

For Active Dogs!

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Coaching dog enthusiasts to embrace the unique needs of active dogs through teaching, mentoring and educational media

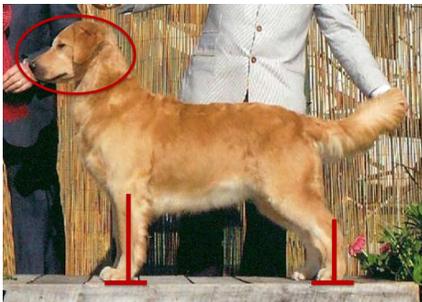
VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 5 | April 2018

Is Your Dog Fit?

Track Your Dog's Fitness and Detect Early Injuries

Greetings!

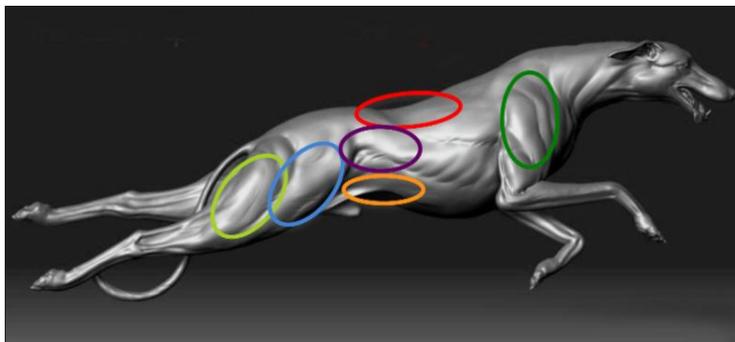
Regular assessment of your dog's muscle size and tone should be a **routine part of the health care program** for your active dog. It will help you **target your conditioning program** to the muscles that most need work, and can **tip you off to a possible early injury**.



should be held up and looking forward.

Start with your dog standing in a stacked position, just as you would if you were showing in conformation. Your dog's lower front leg, the radius and ulna, should be perpendicular to the ground, your dog's rear pasterns from the tarsus (hock) to the foot should be perpendicular to the ground, and your dog's head

Below is a sculpture of a very well-muscled greyhound so that you can see the **6 muscle groups you should assess**. It's not necessary to learn the names of the individual muscles. The most important thing is that you know where they are on the dog's body and what they should feel like in a really fit dog.



Starting at the front of the dog you can see in dark green the **muscles of the shoulder**. You should feel those two big muscle bellies separately, and ideally they should feel large and firm to the touch.

The next three groups of muscles together comprise your dog's core. First, along the back, are the **paraspinal muscles**, shown in red. Feel the dorsal spinous processes of the vertebrae, those bony bumps along the center of your dog's back. Your dog's paraspinal muscles should come out on both sides of those bumps and form a rounded curve along the top

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of your dog's back and around to the side.. Ideally, those muscles should feel firm to the touch, not soft.

The next two components of the core are the **lateral abdominal muscles** shown in purple on the side of the dogs abdomen, and the **ventral abdominal muscles**, shown in orange – those are the muscles that run along the bottom of the dogs abdomen, where the human six-pack would be.

Unlike the other muscles we're checking for fitness, the lateral and ventral abdominal muscles don't get larger - they just get firmer. They generally don't feel as firm as the other muscles we're evaluating but they should not feel flabby.

TIP: The vast majority of dogs, as with humans, are weak in the core. So if you're having trouble knowing whether or not your dog's core muscles are strong enough, it's safe to assume that they aren't.

The two groups of muscles of the rear legs to assess are the **quads**, shown in blue, and the **hamstrings**, in light green. These muscle bellies should feel large and rounded and very firm to the touch. The hamstrings should be larger than the quads, and you should be able to feel the bulging of separate muscle bellies in this group.

Note: If you've been feeling these muscles in your dog as you read along, you probably have a big question mark above your head right now! How are you supposed to know whether the muscles are large or firm enough? Don't worry! That's just because you have nothing to compare them to yet. So go ahead and **assess the muscle size and tone of as many dogs as you can**. Feel your other dogs, feel your friends' dogs. Heck, feel dogs you meet on the street (with the owners' permission of course)! You will soon notice huge differences and can make it a goal for your own dogs to have the largest, firmest muscles in town! But remember – you must have the dog standing correctly when you are doing your assessment.

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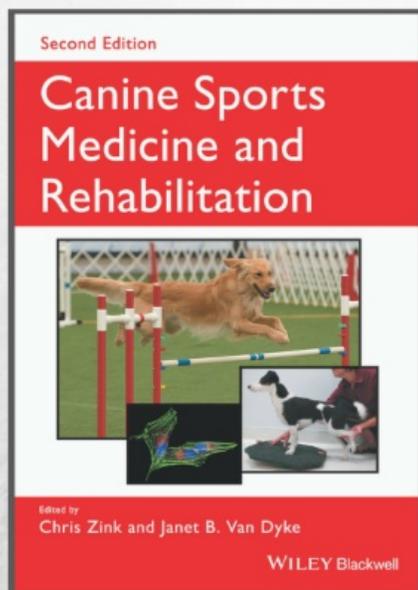
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