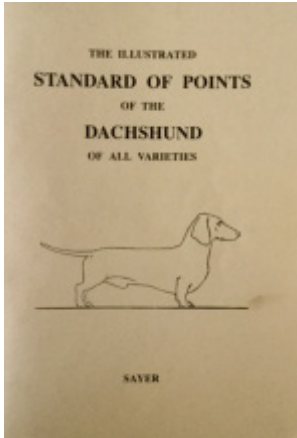


"Not long and not low" – please read the Breed Standard

Source: <https://dachshundbreedcouncil.wordpress.com/uk-breed-standard/not-long-and-not-low-please-read-the-breed-standard/>



Issued by the Dachshund Breed Council Health Committee, August 2018

It's nearly 80 years since JF Sayer published his **Illustrated Standard of Points of the Dachshund**. Since 1939, "Sayer" has been acknowledged as the Dachshund breeder's and judge's bible. Although there have been amendments to the Breed Standard over the years, Sayer has remained the definitive illustrated guide. The other classic text is Dalglish's "The Dachshund" from 1952 which also includes illustrations of the ideal shape and proportions for a Dachshund in the UK.

The current Breed Standard had its most significant update in 2008 when guidance was added to discourage exaggeration. In particular, the proportions were defined as follows: "*Height at the withers should be half the length of the body, measured from breastbone to the rear of thigh*". (**Withers**: Highest point of body immediately behind the neck; this is the top of the shoulder blades, the point from which height is measured) Unlike the guidance given in the FCI (International) Breed Standard, the 2008 UK revision did not quantify the amount of ground clearance and depth of body but simply said: "*with enough ground clearance to allow free movement*". It further states: "*Essential that functional build is retained to ensure working ability*".

The illustrations in both Sayer and Dalglish show Dachshunds whose height at the withers is half their body length; i.e. they fit the 2:1 length:height ratio described in the 2008 revision. These illustrations also show dogs that have approximately 75% depth of body and 25% ground clearance; the figures that typically get quoted at breed seminars. Based on their illustrations, we can assume that both Sayer and Dalglish also considered 25% ground clearance to be around the ideal. Sayer specifically said: "*It is not necessary for the chest to be as low as the wrist*" and "*...the less deep the chest, the greater the activity of the dog; exhibitors are too afraid of a reasonable amount of clearance under the chest*".

The FCI guidance is for one-third ground clearance and two-thirds depth of body (and 1.7 to 1.8:1 length:height). Clearly, the FCI standard requires a more compact dog with more ground clearance than we do in the UK.

The dangers of exaggeration

Coincidentally with our change to the Breed Standard, in 2008, Pedigree Dogs Exposed (PDE) used illustrations of Dachshunds to make a point about exaggeration in show-bred dogs, saying "*look what 100 years of the show ring has done to the Dachshund; today's dogs have much shorter legs*". This message about exaggerated length and lack of ground clearance was repeated on the PDE blog in 2009 and again on TV in PDE2 (2013).



Source: Pedigree Dogs Exposed

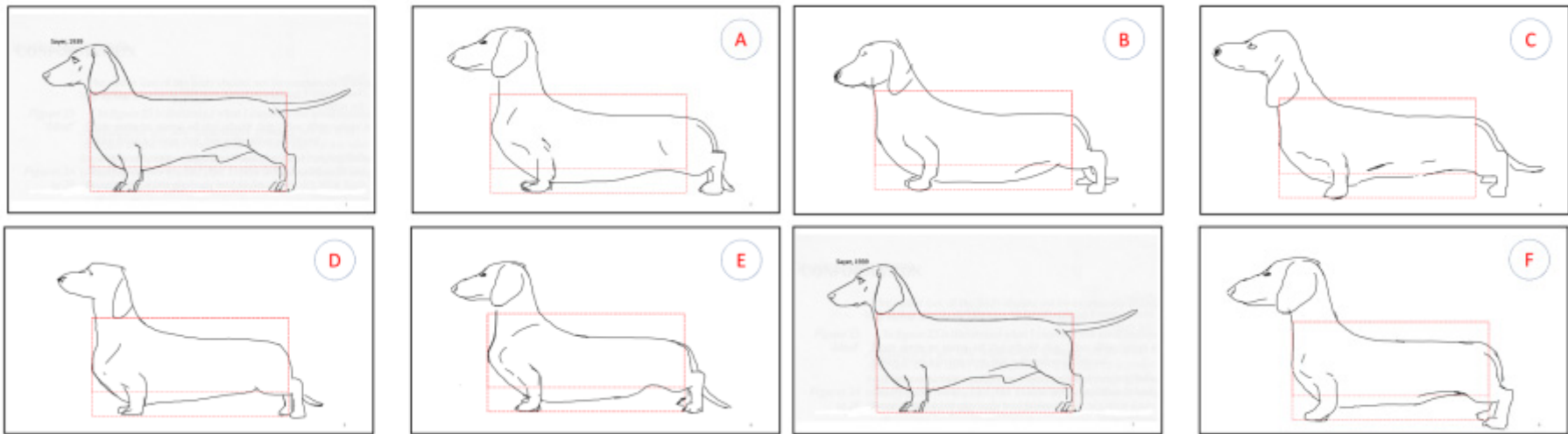
Also in 2013, Rowena Packer and her colleagues at the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) published a paper that demonstrated increased risks of back disease (IVDD) in Dachshunds that were "longer and lower". These findings were based on a relatively small sample of dogs and there are other studies that demonstrate IVDD cannot simply be attributed to exaggerations in body length, depth of body or shortness of leg. Nevertheless, the RVC findings have to be considered among the risk factors for back disease.

Breed Health & Conservation Plans

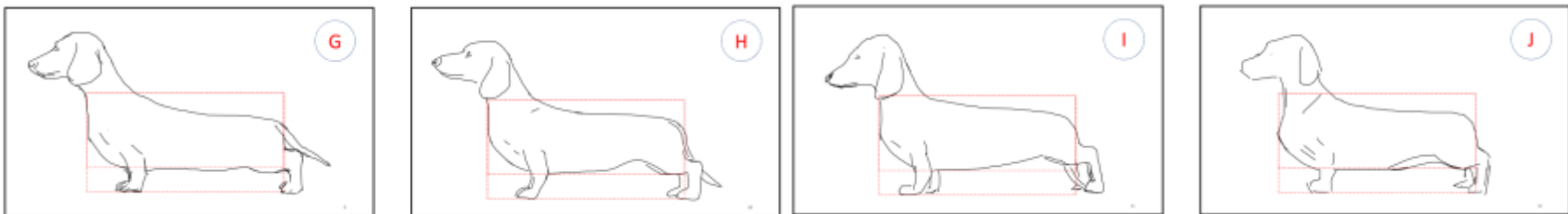
During 2018, the Breed Council's Health Committee has been working with the Kennel Club to agree our Breed Health and Conservation Plan (BHCP). The dangers of exaggeration have again featured in our discussions. By definition, the Dachshund is an "exaggerated" breed; the genes for dwarfism cause the breed's characteristic short legs. The Breed Standard's use of the word "*low*" relates to this dwarfism; the breed is low to ground at the withers compared with a non-dwarf breed. Low to ground does not mean lack of ground clearance and the standard specifically requires "*body sufficiently clear of the ground to allow free movement*".

Our Health Committee is concerned that, despite the many messages about desired proportions and ground clearance that have been communicated at seminars for over a decade, some breeders and judges still seem inclined to favour undesirable exaggerations.

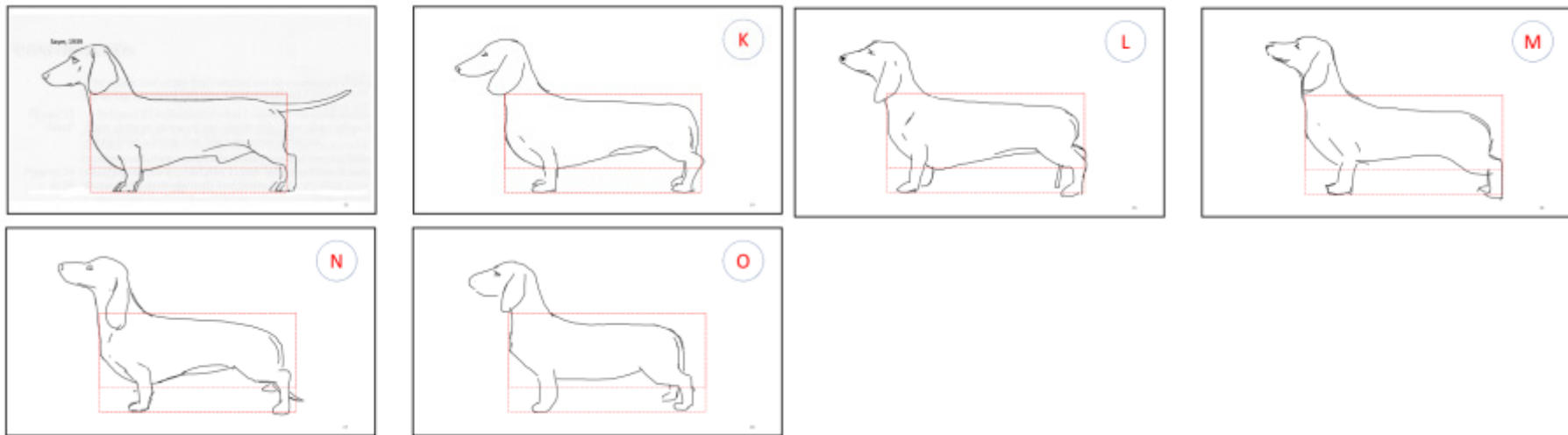
To illustrate the range of proportions of Dachshunds currently being exhibited, we have created outlines of a selection of dogs from the show-ring and overlaid these with a 2:1 box and a 25% ground clearance line. All the illustrations have been drawn to the same scale, so are directly comparable. Sayer's illustration is also included as a baseline reference. They clearly show that UK dogs (A-F) which are longer than the desired 2:1 proportions also tend to be excessively deep in chest, with very short legs.



The profiles of dogs (G-J) which are close to the 2:1 proportions are also close to having 25% ground clearance.



At the other extreme, dogs (K-O: which are drawn from FCI examples) that are shorter than the 2:1 proportions tend to have more than 25% ground clearance.



In the spotlight

The Health Committee's concerns are that dogs with excessive length and lack of ground clearance cannot be considered to be "fit for function" and that such exaggerations are likely to increase their health risks. IVDD is one of those risks, as is Bloat which is reported in Dachshunds and other breeds with proportionately more depth of chest.

Our other concern, of course, is for the reputation of the breed at a time when pedigree dogs are still under scrutiny. The image below is from a 2009 Dogs Today feature on exaggerated conformation in pedigree dogs. While brachycephalic breeds are currently in the spotlight, we know that Dachshunds are already on the radar for some health and welfare campaigners.



Source: Dogs Today 2009

Judges, in particular, have a responsibility to recognise and reward those dogs that best meet the Breed Standard and are fit for function. If judges continue to reward exaggeration, exhibitors will continue to breed and show that type of dog. There can be very few dogs being bred and exhibited in the UK that are too short and it is unacceptable for judges to be asking, in their critiques, for Dachshunds that are longer in the body. We should also not be reading judges' critiques praising dogs for being "low to ground" which invariably means very little ground clearance and clearly demonstrates their lack of understanding of the Breed Standard. JF Sayer made that very same point in 1939: "*In connection with the depth of chest, one often reads in the reports of critics at the shows that a dog is 'very low to ground' which is intended as a compliment, but I fear it usually means that the dog has a **very deep** chest, a fault instead of a virtue*".

The Breed Standard is equally important for breeders and owners who do not show their dogs. We see too many pet adverts proclaiming the virtues of "very short legs" and "lovely long" puppies.

Body condition matters too

For those Dachshund owners interested in showing their dog, the Breed Standard defines the Miniature and Standard varieties on the basis of their weight: Standards: 9-12 kg (20-26 lbs), Miniatures: Ideal weight 4.5 kg (10 lbs), desired maximum weight 5 kg (11 lbs). The Breed Standard also says: *"Exhibits which appear thin and undernourished should be severely penalised"*.

Remember, the Breed Standard describes the ideal sizes of Standard and Miniature Dachshunds; these ARE NOT "target weights" for individual dogs and judges cannot disqualify a Miniature for exceeding 11 lbs. Every Dachshund will be different and will need to be fed to keep his ideal weight for his frame. Judges have a responsibility to ensure that there are no welfare issues, particularly of Miniature Dachshunds, related to the weight clause in the Breed Standard.

If you are breeding, exhibiting or judging Dachshunds, please re-read Sayer's illustrated guide as well as our Breed Standard.

Further information

Guide for Dachshund Judges (pdf): <https://dachshundbreedcouncil.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/dachshund-health-for-judges.pdf>

Why Dachshunds are the shape they are:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ukdachshundhealthreport/home/news/whydachshundsaretheshapetheyare>

The Dachshund Breed Standard:

<https://dachshundbreedcouncil.wordpress.com/uk-breed-standard/>

Comparison of UK, US and FCI Breed Standards (pdf): <http://sunsongdachshunds.files.wordpress.com/2009/10/comparison-of-breed-standards.pdf>

Your Dachshund's bodyweight:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ukdachshundhealthreport/dachshund-health-resources/welfare/your-dachshund-s-bodyweight>