

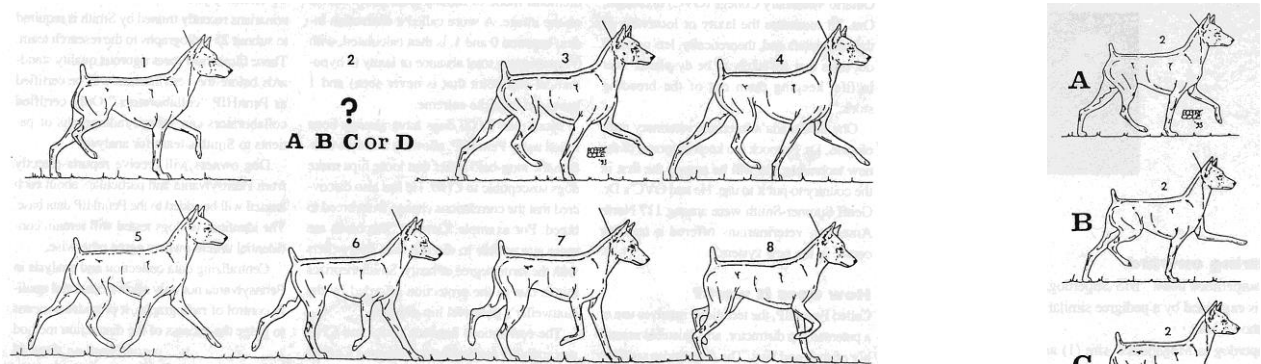
YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

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THE MINIATURE PINSCHER TROTTING ACTION

Indicate your preference for Miniature Pinscher hackney action at the trot by completing the eight-phase illustrated sequence. Select the action of Dog A, B, C and D (each in a different manner) to fill the blank space. Phase 2 is crucial; the action of the dog you select will indicate how you judge Min Pin hackney action. Then, having decided on typical, place the remaining three dogs in order of Phase 2 action preference.



HACKNEY ACTION

Miniature Pinscher action at the trot is unique; no other breed is required to trot in the manner of a Hackney pony, a highly prized breed developed in the 1800s from the old Norfolk Roadster (England).

Perhaps if we were more familiar with the Hackney pony, its structure and its dramatic gait, we would have less difficulty visualizing required Miniature Pinscher action at the trot. Caroline Silver in *Guide to the Horses of the World*, Oxford, 1976, describes the Hackney pony's physique and gait as "...prick ears, long neck, compact body with good shoulders and quarters, iron-hard legs and good feet flung forward with an extravagant, rounded motion. Hocks brought up high under the body, with movement of all four legs straight and true. The effect of a hackney at the trot is one of flamboyance and brilliance." Caroline Silver could have been describing the Miniature Pinscher I used for this illustrated sequence.

THE STANDARDS

The Miniature Pincher is required to have hackney or hackney-like gait. My Canadian standard requires "precise hackney gait". Britain asks for "coordinated to permit a true hackneyed action". United States modifies the requirement by asking for "hackney-like action"; however, Americans elaborate on other important aspects, such as wrist bend.

Requirement for bend at the wrist in the expanded American standard (1980) reads: "The hackney-like action is a high-stepping, reaching, free and easy gait in which the front leg moves straight forward and in front of the body and the foot bends at the wrist. The dog drives smoothly and strongly from the rear. The head and tail are carried high.

HIND LEG LIFT

None of the three standards specifically require the hind leg to also lift high, but the British standard does so indirectly by saying that movement should be “coordinated to permit true hackneyed action.” To be coordinated, diagonal feet lift and strike the ground together as pairs – the hind leg must lift high and remain free of contact with the ground the same length of time as the diagonal front foot. Also, to affect a high hind leg lift, the belly must be moderately tucked up – a requirement in every Min Pin standard.

ANGULATION

Because faulty hackney action in other breeds is usually caused by steep shoulders, many people erroneously believe that a Miniature Pinscher must have steep shoulders to exhibit this energy wasteful but aesthetically pleasing hackney action. In fact, the reverse is true. The late Harry Spira (Australia) in his illustrated book *Canine Terminology*, 1982, added to the debate with his statement on page 68 that “Min Pin hackney action requires rather steep shoulder angulation, coupled with upright pasterns.”

ORDER OF PREFERENCE

If you selected Dog D, with his moderately angulated front and rear, as the typical, we are in accord. He is the missing Phase 2. His hind leg bends at stifle and his hock is lifted high, his forearm is raised to horizontal and the wrist is bent.

My second place choice is sound Dog A. His action, which is normal, is desired of most breeds. He is balanced front with rear but lacks dramatic hackney action.

I awarded third place to steep-shouldered Dog B because, although he goosesteps high in front and does not bend his wrist, he does hackney in rear.

Fourth place goes to steep-shouldered Dog C, who goosesteps in front (an action often mistaken for hackney) and fails to bend at the wrist. He also fails to bend and raise his high leg, a fault that often goes unnoticed.

Choosing my order of preference was not difficult because all four are similar and the emphasis was on movement. Ring reality, hover, can be another story.

BREED TYPE

It is great to see in your ring a flashy Min Pin with coordinated true hackneyed action, but it is equally important that the dog possess proper breed type. This is one of the challenges when judging Min Pins. Judges' study groups will play “what if” with this illustrated scenario and you can do the same: What if best typical mover Dog D possessed a coarse head and was less than elegant? Would you then place second place Dog A over first place Dog D? After further comparison, would Dog D's coarse head and lack of elegance force you to move third place Dog B into second place? That still leaves fourth place Dog C. How would Dog D, with his sound and typical movement but imagined coarse head and lack of elegance, place against typey but steep shouldered Dog C?