

A MOVEMENT FOR SOUNDNESS in Dachshunds

Yes, Dachshunds are a Movement Breed!



By *Cyndy Senff
Dynadaux*

Illustrations courtesy of the author

Going out on a limb here, but I am just going to say it. In recent years the judging of Dachshund movement has been in a serious “economic downturn” and in great need of a “stimulus package”. Just because the legs are short doesn’t mean they can’t walk. And just because they look pretty stacked doesn’t mean they can walk. At times there seems to be a trend of picking off the stack. Perhaps this is easier than judging movement? At other times faulty movement is being rewarded. One has to ask if this is because we have not taught effectively how to judge movement? Whatever the case, I hope to open the door to some serious thought on the subject.

Not crippled, cramped nor awkward in any manner, a correctly put together specimen will cover ground. That means it can GO. It should cover ground effortlessly with little or no wasted movement and it will not take little mincey steps going nowhere. When looking at sidegait the topline is going to lie in the straightest possible line between the withers and the croup. The dog is going to neither run up or down hill meaning it doesn’t sink on either end. The front legs reach forward far enough to efficiently clear the ground to make a stride and follow through the same amount. Think of a clock, if the forward swing passes the 7 then to match it would swing back past the 5. It is the same process in the rear, reach under the body and kick out behind. When looking at a still of movement the spread between the front feet and the spread between the back feet are matching distances. This is balanced movement.

From the front and rear the feet drive on parallel lines. When viewing a correctly wrapped front the wrists are necessarily closer together. When a well laid back shoulder meets with its ideally equally long upper arm on the oval thorax it will properly wrap. (These parentheses create the correct wraparound front) When this has happened wrists will be some closer than shoulders. When evaluating movement coming at you, you can think along the lines of a train on a track. You will see legs come from under the body not straight off the shoulder. Your Dachshund “train” will ap-

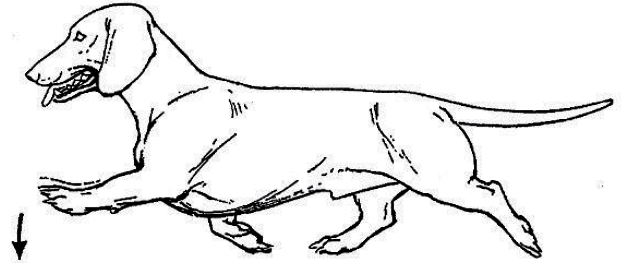
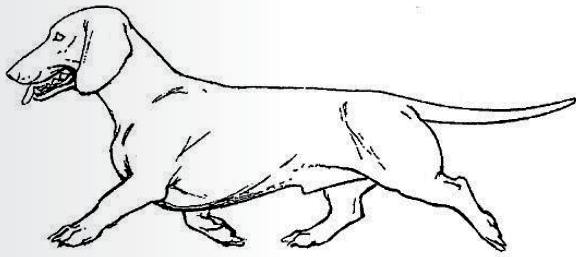
proach you with its feet hitting the tracks. A clean reach forward with slight convergence (thus hitting those tracks) with no wasted flipping, pounding, crossing over or waddling. If ideal movement hits those imaginary tracks then you can identify when it is not ideal. When the feet hit wider than those tracks. When the feet are too close together they hit inside those tracks. If they do loop de loops over those tracks. Well you get the idea. Not too wide, not too close, not east and west. A “trifle” is not easty westy.

Going away the same tracks apply but the hind feet might hit just slightly closer than the path of the front (maybe a back paws width). Again, wider than, closer than or hopping in and outside of those tracks give you pause to identify not so great movement. You want to see a nicely spaced clean moving rear going away that shows you the pads of the feet. No swishing back and forth. Hocks are stable not turning in or out.

Going back to the idea that form follows function a good field dog must be able to GO. If it can’t and takes mincey little steps or stumbles all over itself and wastes motion all day then it will tire before it gets to the end of the hunt. We don’t put food on the table by looking pretty standing still. We don’t corner our quarry by just standing still and we certainly don’t win a field trial by posing pretty in the field next to the bunnies.

Historically in the breeds heyday Dachshunds, particularly Smooths, were winning All Breed Best in Shows nearly weekly. Perhaps that is fodder for another writing. For now I mention it because as a measuring stick for the breeding program, judging is an important factor into a breed’s rise out of or fall into decline in quality. Better breeding is not encouraged by being successful with mediocrity. Let us challenge judges and breeders alike to raise the bar!

For comparison to what has been written above on movement, I have copied here from HYPERLINK “<http://www.akc.org>” www.akc.org the current AKC Standard of the Dachshund (Effective 3/1/07) the section on movement:



Figures 27 and 28

Gait

Fluid and smooth. Forelegs reach well forward, without much lift, in unison with the driving action of hind legs. The correct shoulder assembly and well-fitted elbows allow the long, free stride in front. Viewed from the front, the legs do not move in exact parallel planes, but incline slightly inward. Hind legs drive on a line with the forelegs, with hock joints and rear pasterns (metatarsus) turning neither in nor out. The propulsion of the hind leg depends on the dog's ability to carry the hind leg to complete extension. Viewed in profile, the forward reach of the hind leg equals the rear extension. The thrust of correct movement is seen when the rear pads are clearly exposed during rear extension. Rear feet do not reach upward toward the abdomen and there is no appearance of walking on the rear pasterns. Feet must travel parallel to the line of motion with no tendency to swing out, cross over, or interfere with each other. Short, choppy movement, rolling or high-stepping gait, close or overly wide coming or going are incorrect. The Dachshund must have agility, freedom of movement, and endurance to do the work for which he was developed.

And the second sentence of the standard—Appearing neither crippled, awkward, nor cramped in his capacity for movement, the Dachshund is well-balanced with bold and confident head carriage and intelligent, alert facial expression.

Still true today regarding movement, from my library I reference Grayce Greenburg's *The Dachshund* (5th Ed. 1955 pgs 69&70) where she writes: "In movement the Dachshund should have the appearance of having unlimited driving force. He is naturally alert and intelligent, with a bold and confident carriage. His front legs must be as near straight as is possible to have them, with heavy bone and well padded front feet slightly larger than are those in the back... The hind legs are not so heavily boned as are the front, and the feet are smaller. The hind legs must not crouch under the body giving a slinking, shy appearance, but should set down cleanly with well let-down hocks and the knee almost

perpendicular with the floor...When moving, the hind legs should move straight ahead, the feet neither turning in nor out; feet crossing is a real fault. In moving, the Dachshund should travel with the assured, free movement almost of a pacing horse, head held high, showing every one of his good points, not draggy or slouchy."¹

Figures 27 and 28 show side gait correct and side gait with a lifting front as illustrated by the RKF in relation to the FCI Dachshund standard. These drawings titled *Dachshund Official Documents* were handy and in general effectively illustrate what is written above. (Scanned from Volume 2-2008 of the Russian magazine publication "Dachshund")

In *The Complete Dachshund* (1949 pg 107) Milo G. Denlinger wrote a chapter titled *The Dachshund in a Nutshell*. Regarding movement he states under the section "Avoid-Narrow, cramped action. Choppy steps. Pigeon-toed or slew-footed, front or rear."²

And from Herman Cox-Cox on *Dachshunds* (1982 p.84, 86, 87) "One of the best, time-tested methods for determining soundness is the observation of gait and movement. The animal that moves with the least amount of effort is proper in conformation and soundness..."

(Figure 23 taken from Cox on *Dachshunds* 1982 page 87 with permission from Hoffin Publishing)

If we examine effortless movement, we find that it requires the summation of practically each item described in the standard, i.e., neck, shoulder placement, rear assembly, back and feet...

The dog in action clearly reveals structural faults. An animal with loose shoulders needs only to travel a short distance for an educated eye to detect this fault. Likewise, a hackney gait is an indication of steep shoulder placement. I am a firm believer in the (origin unknown) statement that "A dog that moves right has to be put together right."³

From England's *The Dachshund Club Handbook and Records* 1990-1992(p17) In his *Back to Basics* chap-

ter, Jeff Crawford writes “Movement is the acid test of all construction and a Dachshund should move with powerful ground-covering strides showing forward reach and hind thrust while still keeping the same outline it presented when standing. All too often the moving dog bears no relationship to the stationary one. The forechest disappears, the topline alters or the hind legs move forward under the dog, but not back beyond the perpendicular.”⁴

From the Australian National Kanine Council Dachshund Standard as published in the Australian Dachshund Handbook and Records 1970-1988 (p 27) “Gait/Movement-Should be free and flowing. Stride should be long, with the drive coming from the hindquarters when viewed from the side. Viewed from in front or behind, the legs and feet should move parallel to each other with the distance apart being the width of the shoulder and hip joints respectively.”⁵

Author’s Note: Interestingly both the Australian and England breed standards are to this day unchanged from the above.

Dee Hutchinson writes in her book *The Complete Dachshund* (1997 pg 69) with her late husband Bruce “The Dachshund’s gait should be smooth and effortless. From the side, the dog should have good reach in front and good extending drive in the rear. When coming at you, the front will incline slightly inward because of the short legs. When going away, you should be able to see the rear pads.”⁶

For decades, as well as around the world, there is plenty of evidence that Dachshunds are a movement breed. I hope this gets people to thinking and learning more about Dachshund movement. If you know what is correct then you have a good starting point. You can only judge what is brought you and each judge (and also breeder) will have an opinion as to which is more important, coming, going, breed type, sidegait, etc. That is a given. But knowing what is truly correct first then doing what you will from there, well, that should be a goal.

Obviously there are many good Dachshund judges already, even some great ones that already know about what I write and much more. Before I get burned at the stake I am no way shape or form saying all Dachshund judges need to read this and go back to school. I’m just concerned that the newer generations of Dachshund judges are going to be taught incorrectly, incompletely or not at all. I offer here food for thought on a trend that I don’t want to see get set in stone. That is the trend of rewarding incorrect movement.

In consideration of my deadline and the fact that I’ll never be through reading and proofing what I compiled here

I’ll hope that I have done well enough to stimulate some contemplation and effort into further education on the subject and call it a day.

Cyndy Senff

Breeder/Exhibitor

AKC Provisional Judge

Pending Regular Status Approval

Home study:

<http://www.sworab.com/d/> offers some good flash animation on side gait and provides a diagram with flashovers of pieces of the standard.

Additionally I am collecting movement videos of the three coats and two sizes showing correct or

better than average Dachshund movement. Dogs will not be identified. Dogs that are currently being campaigned will not be used as the sole intent of this compilation will be education and not to benefit any dogs or persons.

www.dynadaux.com/dachshundmovement.com

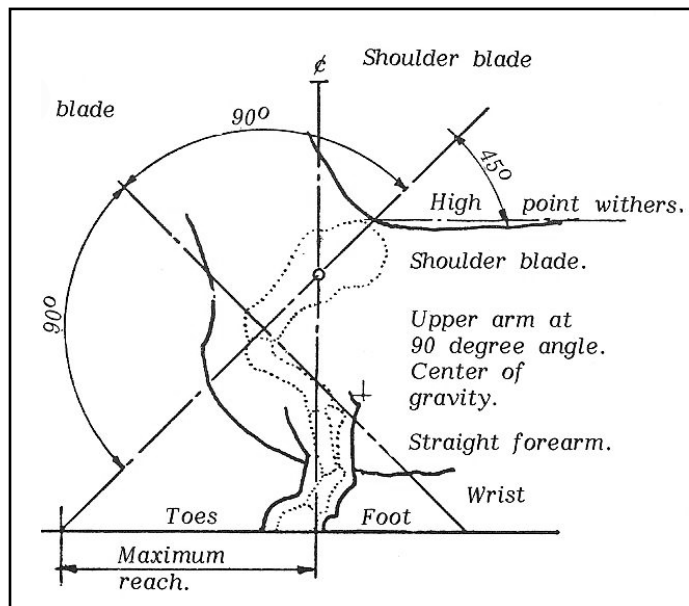


Figure 23: Correct front. Balanced 45 degree shoulder placement; upper arm at 90 degree angle; oval chest, elbows tight; straight forward leg action; paws turned slightly out; maximum reach leg action. (Figure 23 taken from Cox on Dachshunds 1982 page 87 with permission from Hoffin Publishing.)

¹Grayce Greenburg - *The Dachshund* - 1955 - 5th Ed.

²Milo G. Denlinger - *The Complete Dachshund* - 1949 - 2nd Ed.

³Herman G. Cox - *Cox on Dachshunds* - 1982

⁴Handbook and Records - *The Dachshund Club (UK) 1990-1992*

⁵Handbook and Records - *The Australian Dachshund 1970-1988*

⁶Dee and Bruce Hutchinson - *The Complete Dachshund* - 1997