

# BRACCO ITALIANO

## Briefly notes about a hunting dog

by Miguel Canaverde

The Bracco Italiano status in the international context has gradually changed over the last ten years. The visibility given by some important achievements has allowed a considerable increase in the number of enthusiasts and new breeders. However, the breed still remains a stranger for many people, particularly regarding its hunting attributes. For this reason, on this page, I will try to briefly describe the Bracco Italiano as a hunting dog, exposing a few essential ideas to better know and understand this fantastic pointing dog.



Image 1 – Brigitte

KennelRoboris © 2015

One of the most fascinating characteristics of the purebred dogs is the cultural heritage they carry in their genes. A hunting breed is a product of a place, where land and nature influenced the man to select a type of dog able to answer to their hunting needs. The Bracco Italiano was selected to hunt in the demanding territory of the northern part of the Italian Peninsula, where the high mountains, the sinuous hills, the thorny woods and the rugged plains, have shaped a supreme hunting dog.

After many years of selection, has arrived to us a breed with all the fundamental qualities that a hunter looks for in a modern and effective pointing-dog: passion, versatility, resistance, dynamic, power and balanced temperament. To continue this evolution in order to honour the breed and the work of the Italian people, we can't ever reject the function for which they were originally meant, developed and bred for. They were bred to hunt, selected to work all day long, on any kind of ground and under any kind of conditions, and so they must remain!

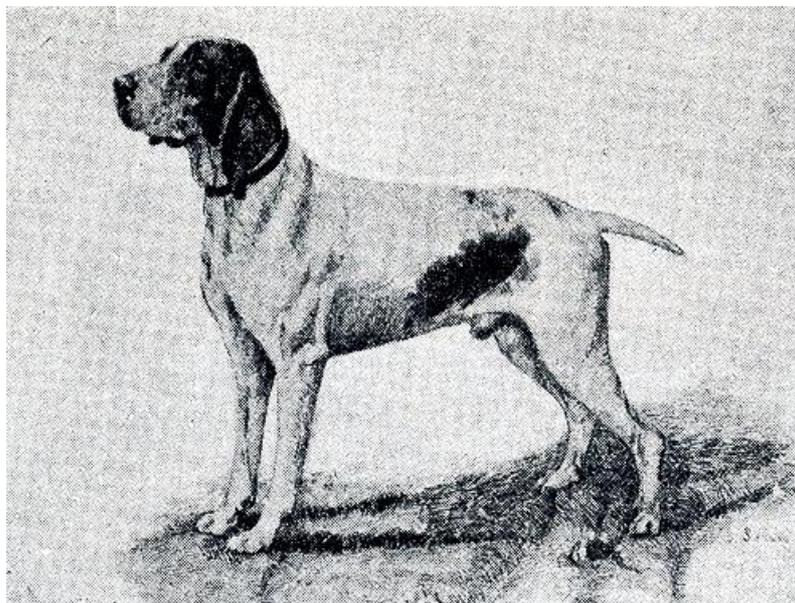
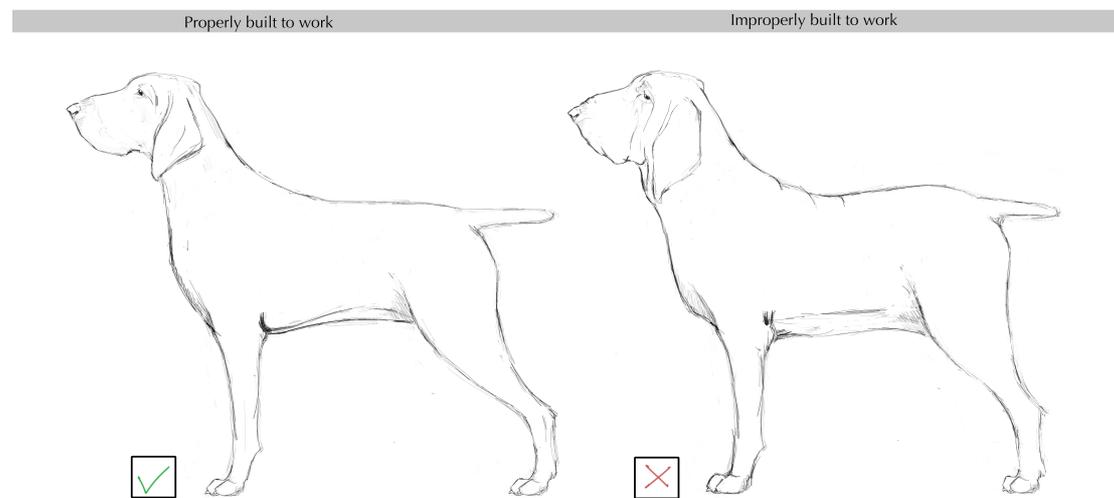


Image 2 – Drawing of beautiful and typical Bracco Italiano dated from the beginning of last century

## Built to work

It often happens, people unfamiliar with the breed, be surprised by the power, speed and passion of many Bracco Italiano when they see them hunting. This actually is not a surprise for those who really know the breed, but the fact is that the Bracco is still often unfairly labelled as a heavy, lazy and slow dog. This kind of preconceptions can only be supported by those who have never experience hunting with a good Bracco, and perhaps have their main source on the appearance of many dogs usually presented in dog-shows. Thus, before judge a breed, it is very important to understand and know what is, or what is not, a proper representative of that breed.

Like any other modern hunting dog, the Bracco Italiano is a quite functional dog. Among many things, this means that they are built to work. To enable the dogs to keep the same intensity and dynamic after several hours of hunting, a proper Bracco Italiano can only have an athletic appearance. Any exaggeration of non-functional details, such as the excess skin, the excess of lip or of dewlap, or even the over-sized body and bone, will only impair their ability to work - these characteristics should never be favoured in breeding or dog-shows judgments. The rustic appearance of the Bracco, an important point of its typicality, can be perfectly conciliated with its functionality. We only need to perfectly understand these concepts.



KennelRoboris © 2015

Image 3 – Comparison between a Bracco Italiano with a perfect structure to work (on left), with a Bracco Italiano equipped with an improperly structure to work (on right)

## Working characteristics

There are two factors that cover the working characteristics of a purebred hunting dog: functionality and style. The style is the way a particular breed performs a function and it is characterized by specific details of that breed. Functionality means performance, is something inherent in any breed and covers the traits that must be present in any good hunting dog. Style and function needs to be always connected. A dog with style and no functionality is useless as a hunting dog, the same way as a functional dog but without style is not a good representative of the breed! However, every breed style is functional when performed by dogs of good natural qualities. Once performed by good dogs, is just a matter of style.

So, beyond the general attributes common to any successful and functional hunting breed, the Bracco Italiano also has characteristics that make it unique. Among that traits, the trot is the one in which the breed more clearly differs from the other and this gait, which is part of its specific heritage, it's caused by its specific morphology structure and psyche. An important lesson that, working style, morphological type and psyche are always connected!

## The trot

The trot is one of the most important features of the breed, which the understanding is fundamental in order to properly know the breed. This elegant and functional gait is still a misunderstood feature for many people, especially outside of Italy, creating many unnecessary controversies. In fact this would be an issue that would give many pages, but supported by the ideas of the most notable breed experts, i will try to summarize what i think is the more important to retain about this special characteristic of the Bracco Italiano.

To better describe this gait, I appeal to one of the experts of the breed. Cesare Bonasegale wrote in one of his articles: *"the Bracco Italiano typical trot is the result of great impulsion of the hindquarters that determines a obvious phase of suspension of all four limbs; a gait of long and powerful steps, instead of short and frequent. This steps remain equally long and wide when the dog slows down, reducing only the power of impulsion and thereby nullifying the suspension phase"*.

The technical words of Cesare Bonasegale, or any other words, will always be insufficient to transmit the idea for those who never actually saw a Bracco Italiano performing a trot of quality on the field. But the important in this case, it is to let clear that the trot of Bracco Italiano is not an ordinary gait, but a fast and dynamic action, able to let the dog cover in detail a vast and wide area of ground. This trot should be smooth and rhythmic, allowing a good mobility of the neck and head, as well as the tail should follow the rhythm of the dog's movement. Those are not esthetical details indeed but functional and fundamental traits to a dog perform a good and typical action.

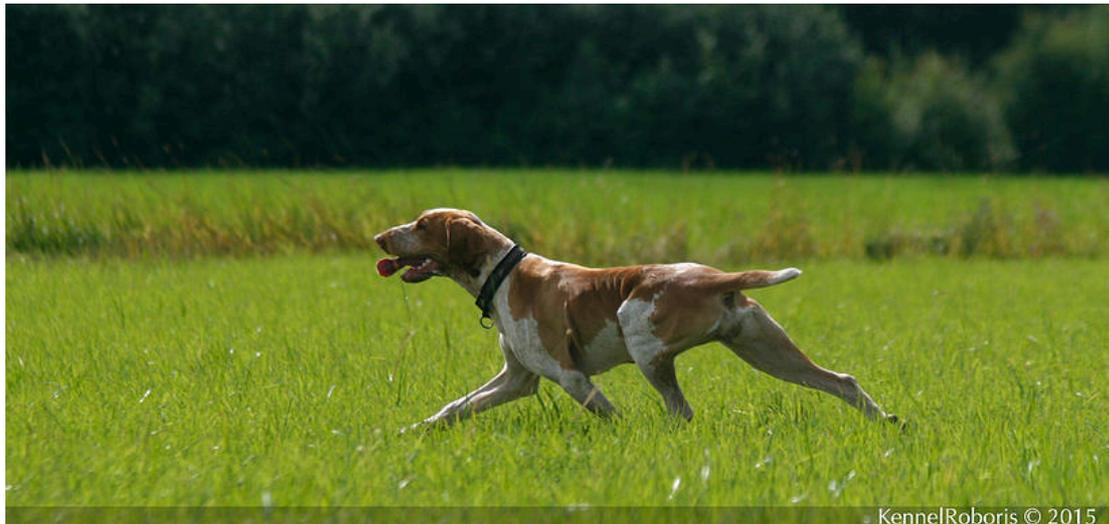


Image 4 – Brigitte in a beautiful moment of trot during the search

One of the most common questions about the trot, it's how the dog manage the use of this gait when working. Well, even if the trot is the main gait of a Bracco, it doesn't mean that a good representative of the breed are not allowed to gallop during the search. Quite the contrary, the gallop is a natural expression of speed and dynamic and passion for hunting. In addition, switch the gait during the search is a demonstration of intelligence and adaptability. Nobody wants a robot, but an avid and cunning athlete, with the ability to adapt and solve different situations, either galloping or trotting. So we shouldn't aim or believe in a "full-time" trotter, that's something naturally unreal. Some breed experts remind us that, for example during a field trial, even if the dog gallop the major part of the time is at the moment the dog detects the bird's scent that it must necessarily show the breed style, which means, that at least during the phase of detection and control of the scent the dog needs to trot, as obvious sign of its calm and reflective psyche.

In fact, working trials and real hunting are completely different situations, and also here is important understand the circumstances to judge the quality of a dog. How can we wait a dog, with right mentality and passion, to trot during the first minutes of a working trial? We can't, it's unnatural! Even if the trot is the main gait of the breed, the gait in which the Bracco Italiano feel more comfortable and can be more effective, a good dog cannot control the impetuous motivated by its natural passion! And that's something positive! In a hunting situation, the dog can start with energy and speed, and with time will find the more comfortable gait to effectively search. A good Bracco will always use both gallop and trot, some dogs will use more the trot, other the gallop, it will be the mental and morphological characteristics of the dog together with other external factors as the terrain or the training, that will define the propensity to a dog trot more or less.

The search of the Bracco Italiano, enlivened by the olfactory stimulus is the basis of its versatility. Unlike the English pointing breeds, provided with the stimulus to run, the Bracco goes where the nose leads, expressing his action with fantasy, cleverly rambling over the scent, speeding and slowing down, moving the neck, head high to the wind. The temptation to break is strong, but the connection with its master it's bigger!