

## THE MIN PIN GAIT DEBATE; WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

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"We are losing the hackney gait" or "We are losing soundness." Depending on which dog is being discussed, these statements are pretty common in Min Pin circles. I'm certainly no expert on the anatomy or gait of dogs and horses, therefore, I won't attempt to address shoulder lay-back, etc. Heck, even the experts can't agree on what kind of shoulders produce the desired Min Pin gait! My views on the subject are mere personal observations or personal assessments to date of the varied & contradictory expert opinions.

Our breed standard was revised in 1980 (before my time), whereby "precise hackney gait" was replaced with "hackney-like action" because (I understand) the definition of "hackney gait" is lifting the front legs very high and no rear drive (as in the case of the hackney pony). On the other hand, "Hackney-like action" is defined in our standard as "high-stepping, reaching, free and easy gait in which the front leg moves straight forward and in front of the body and the foot bends at the wrist; the dog drives smoothly and strongly from the rear."

It puzzles me how some fanciers describe the desired Min Pin gait as "hackney, like a hackney pony." From my observation of the hackney pony in motion, I would never describe his gait as being "hackney-like action" as defined in our standard since there's a lot of non-reaching-high stepping-non-driving going on. I would definitely not want a Min Pin with a gait like the hackney pony, nor the towline that goes along with it. I suspect most people speak of the Min Pin's "hackney gait" in reference to the front movement only, and not including the non-reaching front action, drippy towline and non-driving rear movement associated with the gait.

"Hackney-like action," as described in our standard, is in my opinion, a very well defined. Here's where many of the non-high steppers, no reach, no drive, terrier-like, non-wrist benders fail; IN PROFILE. The catch is, that along with "hackney-like action," our standard dictates (under gait) "the forelegs and hind legs move parallel, with feet turning neither in nor out (SOUNDNESS)" AND "back (towline) level or slightly sloping toward the rear when standing and gaiting." Here's where many of the high-steppers, mix-masters, caressers, drippy toppings, faulty-fronted, weak-reared, wrist-benders fail; COMING AND GOING.

Yes! I do agree we need to concentrate on improvement of the Gait as dictated by our standard. But, the gait is not "hackney gait" and it's not solely "hackney-like action" as the standard also mandates "soundness." The standard calls for SOUND-HACKNEY-LIKE ACTION movement. I'm working on it! And let's not forget that the Min Pin is not a one-dimensional breed, merely identified by its gait. A good specimen must LOOK and ACT like a Min Pin (BREED TYPE), the King of Toys! After all, I have seen some Italian Greyhounds, Poodles, and even Chihuahuas move with "hackney" or "hackney-like action."

(Edited by Madeline K. Miller)