balance of the dog. It should never be short or thick, nor should it be weak, ewe-shaped, thin or weedy.

Here the Standard once again mentions proud head carriage. If it is important enough to repeat, it is important enough to demand, and is essential for correct bearing.

## ● FOREQUARTERS

***Shoulders long and sloping, well set back, well muscled and strong without being loaded. Forelegs straight and well boned, straight with shoulder, elbows held in.***

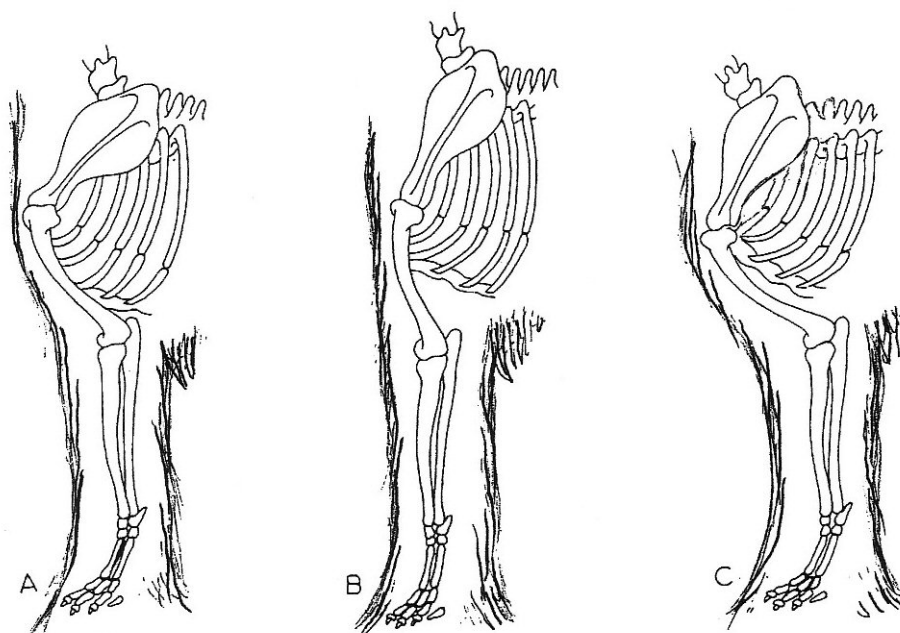


The assessment of the forequarters must be done in conjunction with the assessment of the body, as one is totally dependent on the other.

The shoulder blade and upper arm are long, of approximately equal length and well laid back upon the ribcage. The shoulders should not be loaded, and this means that the flow from neck into withers should be smooth, and there should be no overdevelopment of muscles which will result in a lumpy heavy look. Loaded and forward-set shoulders often go with high withers, which are incorrect. The neck should flow smoothly, and only slightly sloping, into the withers. It should not be a two-level topline of steep withers followed by a straight back. (Fig.2)

The forelegs from elbow to pastern are long, with strong (but not coarse), oval bone. The elbows should sit nicely against the rib cage. If the elbows are pinched, the dog will probably have a narrow front, be lacking body and sternum, and have turned out feet. If the elbows are twisting out from the back, the dog will probably have too full a ribcage, a bowed front and turned-in feet. (Fig.3)

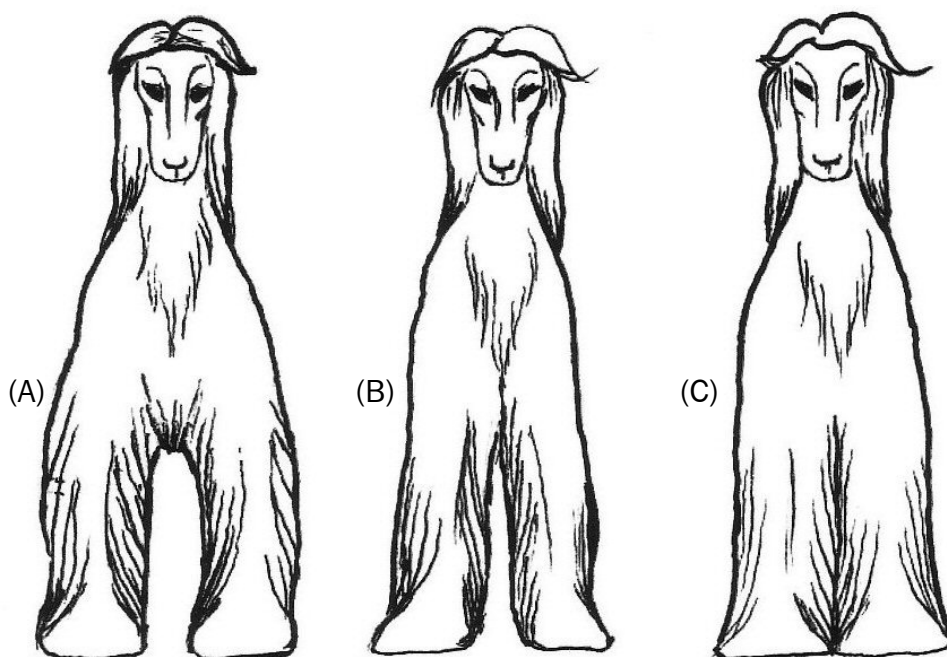
**Figure 2**



## **FOREQUARTERS**

- A) Correct shoulder angulation.
- B) Upright shoulder and pastern.
- C) Upright shoulder with over compensation in upper arm.

**Figure 3**



**FRONTS** A) Too wide. B) Too narrow. C) Correct.

## • **BODY**

***Back level, moderate length, well muscled, the back falling slightly away to the stern. Loin straight, broad and rather short. Hipbones rather prominent and wide apart. A fair spring of rib and good depth of chest.***

The correct topline is one which runs down over an arched neck, across smooth but defined withers into a level back. It is broken by the prominent hip bones, and continues from this point downwards to the base of the tail in a marked, but not severely angled, croup. This is referred to as “falling slightly away to the stern”. The back should be level at all times. The whole topline is a series of smooth planes, and must maintain the hard, lean houndy look of this breed.

Some breed authorities claim that the height to length ratio of the Breed is that of a square dog, others state that the ratio should be that of a slightly longer dog. The important words in the Standard on this subject are moderate length. Therefore it should be interpreted to mean neither too long or too short, as indicated under faults.

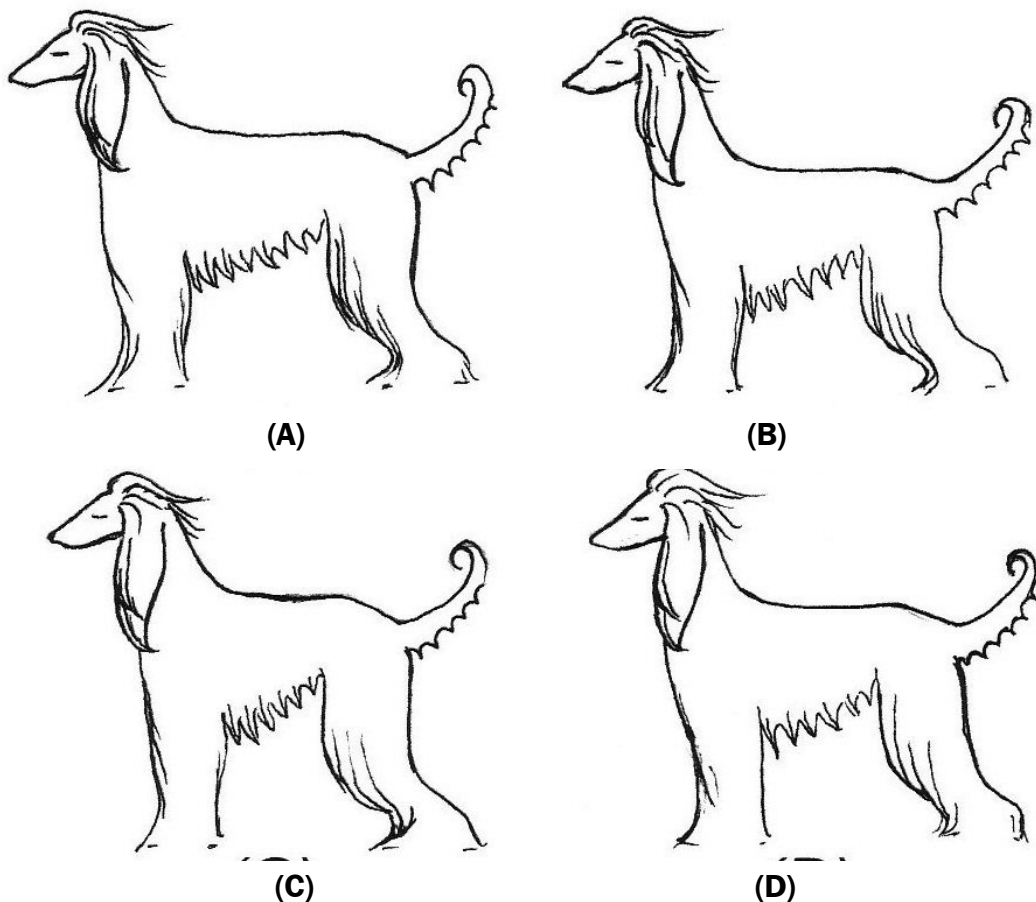
The loin should be straight (not arched as in most other hound breeds), well muscled and broad, and must be fairly short. The correct proportions between length of ribcage and length of loin, when measured from behind the withers to the hip bones, should be approximately two-thirds rib cage, one-third loin. The length in this area must come from the ribcage not the loin. (Fig 4)

The prominent hipbones are a characteristic of the breed, and should be set wide apart to produce a powerful driving rear. They should not be confused with extreme thinness. Usually 3 to 5 vertebrae are visible along the back of a dog in proper condition.

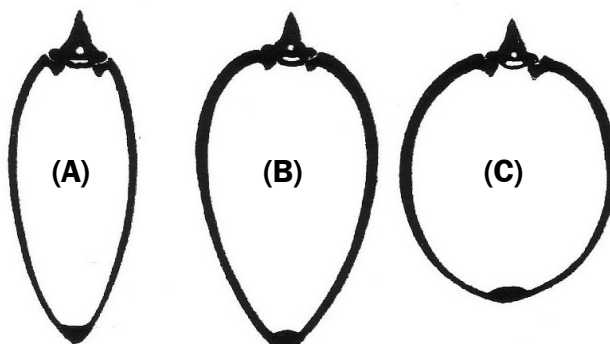
The ribcage should be pear-shaped with good depth of body, and forms a prominent prosternum. It should not be slab-sided or barrel chested, and the lowest part of the body should be at, or just behind, the elbow. (Fig.5)

The Afghan Hound differs from other Sighthounds in that it is angular in profile and does not have the flowing curves of the Borzoi or Greyhound.

**Figures 4 – 5**



- A) Back too long
- B) Neck too long, legs too short
- C) Back too short
- D) Balanced



**RIB CAGES**

- A) Slab sided, legs too close together, narrow front
- B) Normal
- C) Barrel, legs pushed out causing wide front

## ● HINDQUARTERS

**Powerful, well bent and well turned stifles. Great length between hip and hock with a comparatively short distance between hock and foot. The dew claws may be removed or allowed to remain at the discretion of the breeder.**

The Afghan Hound is a powerful and swift moving dog with great turning and stopping ability over a variety of terrain. The rear end must be powerful and sound, and there should be good musculature. The length of the first and the second thighs should be in balance with each other and the rear angulation should be in balance with the front. This will ensure coordinated movement as well as allowing the optimum thrust possible.

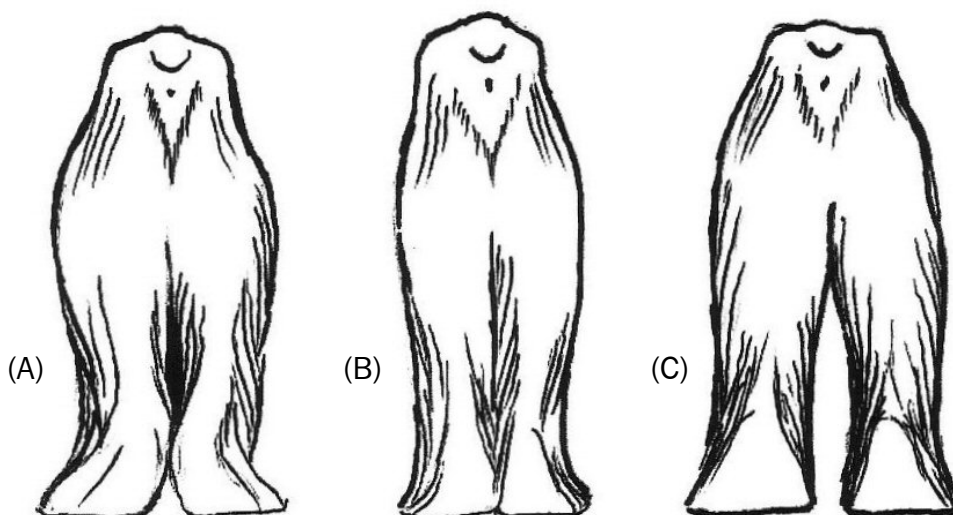
The Afghan Hound is required to work for long periods, and is not designed to be a sprinter, which is why it needs to have great length from hip to hock, and to be short from hock to foot. The rear pasterns should be vertical and parallel, and the hocks perpendicular to the ground. From the rear a well muscled dog may give the impression of a slight bow i.e. "cowboy rear". (Fig.6)

A dog with moderate angulation front and rear should be favoured as being more functional over one with a straight front and a well angulated rear, or vice-versa. Over-angulation is a weakness and should be penalised, but it should be noted that the coat on the hindquarters can give the illusion of a somewhat exaggerated turn of stifle.

Correct sweeping powerful hindquarters should not be confused with those of a dog which is over-stretched and has a crouching appearance.

Dew claws rarely occur on the hind legs in the breed.

**Figure 6**



### **HINDQUARTERS**

A) Cow Hocks

B) Close behind

C) Correct

- **FEET**

***Forefeet strong and very large both in length and breadth and covered with long thick hair, toes arched. Pasterns long and springy, especially in front and pads well down on the ground. Hind feet long, but not quite so broad as forefeet, covered with long thick hair.***

The very large feet are most important, particularly the forefeet as they act as shock absorbers, protecting the forequarter assembly. The forefeet also act as brakes, and will take most of the force of quick turning and stopping. All four feet should face forward and rest with pads well down on the ground. Well arched toes and long thick hair help to protect the feet in a variety of terrain.

The length and spring of the sloping pasterns are extremely important, helping to absorb shock and to produce the characteristic springy movement of the Afghan Hound. A dog with straight, upright pasterns tends to have a stilted action which jars right up to the shoulder blade.

Small feet should be faulted. The feet should be felt with the hands as the covering of long thick hair can sometimes give the illusion of size. Afghan Hounds are extremely sensitive in the foot area, and should not be penalised for this.

- **TAIL**

***Not too short. Set on low with ring at the end. Raised when in action. Sparsely feathered.***

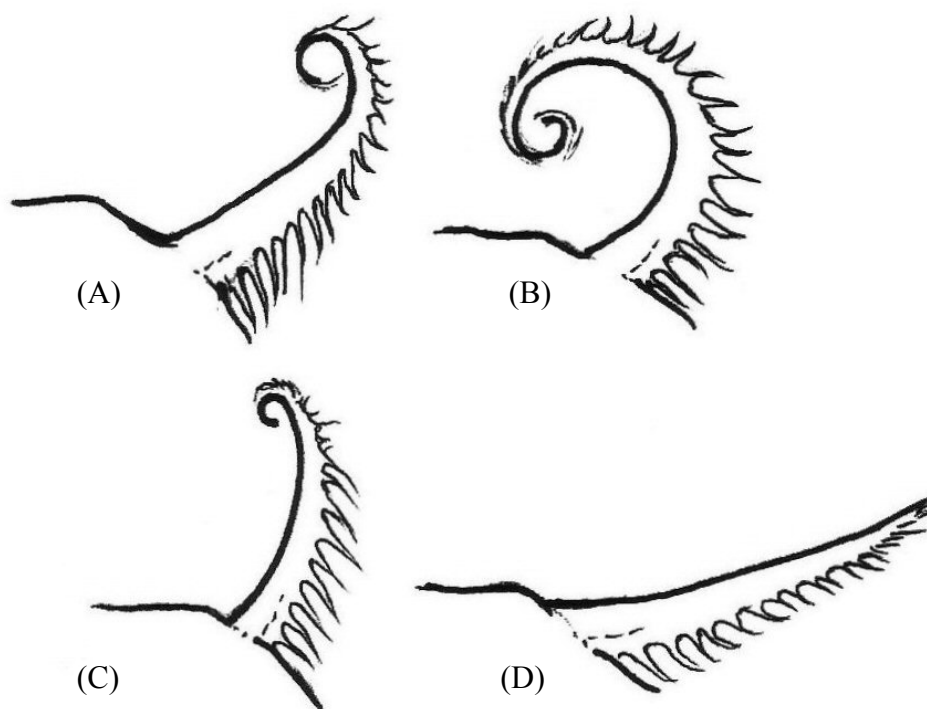
The ringed tail is another unique characteristic of the breed. The ring can be small and tight, or a longer curving ring, set at the end of the tail, which should be neither too short or too long, and should be in balance with the overall size of the dog. A double ring is a fault, as is a straight or merely hooked tail. Tails vary in strength, and a good Afghan tail has considerable “spring” to it.

The tail is used as a counter balance in movement, and should be raised when in action, but as it is an extension of the backbone, it should emerge at an easy angle, not an awkward, upright stilted one. Though carried gaily, it should never be so high that the ring is carried in front of the line of the hip bones. Neither should it be so low as to lose the “style of high order”. It should never be curled over or rest on the back, or be carried sideways. (Fig. 7)

Although the Afghan Hound is not a demonstrative breed, and will not use its tail as an expression of its feelings as obviously as other breeds, if the tail is not raised in action as called for by the Standard it may indicate some form of discomfort or unease. When the dog is standing the tail will probably be relaxed and lowered, but should never be clamped between the legs, indicating anxiety.

“Sparsely feathered” means just that—a thin fringe or just a few wisps on the under side of the tail in adults. Saddle textured hair (to be discussed under “Coat”) should be found along the top and on the sides of the tail. The tail should never have the appearance of a “feather duster”.

Figure 7



#### TAIL SETS

A) Correct set on

B) Teapot handle

C) Too high set

D) Too straight

#### ● GAIT / MOVEMENT

***The gait of the Afghan Hound should be smooth and springy with a style of high order. The head must be held proudly. The tail is raised when in action.***

Movement should be effortless, light and free flowing. There is an elasticity and fluidity to the movement, and a unique spring which comes from the pasterns. This combined with a proud head carriage gives the “style of high order”. Bouncy or jerky movement is un-Afghan, and so is a flat movement with no spring. A hackney action is totally incorrect and should not be accepted.

(This section of the standard is included to conform with the ANKC format. It is a repetition of one of the requirements under “General Appearance” and is covered more fully in that section.)

#### ● COAT

***Long and very fine texture on ribs, fore and hindquarters and flanks. From the shoulder backwards and along the saddle the hair should be short and close in mature dogs. Hair long from the forehead backwards, with a distinct silky topknot. On the foreface the hair is short as on the back. Ears and legs well coated. Pasterns can be bare. Coat must be allowed to develop naturally.***

The long fine silky coat of the Afghan Hound is another distinct feature of this breed as is the saddle pattern. The coat must be silky in texture—never coarse or woolly.

The saddle hair, or hair along the back, is short, close and considerably coarser than the rest of the coat. It may be anything from a quarter of an inch to about two inches long, provided it lies flat and close to the skin and has a very smooth appearance.

The long silky topknot is also a breed characteristic, and a hood of long hair may form from the top of the neck and flow into the shoulders and withers. The hair on the muzzle and cheeks is very short and fine, and the sides of the neck will probably show patches of saddle-like hair, reducing an otherwise bulky appearance. In a more lightly coated dog the neck may be almost bare of long hair and become an extension of the saddle, which in this type of coat pattern is usually wider.

“Pasterns can be bare” means just that: CAN BE— not “can be if you don’t find them objectionable” or “can be unless you prefer them fully coated”. This uniquely Afghan “harem pants” effect **must not** be penalised when judging. However, though the pasterns can be bare, the feet **must** be covered with long thick hair for both balance and protection.

The coat patterning described above should develop naturally— the use of scissors or clippers should not be detected on the coat and may be penalised. This patterning is required in mature dogs— some puppies may have this adult patterning, and others will have hair on the face (monkey whiskers), saddle and tail. A mature Afghan Hound, male or female, may also wear a beard (or Mandarin whiskers) which is considered highly attractive.

## ● COLOUR

***All colours are acceptable.***

**All colours are of equal merit**— colour should never be considered when judging Afghan Hounds.

Colours seen commonly are; gold, silver, black, white, cream, blue, all shades of brindle, black & tan, black & gold, black & silver, black & brindle, and domino. Most of these colours can be black, shaded or self masked. White toes, chests and throats are common and should not be faulted.

## ● SIZE

***Ideal height: Dogs 68cms to 74cms (27 to 29 inches), Bitches 5cms to 8cms (2 to 3 inches) smaller.***

The margin of up to 8cms (5 inches) is quite a large one, so there will be great variety in size. To be over or under the size laid down by the Standard as “ideal” is a fault like any other, but not a disqualification. It is a matter of degree, and must be weighed in with all other points when assessing a dog. Ideally a bitch should not exceed dog height, and the important thing is that by virtue of size a dog does indeed look like a male, and a bitch looks like a female.

Weight is not mentioned, but by normal standards the Afghan Hound is a lean dog: never fat, never scrawny. The prominent hipbones, sloping croup and the first few lumbar vertebrae should be clearly discernible, and the ribs able to be felt without the hands sinking into crevices or pressing into deep layers of fat.

● **FAULTS**

***Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.***

***Any appearance of coarseness. Skull too wide and foreface too short. Weak underjaw. Large round or full eyes. Neck should never be too short or thick. Back too long or too short.***

On reading this alone one would expect to see a hound of refined, elegant, balanced appearance but one nonetheless able to function as a hunter. It should be noted that in the Afghan Hound Standard faults are not disqualifications. All dogs have faults, but in varying degrees which must be considered in overall assessment. The worst faults are features atypical of the breed, or structural faults which would prevent the dog from fulfilling the purpose for which it was evolved.

● **NOTE:**

***Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.***

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## **NATIONAL AFGHAN HOUND BREED COUNCIL**

### **Extension to the Afghan Hound Breed Standard**

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Edited by Patricia M Egan

Illustrations by Daphne Gie

At a Seminar held in Brisbane on June 11, 1994 in conjunction with the 9th Australian Afghan Hound National Specialty, submissions from the clubs listed below were discussed, and the points considered most suitable for inclusion in a Breed Standard Extension were selected. These points were compiled into a cohesive document and submitted to the ANKC as the Breed Standard Extension of the National Afghan Hound Council. Minor amendments were made at the request of the ANKC in 2001 & 2006. Illustrations by Daphne Gie were incorporated in 2005. The National Afghan Hound Council at a meeting held in Sydney in April 2006 unanimously adopted the amended Breed Standard Extension.

The current Afghan Hound Breed Standard in Australia is based on that adopted by the Afghan Hound Association (UK) in 1946 and by the (London) Kennel Club in 1950.

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   Afghan Hound Club of Victoria  
   Queensland Afghan Hound Association

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