

Difficulties in Judging Dachshunds

by Dr Cesare Calcinati

Functionality. - Procedure of judging. - General type & Appearance. - Sizes. - Anatomic construction & Bones. - Angulation. - Movements. - Coat & colours. - Teeth & tail. — Temperament

Have you ever been interested to know what the breeders think about us, - not about you or me personally, but about the judges' job for the FCI group IV in general?

They think, and you will hear this if you ask them, that there is no breed in the world, which would have been judged worse than Dachshunds are judged nowadays.

I cannot say that I totally agree with this opinion; I'm sure that in all the WUT countries we still have correct and competent specialists, who are in perfect condition to judge our breed. But anyway, I understand what the breeders mean, and why they feel so much disappointed.

Year by year, looking at Dachshund rings at the important FCI events, we see that the Standard is not always respected by the judges, and may be even not always learnt. It sounds terrible, but how else could we explain champion titles finished by the dogs with forbidden colours, or toothless Dachshunds on the podiums, or beautiful winners, which are not just oversized, but completely out of type, and first of all, out of function?

Should we then expect that serious breeders will trust us, and that they will rely upon our help in their work for the breed? I'm afraid that in general they know the Standard much better, than those from whom they are getting critiques to their dogs. It happens that even we can't understand what some of our colleagues are looking at, and what they are looking for in Dachshunds!

The problem comes from the fact that the FCI group IV is the easiest to open, and one of the most difficult to judge. In all the countries, we have a lot of judges for Dachshunds, but how many of them can evaluate this breed correctly? 10%, hardly more!

If we really wish to change this proportion, the first step should be to let all the judges remember the most important question: *what is the Dachshund for?*

As you know, and as the Standard says, Dachshund is mainly an underground hunting dog, and this means that his functional beau-

ty is strictly connected to this kind of hunt. Everything in our breed - temperament, types, sizes, anatomic construction and bones, angulations, movement, the quality of coat, requirements to the teeth, etc. - can be explained by the ability to hunt underground. Of course the judges are not obliged to be hunters, but they must understand what for the breed was created, and how the Dachshund should look to be useful at work. Functionality is above all in working dogs!

When this point is learnt, and when you've remembered that in Dachshunds you have to evaluate not the beauty in general, but the *functional* beauty, all the rest is becoming much easier.

PROCEDURE OF JUDGING

The fundamental principle of judging is, - and it can be applied everywhere within the FCI, - that we must follow the Standard of the breed, keeping in mind an important rule that the judge has to give the evaluation of the dog in movement and in stand, always by one and the same method. That's why it's not correct when dachshunds are judged only in movement, and the evaluation on the table is missing, even if under the time pressure. We still need to look at the dogs on the table, where we'll control their type, anatomy, bones, hair, colour, teeth, tail and testicles (in males).

And one more point, which could be important for the beginners: you have to be very careful to the details, but first of all you must be able to see the picture in whole. It should never happen that a super quality, eye-catching Dachshund with a small defect of hair, for example, would be placed after a mediocre dog, in whom the "details" are correct, but not driven to the balanced combination.

For the breeders judges, I'd like to add that we can support our preferred breed type only in the case if the quality is equal. The quality goes first!

GENERAL TYPE AND APPEARANCE

For the highest evaluation, Dachshunds should represent the type to which they belong according to the Studbook; certainly the Standard must be respected. We read there: "Low, short legged, elongated but compact build, very muscular with cheeky, challenging head carriage and alert facial expression. His general appearance is typical of his sex. In spite of his legs being short in relation to the long body, he is very mobile and lithe". And then, we have to understand that only a muscular Dachshund can get "Excellent" or the first place in the competition. Dachshunds with lean body and weak



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muscles, or, speaking shortly, without substance, cannot be your winners; you shouldn't put them up, and, in fact, you shouldn't even give them "Excellent". The same is to be said about evidently underfed Dachshunds, which can remain the representatives of their size variety (standard, miniature or kaninchen) only because the owners put them on a strict diet some weeks before the show. But to have no substance doesn't mean to become a true kaninchen! In the standard variety, the problem of "oversize" is also more than actual. Standard dogs, exceeding the admitted limit even with the tolerance, are not for "Excellent", and they should never lead the competition, because they cannot be "very mobile and lithe", as the Standard requires. In Dachshunds, overweight often goes in the combination with being too low to the ground, as well as with unstable movements. I hope there are no judges in the FCI, who could put too heavy Dachshunds on the top!

One of the most important points of the Standard is related to the general appearance, typical for the sex. Unfortunately, not all the judges follow this rule, especially in males. On the show podiums, we use to see the males which could be excellent females by the type in general, or by the head in particular. And even the females in masculine type are winning sometimes, - probably because of better substance, but anyway, they shouldn't. In miniature and kaninchen varieties, you'll meet this problem quite often. In both cases, - when you'll judge males with small feminine heads or feminine appearance, and when you'll judge females looking like males, - you shouldn't give "Excellent", and of course you shouldn't let them win.

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SIZES

In all our discussions about sizes and measurement, my opinion is that we need more tolerance. When we're judging dogs, we have to understand that something can change. For example, females after having puppies, - it could be very difficult to keep them in size.

This is my centimeter. I have been using it at least for 20 years, always the same. It works! And it does matter which kind of centimeter tape you have; I never used those of the tailors, for example. I remember once, time ago, I thought that I lost my old centimeter, and I became crazy, looking for it everywhere. I have a lot of them of course, but I prefer this one. Good that it is soft, because it's not dangerous for the dog, and it helps the dog to stay quiet at the table. Sometimes dogs even don't understand that I'm measuring.



And then, about the process of measuring. Not always even the specialist judges can measure perfectly, because they don't know exactly where to measure.

The most important part is to remember that the correct point for measuring is the beginning of the chest, right under the elbows. When the centimeter is between the corps and the elbows, and the elbows don't let you move it further to the front, you can measure.



Start not from 0, but from 10, it's easier.



Never let the centimeter stay loose, tighten it till you can, because you have to remember that there is the coat! If you measure in a correct way, you should get the same results on a wire dog when he is in overgrown coat, and when he is just trimmed. When measuring long-haired dogs, the judge cannot forget the influence of the quantity of the hair, and has to try to find the right point to measure, moving the coat and the centimeter inside the coat.



Of course one-two centimeters always depend on how tight you will measure. When you're deciding which variety the dog is, kaninchen or miniature, first of all you have to touch the bones, and to understand what you're talking about. If you see that you're touching the kaninchen bones, you can measure tightly, and the dog will become in size. But if the dog is miniature by the bones and by the type, there is no sense to tighten him till 30.



ANATOMIC CONSTRUCTION & BONES

The desired construction of a Dachshund is known and well described in the Standard. Unfortunately, sometimes we forget to control it on the table. But only on the table you can check properly such important points as the position of the shoulder, strength of the front, of the rears and of the back, and only on the table you can evaluate the muscles.

The best way to illustrate this part of the article is to use the stuff from the seminar, which we gave time ago in Russia together with Mr Hurst Kliebenstein and Mrs Edna Cooper. Thanks to the Russian Dachshund Club for the photos.

You should remember, especially in longhaired Dachshunds, to touch the forechest, in order to examine if it is prominent enough, as required by the Standard. Be careful, the lack of forechest can be hidden by the rich coat of a long-haired dog, and probably you won't see this fault in movement or in stand on the ground.



To understand how deep the chest is, you have to touch the xiphoid appendix. It should be straight, not bent up or down, and it should exist. If it doesn't exist, the dog is "levrierato", so the xiphoid appendix lets the under line be correct.



The chest is to be checked in both dimensions - depth and length.



You have to evaluate the strength of loin region; may be it's the most significant point. Very few judges use this movement now, and even if they do, not always they understand what for. Dachshunds are hunting dogs working underground, and the strong loin is very important for them. The dog on the table is not strong enough in this part.



Checking the strength of the loin region in a puppy.



Another point is to check the length of the loin region. As I already said, Dachshunds must have a very strong loin region, and it has to be short (but at females obviously longer than at males).



ANGULATION

For me, Dachshund is a wonderful and perfectly balanced combination of angulations: angulation of the shoulder first, angulation of the rears, angulation of the croup. But why all these angulations must act perfectly together? Because the dog has to work underground. And then, he has to enter the hole, with the rears he has to push, with the shoulders he has to move ahead, with the croup he has to help the rears to move in front of the fox. Better if all these angulations are combined with the perfect topline, because of the push from the rears to the front. This is my idea of a Dachshund.

For the correct evaluation, you have to touch the dog on the table, and then to look how his angulations work in movement.

This movement is to check the strength and balance of shoulders.



Checking the strength of the shoulder. Touching the bones to understand, if they are bodying up well according to the age of the puppy.



Shoulder evaluation - to understand how long the shoulder is, and to see the angulation between scapula and humerus. The correct angle is 90° , because dachshund is a hunting dog working underground, and not a shepherd where the angulation is 110° .



Checking the length of the scapula. In fact, this point is not important while it is taken by itself. We have to evaluate it only in relation to the length of the humerus, and to look at the angulation between them.



Checking the length of the humerus.



It's not an easy task for a judge to examine the croup in a correct way. To understand the importance of this point, you should remember the rule about functional beauty. According to their functionality, Dachshunds must have strongest croup and loin region. This is the most important point for the ability to work underground. The chest is important for the dog's health, the head - for his general beauty, and so on, but without the strong croup your Dachshund cannot work!



The problem of this bitch is not the topline itself, but the croup and the rear angulation. Being not well angulated in the rear, she won't have good movements (will move without drive).



On the three pictures below you can see the croup evaluation step by step:

Looking how large the croup is.



Looking how the croup is angulated



Looking how strong the croup is



Correct stand to evaluate the angulation and the strength of the rears



Checking the strength of the rear legs.



The proper way to check the angulation between femoral and shin bones.



MOVEMENTS

When you'll let the dogs move in the ring, you'll understand the meaning of what that 1 said before about "perfectly balanced combination of angulations". If the angulations work as they have to work, you'll see irresistible harmony of movement, typical for this breed. Your winners should look not like "horses' procession", and not like "terriers in general", but like *Dachshunds*, as the underground hunting dogs.

On these three photos you can see how the angulations work in movement.



Correct movement with an excellent reach of the front legs. A dachshund shouldn't mince along like a terrier, but should move like a shepherd.



This female is a little bit fat, but her movements are correct and typical for the breed, with correct angulation and very good coverage.



Super movement typical for the breed, correct top-line and underline.



Correct front in movement with correct pasterns.



Correct rear parallelism compared.



COAT & COLOURS

The quality and quantity of the hair can be evaluated only on the table, by touch, not just by sight. In smooth- and long-haired Dachshunds, there are few problems concerning this point, and all of them are quite evident. When you'll have to judge smooth dogs with poor coat, showing not enough density or even bald patches on the leather, you'll recognize this fault and will be able to evaluate it properly. The same for long-haired variety: if there is the lack of coat or loose hair on the body, or if the coat is overloaded, shaggy or wavy (the worst case), you'll see these defects immediately.

The evaluation of wire coat is more complicated. Here you have to touch the hair carefully; it has to be perfectly harsh and dense, not too short and not too long. Soft coat on wire-haired dogs should be penalized unconditionally. "Hairy guys" with long, soft and open hair have to get "Sufficient" and to be eliminated from breeding.

We should mention one more problem that we got just recently here in Europe. It seems to be a "trend", coming from the Far East, to have the front part of the neck in wire-haired Dachshunds, especially in miniature, not only stripped, but shaved shortly, with the intention to make the neck look longer, and thanks to that, more elegant. The same happens in long-haired Dachshunds, groomed in American style. Like any other attempt to deceive the judge, shaving is not admitted, and must be the reason to send the dog from the ring without evaluation.

The colour of smooth-haired Dachshunds is well regulated by the Standard. The most frequent colours are red, with or without interspersed black hairs, and black or brown with tan markings.

Red with or without interspersed black:

Clear red



Red with interspersed black



Black & tan



Brown & tan



Wild boar colour, typical for wire-haired Dachshunds, is not allowed in smooth-haired, as the Standard claims that colours other than those listed under "Colour" are eliminating. In smooth-haired variety, wild boar colour means that there are wire-haired ancestors behind this dog.

Wild boar (allowed only on wire-haired dachshunds):

"Classic" wild boar



Brown wild boar (it's NOT forbidden!)



In the brochure "Colours & Colour Patterns in Dachshunds: Illustrated Guideline for the Aspirant Judges" (ed. by the Russian National Dachshund Club, 2017), I already gave my commentaries to all the colour issues, which we can meet in the ring. So here I'll only underline the most important points:

1) It's very stupid to breed by colour and for the "fashionable" colour, but even more stupid is to judge by colour. The best dog should win, and it doesn't matter if it is red or dappled. But if to imagine what that can never happen in the ring, - six dogs of absolutely identical quality, looking like twins, but of different colours, - what the judge is supposed to do? First, he has to check the depth of the colour, the pigmentation, the size and colour of tans (in all the dogs but red and brindle), the dispersion of the pattern (in dappled). When it's done and everything is of the same quality again (even if it's impossible), the judge can send the "red nose" at the last place, and can support what he thinks to be reasonable to support (classic colour, or, vice versa, brown dappled, because as the breed specialist the judge has to know how difficult is to reach the top quality in dappled).

2) The judge has to understand that brindle and dappled are not colours, but patterns, and this means that they can appear on ANY colour. And then, he must remember that brindle is allowed only on red, and dappled is allowed on ANY admitted colour, even on wild boar.

FCI colours with dappled pattern:

- a) Red dappled;
- b) Black & tan dappled;
- c) Brown & tan dappled;
- d) Wild boar dappled;



Brindle pattern.
NB: brindle is allowed only on red.



3) The judge never has to forget to check the pigmentation (nose, nails, pads), and he must penalize the lack of pigmentation because of the health issues. In the same time, he has to understand that black pigmentation cannot exist in brown dogs by the definition, and that "red" (in fact, brown noses) are not a crime in red dogs (because it comes from coffee gene).

"Reddish nose" at a red dog is not desirable, but admitted



4) The judge has to remember that cream exists only in long-haired varieties, and that it's forbidden in the FCI system. The same about "cream tans". But when he is judging in England, for example, he cannot penalize this colour.

Cream (non FCI colour)



5) Another problem which we can meet quite often nowadays, is piebald coming from non-FCI countries where it is allowed in dachshunds. Piebald Dachshunds can be recognized by widely spread white spots on the body; sometimes these dogs are tricolour (black or brown, plus red, plus white). The Standard says that a small white spot on the chest is not a fault, but wide extension of white is eliminating; a big white spot covering the chest all over, as well as small white spots on the feet or on the tip of the tail, can mean that the dog is piebald or piebald carrier.

Piebald (non FCI colour)



6) The judge has to understand what is just forbidden (black & brown brindle, for example) and what is really DANGEROUS (double dappled).

Double dappled is strictly forbidden due to health issues!

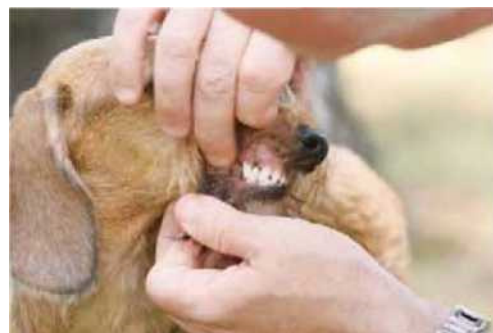


TEETH & TAIL

The control of teeth should be maximally precise. It's very important not only for the evaluation of the dog, but also for the judges' reputation. Imagine what a shock it is for the owner, if after many shows where the last teeth have never been checked carefully, someone finds in his dog, - perhaps already the champion, - that, for example, M2 is missing! But the situation can be even more unpleasant for those, who haven't noticed missing teeth during the evaluation. Sure you won't be happy, if after your judgement people will call each other, saying, "Today all the dogs could be toothless, and still could get qualification for breeding; and he was even checking the teeth!" If the judge makes such omissions, he shouldn't wonder why we doubt his competence.

On these photos you can see teeth evaluation step by step.

Here I'm checking the teeth (both sides) and the bite.



It's always very important to see the last teeth. Please be correct with the dogs and don't hurt them, but put your hand inside and touch, - there is no other way to make sure that everything is OK.

That's what I mean saying "please be correct with the dogs". It's a very sweet, and in the same time informative style of teeth evaluation.

It's good to remember that the tail examination should be started from the croup. Only this way, moving from the croup to the tip of the tail, you won't miss the defects. Take



note that some defects of the tail, especially so called "block formations", reveal themselves only in adult dogs, i.e. not earlier than in 15 months. It happens, that in junior class the dog is winning a lot, and no deformation of the tail is found even by the experienced judges, but after 15 months the innate blocking formation (an eliminatory fault) comes out, and stops his show career.

The next photos are showing how to examine the tail in practice.

Here I'm not checking the tail, I'm looking at the hair on the tail. The hair could be a little bit longer, but anyway, it's normal, because she is the bitch.



Now touching the tail to understand if everything is OK.

The movement should be the same as the catholic priest is doing with the rosary.



Step by step, from the beginning of the croup to the tip of the tail:

The correct beginning of the tail evaluation - from the croup.

The movement of Mr Kliebenstein (photos in the lower row) is very sweet and in the same time very correct.



TEMPERAMENT

We shouldn't forget that we are judging hunting dogs!

This means strong temperament, never afraid, always ready to react, happy, and with the tail waving, while the dog is approaching in the ring.

Check the temperament always! Even when you're almost finishing to judge the class, and you have the dogs in stand in front of you, please come close to each of them, and try to touch the nose with your hand. The Dachshund has to stay as he is, not moving, not jumping to the owner, not showing to be afraid, not going back or trying to bite, but coming to your hand, sniffing it, and may be moving his tail.

And the last advice which also could help the beginners. When everything is done, and you have two beautiful dogs in front of you, and still cannot decide your winner, go back to the question from which we have started: *what is the Dachshund for?* Not just beauty, but *functional beauty* should be put up, and the closer the dog is to his original function, the more chances he must have under you.

All the illustrations are provided by the Russian National Dachshund Club

Photographers: Functionality - Olga Murzina Sizes; Movements - Anna Shvets Anatomic construction & bones; Angulation; Teeth & tail - Michael Trafford Colours - Anna Shvets, Elena Chirskova, Michael Trafford, Roman Gunchenko, Will Harris, Svetlana Gorlova, Inna Drozdova, and private archives

