

Proper Schipperke Movement

GAIT

“Proper Schipperke movement is a smooth, well coordinated and graceful trot (basically double tracking at a moderate speed), with a tendency to gradually converge toward the center of balance beneath the dog as speed increases. Front and rear must be in perfect balance with good reach in front and drive in the rear. The topline remains level or slightly sloping downward from the shoulders to the rump. Viewed from the front, the elbows remain close to the body. The legs form a straight line from the shoulders through the elbows to the toes, with the feet pointing straight ahead. From the rear, the legs form a straight line from the hip through the hocks to the pads, with the feet pointing straight ahead.”

Let's breakdown the verbiage in the Schipperke standard regarding movement and compare it to the breed's structure and ideal body shape.

“Proper Schipperke movement is a smooth, well coordinated and graceful trot (basically double tracking at a moderate speed), with a tendency to gradually converge toward the center of balance beneath the dog as speed increases.”

The schipperke is a small thickset, cobby dog which is square in profile with well sprung ribs (modified oval). Consider a dog of this description working as a ratter on barges, and how having a double tracking gait would help them maintain balance when the vessel is in motion.

Thought must be taken not to confuse the use of the word “basically” to diminish the importance of the otherwise clear explanation of what is expected from schipperke movement:

“Viewed from the front, the elbows remain close to the body. The legs form a straight line from the shoulders through the elbows to the toes, with the feet pointing straight ahead. From the rear, the legs form a straight line from the hip through the hocks to the pads, with the feet pointing straight ahead.”

Dogs that are not exhibiting this type of “clean” movement are deviating from the standard. The standard clearly states that the legs should move in a straight line. This does not allow for any excess movement in the feet, pasterns, elbows, shoulders, hips or hocks. Flipping or paddling in the front or hockiness in the rear is not efficient and should not be considered acceptable movement as it clearly is not provided for in the standard and often is caused by some structural fault or imbalance. Too wide of movement (front/rear or both) is as undesirable as a dog that has any extra movement as it would not allow for the “tendency to converge as speed increases.”

We are losing this distinct and specifically described movement in our breed.

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With form dictating function, again the schipperke is a thickset and cobby dog which holds its silhouette while moving and viewed from the side as described by the level or slightly sloping topline. This body type would suggest that sidegait should be **balanced** and efficient with **“good”** but not extreme reach and drive as seen in breeds where they drop their head and lengthen their body to cover more ground efficiently and at a quicker pace.

In conclusion, it is important to keep in mind the ideal body shape of the Schipperke when evaluating movement. **“Smooth, well coordinated and graceful trot”** where **“front and rear must be in perfect balance”** while **“basically double tracking at a moderate speed.”**

Excerpts taken directly from the Schipperke Club Of America official standard as approved in 1993.

Written by Kristin Morrison, SCA Judge’s Education Chair



From the Schipperke’s AKC breed standard: “Proper Schipperke movement is a smooth, well coordinated and graceful trot (basically double tracking at a moderate speed), with a tendency to gradually converge toward the center of balance beneath the dog as speed increases. ... Viewed from the front, the elbows remain close to the body. The legs form a straight line from the shoulders through the elbows to the toes, with the feet pointing straight ahead.”

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