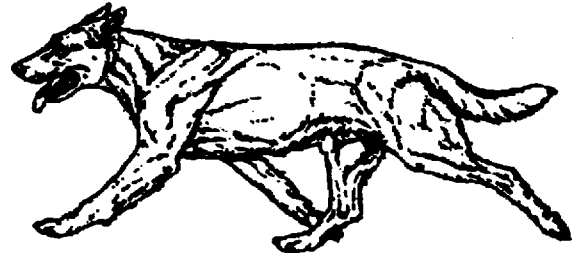


CANINE TERMINOLOGY - GAIT

3rd in a series - compiled by J. Seltzer

The term **gait** means the pattern of footsteps at various rates of speed, each pattern distinguished by a particular rhythm and footfall. The **walk**, **trot** and **gallop** are the most commonly recognized gaits, but the **amble**, **pace**, and **canter** are also normal ways in which many quadrupeds move. The principal gait in the show ring is the trot, and when a judge requests an exhibitor to "Gait your dog," he means the dog is to be led at a trot across the ring in a prescribed pattern.

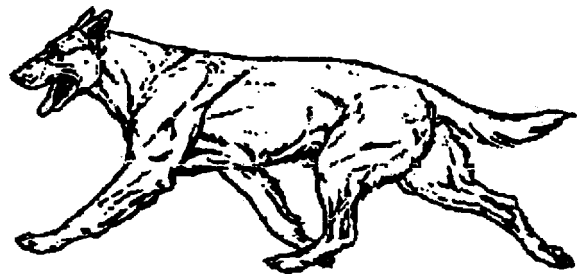
The **trot** is a rhythmic two-beat, diagonal gait in which the feet at diagonal ends of the body strike the ground together. Because only two feet are touching the ground at a time, the dog must rely on forward momentum for balance. At a normal trot, when the weight is transferred from one pair of legs to the other, there is an almost imperceptible period of suspension as the body is propelled forward. Some people call this spring.



The Trot

The **suspension**, or **flying trot**, is a fast gait in which the forward thrust contributes to a longer and more obvious period of flight during each half stride. Because of the long reach, the hind feet actually step beyond the imprint on the ground left by the front foot. But the suspension, combined with coordination and good foot timing, is important to avoid interference.

The **pace** is a two-beat lateral gait in which the legs on each side move back and forth exactly as a pair causing a rolling motion of the dog's body. Structure and proportion (as well as fatigue) influence a dog's inclination to pace. The gait is typical of a few large breeds, but is frowned upon in the show ring. Pacing is sometimes called side-wheeling.



The Pace

The **amble** is also a type of gait in which the front and hind legs on the same side move in unison with each other as a pair. The amble is similar to the pace in all respects except that it is slower, and, while in the pace both feet on the same side hit the ground simultaneously, in the amble the rear foot of the pair is raised off the ground just a fraction sooner than the front foot, and the rear foot is also brought into ground contact a little earlier. The amble can also be described as a fast rocking walk which is often seen as a transition movement between the walk and faster gaits. As a transition movement it should not be confused with pacing.

The fastest movement of the dog, the **gallop**, is a four-time gait in which the dog is fully suspended or airborne once during each motion sequence. The actual movement pattern is: right front foot, left front foot, right rear foot, left rear foot. Suspension occurs immediately after taking off from the left rear foot. According to Stonehenge¹: "Perfection of the gallop depends upon the power of extending the shoulders and

forelegs as far as possible, as well as bringing the hind legs rapidly forward to give the propulsive stroke. If the hindquarters are good and well-brought into action, while the shoulders do not thrust the forelegs well forward, the action is labored and slow. On the contrary, if the shoulders do their duty, but the hind legs are not brought well forward, or do not thrust the body onwards with sufficient force, the action may be elegant, but it is not powerful and rapid. For these purposes, therefore, we require good shoulders, good thighs, a good back, and, lastly, for lodging the lungs and heart, whose actions are essential for the maintenance of speed, a well-formed and capacious chest"



The Gallop

¹ "Stonehenge," *The Dogs of the British Islands*, Second Edition, London, 1872, p 180.

Elliott, Rachel Page, *The New Dogsteps*, Second Edition, Howell Book House, New York, 1983.

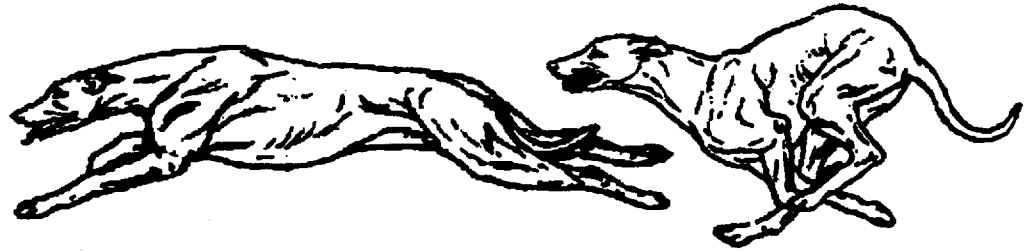
Spira, Harold R., *Canine Terminology*, First Edition, Howell Book House, New York, 1982.

CANINE TERMINOLOGY - GAIT

Continued

The gallop of the Greyhound and several of the other sight hounds differs from that of most other dogs in that it consists of a series of gigantic leaps, leaving the dog totally airborne for considerable periods of time, twice during the sequence of motion. This type of motion is referred to as the ***double suspension gallop***.

The ***canter*** is a term not generally used to describe canine movement. It is basically a slow form of gallop, and not as tiring. It has three beats per stride, two legs move separately and two as a diagonal pair. Canter-ing is sometimes referred to as the ***collected gallop*** or the ***lope***.



The Double Suspension Gallop

The ***walk*** seems so uncomplicated there is no need to analyze it other than to draw contrast with the faster gaits. It is the least tiring and the slowest of all gaits: a four-time gait with each limb moving one after the other. At the walk three legs support the body at all times, each foot lifting from the ground one at a time in a given sequence: right hind, right front, left hind, left front.