

**SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE VIZSLA CLUB OF AMERICA  
CONCERNING PROPOSED BREED STANDARD CHANGES**

## **1. Introduction**

After review of the *Report on the Clarification of the Vizsla Standard* ("the Report") published in the January/February issue of the *Vizsla News*, the undersigned members of the Vizsla Club of America, while they support defining some basic proportions of the Vizsla, believe that at least one of the proposed clarifications amounts to a substantive change to the standard that is not in keeping with the purpose of the Vizsla breed. Concerns have also been expressed that these proposals could be submitted to a vote by members of the Vizsla Club of America without the members of the club having been given an adequate opportunity to provide input at such time as would have allowed necessary adjustments to be made *prior* to the Board of Directors' approval of the changes.

We want to emphasize that we support the recommendation made by John Hannum at the 1999 Annual General Meeting, that the standard define some of the important proportions of the Vizsla and agree it may be of benefit to both breeders and judges to provide some indication of those expected proportions. We believe however that the depth of chest to length of leg ratio put forward in the Report ("The distance from the elbow to ground is approximately equal to the distance from the elbow to the top of the withers") will bring about an undesirable change in the structure of the Vizsla.

### **2.1 Definition of issue\***

The *primary* working gait of the Vizsla is the gallop rather than the trot. On this basis, we suggest that a depth of chest/length of leg ratio that is typical of an *endurance trotter* is not

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\* In this presentation, the chest/leg ratio is described either as a proportion of the height at the withers or as a ratio that uses the "legginess ratio" as defined by Curtis Brown at p. 31 of *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis* (length of the leg below the chest divided by the depth of the chest). For example, where the distance from top of withers to point of elbow is equal to the distance from point of elbow to ground, the dog may be described as having chest/leg proportions of 50/50 or as having a chest/leg ratio of 1:1, where 1 equals the depth of chest. A dog with a chest depth (top of withers to elbow) representing 46% of height at the withers and a length of leg (elbow to ground) representing 54% of its height at the withers, is described as having chest/leg proportions of 46/54 or as having a chest/leg ratio of 1:1.17. In this second example, 1.17 is the "legginess ratio" as defined by Curtis Brown.

appropriate for the Vizsla. An ideal Vizsla will **never** have a length of foreleg that is *equal to or shorter* than half its height at the withers but in fact, the length of foreleg, measured from point of elbow to ground, should always be greater than half of the height at the withers.

We emphasize that the issue here has nothing to do with the question of the ideal depth of the chest on a Vizsla. The purpose of the breed standard is to describe an ideal specimen of the breed and the standard already states that the chest should be “moderately broad and deep reaching down to the elbows” with “ribs well-sprung”. When discussing the proper chest/leg ratio, it is assumed that the discussion is about a dog with a correct depth of chest, i.e. a chest that reaches the elbow. Deciding what the correct chest/leg proportions should be on a Vizsla really involves a decision about the ideal amount of leg that a Vizsla with a correct depth of chest should carry under him.

## 2.2 Objections to proposed change

### *2.2.1 Use of the expression “approximately equal”*

The first difficulty with the proposal put forward is that a Vizsla *with legs that are slightly shorter than its depth of chest* would have to be accepted as being just as correct as a Vizsla with legs that are slightly longer than its depth of chest. Let us suppose we have a dog with chest/leg proportions of 48/52 and that the height of the dog at the withers is 24 inches. This dog’s chest would be approximately 11 ½ inches deep with a leg that is approximately 12½ inches. If proportions of 48/52 are considered to be “approximately” equal however, so should proportions of 52/48 where the same 24” dog has a depth of chest of 12 ½” and a length of leg of 11 ½” ! Yet, this dog would have legs that are an inch shorter than its depth of chest and half an inch shorter than half its height at withers! Such a Vizsla cannot possibly be described as representing a breed ideal and if the current proposal were to be retained, the standard must at the very least expressly specify that the distance from elbow to ground can never be less than the depth of chest.

### *2.2.2 Structure and purpose*

In *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis*, Curtis Brown confirms that a sporting breed whose primary working gait is the gallop should have a length of leg that is greater than the depth of chest in order to perform optimally. At page 134 of his work, Brown states the following under the heading “Longer-legged Sporting Dogs”:

Within the Sporting Group are a number of fairly tall breeds which are designed for hunting with endurance at moderate galloping speeds: Pointers, German Shorthaired Pointers, Irish Setters, English Setters, Gordon Setters, Vizslas, Weimaraners, Brittanys, and Wirehaired Pointing Griffons. In general, the average leg is about 1.1 to 1.2 times the depth of chest, and the average dog may be as high as it is long or a little longer than high. Although these breeds should be able to trot well for their build, *in the field they are designed more for sustained galloping than for trotting.* (emphasis added)

Amongst breeds designed for endurance trotting, we find the Collie, Shetland Sheepdog, Belgian sheepdog, Dalmatian, etc. (see *K-9 Structure and Terminology*, p. 177). The Vizsla, in common with many of the other sporting breeds, is intended to have both endurance and good galloping speed. Meeting this objective requires a leg that is longer than that of an endurance trotter (see *K-9 Structure and Terminology*, pp.126-128). From a functional perspective, the ratio called for in the proposed revision is simply not appropriate for a breed intended to perform as a pointer-retriever in the manner of the Vizsla. We refer again to the work of the late Curtis Brown and his discussion of "Desirable Structures for Locomotion", chapter 2 of *Dog Locomotion and Gait Analysis*. At page 31, he enunciates this principle:

Swift traveling dogs have a lower leg length about 1.3 times longer than the depth of chest. Dogs displaying endurance at the trot have a lower leg length about equal to the depth of chest. Dogs displaying endurance at the gallop have a lower leg length about equal to 1.2 to 1.25 times the depth of chest.

The work of Curtis Brown leaves no doubt that foreleg length on a breed such as the Vizsla should be greater than the depth of chest to allow the dog to function as intended in the field. In "The Hungarian Vizsla", an article written in the 1950s (?) by Jenő Dus, a former "Vizsla Club Registrar and Senior Expert in Breeding" in Hungary, the author compared the Vizsla "with the best-known breeds in the pointer line". He wrote: "The English pointer has an extremely speedy dash and excellent scent. He points firmly but retrieves poorly. Not a too many-sided breed. The German pointer is more versatile: he has a fine scent, retrieves and brings well, but at a moderate speed. The Hungarian Vizsla unites the good faculties of these two pointers. Never nervous, he is quick, has superb scent, is reliable in retrieving, bringing and trace keeping. A peerless all-purpose gun-dog." In short, the Vizsla was expected to be faster than the German Shorthair though perhaps not as fast as the Pointer.

The estimates made by Brown from photographs showed the Pointer to have a chest/leg ratio of 1:1.2, equivalent to proportions of 45/55. In light of the history of our breed, it would seem fair to conclude that the Vizsla should not be expected to or need to travel as swiftly as the specialist Pointer. Accordingly, the correct chest/leg ratio for a Vizsla may be closer to a 1:1.1 ratio.

### **2.2.3** *Review of other breed standards*

#### **2.2.3(1)** *Standards of breeds other than the Vizsla*

We attach as Appendix A a list of the breed standards (as of 1994) that include a specific indication in relation to chest/leg proportions.

The view according to which a chest/leg ratio of 1:1 is typical of breeds designed as endurance trotters, rather than of breeds such as the Vizsla, is largely confirmed by a review of other breed standards. There are only two Sporting breeds which perform in a manner similar to

the Vizsla whose standard calls for a chest/leg ratio similar to that proposed in the Report: the Weimaraner and the Brittany. On the other hand, we cannot avoid being struck by the number of breeds whose proportions are immediately recognizable as being different from those of the Vizsla that have breed standards calling for a chest/leg ratio similar to the one proposed. If 50/50 proportions are appropriate for breeds like the Labrador Retriever, the Rottweiler, the Chow Chow or the Shetland Sheepdog, those proportions simply cannot be right for the Vizsla. A Vizsla carries more leg under him than any of these breeds. We can only conclude that the specification of a 50/50 proportion in the breed standards of the Weimaraner and of the Brittany is based on some of the same erroneous assumptions that have led to the current suggestion that this ratio be adopted for the Vizsla.

### **2.2.3(2) *Hungarian/FCI Vizsla breed standard***

As members of the Board of Directors know, the Magyar Vizsla Klub recently submitted a standard revision to the Fédération cynologique internationale (the FCI). In that revision, the Hungarian club proposed to specify that the depth of chest of a Vizsla should be between 44% and 46% of height at the withers. To put it differently, that version asked for the length of leg of the Vizsla to be between 54% and 56% of the height of the dog. These specifications were not accepted by the FCI committee reviewing the standard submission and the Hungarian club was asked to submit language that could be substituted for the actual percentages, According to Zsuzsa Fuzesi:

The text from 1997 were slightly modified - The FCI [Standards Committee] did not accept exact angles and measurements except height at wither – saying at the show ring you cannot measure angles.(personal communication)

The language that was eventually adopted was to the effect that: “the depth of the brisket is slightly less than half the height at the withers” (FCI Standard No. 57/13.09.2000/GB, official translation of original standard). The earlier version of the standard can still serve to explain the meaning of this sentence so that we can say that as far as FCI countries are concerned, including the country of origin of the breed, a Vizsla ideally has a chest/leg ratio that falls between 44/56 and 46/54 or 1:1.27 to 1:1.17. This clearly excludes a Vizsla with a length of leg equal to its depth of chest or worse, a Vizsla with legs that are shorter than its body depth.

### **2.2.3(3) *British Vizsla breed standard***

The only Vizsla breed standard in force that calls for the “distance from withers to lowest part of chest” to be “equal to distance from chest to ground” is the British standard (and its derivatives). Assuming that the chest is expected to reach the elbow (something that is not specified in the British standard), that standard effectively calls for chest/leg proportions of 50/50. Measurements made on a number of pictures of British show champions from 1971 to 1996 (J.

Perkins, *Hungarian Vizsla Champions, A Pictorial Record* (1997)) show no dog to have the exact 1:1 ratio called for in the British standard. The pattern of leg length greater than the depth of chest is fairly consistent notwithstanding that the British standard asks for the leg length to be *exactly equal* to half the height at withers. It is true that a number of these dogs do tend to have a leg length that is shorter than is found on North American Vizslas of comparable quality.

The Hungarian and the British standards are obviously not compatible on this point. Under the FCI/Hungarian standard, a dog that has a leg length equal to half its height at the withers would be considered faulty while the British standard describes the same dog as ideal! In the absence of evidence that would show the findings of experts such as Curtis Brown to be incorrect, we consider that the Hungarian standard is the one that describes the correct Vizsla.

#### 2.2.4 *Estimated proportions of US Vizslas*\*\*

Measurements made on pictures of a random selection of fourteen Vizslas having achieved top placements at national specialties yield chest/leg proportion estimates ranging from 45/55 (1:1.22) to 48/52 (1:1.08) with the average being 46.5/53.5 (1:1.15). A sufficient number of suitable photographs of top field performers was not available as most of these tend to be taken outdoors making it difficult to obtain a valid estimate of the distance from point of elbow to ground. Nevertheless, it has been possible to at least confirm from photographs of top field dogs that the length of foreleg on these dogs is always greater than the distance from withers to point of elbow.

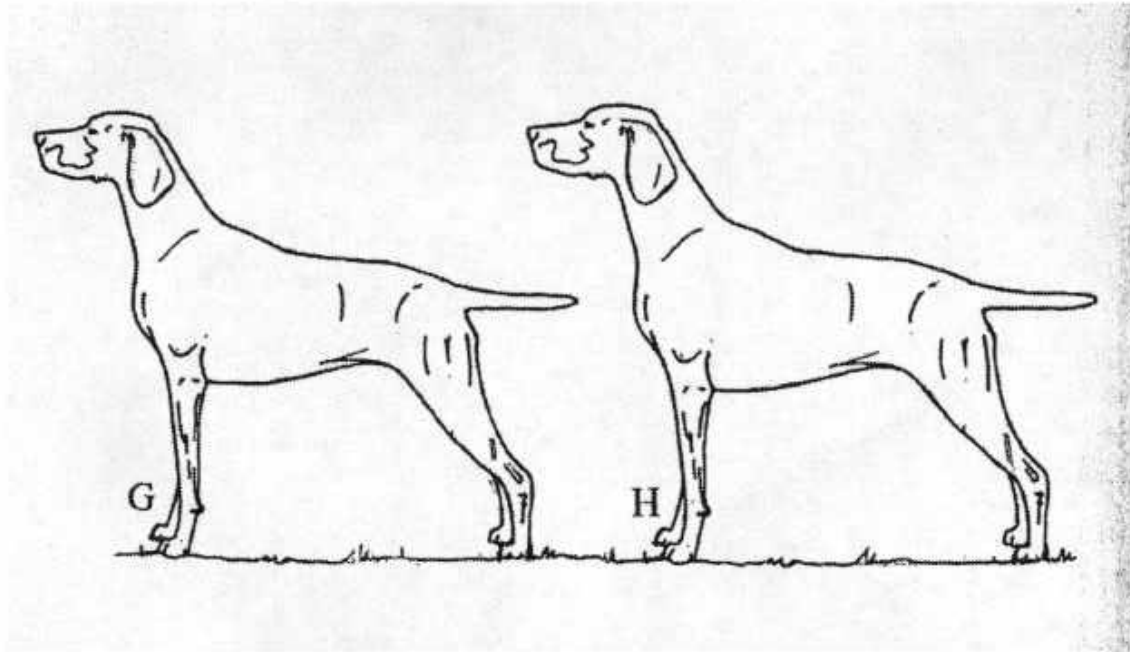
We also refer to the measurements made by Cliff Boggs and reported at page 53 of *The Vizsla*, 2nd revised edition (2000). While the depth of chest measurement is not stated to have been from top of withers to elbow, the leg measurements were taken from point of elbow to the ground. Given that the total height at withers of 5 of the 6 measured dogs is equal to the length of leg plus the depth of chest, one must assume that the chest of these five dogs did reach the elbow. The height at withers of one dog is given as  $22 \frac{3}{4}$  while his depth of chest is given as  $10 \frac{1}{2}$  and his length of leg as  $12 \frac{1}{2}$ . The discrepancy of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch between the total height at withers and the sum of the other two measurements is presumably due to that dog's chest not reaching the elbow. It would also indicate that the author was measuring the actual depth of chest rather than taking a measurement from top of withers to point of elbow. The chest/leg proportions on the six dogs measured ranged from 44.7/55.3 (1:1.23) to 49/51 (1:1.04). Average is 46.6/53.4 (ratio of 1:1.14). Note the consistency between this average and that reported above for the specialty winners.

The following drawings were made by Robert Cole for one of his *You Be The Judge* columns on the Vizsla under the VCA breed standard, which appeared in the March 1999 issue of

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\*\* Some of the measurements referred to have been made from photographs. Obviously, this method has limitations and at best, can only yield estimates of a dog's proportions. We have tried to select photographs where the dog is positioned perpendicular to the camera and taken at the level of the dog so that angles are eliminated. The smaller the picture available, the less accurate the estimate will be. Unfortunately, very few suitable pictures from top field performers are available as most of those pictures are taken outdoors making it impossible to take a proper measurement of the distance from elbow to ground. Measurements are taken with a compass from estimated top of withers to point of elbow (olecranon) and from elbow to ground. It should be noted that using the elbow as the point of measurement removes the actual depth of chest as a factor in these measurements.

*Dog News*. One of these two bitches is a real-life competitive Vizsla, the other the same bitch modified.



As explained by the author, “only one modification was made but the effect is dramatic and may be one of the reasons for variety of type within the breed. [...] Dog G is the real-life Vizsla and the modified version Dog H has almost a two inch shorter foreleg than Dog G, a foreleg the same length as the body is deep from withers to brisket. In canine terminology Dog G’s foreleg would be labeled moderately long and Dog H’s labeled medium. [...] Even though author and Vizsla specialist B.C. Boggs promotes ... that the “length of front leg from elbow to ground should be about equal to depth of the body (chest)”, I side with the FCI Hungarian Standard which cites the depth of body as 44 percent of height,<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and the foreleg as 56 percent. (One assumes the FCI brisket is level with the elbow).” Dog H, of course, is also the dog that the proposed change describes as ideal. On the contrary, this dog has a ponderous and heavy appearance that entirely lacks the required elegance exhibited by Dog G.

### 2.3 Conclusion

The breeders and fanciers who have signed this submission believe that a leg length greater than the depth of chest is a structural requirement for the Vizsla to perform his intended function as a versatile hunting dog whose primary gait is the gallop with maximum efficiency. A length of leg greater than chest depth is also required for this “elegant gun dog” to maintain the distinguished appearance and aristocratic bearing that are hallmarks of the breed.

In addition to the illustrations provided above, the picture reproduced in Appendix B shows on the left-hand side a picture of a dog with chest/leg proportions of 44.5/55.5 (1:1.21) as

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<sup>\*\*\*</sup> It should be noted that the version of the FCI standard referenced by Bob Cole (dated 1966) contained an error in translation. All other versions of the same standard specify that 44% is a minimum, making it clear that a Vizsla with a depth of chest representing a greater percentage of its height at withers would still be considered to be correct.

estimated from that picture. On the right-hand side, the length of his legs has been altered so that leg length is exactly equal to the depth of chest, which is what the proposed revision would call for. We believe a comparison of these two pictures speaks for itself. We are opposed to a standard change that could eventually make a reality of this doctored example of a Vizsla or that would allow a Vizsla with a leg length less than its depth of chest to be described as "ideal".

Generally speaking, we think that a Vizsla with a correct depth of chest, will have a length of leg, measured from elbow to ground, that is between 53% to 55% of the height of the dog at the withers. The ideal chest/leg proportions then, range from 45/55 (1:1.22) to 47/53 (1:1.12). The particular chest/leg proportions that will be correct in any given case are those that are in keeping with other proportions of the dog and that result in a well-proportioned and balanced dog. Overall balance will always be more important than strict adherence to a specific measurement.

The following table gives the actual differences in the measurements of a 24" Vizsla for each particular chest/leg ratio:

Proportions (Ratio)	45/55 (1:1.22)	46/54 (1:1.17)	47/53 (1:1.12)	50/50 (1:1)
Depth of chest	10 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	11"	11 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	12"
Length of foreleg	13 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	13"	12 $\frac{3}{4}$ "	12"
Measure by which leg length exceeds depth of chest	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	2"	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	--
Measure by which leg length exceeds half of height	1 $\frac{1}{4}$ "	1"	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	--

### 3. Standard revision process and recommendations

As far as the process for making these changes is concerned, we regret that the proposals have reached the stage they have without interested members of the VCA having been given an adequate opportunity to provide input and comments.

At the Annual General Meeting held in November 2000, members adopted a motion intended to preclude a membership vote on any changes to the breed standard before these changes are submitted to the Annual General Meeting that will take place in October of 2002. This motion provides the Board with an opportunity to address both the substantive and process issues raised in this presentation and we ask that the Board of Directors reconsider its approval of the changes outlines in the Report and send that Report back to the Breed Standard Committee for further study. This referral should be accompanied by instructions to the Committee that it should actively involve members of the VCA in the development of any new proposals and keep them informed of progress on a regular basis through the *Vizsla News*. This would include disclosure of the membership of that committee and an indication as to how the committee proposes to conduct its work and seek the participation of interested members of the VCA.

Finally, before the Board approves any changes that are re-submitted by the Breed Standard Committee, those proposed changes should be published for comment so that the Board may have the benefit of the views of members on the final draft of the proposed changes *before* deciding whether or not that wording should be put to a vote. At the October 2001 Annual General Meeting, the Board could simply report on having taken these steps, thereby avoiding the need for a lengthy discussion and debate on the currently proposed changes.

All of the signatories of this submission share the same goal as the members of the Board of Directors of the Vizsla Club of America: to achieve a standard that accurately describes the ideal Vizsla and that provides breeders with a reliable blueprint of the breed. Needless to say, that blueprint must remain faithful to the heritage of the Vizsla as a hunting dog and reflect the structure needed for our dogs to continue to perform as the “walking gentleman’s shooting dog”.

Respectfully submitted,

Wanda S. Berner,  
Strider Vizslas

Kay Ingle

John and Debbie Reid,  
Onpoint Vizslas

François-R. Bernier,  
Bajnok Vizslas & GSPs

Gary Jagoda,  
Berry'sBirdDogs

Dorothea Romano,  
Willorunn Farm

Annie and Ray Bouckley,  
Encore Vizslas

Diana Jones,  
Caveat Vizslas

Kathy Rust,  
Kizmar Vizslas

Marilyn Brown,  
Woods Afire Vizslas

Linda Kelly,  
Oakleaf Vizslas

Kirsten Schick,  
Copperfield Vizslas

Jayne Coneybeare,  
Kalypso Vizslas

Cathy & Ed Kottmeier,  
Copperfield Vizslas

Marcia Schlesinger,  
Barktalk Vizslas

Mary J. Durham

Frank & Martha Lacko,  
Toldin Vizslas

Lynn E. Schwermann,  
Kiralvi Vizslas

Jeff and Kathy Englesman,  
JNEK Vizslas

Sharon Lim,  
Rayshar Vizslas

Diane Shearer,  
Legacy Vizslas

Edwin Foster,  
Elgin Vizslas

Joy Lyons,  
Lyons Vizslas

Janet A. Simer

Christina Freitag,  
CMF Vizslas

Caroll & Raymond Mealy,  
Hodag Vizslas

Will Snyder,  
Rivercity Vizslas

Kathleen Hartmann

Mike and Beth Nash,  
Red Dogwood Vizslas

Beryl Taylor,  
Vizsta Vizslas

Judy Hetkowski,  
Boulder Vizslas

Linda Penry

Ginger M. Tierney,  
New Dawn Vizslas

Karen Hooks, DVM  
Caveat Vizslas

Carol Phelps,  
Szizlin Vizslas

E.S Toadvin & Jane Toadvin,  
Lone Juniper Vizslas/Sugarmint Vizslas

Marcia Hostetler

Linda Promaulayko,  
Brylynn Vizslas

Maria Zucconi,  
Poquito Vizslas

Rhoda Ezell

Linda Pruitt,  
Sansouci Vizslas

## Appendix A

**Labrador Retriever** : "Distance from the elbow to the ground should be equal to one-half of the height at the withers."

**Weimaraner**: Forelegs "straight and strong, with the measurement from the elbow to the ground approximately equaling the distance from the elbow to the top of the withers."

**Chesapeake Bay Retriever**: "Shoulder to elbow and elbow to ground should be equal."

**Welsh Springer Spaniel**: "Height to the elbows is approximately equal to the distance from the elbows to the top of the shoulder blades."

**Brittany**: "Height at the elbows should approximately equal distance from elbow to withers."

**Norwegian Elkhound**: "Distance from brisket to ground appears to be half the height at the withers."

**Samoyed**: "Length of leg from the ground to the elbow should be approximately 55 percent of the total height at the withers."

**Siberian Husky**: "Length of the leg from elbow to ground is slightly more than the distance from the elbow to the top of the withers."

**Great Pyrénées**: "The height from the ground to the elbow appears approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the withers."

**Doberman Pinscher**: "Height from elbow to withers approximately equals height from ground to elbow."

**Rottweiler**: "Distance from withers to elbow and elbow to ground is equal."

**Newfoundland**: "The distance from elbow to ground equals about half the dog's height."

**Shetland Sheepdog**: "Elbow joint should be equidistant from the ground or from the withers."

**Australian Shepherd**: "The elbow joint is equidistant from the ground to the withers." (Standard of the Australian Shepherd Club of America)

**Old English Sheepdog**: "Measurements from withers to elbow and from elbow to ground are practically the same."

**Manchester Terrier**: "The distance from the elbow to the withers should be approximately the same as the distance from the elbow to the ground."

**Chow Chow**: "Distance from tip of elbow to ground is half the height at the withers."



Original



Doctored version