

# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL LTD



## Extended Breed Standard of **THE AZAWAKH**

Produced by

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## HISTORY OF THE BREED

### ORIGIN

Recent genetic, blood protein and archaeological studies as well as direct observation in the field offer a glimpse into the origin of the contemporary Azawakh breed. He comes out of the population of pariah dogs of sub-Saharan Africa—also called *bush dogs* or *basenji*—and is also closely related to the Sloughi of the Maghreb. Despite morphological similarities, mitochondrial DNA evidence shows that he is only very distantly related to other sight hounds. Azawakh have a rare glucose isomerase allele (GPI<sup>B</sup>) that occurs only in foxes, jackals, Italian wolves, Sloughi dogs and a handful of other quite unrelated rare dogs found mostly in Japan. The presence of the GPI<sup>B</sup> suggests an ancient differentiation of the Azawakh from other dog populations near the base of the dog family tree divergence from wolves or perhaps a uniquely African cross-breeding with local African canids such as jackals. Petro glyph rock art dating from 8,000 to 10,000 years ago during the Green Sahara (also known as the Holocene and Neolithic Sub pluvial) shows cursorily dogs in conjunction with hunters. Archaeologists have found dog bones buried in Holocene settlements in the Sahara. At the close of the Holocene Wet Phase in the 4th millennium BCE, the Sahara returned to the desert and created a formidable physical barrier to travel. Together, this evidence suggests that the Azawakh population has a unique genetic heritage that has been largely isolated from other dog populations for millennia.

In the common era the Sahel dogs are almost totally isolated from northern dogs by the Sahara, but the ties to the pariah dogs to the south are extremely close. The Azawakh is virtually indistinguishable from the Sahel pariah dog population from which they are drawn. In addition to a basic physical structure, the Azawakh share a number of unique traits with the pariah dogs:

- intense suspicion of the unknown
- strong guarding instinct
- pack hunting behavior
- complex social hierarchies
- unique vocalizations
- extra premolar teeth
- strong instinct to dig dens

Throughout the Sahel, very elegant puppies can be found among rustic siblings. The Sahel nomads do not have the same breed concepts as in the West and, unlike the Bedouin of the North, do not recognize a strict separation of *al hor* (noble) from *kelb* (mongrel) dogs. The nomads act as an extra level of selection on top of the intense natural selection pressure of the Sahel environment. The approach to selection is diametrically opposed to Western breeding. Instead of selecting which dogs to breed upon maturity, they decide which puppies should live. This approach has the advantage of maintaining a large reservoir of genetic variability and resilience.

The peoples of the Sahel control dam lines and cull puppies heavily at birth according to locally held aesthetic criteria that we do not fully understand. In the Sahel, colour is not a selection criterion. The alpha male dog from the local population is usually the sire. Unless it is a wet year, only one puppy from a litter might be selected to live. Females are usually culled unless the family projects a need for more dogs in the future.

## HISTORY



**Azawakh among the Tuareg**

*Fig. 1*

Bred by the Tuareg, Fula and various other nomads of the Sahara and sub-Saharan Sahel in the countries of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and southern Algeria, the breed is used there as a guard dog and to hunt gazelle and hare at speeds up to 40 miles per hour. The austerity of the Sahel environment has ensured that only the fit dogs survive and has accentuated the breed's ruggedness and independence. Unlike some other sighthound, the Azawakh is more of a pack hunter and they bump down the quarry with hindquarters when it has been tired out. In its role of a guard dog, if an Azawakh senses danger it will bark to alert the other members of the pack, and they will gather together as a pack under the lead of the alpha dog, then chase off or attack the predator. The Sloughi, by comparison, is more of an independent lone hunter and has a high hunting instinct.

Azawakhs have a range of temperaments from lap dog to quite fierce. Lifelong socialization and firm but gentle handling is critical. Well socialised and trained, they can be good with other dogs, cats, children, and strangers.

## **! BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

*It is an African sight hound of afro-asian type which appeared in Europe towards 1970 and comes from the Nigerian middle basin, among others from the valley of the Azawakh. For hundreds of years he has been the companion of the nomads of the South-Sahara.*

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function with soundness essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be mindful of features which could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed.

## **! GENERAL APPEARANCE**

*Particularly high in the leg and elegant, the Azawakh sight hound gives a general impression of great fineness. His bone structure and musculature are transparent beneath fine and lean tissues (skin). This sight hound presents itself as a racy dog whose body fits into a rectangle with its longer sides in vertical position.*

## **! IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS**

*Length of body/height at the withers = 9: 10. This ratio may be slightly superior in the bitches.*

*Depth of chest/height at the withers = about 4: 10.*

*Length of muzzle/length of head = 1: 2.*

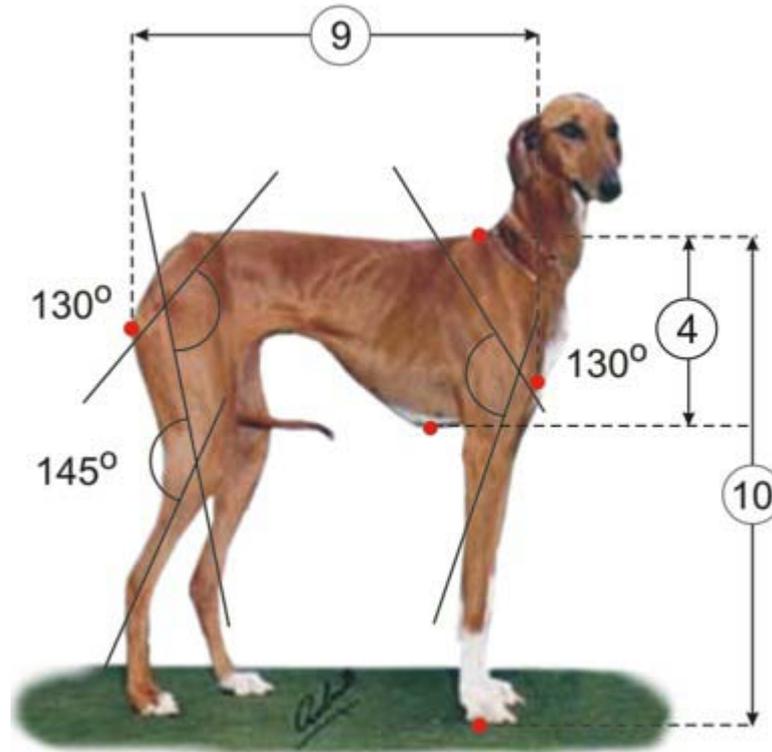
*Width of skull/length of head = 4: 10.*

Particularly leggy and elegant, the Azawakh sighthound gives a general impression of great fineness. His bone structure and musculature is transparent beneath fine and lean tissues (skin). This sighthound presents itself as a rangy dog whose body fits into a rectangle with its longer sides in vertical position. The Azawakh's skin is fine, tight over the whole of the body. The hair is short, fine, down to none on the belly. Coat colours come in fawn with flecking limited to the extremities. All shades are admitted from light sable to dark fawn. The head may or may not have a black mask and the blaze is very inconsistent. The coat has a white bib and a white brush at the tip of the tail. Each of the four limbs must have compulsorily a white "stocking", at least in shape of a trace on the feet. The black brindleing is admitted.

This is a short, a very short, the shortest dog and the proportions of the body are a very important point of the standard, distinctive for this breed. It is high on legs, dry, architectural beauty, with gothic lines. Please note that the bone structure and superficial musculature must be visible. An Azawakh in show condition must have almost zero fat tissue. The Azawakh must be elegant. There is no other word what can describe it better than - elegance . It should be noted a heavy general appearance is a fault.

The important proportions need to be very carefully studied. The height to length makes the breed shorter from point of shoulder to rear projection than the height at the withers. That is a ratio of height at withers 10 compared with length of body 9. Care should be taken to ensure that the shortness of length is not exaggerated so that it interferes with the proper function of the dog.

Figure 2 -Dimensions and correct outline for the breed.



## ! BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

*Quick, attentive, distant, reserved with strangers and may even be unapproachable, but he can be gentle and affectionate with those he is willing to accept.*

In their native environment the Azawakh is closer to the proud ' domestic wolf ' than to the fully obedient dog. One must have a strong personality to be accepted as a master. It is hard to believe for those who never have had an Azawakh, but he can be very affectionate with his owner in his environment, when no possible enemy is around. This dog is extremely suspicious, It normally takes days to bond in any way with a new person and even longer to accept somebody in his environment. He will decide to approach and never vice-versa. Because of this suspicion, they need more time to adjust to new environments and big crowds. In the show ring they must be able to be handled by the judge, but not excessively, especially puppies. Judges **MUST** remember this breed is extremely suspicious of all people except their owners. Timid character, panicky or aggression are all eliminating faults.



*Figure 3: Obeying a very young girl but never accepting to be touched by strangers. As long as he is an excellent partner for every member of his family, and he can be well handled in the show ring his scepticism cannot be considered a fault but ...a quality.*

Unlike other sighthounds, the primary function of the Azawakh in its native land is that of protector. It develops an intense bond with his owner, yet can perform independently from its master. With those they accept, the Azawakh are gentle and extremely affectionate. With strangers many are reserved and prefer not to be touched, but are not inherently aggressive. Although raised to protect livestock, they do not have innate aggression toward other dogs nor humans unless they are threatened.

The Azawakh has high energy and tremendous endurance. They are excellent training companions for runners and are nearly impervious to heat. They will happily run in weather over 100 degrees Fahrenheit that would kill a Greyhound. They often dig holes in the garden.

Many Azawakhs dislike rain and cold weather.

The Azawakh is pack oriented and form complex social hierarchies. They have tremendous memories and are able to recognize each other after long periods of separation. They can often be found sleeping on top of each other for warmth and companionship.

## **! HEAD AND SKULL**

*Long, fine, lean and chiselled, rather narrow, without excess.*

### **CRANIAL REGION**

***Skull*** : It is almost flat, rather elongated. The width of the skull must definitely be inferior to half the length of the head. The directions of the axes of the skull and the muzzle are often slightly divergent towards the front. The superciliary arches and the frontal furrow are slightly marked. On the other hand, the occipital crest is clearly protruding and the occipital protuberance marked. ***Stop*** : Very slightly marked.

### **FACIAL REGION**

***Nose*** : Nostrils well opened. The nose is either black or brown. ***Muzzle*** : Long, straight, fine towards the front without exaggeration. ***Cheeks*** : Flat.

As with everything in this dog, his expression is unique and is hard to described. The best exercise is to look at the pictures attached to this material and to use these with the expression of the head.

Width of skull compares with length of head in the ratio of four is to ten.

Skull too wide is a fault. Accentuated stop is also a fault. As is distinct depigmentation of the nose. Light eyes like those of a bird of prey are a eliminating fault.



Figures 4,5,6. Correct head profiles and expression

## ! EYES

***Almond shaped, quite large. Their colour is dark or amber. Eyelids pigmented.***

A quite large almond shaped eye is correct. The colour should be dark or amber to match the coat colour, with well pigmented eyelids.

## ! EARS

***Set quite high. They are fine, always drooping and flat, quite wide at the base, close to the skull, never a rose ear . Their shape is that of a triangle with a slightly rounded tip. Their base raises when the hound is attentive.***

Ears are set high, wide at the base, set close to the skull, always drooping and fine. Triangle in shape with a slightly rounded tip. At attention the base may be raised.

## ! MOUTH

***Jaws long and strong. Scissor bite.***

The breed standard does not mention any penalty for the missing teeth and the absence of PM1 or PM2 cannot be a disqualifying fault. This does not mean that the dog should have no teeth at all. The judge should consider the importance of the absent teeth for the well being of the dog and the breed and penalise it in accordance with this.

Scissor bite is the correct bite mentioned in the standard. Upper and lower prognatism are eliminating faults, a level bite is accepted but not desired.

## **! NECK**

***Good reach of neck which is long, fine and muscular, slightly arched. The skin is fine and does not form a dewlap.***

The Azawakh has a long and arched neck, with the head carried high, impassive and proud. Without dewlap.

## **! FOREQUARTERS**

***Seen as a whole : Long, fine, almost entirely vertical; legs perfectly well-set. Shoulders : Long, lean and muscular and only slightly slanting seen in profile. The scapulo-humeral angle is very open (about 130°).***

Open angulation of the forequarters is essential, with prominent withers. Perfectly straight legs with slight bend of the pastern. The depth of chest is 40% of the height at the withers.

## **! BODY**

***Topline : Nearly straight, horizontal or slightly rising towards the hips. Withers : Quite prominent. Loin : Short, lean and often slightly arched. Hip bones : Distinctly protruding and always placed at an equal or superior height to the height of the withers. Croup : Oblique without accentuated slant. Forechest : Not very wide. Chest: Well developed in length, deep but without reaching elbow level. It is not very wide but must have enough space for the heart, so, the sternal region of the chest must not abruptly become narrow. Ribs: Long, visible, slightly and evenly curved down to the sternum. Underline: The sternal arch is accentuated and joined without abruptness to the belly which is tucked up very high below the lumbar arch.***

Withers are prominent as well as the hip bones which must be at the same level or higher than the withers. Hip bones placed lower than the withers must be considered a serious fault.

In dogs with less subcutaneous tissue the loins are sometimes more arched than usual but this should not be penalised as long as in movement the dog have a good, straight topline.

Croup does not have an accentuated slant but is definitely oblique and more often the fault is a too horizontal croup than a too accentuated slant. A body too long is a fault. Ribs curving in or at the base of the chest which thus takes on the look of a violin box.

## ! HINDQUARTERS

***Seen as a whole: Long and lean; legs perfectly vertical.***

***Thighs: Long with prominent and lean muscles. The coxo-femoral angle is very open (about 130°).***

***Stifle : The femoro-tibial angle is very open (about 145°).***

***Hock : Hock joint and hock are straight and lean, without dewclaws.***

The Azawakh has open angles on the hindquarters but never straight hock joints neither too closed angles. Metatarsals should be vertical but in dogs with a somewhat longer second thigh the angle formed by the metatarsal bones with the second thigh is smaller than 145 and obvious that metatarsals are no more vertical, this is not to be considered a major fault if doesn't affect the general appearance and the gait, but totally straight hocks or very angulated hocks which affect the distinctive type and movement are not desired and must be penalised.

## ! FEET

***Forefeet : Rounded shape, with fine and tightly closed toes; the pads are pigmented.***

***Hind feet : Round shaped. Pads are pigmented.***

The pads should be well pigmented with fine and tightly closed toes. The feet are rounded is shape.



*Fig. 7  
Over angulated in both  
hindquarters and hock joint*



*Fig. 8  
Correct hindquarters and  
angulation in hock joint*



*Fig. 9  
Straight in stifle and  
hock joint*

## ! TAIL

*Set low, long, thin, lean and tapered. Is covered with the same type of hair as that of the body and has a white brush at its extremity. Is carried hanging with the tip slightly raised, but when the dog is excited, it can be carried above the horizontal.*

The tail should be set low on an oblique croup. It is long and thin but in balance with the overall structure of the dog. It is carried hanging with the tip slightly raised. May be lifted when the dog is excited and can be above the horizontal.



Figure 10 : overcurled tail set too high, poor croup

Figure 11 : well set and carried tail, correct croup

## ! GAIT/MOVEMENT

*Always very supple (lissom) and with particularly high action at the trot and the walk. The gallop is bouncy. The Azawakh gives a great impression of lightness, even elasticity. The movement is an essential point of the breed.*

The standard well explains the movement required. As the illustrations show this is not a short stepping dog and the movement is a characteristic of the breed.



Figures 12, 13, 14, 15 - Dog in Action

## ! COAT

***Skin - Fine, tight over the whole of the body.***

***Coat - Short, fine, down to none on the belly.***

A fine and tight skin is to be found covering the whole body. A coat not conforming with the standard or a harsh or semi long coat are eliminating faults.

## ! COLOUR

***Fawn with flecking limited to the extremities. All shades are admitted from light sable to dark fawn. The head may or may not have a black mask and the blaze is very inconstant. The coat has a white bib and a white brush at the tip of the tail. Each of the four limbs must have compulsorily a white « stocking », at least in shape of a trace on the feet. The black brindling is admitted.***

All shades of fawn from light sable to dark fawn are allowed.

The dog has white on the chest and/or the neck, and two or three limbs, most of the time the white is present on the other limbs too but not in the same amount. If you check it well you will find probably just a few white hairs between the toes or pads. This is not to be considered a fault. It should be noted that the absence of any white on the extremities of one or more of the four limbs is an eliminating fault.

## **! SIZE AND WEIGHT**

***Height at the withers :*** Dogs : *between 64 and 74 cm.*  
Bitches : *between 60 and 70 cm.*

***Weight :*** Dogs : *about 20 - 25 kg.*  
Bitches : *about 15 - 20 kg.*

Three cm above or below these measurements regarded as an elimination fault.

## **! 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 upon the health and welfare of the dog.***

***General appearance : heavy.***

***Skull too wide.***

***Accentuated stop.***

***Body too long.***

***Hip bones placed distinctly lower than the withers.***

***Distinct depigmentation of the nose.***

## **! ELIMINATING FAULTS**

***Timid character, panicky or aggressive with attack.***

***Lack of type (in particular when showing a recent crossing with another breed).***

***Strong non-accidental anatomical deformation.***

***Disabling anomaly - not acquired.***

***All obvious redhibitory vices.***

***Upper or lower prognathism.***

***Light eye : i.e. bird of prey eyes.***

***Ribs curving in at the base of the chest which thus takes on the look of « violin box ».***

***Coat not conforming to the standard.***

***Harsh or semi-long coat.***

***Absence of any white marking at the extremity of one or more limbs.***

***Size out by more than 3 cm from the standard measures.***

***Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.***

Prognathism is an extension or bulging out (protrusion) of the upper or lower jaw that occurs when the shape of the face bones cause the teeth to be improperly lined up (misaligned).

Redhibitory means having a defect of such a nature as to make it totally or virtually unusable in the performance of its work

***N.B. : Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.***

# JUDGING THE AZAWAKH

by Dr. Cristian VANTU - FCI Judge and Azawakh Breeder.



I write this breed description around the very good breed standard and I write it more like a letter from an Azawakh breeder and judge to his colleagues. I write it thinking about the future of this breed but also to those judges who are willing to understand what exactly is the Azawakh and how should we judge this uncommon breed to preserve its uniqueness. I do not necessary write many words about obvious aspects, but to accentuate those important things what make the difference between a good judge and a great judge.

If you want to judge Azawakhs, first of all try to forget all other breeds, shapes and proportions with which you are familiar, try to forget also the classic dog temperament and behaviour and be prepared to accept something different.

As judges we like to use a kind of general model, in which all the dogs should fit, but in this situation the model is not available. One should spend some time and broaden their perspective to perceive the right type of Azawakh.

I remember I was walking in the city with one of my dogs when a very young girl told her mother 'mammy, look a small horse'. I understood then that without the preconceptions of our mind, this is what the eye sees when you look at a Azawakh - a small horse. The resemblance between the Azawakh and the Arabian horse, especially in movement is evident.

When you are judging the Azawakh, before taking the decision of disqualifying it for timidity, nervousness or aggression, please remember what is written in the BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT part of the standard : " ... **distant, reserved with strangers and may even be unapproachable.** " If the dog is aggressive or attacks without a reason, you should disqualify it but do not try to touch him if you see he is not willing to allow

this. This applies for many sighthounds but for Azawakh is almost a rule. When you are judging young dogs which are not yet familiar with crowds around our show rings, please remember that this breed is at home in open areas with less people and our shows are not like his natural habitat. So it is not his fault that he displays his breed characteristics and tries to keep his dignity. They need time to become familiar with dog show inter-action . Improper handling is the major problem preventing the dog from being judged and should not be a reason to disqualify him for a behaviour fault.

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