

# An Introduction to the Borzoi

## HISTORY

The Borzoi originated in Russia. The first standard for the breed was in 1650. Borzoi were used by the Russian nobility for hunting game, which at that time was mostly wolves. The Borzoi was developed to meet the criteria of the hunt, which included courage, speed, agility and strength.

After the Russian Revolution, many of the Borzoi were slaughtered because of the association with the Czars. Borzoi survived in isolated kennels.

## Borzoi in General

The Borzoi is a very tall, elegant hound with long to medium length of coat. They are considered a giant breed, with an average height at the withers of 28"-32", depending on the gender. Even though they are large dogs they are graceful animals that make great house dogs. They can come in any color or pattern of colors. Russian Wolfhound was the original name of the breed. Their job was to hunt wolves, fox and hare across the open plains of Russia. Borzoi are sighthounds, which are dogs bred to course (chase) game by sight. Being sighthounds, they are apt to chase anything that moves. That is why they should always be in a fenced area or on a leash. It is never advisable to allow a Borzoi to run loose.

The Borzoi is a gentle, non-mischievous dog that is usually well-mannered and does not bark much. They are quite catlike (independent and undemanding) in the house as adults, never pushy, but very affectionate with their owners.

## Grooming

Grooming should always be a pleasant experience. A good pin brush is excellent for the coat...not a slicker brush (they have bent pins and will break and tear the coat).

Show Grooming: Borzoi should always be shown clean and groomed. The proper coat requires little trimming. All trimming should be in moderation. They should never appear trimmed.

Toenails should receive regular attention and not be allowed to get too long, whether you are showing or not. Ears also need to be kept clean.

## Leash Training

The key to leash training is consistency and patience. Leash training a Borzoi pup is not always easy as they are very independent, free-thinking hounds. In the

beginning, use a treat to make him forget the leash and come with you. Be firm and gentle and never lose your composure, as this only leads to frustration on your part and a terrified puppy on the other end of the lead. If frustration sets in, quit, and try again later.



Illustration by Patti Widick-Neale

## Health Concerns

As the Borzoi is not a popular breed and is not overbred, we are blessed in not having many health problems. Being a giant breed, they can develop osteosarcoma (bone cancer) or heart problems. Bloat and torsion are also seen in any large, deep-chested breed. You might want to talk to your vet and become familiar with the symptoms of bloat. Immediate vet attention is required if it occurs.

Some Borzoi are very sensitive to certain types of anesthesia, and if your Borzoi has to have surgery, your vet needs to be aware of this. Because of their lack of body fat, Borzoi absorb these drugs differently. Ropum (Xylazine) should not be used in the breed.

Borzoi are slow growing dogs. Sexual maturity is typically 12-18 months, and 2+ years for the bitches' first heat cycle is not uncommon.

Regular veterinary care, yearly vaccinations, and proper feeding and exercise are vital to maintaining your dog's good health.

Many Borzoi Club of America members support health research for the Borzoi through the AKC Canine Health Foundation—a nonprofit charitable organization whose mission is to help dogs live longer, healthier lives. Supporting the Canine Health Foundation will help ensure a healthy future for all dogs. For more information about ongoing health research to help Borzoi, see [www.akcchf.org](http://www.akcchf.org) or call toll free, 888-682-9696.

## Identification

Protect your Borzoi in case it is lost. Identify your Borzoi with a collar and tags. A permanent identification with a microchip or tattoo can be registered with AKC's Companion Animal Recovery. A 24-hour toll-free hotline helps locate the owners. For information, call 800-252-7894.

## Spay/Neuter

Spayed bitches have a lower chance of developing breast cancer and cannot develop uterine or ovarian cancer. Neutered males cannot develop testicular cancer and have a lowered risk of prostate cancer. Neutered males will also be less likely to wander and will be more tolerant of other male dogs.

## Reputable Borzoi Owners/Breeders

Breeders and owners that are members of the Borzoi Club of America are obligated to abide by an ethical code. This includes: abiding by the rules of BCOA and the AKC; providing the best possible environment for their dogs' physical and emotional well-being; putting the welfare of the dog above personal gain or profit, as a dog purchased is a 10-12 year commitment; striving always to behave in a sportsmanlike manner; helping educate newcomers; and always trying to sell to responsible homes. These are things you should look for in anyone you do business with.

As a new owner, hopefully you have purchased from such a breeder. If so, we recommend that you keep in touch with the person you got your dog from and use them as a resource for mentoring. Don't hesitate to contact the breeder for advice in any area that you have questions. They will be pleased to help you throughout your dog's life.

## Fun Activities with your Borzoi

There are so many activities you can enjoy with your Borzoi: lure coursing, conformation (dog shows), agility, obedience, racing, therapy work, along with many others. Information on these can be found on the following websites:

- ♦ The American Kennel Club: [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)
- ♦ The American Sighthound Field Advisory (ASFA): [www.asfa.org](http://www.asfa.org)
- ♦ The Large Gazehound Racing Association (LGRA): [www.lgra.org](http://www.lgra.org)

## Resources

### BOOKS

*The Complete Borzoi*

by Lorraine Groshans, Howell Book House – 1981

*Your Borzoi*

by Alfred W. Edlin, MD, Denlinger – 1976

*Life With Borzoi*

by Phydelda Gillette, Hoflin – 1977

*Observations on Borzoi*

by Joseph B. Thomas, Hoflin

## PAMPHLETS

Pamphlets are available on Borzoi Ownership, Regional Clubs, Guidelines for Breeders, and various areas that you can compete with your dogs.

*The Visualization of the Borzoi Standard* can be purchased online. It is a highly acclaimed guide on the Borzoi standard and a must for fanciers and judges.

*The Borzoi Connection* is an excellent non-profit breed magazine, listing information on all of the recognized Borzoi clubs in the US and Canada. Subscription information can be found at [www.borzoiconnection.com](http://www.borzoiconnection.com)

## WEBSITES

Visit our website: [www.borzoiclubofamerica.org](http://www.borzoiclubofamerica.org)

Our website has a wealth of information on the breed and on upcoming events. It is a great resource to bookmark. Some items of interest are:

- ♦ Access to the Borzoi Standard, BCOA events across the country, membership forms, Constitution and Bylaws, health information on the breed, and information on Borzoi rescue.
- ♦ Sites with links to kennels around the world, Borzoi clubs, and Borzoi art/items:  
[www.borzoi.net](http://www.borzoi.net)  
[www.brozoionline.com](http://www.brozoionline.com)  
American Kennel Club: [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

