

## On the Fringe

**Explore the history of hound breeds, and get an up-close look at four rare hounds that embody elegance and skill.**

*Kim Campbell Thornton*

Hounds are among the most ancient of dog types. Dogs that hunt by sight date to antiquity, with the forerunner of the modern Saluki possibly emerging as long ago as 7,000 B.C. Dogs that use their sense of smell to track prey were probably first developed in the Middle Ages. Their ancestor was the now-extinct St. Hubert Hound, developed in the 7th century at the Abbey of St. Hubert in what is now Belgium.

Hounds are a diverse group of dogs, ranging from the great Irish Wolfhound to the height- but-not-length-challenged Dachshund. They fall into two types: sighthounds and scenthounds. Both are built to work over rough terrain, whether it's the harsh deserts and mountains of Afghanistan or the rugged piney woods of North America, but in appearance, they differ greatly.

### Hound types

Sighthounds are tall, sleek, streamlined dogs with narrow heads that give chase and bring down their quarry. Built for speed, these breeds are often described as the Ferraris of the dog world. Sighthounds may appear delicate at first glance, but beneath their thin skin, these athletic dogs are muscular and flexible with powerful jaws and rapid reflexes.

Sighthounds' appearances vary with the environment for which they were created. The Afghan Hound from the mountains around Kabul, Afghanistan, has a full, heavy coat; the Greyhound, hailing from North Africa, has a short, smooth coat. Other sighthounds have coats that lie somewhere between these two extremes. Common breeds that fall into the sighthound category include the Afghan Hound, Borzoi, Greyhound, Irish Wolfhound, Saluki, Scottish Deerhound and Whippet.

Scenthounds are more sturdily built and slower paced. They may work over a period of hours, not minutes, patiently tracking rabbits, raccoons, badgers, foxes, otters, bears and other game. When their quarry is in sight, scenthounds hold it at bay until the hunter arrives. Popular members of this group include the Basset Hound, Beagle, Bloodhound, various coonhound breeds, Dachshund, Harrier, Otterhound, Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen and several foxhound breeds.

Other hounds are multipurpose dogs, able to hunt by sight and scent. Sometimes referred to as utility hounds, they include the Basenji, Ibizan Hound, Pharaoh Hound and Rhodesian Ridgeback. Other versatile hunting dogs that don't necessarily fall into any of these categories, yet are classified as hounds by the American Kennel Club, are the Finnish Spitz and the Norwegian Elkhound. These spitz-type dogs hunt game ranging from birds to elk and bears. Unlike the typical hound, they are characterized by their prick ears, wedge-shaped heads and dense, off-standing coats.

Not every hound breed is as well-known as the Beagle, Bloodhound, Dachshund, Greyhound and Whippet. Some are quite rare. Here's an introduction to four lesser-known hounds.

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