

Harriers



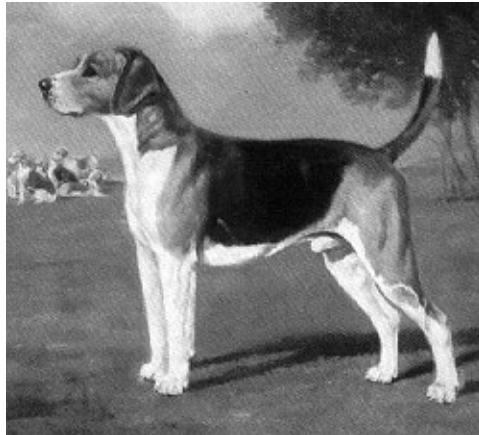
The Vale of Lune Harriers

Two English Packs

The Dunston Harriers



General Appearance – Developed in England to hunt hare in packs. Harriers must have all the attributes of a scenting pack hound. They are very sturdily built with large bone for their size. They must be active, well balanced, full of strength and quality, in all ways appearing able to work tirelessly, no matter the terrain, for long periods. Running gear and scenting ability are particularly important features. The Harrier should, in fact, be a smaller version of the English Foxhound.



An outstanding Harrier from the 1920's

Size, Proportion, Substance – Size – 19 to 21 inches for dogs and bitches, variation of one inch in either direction is acceptable. **Proportion** is off-square. The Harrier is slightly longer from point of shoulder to rump than from withers to ground. **Substance** – Solidly built, full of strength and quality. The breed has as much substance and bone as possible without being heavy or coarse.



A nice Harrier showing good substance & proportions.



Examples of clunky, coarse Harriers

Head – The head is in proportion to the overall dog. No part of the head should stand out relative to the other parts. The expression is gentle when relaxed, sensible yet alert when aroused. **Eyes** are medium size, set well apart, brown or hazel color in darker dogs. Lighter hazel to yellow in lighter dogs, though darker colors are always desired. **Ears** are set on low and lie close to the cheeks, rounded at the tips. The **skull** is in proportion to the entire animal, with good length and breadth and a bold forehead. The **stop** is moderately defined. The **muzzle** from stop to tip of nose is approximately the same length as the skull from stop to occiput. The muzzle is substantial with good depth, and the **lips** complete the square, clean look of the muzzle, without excess skin or flews.



Examples of nice heads



Head Faults: high earset



lack of stop



snipey & dishfaced

A good **nose** is essential. It must be wide, with well opened nostrils. Teeth meet in a **scissors** bite or they may be level. Overshot or undershot bites faulted to the degree of severity of the misalignment.

Neck, Topline, Body – the **neck** is long and strong with no excess skin or throatiness, sweeping smoothly into the muscling of the forequarters.



Nice hounds showing good length of neck & nice toplines

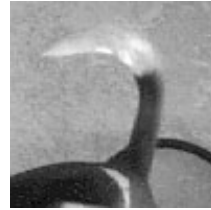
The **topline** is level. Back muscular with no dip behind the withers or roach over the loin.

Body – Chest deep, extending to the elbows, with well sprung ribs that extend well back, providing plenty of heart and lung room. The ribs should not be so well sprung that they interfere with the free, efficient movement of the front assembly. The loin is short, wide and well muscled.

The **tail** is long, set on high and carried up from 12 o'clock to 3 o'clock, depending on attitude. It tapers to a point with a brush of hair. The tail should not be curled over the back.



A good tailset & nice brush



too much curl



a low tailset

Forequarters – Moderate angulation, with long shoulders sloping into the muscles of the back, clean at the withers. The shoulders are well clothed with muscle without being excessively heavy or loaded, giving the impression of free, strong action. Elbows are set well away from the ribs, running parallel with the body and not turning outwards. Good straight legs with plenty of bone running well down to the toes, but not overburdened, inclined to knuckle over very slightly but not exaggerated in the slightest degree.



Correct fronts



Incorrect fronts: zero angulation



extreme knuckling over



down in the pasterns & flatter, open feet

Feet are round and catlike, with toes set close together turning slightly inwards. The pads are thick, well developed and strong.



an example of toeing in,
with a wide front a bit out at the elbows

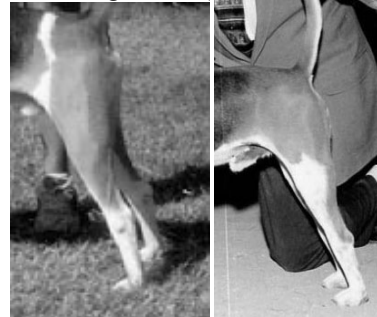


a nice hound being shown “on the flags” –
note good feet

Hindquarters – Angulation in balance with the front assembly, so that rear drive is in harmony with front reach. Well developed muscles, providing strength for long hours of work, are important. Endurance is more important than pure speed, and as such, the stifles are only moderately angulated.



moderate rear angulation (note good muscle tone)



incorrect rears with no angulation whatsoever

Feet point straight ahead, are round and catlike with toes set close together, and thick, well developed pads.

Coat – Short, dense, hard and glossy. Coat texture on the ears is finer than on the body. There is a brush of hair on the underside of the tail.

Color – Any color, not regarded as very important.

A wide variety of colors & patterns. ALL ARE CORRECT, NONE PREFERRED.



Plainly marked Tricolor



Red & white



Open-marked Tricolor

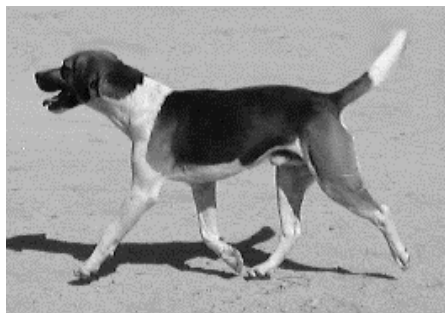


Two faded Tricolors



A white English Harrier

Gait – Perfect coordination between the front and hind legs. Reach and drive are consistent with the desired moderate angulation. Coming and going, the dog moves in a straight line, evidencing no sign of crabbing. A slight toeing-in of the front feet is acceptable. Clean movement coming and going is important, but not nearly as important as side gait, which is smooth, efficient and ground-covering.



Temperament – Outgoing and friendly, as a working pack breed. Harriers must be able to work in close contact with other hounds. Therefore, aggressiveness towards other dogs cannot be tolerated.

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The Harrier Huntsman

As a crisp winter's day dawns bright and clear, the huntsman heads across the icy cobblestones to the stable to prepare his mount for the day's hunt. Utilitarian coveralls, green rubber wellies and a wool cap keep him warm - in addition to keeping his white breeches, high-collared white hunt shirt, carefully tied stock tie and canary vest pristine and unblemished, for the moment at least.

With the tacking chores completed, the huntsman crosses the yard to the hound lodges. The hounds in the kennels hear the stable door open and shut, and give full throat in anticipation - howling, barking, baying and shrieking with absolute abandon. The cacophony 32 couple of Harriers raises on a hunting day is perfect testimony to their love of their work.

The ice on the cobbles has melted somewhat with the rising sun. Before he reaches the gate to the hound yard outside the hound kennels, the huntsman absently loops the 2 yards of leather thong connected to the well-worn stag-handled hunt crop he carries in his hand. With his other hand he pulls a piece of paper from the pocket of his coveralls and gives it a quick perusal.

After securely closing the hound yard gate behind him, the huntsman approaches the first of two kennel yards whose individual gate opens into the now-empty concrete paddock. The hounds are leaping, howling and barking in chaos behind their respective gates.

“ME! MEEEE! Pick MEEEE!” they each cry loudly! The huntsman lets the thong drop on his crop and with an expert flick of his wrist, pops the whip into the empty yard behind him with a decisive *CRACK*. “Enough of that”, he says gruffly, a small indulgent smile playing at the corners of his mouth. The hounds settle reluctantly, as they struggle mightily to curb their oh-so-obvious enthusiasm.

Coiling the thong back up again, the huntsman undoes the latch on the first hound yard, and holds it firmly, allowing it to open only a few inches. The hounds in this yard mill impatiently. Expectantly. All brightly shining eyes focused intently on their beloved master.

Glancing down at the paper in his hand, “Chancellor, Chancellor, Chancellor”, he says as he watches a dark hound push his way forward to the gate in rapid response to his name. Chancellor is slipped into the empty kennel yard behind him, the first of the lucky hounds on the huntsman's list for that day. Chatter joins her brother next, and the list goes on: Lilac, Lily, Quiver, Dalesman, Hackney, Hero, Hopeful, Saracen, Saxon, Miller, Minstrel, Minty, Wishful, Preacher, Proctor, Promise

When all of the thirty-seven names on his list are drawn out of the two yards, the huntsman proudly surveys his handsome pack of 18 ½ couple hounds as they swarm excitedly around his wellies. “Right”, he says, “off we go!” He opens the yard gate and leads his pack to the large horse trailer parked on the cobblestones. The hounds scramble up the wide ramp, into the holding area fenced at the back of the horse box, and settle as a pile onto the thick bed of dry straw.

The huntsman leads his mount, now covered in a light blanket, out of the warm stable. The gelding confidently steps up the ramp and into the horse trailer, where he paws the floorboards and chuffs expectantly once clipped to end of his short tether. Two professional whipperins lead their horses into the box next; the ramp is raised and locked, and the huntsman slowly drives the trailer from the yard.

The twenty-seven hounds left behind in the kennel yards bay and howl their frustration and sorrow at not being chosen this morning. Another day will be theirs.

The hunt itself begins with the arrival of the hounds at the field and the exchange of obligatory social pleasantries. The Master gives a nod to the huntsman, whose coveralls and wellies have now been shed,

revealing his dark green hunt coat, white breeches and mahogany-topped black boots. A black velvet hunt cap completes the uniform. He sits quietly mounted on his grey gelding, watching the hounds fan out around the gelding's legs like a living, breathing Christmas tree skirt. With his hunt crop held out slightly to one side so that the thong dangles straight down to almost touch the grass, he grips the reins held firmly in the same hand. He then pulls out the short copper horn kept warm in his inner coat pocket with his free hand. Putting it firmly to the side of his pursed lips, he gives a brief *trrrrppp trrrrppp trrrrppp!* A slight nudge in the side moves his grey forward into a trot, with the hounds following collectedly around him.

They soon reach the dark frozen field where the hunt will begin. The rich earth is plowed up in thick deep furrows, clods the size of tumbled bread loaves still frosty and hard in the bright morning air. A different call on the huntsman's horn signals the hounds to cast themselves across the field, and they spread out, covering the field at a good clip with their tails upright and wildly vibrating. They lope along with their heads held almost down to the ground between their galloping strides, noses searching for any trace of a hare.

Hunkered down tight in her set in the middle of the field, the hare scarcely breathes as the hounds stitch themselves back and forth all around her, so close but not quite. At last, she can stand it no longer and leaps from her warm depression. Her long hind limbs reach past her nose, grab the frozen ground and propel her forward at an incredible pace as she flies for the far hedgerow.

All the hound heads turn as one towards the fleeing hare, and the pack erupts in screaming pursuit. Hard muscles flow under gleaming coats as powerful loins contract and extend the strong spines into a flying gallop. Well-muscled haunches reach, grab and push the hounds rapidly forward while tight, tough feet find purchase on the uneven and punishingly frozen field. Deep chests draw great drafts of frosty air through wide-open nostrils and back out through loudly baying mouths.

The hare darts through the dense hedgerow, turns ninety-degrees and races along the hedges towards another farmer's field. At a corner gate, she squeezes under the bottom slat and darts again across the frozen expanse. Hounds scream on the line, bullying their way through the prickly hedge and off along the row. Unwilling to be stopped by anything, they launch themselves at the gate and scabble over it. One or two follow the hare's example and push themselves sideways under at a low spot, scraping a little hair off on a splinter. The chase goes on, as the hounds know no limit and never quit.

And so it continues, over, through and around many fields and pastures, some not plowed but rather left fallow and covered in sharp wheat stubble. The original hare may tag-team another, or it may lose the hounds using the many tricks in its bag. Occasionally an unlucky one will meet its end in a brief instant with a snap from a hound's strong jaws.

Hours later, the huntsman sits quietly atop his steaming and winded gelding. The long miles they've covered this day have tired both man and horse. Even though the hounds put in many more miles as they chased, raced and circled across the county, with eager grins, hanging tongues and panting sides they tell the huntsman as they gather around his gelding that they're still willing to go more -- if only he'd let them.

"Well done, hounds, well done", he murmurs to them in quiet satisfaction. He reins his sweat-lathered grey towards the far trailer at a cool-down walk. Mud-spattered hounds fall in behind their master, content at last for having given their all that day.

The deep straw in the back of the horse trailer is mounded with a pile of sleeping hounds as the huntsman pulls out of the farmer's yard. While driving slowly down the winding country lanes, he reflects back over the day's excellent hunt. He glances down at the small gadget beside him on the truck bench, the new GPS that he wore for the first time that day. It shows that he and his gelding covered over fifteen miles all around the county in the almost four hours they were out. He knows that his hounds easily covered at least twice that distance, if not more. Multiplying that by twice weekly hunts, over the five months of the hunting

season, the huntsman realizes with astonishment that his hounds cover some twelve hundred miles a season. He gives a low whistle in appreciation.

Although he had always known that for hare hunting, Harriers were without peer, actually doing the math finally clicked something home for the huntsman. The hounds he'd carefully bred, trained, loved and hunted for generations, had to be moderately and sturdily built in all ways, as his were, for a reason: their unmatched endurance and stamina. Add to that their sunny disposition and their absolute reluctance to ever quit hunting, and he couldn't help but smile to himself. "Well done, hounds, well done."

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More than a pretty costume

Everyone has seen paintings and photos of the classic foxhunt, with riders in scarlet coats following hounds across a bucolic countryside. What you may not realize is that those eye-catching costumes are more than just decoration. To those who understand the language, there is meaning to be found in almost every detail.

Let's start at the top. The black riding cap provides some protection for the head should a rider have an "unscheduled dismount". On the back at the bottom rim is a black grosgrain ribbon tied in a small bow. The tails of the bow left down and hanging indicates the rider is a professional (meaning paid) huntsman or whipperin. Everyone else has the bow ends glued in an upright position.

An entire chapter could be written on the intricacies of the hunt coat alone, but I will skip over a lot and speak in broad generalizations.

The hunt staff and Masters wear scarlet coats; packs other than foxhounds normally wear other colors, but I won't get into that here. Hunt members and visitors wear a black coat with black buttons. Hunt members may earn the right to wear brass buttons engraved with the hunt's logo, and may eventually earn the privilege of "colors".

Awarding colors means that the member is entitled to wear the scarlet coat with brass buttons and the collar covered in the specific color scheme that particular hunt uses, ie navy collar with grey piping. A member wearing the colors indicates that the person is very knowledgeable and experienced, one that the Master and staff can count on to be level-headed and helpful, a person that visitors and new members can turn to for assistance when out hunting. The scarlet coats make them stand out as mobile "help desks" in the field, basically. Tradition has it that female members awarded colors do not wear the scarlet coat, but instead affix the colored collar to their black coat to indicate their status. However, some US hunts have modernized things, and allow women to wear scarlet.

The number of brass buttons provides another code to decipher. Four buttons indicates the huntsman and staff. Five buttons are reserved for Masters who hunt their own hounds. All others wear three buttons

The white stock tie worn under the coat is about 6 feet long, tied in a very intricate manner and affixed with a brass pin that looks similar to a large diaper pin. The tie can be used in emergencies as a bandage for horse or rider, or a sling for an injured arm. The pin has meaning also. Pinned vertically it indicates professional hunt staff; all others pin theirs horizontally.

The tall black leather boots reach to just below the knee. Brown tops that cover the first 4 inches of the boots are worn by Masters and hunt staff. All others wear unadorned black boots. Traditionally, women Masters and staff wear black patent leather tops rather than the brown, but as with the colors, this isn't always the case anymore.

So the next time you see a painting or photo of a hunt, check out the details to see if you can decipher what role each person plays in the hunt, just by interpreting their fancy outfit!

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Hares vs Rabbits

In order to understand some of the very basic differences that led to the creation of Harriers and Beagles as hunting hounds, you must first know more about their intended quarry.

To most people, the terms “rabbits” and “hares” are interchangeable as they both conjure up images of cute, furry hopping critters with big ears. However, in actuality they are quite different. And it is these very differences that the two hound breeds were created to match.

While rabbits and hares are in the same order (lagomorpha) and family (leporidae); they differ in genus. Rabbits are sylvilagus whereas hares are in the lepus classification. In the US, wild rabbit varieties include the Eastern Cottontail, the New England Cottontail and the Swamp Rabbit. The most common hare varieties are Snowshoe Hares, and the Black-Tailed, White-Tailed and Antelope Jackrabbits.

Both families are very fertile and reproduce easily and often, as Mother Nature requires of successful prey species. Hares have young that are born fully furred with eyes open and ready to run. They do not have burrows below ground but rather have shallow depressions on top of the earth where they hunker down overnight. Hares tend to be bigger than rabbits, with larger ears, legs and rear feet. On the other hand, rabbits give birth to blind, naked, helpless young in cozy fur-lined nests dug underground.

Beagles were developed to hunt rabbits, as they are a smaller, slower hound. They pursue rabbits tirelessly, but not with excessive speed; when a rabbit is pushed too hard or fast it will bolt down a hole in a split second, thereby ending the chase. Harriers were developed to be a perfect match for hares, which are larger and faster and without any burrows for escape. Rabbits are overmatched with Harriers, and Beagles are usually too small to be very successful with the larger hares.

Hares and rabbits both tend to run in large circles when pursued, most covering several acres of their home territory. When hunted, they don't bolt for miles as do foxes or coyotes, but rather they will circle back to near where they started. Through selective breeding, huntsmen created hounds that do the same thing when hunting – they circle back to the hunter in very large loops when searching for quarry. “Foxhounds cast forward, harriers (and beagles) cast back” is an old huntsman's adage, which is definitely true. These characteristics were bred into the hounds to best match their quarry.

In the US, where most rabbit and hare hunting is done with a lone hunter, a shotgun and a couple hounds, this circling tendency is counted upon by the hunter to bag their bunny. When the hounds are on a rabbit or hare and are speaking loudly, the hunter knows that the quarry will eventually circle back near where it started, so they try and position themselves to get a clear shot of the rabbit when it comes running back with the hounds in hot pursuit.

So now you know why Harriers and Beagles are the sizes that they are!

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A Tail's Tale

Tail wagging the dog: an item of minor importance dominating a situation.

A few things need to be cleared up for judges in regards to Harrier tails, as there seems to be some misconceptions out there. One is that Harriers are simply "big Beagles".

The Beagle standard calls for a tail that is "set moderately high; carried gaily, but not turned forward over the back; with slight curve; short as compared with size of the hound; with brush. Defects – A long tail. Teapot curve or inclined forward from the root. Rat tail with absence of brush." However the stern (tail) is given only 5 points out of 100 in their scale of points, which really isn't a very heavy emphasis if you think about it. But for some reason, it's become accepted that all Beagles *must* carry their tails ramrod straight up in the air, else judges won't even consider them.

Contrast that with the Harrier standard, which says "the tail is long, set on high and carried up from 12 o'clock to 3 o'clock, depending on attitude. It tapers to a point with a brush of hair. The tail should not be curled over the back." Much less emphasis on the tail in general, especially since specific defects are not called out.

The important part for judges to learn and take to heart is the 12 to 3 o'clock carriage. And more significantly, where it clearly says, "DEPENDING ON ATTITUDE".

For the most part, Harriers have not been bred specifically for the show ring. They retain their utilitarian hunting roots very close to the surface. And this can mean that some hounds may find showing to an *absolute bore*, a total waste of their time. This attitude will usually mean that their tail simply trails out behind them at 3 o'clock, as if to say, "yawn ho-hum, I'll do this but I won't act thrilled about it." After all, trotting around a ring can no way compare to the absolute ecstasy and excitement of chasing hares!

Other Harriers, due to their general temperament, are what may be called, "down-waggers". The structure & set-on of their tail is correct, but personality-wise they show their happiness by furiously wagging their tail back and forth, parallel to the ground rather than straight up in the air.

Both of these are absolutely correct tail positions for Harriers, hence the wording in the standard. Do not fault either of these tails – they are perfectly acceptable in Harriers!!

The only time a judge should penalize for a non-structural tail issue is if the hound is obviously frightened or upset, and clamping the tail between their legs. In this instance, please give the hound a moment to regroup if it can. Otherwise, do not reward it on that day. Hopefully the next time they're in the ring they will be more confident and happy.

Please keep this tail's tale in mind the next time you judge Harriers!

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