

Anatolian Shepherd January 2018

A solid foundation : feet and legs in the Anatolian Shepherd Dog

As the old saying goes, It takes a better foundation to build a church than an outhouse. In a working dog, feet and legs are important. Feet, and the pasterns, legs and shoulders/hips above them, are the shock absorbers for the working dog. Without sound legs and feet a working dog is simply not functional.

Livestock guarding breeds like the Anatolian engage in the practice of transhumance – the act of following flocks with a shepherd from one grazing area to another. This is actually a slow paced activity. The dogs and shepherds follow the flock at the flock's speed and that generally is determined by the terrain and the amount of grazing material to be found on the path leading to their seasonal pasture. The LGD's job is to keep an eye out for anything out of the ordinary that might indicate the presence of a threat. He will keep his head down and move beside and within the flock, going with the general flow of traffic. When he perceives a threat he will immediately change speed from a meandering walk to a sprint in the direction of the threat. Once the threat has been run off or otherwise dealt with, the dog returns to the group and goes back to his slow, ambling stroll with his charges.

The AKC standard for the Anatolian has the following to say about feet and legs : Forequarters: Shoulders should be muscular and well developed, blades long, broad and sloping. Elbows should be neither in nor out. Forelegs should be relatively long, well-boned and set straight with strong pasterns. The feet are strong and compact with well-arched toes, oval in shape. They should have stout nails with pads thick and tough. Dewclaws may be removed. Hindquarters: Strong, with broad thighs and heavily muscled. Angulation at the stifle and hock are in proportion to the forequarters. As seen from behind, the legs are parallel. The feet are strong and compact with well-arched toes, oval in shape. Double dewclaws may exist. Dewclaws may be removed.

The Anatolian presents you, the judge, with a harmonious blend of Mastiff and Sighthound. He is, ideally, neither extreme of type. The molosser heritage shows in his large size, good bone and powerful build. His Sighthound ancestry shows in the tuckup that is apparent, even in such a large dog, the tendency towards bladed bone, and in that oval foot called for by the breed standard.

Many of the breeds in the Working group call for a cat foot – small, tight and round. It is the foot of a trotting dog. But the Anatolian is possessed of an oval foot, the center two toes being slightly longer than the outside toes. Look at the foot from the side – you want to see depth from the top of the foot to the hard, tough pads on the bottom of the feet. These are working feet that can travel long distances in harsh terrain and all sorts of weather, from extreme heat to frigid cold. Nails should be stout. They may be dark or light, and you may find dark nails and light ones on the same foot. This is not a fault.

Angulation in the breed tends to be moderate, and dogs should be well balanced for and aft. Pasterns are strong. You should see some give to the pastern. It will not be as long as the pasterns of a Sighthound, but it should never be the short, upright pastern seen in some breeds. Remember, this is a breed that has to put in long hours on its feet following a flock over whatever terrain it is presented with. The Anatolian exists in a Goldilocks zone – not too heavy, nor too light – and its characteristic oval feet with arched toes are part of this 'just right' character. They are the solid foundation upon which the rest of the dog rests. Feet are easy to overlook, but they are vitally important in a working dog.

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