

Breed Standard

Breed standard: Italian Greyhound

From puppyhood to adulthood, the Italian Greyhound embodies a combination of harmonious light bone structure, strength, grace, and elegance. Getting to know the Italian Greyhound better will surprise you, as its refined postures are just the visible side of the coin. These are amazing and even paradoxical dogs!

The graceful Italian Greyhound is quite ambitious and far from being a fragile dog ready to sit in a bag. Incredibly agile and athletic, Italian Greyhounds are ready to follow their owner everywhere and adapt to any lifestyle.

A well-raised Italian Greyhound with good genetics is a hardy companion with excellent health and a lot of energy. At any age, from puppyhood to adulthood, the Italian Greyhound will leave no one indifferent and can win over even the most hardened skeptic.

It's fun to spend time with Italian Greyhounds; they easily get along with each other and with any other animals in a small area, including apartments. They love to travel and engage in sports racing. **But most importantly, the Italian Greyhound is a dog for feelings and love in the highest sense of the word. An Italian Greyhound wholeheartedly attaches to its family and rewards its owners with extraordinary relationships.**

Only those who have an Italian Greyhound can understand and appreciate these relationships. And those who already have one little sighthound will likely come to the conclusion that they need at least one more for complete happiness. Our website features several articles about the Italian Greyhound, written by us based on our experience with these unique dogs.

FCI Standard with the latest amendments of 2016

Italian Greyhound - Italian Sighthound - Piccolo Levriero Italiano

ORIGIN: Italy.

UTILIZATION: Racing dog.

FCI CLASSIFICATION:

Group 10 / Sighthounds

Section 3: Short-haired Sighthounds, without working trial.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY: The Italian Greyhound descends from small-sized sighthounds that existed in ancient Egypt at the courts of the Pharaohs. Passing through Laconia (Greece), as evidenced by numerous depictions on vases and bowls, the breed arrived in Italy at the beginning of the 5th century BC. Its greatest development occurred during the Renaissance at the courts and among the nobility. It is not uncommon to see the Italian Greyhound depicted in paintings by the greatest masters.

GENERAL APPEARANCE: Slender body fitting into a square. Despite its small size, it fully characterizes a miniature sighthound. A prototype of refinement and elegance, it can be considered a model of grace.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS: Its length is equal to or slightly less than the height at the withers. The length of the skull is equal to half the length of the head. The length of the head can reach 40% of the height at the withers.

BEHAVIOR AND TEMPERAMENT: Lively, affectionate, obedient.

HEAD: Narrow, elongated.

CRANIAL REGION: Flat skull, the longitudinal axes of the skull and muzzle are parallel. The length of the skull is equal to half the length of the head, slightly rounded at the sides. The lower orbital area is well-filled. Head muscles should not show any heaviness. Eyebrows are well-defined. Occiput not prominent. Only slightly marked median furrow. Frontal nasal depression (stop) is poorly defined.

FACIAL REGION:

Nose is dark in color, preferably black with well-opened nostrils.

Muzzle is conical.

Lips are thin and tight, with very dark pigmentation on the edges.

Jaws are elongated with clearly defined incisors in a crown shape, strong in comparison to the size of the dog.

Teeth are healthy, complete, and set perpendicularly to the jaws, with a scissor bite.

Cheeks are dry.

Eyes are large, round, expressive, set in a sub-frontal position, neither deep-set nor bulging. The iris is dark, with pigmented eye rims.

Ears are set very high, small, with thin cartilage, folded and placed back on the neck. When the dog is attentive, the base of the ear is erect and the ear tips are horizontal, known as "flying ears" or "propeller ears."

NECK: The back part of the neck is slightly convex and forms a broken line at the base near the withers. The throat line is slightly arched. The neck is equal in length to the head. It has a truncated conical shape with well-developed muscles. The skin is free from wrinkles and sagging.

BODY:

Length is equal to or slightly less than the height at the withers.

Topline: Straight profile with a slightly convex back-lumbar area.

The lumbar curve harmoniously transitions into the croup line.

Loins are slightly arched.

Withers are fairly pronounced and close to the upper part of the shoulders.

The back is straight and muscular.

The croup is very sloping, wide, and muscular.

Chest: Narrow, firm but elegantly modeled with thin and elastic ribs. Deep, reaching the elbows.

Underline and belly: The rather short sternum is emphasized by an arch that rises sharply into the belly.

TAIL: Low set, thin and graceful even at the base, tapering gradually to the tip. Carried low and straight in the upper part, curved in the second half. When straightened, it should reach the hock joint. Covered with short hair.

LIMBS:

Forelimbs: Generally straight and vertical with dry musculature.

Shoulders are slightly sloping, with well-developed, long, and well-defined muscles.

The upper arm has a very open scapulohumeral angle, parallel to the median plane of the body, and is slightly longer than the scapula.

Elbows are neither turned outwards nor inwards.

Forearms: Straight. Thin bone structure, flat and lean, perfectly vertical. Well-defined grooves from the wrist to the elbow. The length from the ground to the elbow is slightly more than from the elbow to the withers.

Pasterns are dry and slightly sloping in profile.

Forefeet are almost oval in shape, small, slightly arched, with tightly set toes. Pads are not voluminous, pigmented. Nails are black or dark, matching the coat color; white is allowed on the feet.

Hind limbs: General appearance with good angulation. When viewed from behind, they are straight and parallel.

Thighs are long, lean, not voluminous, with well-defined muscles.

Knees are firm and strong.

Lower thighs are very sloping, with thin bone structure and a noticeable groove between the muscles. The length of the lower thigh is slightly more than the length of the thigh.

Hocks, when viewed from behind, should be parallel.

Hind feet are less oval than the forefeet, also slightly arched, with tightly set toes. Pads are not too voluminous, with nails pigmented as on the forefeet.

GAIT:

Springy, harmonious, with a slightly elevated trot and good ground coverage. This means that the forelimbs should move forward with a good reach and slightly raised and sloping pasterns. The gallop is fast with sharp, springy leaps.

SKIN:

Thin and tight all over the body, except at the elbows where it is slightly less taut.

COAT:

Short, silky, and fine all over the body with no trace of fringes. The color is solid black, gray, or isabella (pale yellow/beige) and all shades. White is allowed only on the chest and feet.

SIZE AND WEIGHT:

Height at the withers: Males and females from 32 to 38 cm.

Weight: Males and females not exceeding 5 kg.

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 on the health and welfare of the dog.

Persistent pacing

"Hackney" movement (overly high, unproductive step, similar to prancing).

Movement close to the ground with short steps.

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:

- Aggressiveness or extreme shyness.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioral abnormalities should be disqualified.
- Convergence or divergence of the longitudinal axes of the upper lines of the skull and muzzle.
- Partial or complete depigmentation of the nose.
- Concave or convex nasal bridge.
- Undershot or overshot bite.
- Cataract, complete depigmentation of the eyelids.
- Tail carried over the back, twisted, shortened congenitally or artificially.
- Multicolored coat. White patches, except on the chest and feet.
- Size: Less than 32 cm and more than 38 cm, both for males and females.

FAULTS EXCLUDING FROM BREEDING:

- Overshot bite
- Cryptorchidism, unilateral cryptorchidism.

NOTE: Males should have two well-developed testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

To fully understand the breed, we recommend familiarizing yourself with the very detailed comments on the Italian Greyhound standard by the legendary breeder and judge Bitte Ahrens.

Comments on the Standard by Mary Keast

The Italian Greyhound is a small sighthound with a high, free step. Its conformation forms the dog, but try not to get lost in the details and remember the whole picture.

Historical documents from the past century indicate that the breed was threatened with extinction due to the reduction in weight to 1.8 - 2.2 kg. Around this time, two similar breeds, the Whippet and the Italian Greyhound, began to diverge. The first towards strong functionality, and the Italian Greyhound towards refinement and a high step. Victorian-era English breeders experimented with crossbreeding these breeds to acquire and enhance certain characteristics. Later, there were crosses with the Toy Terrier. The standards for Toy Terriers and Whippets reject Italian Greyhound characteristics. The Italian Greyhound standard prohibits brindle and tan markings. Remember all these mixes and do not be lenient towards Terrier-like appearances, topline, and other characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS:

Elegant, graceful, fast.

Often misunderstood, speed does not mean the dog should bounce around the ring, but rather general liveliness.

TEMPERAMENT:

Intelligent, gentle, lively. May seem aloof. A typical sighthound, this aloofness is often associated with their work by sight and inability to focus on close objects. It can be difficult to distinguish between such aloofness and a bad temperament. Puppies often go through a difficult stage and should be given extra attention.

HEAD AND SKULL:

Long, flat, narrow skull. Small stop, long, fine muzzle. Dark nose.

EYES:

Rather large, bright, expressive. According to the standard, but additionally remember that with a small stop, the eyes cannot be round. Typical sighthound, gently rounded, triangular, or oval eye shape. The nose protrudes above the line of the lower jaw. Clearly chiseled under-eye area. The forehead and muzzle are of the same length and parallel. Eye color should not be lighter than the coat tone.

EARS:

Rose-shaped, pulled back, soft, and thin. Not erect. The ears should not be erect or semi-erect, except in puppies during teething when this is permissible. Preferably small, ear base at eye level. When alert, in line with the top of the skull. When pulled back, the tips touch or cross.

MUZZLE:

Strong jaws with a correct, even scissor bite. Teeth are even.

NECK:

Long, gracefully arched. A correct neck is a distinctive feature of the breed. It contributes to a high and free step. The neck is equal in length to the head. Set high, with a slight forward bulge right above where it joins the body. With a well-developed withers, it slightly widens towards the withers. Held high and vertical when moving. Not to be confused with a ewe neck, which has a concave upper line.

FORELIMBS:

Long, sloping shoulder blades. Forearms straight, positioned under the shoulder blades. Strong, fine bone structure. Like all sighthounds, the shoulder angle is quite open, although the shoulder blades are quite sloping, giving the neck length. Positioned so that the sternum is visible between the shoulders but does not protrude. The forelimb construction ensures a free high step. Flat bones (narrow in front, wide on the side). Slightly sloping pastern.

BODY:

Deep and narrow chest. Good length of ribs. Slightly arched loin. According to the standard. Typical sighthound body. A distinctive feature is that the length of the Italian Greyhound never exceeds its height. The distance from the scapulohumeral joint to the ischial tuberosity is not greater than the height at the withers. This determines the high step. The arch of the loin is mainly formed by muscles and can change with temperature and other conditions. The small arch, a distinctive sighthound feature, is easily assessed when moving at a brisk trot. The lowest point of the chest should reach the level of the elbows. Ribs directed backwards. Not flat, not barrel-shaped.

HIND LIMBS:

Long, muscular, parallel when viewed from behind. Well-defined knee, low hock joint. According to the standard, typical for a sighthound. Long, sloping croup, but not steep. Long, flat musculature. When viewed from the side, the hind limbs are not set under the body, but not extended back (not like a Whippet). In a relaxed stance, a line dropped from the ischial tuberosity should pass through the hock. This determines a free step. A common fault in the breed is a short croup. This results in a high tail set, insufficient thigh width, and makes the dog appear chopped off. Such a croup is not typical for a sighthound. Faults can be hidden in a stance but are always noticeable in movement.

FEET:

Hare-like. Long hare foot with tight thick pads, unfortunately, short feet are more common.

TAIL:

Low set, long, and thin. The tail reaches the hock joint. Puppies and breeding males may carry the tail high when aggressive towards other males. As the tail is thin, especially at the end, fractures are common and should not be penalized, but congenital bobtail is unacceptable.

COAT:

Thin skin. Short, fine, smooth coat. Ideal coat is rare but always should be soft and smooth, not bristly. The dog should be fully coated without bald spots, particularly along the back, which indicates alopecia. Puppies may have longer hair, which is permissible until six months.

COLOR:

Black, blue, cream, fawn, red, white, or any of these colors combined with white. (According to FCI standard, only white markings on the chest and feet are allowed. Editor's note). Black and blue with tan markings or brindle are not acceptable. All these colors may have different shades, and a single dog may have multiple shades. Additionally, the primary color may have black-tipped hairs. Such a color should not be classified as brindle.

MOVEMENT:

High, free step. Limbs move in a straight line. Knees and hocks flex and extend in a parallel plane. Hind legs should not move pendulum-like, often seen with a high rear and stiff topline. They should not rise excessively, creating a mincing gait. There should be no faults related to overangulation or excessive length of hind limbs causing imbalance with forelimb movement (crab-like movement, hitching). The forelimb movement should be high. Ideally, they rise so that the forearms are parallel to the ground. The pasterns should be slightly sloping, but when the foot is placed on the ground, the pastern, foot, and forearm should form a straight line. The step should not be low like a Whippet's. Not too high (hackney). The step should not be low and short like poor Whippets.

WEIGHT:

From 2.7 to 4.5 kg. There should be a proportion between height and weight. Although the standard does not specify height-to-weight proportion, height generally ranges from 33 to 38 cm. Thus, a 2.7 kg dog is closer to 33 cm, and a 4.5 kg dog is closer to 38 cm. Such proportion is a necessary distinction from other toy breeds. The Italian Greyhound should not be coarse or heavy but an elegant dog. Neither frail nor thin, but strong. The main goal is to breed strong and typical dogs according to the standard. It is the judge's duty to give preference to the dog of the correct size according to the standard.

Remember, the Italian Greyhound is a small sighthound.
Here are its distinctive features:
- Typical sighthound appearance
- Typical weight-to-height ratio
- Typical neck set
- Rose-shaped ears
- High, free step

FAULTS:

Any deviation from the standard, depending on its degree and its effect on overall proportions.

Remarks: Males should have two normally developed testicles in the scrotum.

Mary Keast (Australia)