

# 12 Dogs That Were Born to Run

Want a natural canine workout partner? While breeding has tampered with the athlete in many breeds, these 12 dogs love nothing more than to run. With some of these pups, you'll be out of breath way before they are! Plus, 3 cardinal rules before you start exercising with your dog.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Researchers have learned that dog breeds that have remained closest to their wolves have maintained more of their natural athleticism than other breeds
- The sled dogs turned out to be better distance and duration runners than either the hounds or the dogs in the retriever group
- The researchers concluded that human breeding practices have caused a decline in the natural athleticism of certain dogs
- Before you start exercising with your dog, have your veterinarian check him out to ensure he's in good enough condition to work out with you
- Always keep an eye on him for signs of extreme fatigue, limping, excessive panting, heaving sides and other signs he's overdoing it

***Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. It was originally published March 17, 2017.***

A pair of researchers from the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz conducted a study of energy use in dogs.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the duo started their endeavor with the simple goal of calibrating a special collar they developed to study how wolves use energy.

They decided to test the collar on a few dogs first before moving on to wolves. But they were so taken aback by the difference in the energy use of the dogs wearing the collars that their research evolved from wolves to dogs.

Ultimately, the researchers learned that dog breeds that have remained closest to their wild ancestors (wolves) have also maintained more of their natural athleticism than dogs that have undergone selective breeding by humans.

## Study Looked at Exercise Endurance in Different Types of Dogs

The study involved 23 healthy, privately owned male and female adult dogs from 2 to 11 years old. The dogs were from three breed categories and included 9 northern breeds (**Siberian Huskies**, Alaskan Malamutes and Samoyeds), 7 Plott Hounds and 7 retrievers (Goldens and Labs).

The dogs were filmed with high-speed cameras as they walked and ran outdoors, and the researchers used the videos to gauge each dog's speed, the frequency of his strides and the length of his legs. They also calculated the speed at which each dog normally walked, trotted and galloped.

The next phase of the experiment required the dogs to walk and run on an indoor treadmill. "I was amazed at the diversity of dog temperaments I encountered," Caleb Bryce, Ph.D., study co-author, told Discover magazine. "Some took to the treadmill instantly, and others took months of dedicated training."<sup>2</sup>

The treadmill was mounted inside a Plexiglas metabolic chamber that measured how much oxygen the dogs used, and was set according to each dog's preferred speeds.

## Dog Breeds Closest to Wolves Are Better Athletes

Once all the dogs were moving comfortably on the treadmill, the researchers noticed that some dogs were much more athletic than others. The northern breeds had significantly better aerobic endurance than the other dogs.

"They're better long distance/duration runners," Bryce told Discover, which isn't really surprising since these breeds evolved to pull sleds. The snow dogs prefer to move at a trot, which also makes sense when you remember that their job was once to pull sleds for hundreds of miles over rugged terrain in punishing weather.

Interestingly, according to Bryce, these dogs remain top athletes even as family dogs who never pull anything. Of the three groups, the sled dogs remain closest to their wolf ancestors.

"Hounds and retrievers are both relatively modern breeds compared with the ancient lineage that includes northern breed dogs," say study authors.<sup>3</sup> And it appears breeding may have removed some of the natural athleticism of these dogs, and other breeds as well.

## Looking for a Canine Athlete as a Workout Partner?

Northern breeds are certainly not the only dogs who can make great workout companions. For example, these 12 dogs were born to run:

1. **Jack Russell Terrier** — Small in body but with oodles of energy to burn, the Jack Russell can run for surprisingly long intervals. And he's fast, reaching speeds up to 25 miles per hour (mph) in short bursts.
2. **Brittany Spaniel** — The blazing fast Brittany is often called "the breeze." She's a medium-size sporting dog with high energy and a light build perfect for running.
3. **Dalmatian** — Dalmatians were actually bred to run alongside carriages and horseback riders, so a love of running side-by-side with their humans is in their genes.
4. **Greyhound** — With their long legs and sleek bodies, **Greyhounds** are built for speed and have been clocked at 45 mph. In between energetic bursts of speed-running, Greyhounds can be found napping on the couch.
5. **Whippet** — The Whippet is thought to be a blend of Greyhound, Italian Greyhound and terrier. With that lineage, it's no wonder they're sometimes called "the poor man's racehorse." Believe it or not, a Whippet can run 200 yards in under 12 seconds!
6. **German Shorthaired Pointer** — This breed is athletic, with tremendous endurance, and those muscular hindquarters are custom-built for running. Since he requires exercise every day, he's the perfect companion for a long run or bike ride.
7. **Standard Poodle** — Don't let the hairdo fool you — the Standard Poodle is loaded with energy and was originally bred as a gun dog and water retriever, making her an excellent partner for long runs.

8. **Australian Cattle Dog** — This dog was bred to herd livestock on ranches in Australia, so a love of running is in her blood. She can go for miles, and she doesn't like to skip a day, so she's an excellent choice if you need occasional prodding to lace up your running shoes.
9. **Airedale Terrier** — Airedales do well in hotter climates thanks to their short, wiry coats. This isn't a large or heavily muscled dog, so shorter runs (10K or less) are well suited to his energy level and stamina.
10. **Border Collie** — Better known for their incredible intelligence and skill at flyball and agility events, Border Collies are also great runners and have been clocked at speeds up to 30 mph.
11. **Weimaraner** — The agile "grey ghost" is adaptable to all types of running. She excels at short, quick bursts of speed and can cover long distances just as easily. Her short coat makes running in warm weather a breeze, and she's also confident on rough terrain and trails.
12. **Siberian Husky** — If you live in a cold climate, a Husky is the perfect running companion. This dog was bred to pull sleds, so endurance running is in his blood.

Before you start exercising with your dog, have your veterinarian check him out to ensure he's in good enough condition to work out with you. Always keep an eye on him for signs of extreme fatigue, limping, excessive panting, heaving sides and other signs he's overdoing it.

Don't push your luck by exercising in extreme heat, cold or high humidity; when the air quality is poor; or where road conditions are hazardous.

## Sources and References

<sup>1, 3</sup> [Journal of Experimental Biology 2016 \(Archived\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> [Discover, November 17, 2016 \(Archived\)](#).

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