

Saint Bernard Locomotion – Part 2

Defining What is Correct

By Stan Zielinski

The first part of this series gave a short discussion on why evaluating movement is an important part of judging a Saint Bernard. This second part of the series intends to discuss how we determine correct movement for a Saint Bernard.

Before continuing, I probably need to define the term “Correct” when I apply it to judging movement. The secret of defining correct movement lies in the word description in the standard and the description of the breed’s historical task – the task that motivated the fancy to preserve the breed. Often, writers of standards left the reader to deduce what is correct movement from the description of the breed’s anatomy, and that is the case with the Saint Bernard standard!

Simply stated, *moving correctly* is a test of correct construction. The dog whose movement is correct is one whose length of stride, foot placement, and speed – three distinctly different things – is governed by the anatomy described in its breed standard.

A dog can be showing with less style than its competitors, but be moving properly. On the other hand, a dog may be showing up a storm while moving incorrectly for its breed. These may seem like contradictions until one stops to analyze what each actually means. Having a Saint Bernard move about the ring in an untypical manner confirms nothing but incorrect structure.

Often we hear people describe correct movement for Saint Bernards as being *athletic*. This concept of being athletic is associated by many people with Saints of high quality. This is fine for breeds such as ours, whose historical function required them to be canine athletes – even though the standard is not specific about this subject.

Perhaps we should take the time here to reinforce our previous discussion about what is happening when a breeder, fancier or judge tries to evaluate the dogs while they are moving

We must start with the concept that it is impossible to gain an accurate picture of the total dog without doing the evaluation under both static and moving conditions – that is, both while posed on the line and while being gaited. Another way to think of this is to consider the whole point of moving a dog during the evaluation process is to insure that all the parts work together and that no component part is so out of whack that the dog could not possibly do the historic Saint Bernard work.

