



# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL

## Extended Breed Standard of **THE TIBETAN SPANIEL**

Produced by  
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in consultation with the  
Tibetan Spaniel Association of Victoria Inc  
on behalf of and in conjunction with  
The Australian National Kennel Council

The Kennel Club (England) pre 1987 Standard  
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Country of Origin ~ Tibet

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## **THE TIBETAN SPANIEL**



The Tibetan Spaniel is a highly intelligent dog coming from the mountainous regions of Tibet. These little dogs were originally bred in the monasteries of Tibet where the monks held them in high esteem. They were used as watchdogs and warned of approaching visitors by their barking.

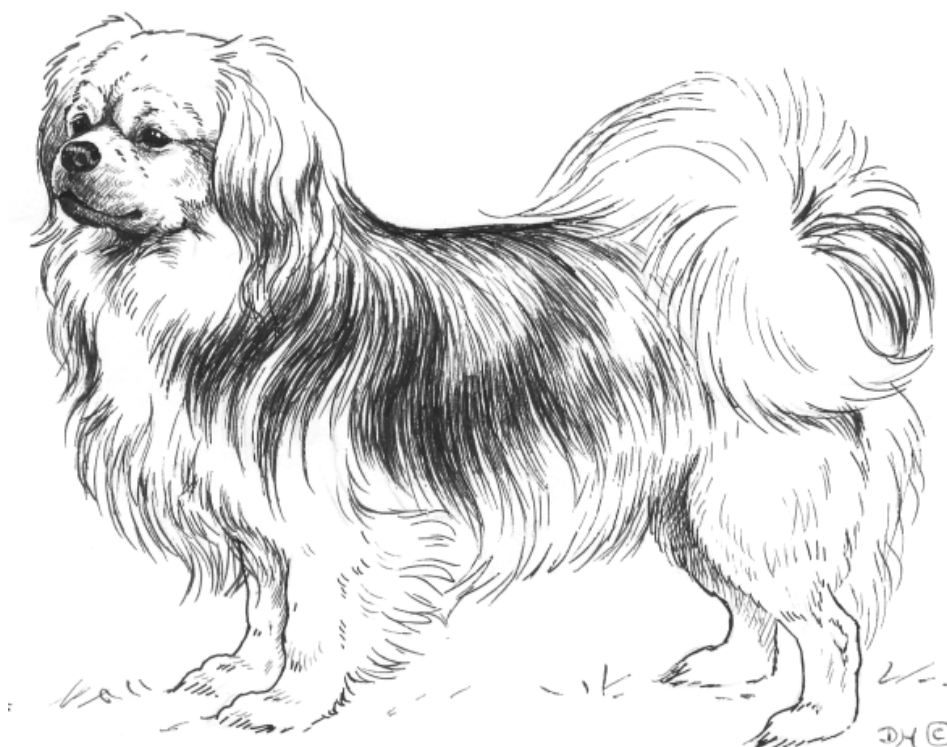
These characteristics are still found in the breed today as they make very good housedogs, warning of any unusual occurrence. Just as they used to watch from the walls of the monasteries in Tibet, so today they often like to climb up to a lookout point such as a windowsill.

The Tibetan Spaniel should have great dignity and proud bearing, indicating how much the powerful monks, their masters, prized them in Tibet, and it should be realised that these dogs could not be bought from the monks but were given as valued gifts to esteemed friends.

They are a long-lived and generally healthy breed, often remaining active and full of life until 15 or 16 years of age.



**Fig. 1 - Lovely example of the head**



**Fig.2 - Lovely example of the breed**

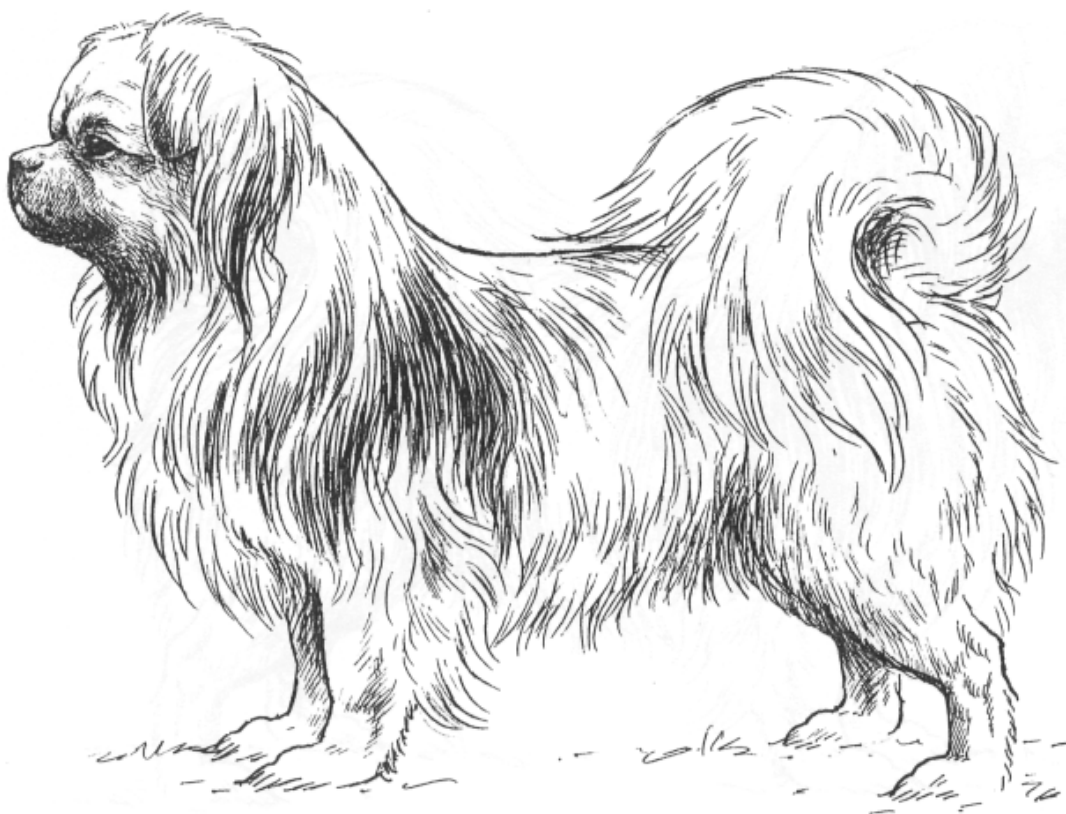
- **GENERAL APPEARANCE**

***Should be small, active and alert. The outline should give a well-balanced appearance, slightly longer in body than height at withers.***

When we look at the Tibetan Spaniel we should be trying to find a vigilant little dog who takes an interest in its surroundings and possesses the distinctive oriental expression that is so typical of the breed.

A good Tibetan Spaniel should have that indefinable something called quality and should look a true aristocrat from head to toe. It should not be exaggerated in any way. For example, excessive weight, height and coat are undesirable. Any unsoundness should be penalised.

And it is very important to look at the overall proportion of the dog, as it should be remembered that construction faults are the hardest to breed out. A poorly angulated dog will almost always have poor muscle structure and less overall substance.



**Fig.3 – Correct balance and type**



**Fig. 4- Incorrect balance and poor type. Roached back, dipping at shoulder, low set tail**

- **CHARACTERISTICS**

***Gay and assertive, highly intelligent, aloof with strangers.***

Intelligent, mischievous, stubborn, determined, charming, amusing and full of life, taking an interest in what is going on around them. May test your patience but soon forgiven because of their wicked sense of humour. To quote an international judge from mainland Europe they are “part cat, part dog and part monkey”. This is a good description of the breed’s character - the curiosity and independence of a cat, the faithfulness and watchfulness of a dog and the mischievousness of a monkey.

- **TEMPERAMENT**

***[See Characteristics and also under Faults.]***

Whilst appearing dignified and confident, this breed of dog is nevertheless wary and somewhat suspicious of anything unfamiliar. However, this attitude should give the impression of aloofness and even disdain - certainly not timidity. They are quite brave for their size; a big dog inside a small dog’s body, although they should never bite or show other signs of aggression.

Judges also need to note that Tibetan Spaniels have a tendency to look past or ‘through’ strangers rather than directly at them. They also do not like being swooped down upon and should therefore be placed back on the table if a re-examination or comparison is necessary.

Their attitude when being handled on the table is usually one of disdainful tolerance; they seem to consider handling by strangers as an infringement on their dignity.

Whilst the Tibetan Spaniel is an extremely happy and intelligent dog, it is also highly individualistic and will only cooperate if and when it chooses to do so. It should not be penalised for refusing to look at a judge who is after expression, after all, the Tibetan Spaniel is supposed to be aloof with strangers. This is not a breed of dog that can be dominated and if you own one you should never expect instant obedience. Tibetan Spaniels do, however, become very devoted to their owners and, if correctly and gently disciplined, will obey in their own time as long as there is love and trust in the relationship.

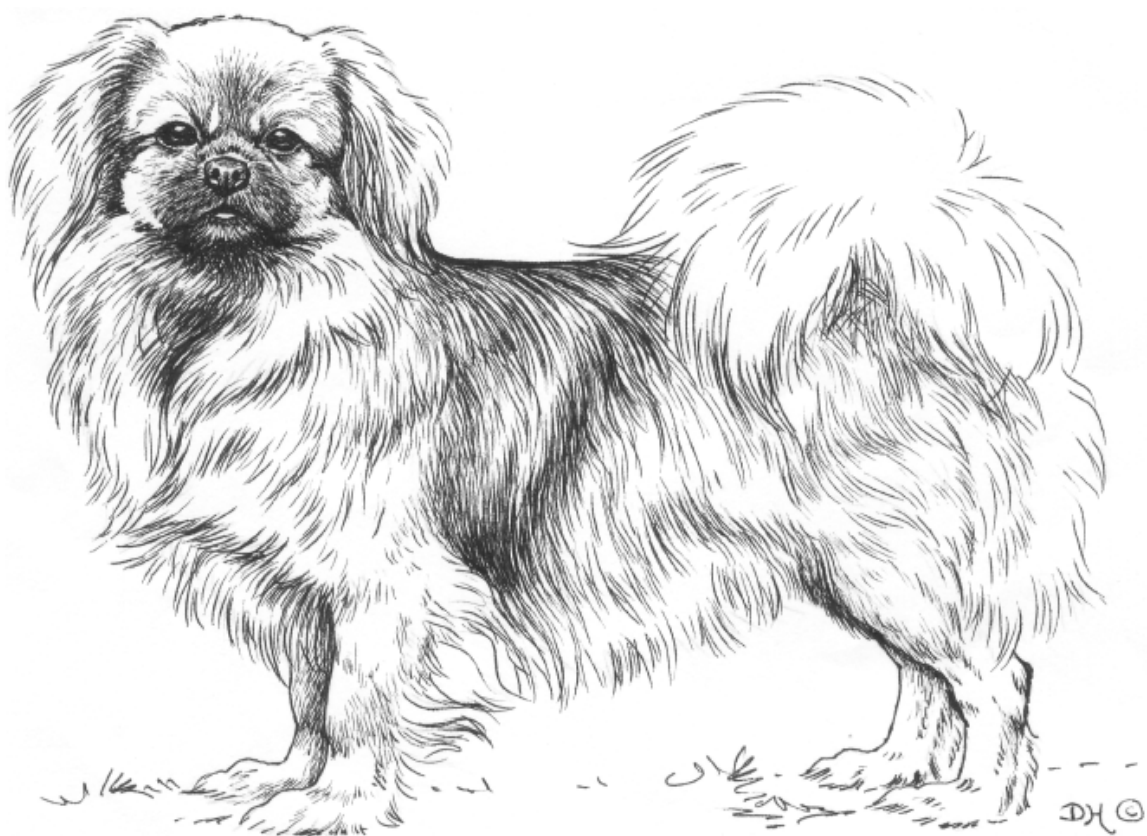


Fig. 5- Good type with correct balance and bone

#### ● HEAD AND SKULL

***Small in proportion to body and proudly carried giving an impression of quality. Masculine in dogs but free from coarseness. Skull slightly domed, moderate width and length. Stop slight but defined. Medium length of muzzle, blunt with cushioning, free from wrinkle. The chin should show some depth and width. Nose: Black preferred.***

The head is one of the most important and distinctive features of the Tibetan Spaniel, especially the correct balance of skull and muzzle and neither one should dominate the other. The ideal proportion should be one-third muzzle to two-thirds skull.

The top of the skull should be neither too domed nor too flat between the ears. The broadest part of the head should be at eye level.

In profile, the muzzle should be blunt, not short and Peke-like with a roll or wrinkle, nor should it be long and narrow. It should be level out to the tip of the nose. From front on, with the head level, the top of the nose leather should be level or fractionally below the line of the lower eye rims.

The muzzle should be strong and have slight cushioning but should not have a square appearance. If you are not sure where this cushioning should be, think of the roots of a cat's whiskers that are embedded in a soft, rounded layer of fat padding.

The chin should be defined, not with the lower lip jutting out spoiling the profile, nor should there be any bottom teeth protruding over the upper lip.

The flews and nose should be black regardless of coat colour, but the nose may fade in winter.



**Fig.6- Lovely example of the head**

Nice balance of skull  
to muzzle.  
Slight stop.  
Blunt muzzle with desired  
depth of chin



**Correctly balanced**



**Too round in skull,  
short muzzle**



**Very short muzzle resulting in wrinkle**



**Too long in muzzle, unbalanced,  
muzzle lacks desired cushioning**

**Fig. 7 - Heads**





Fig.8- Head typical of the breed

- **EYES**

***Dark brown in colour, oval in shape, bright and expressive, of medium size, set fairly well apart but forward looking, giving an ape-like expression. Eye rims black.***

The eyes should be oval-shaped and in no way resembling the full, round eye of the Pekingese. It is also important to remember that the eyes should be set forward-facing. There must not be any white showing around the iris because this gives an incorrect expression. Light eyes are undesirable regardless of the coat colour and the eye rims must be black regardless of the coat colour.

Often the eyes have delicately pencilled lines, frown lines, running from between the eyes and nose and arching like eyebrows over the eyes. A significant characteristic of the breed, it helps to create the typical aloof and quizzical expression by producing a look of faint puzzlement.

There is a tendency for the eyes to be slightly runny, especially in dusty or windy conditions.

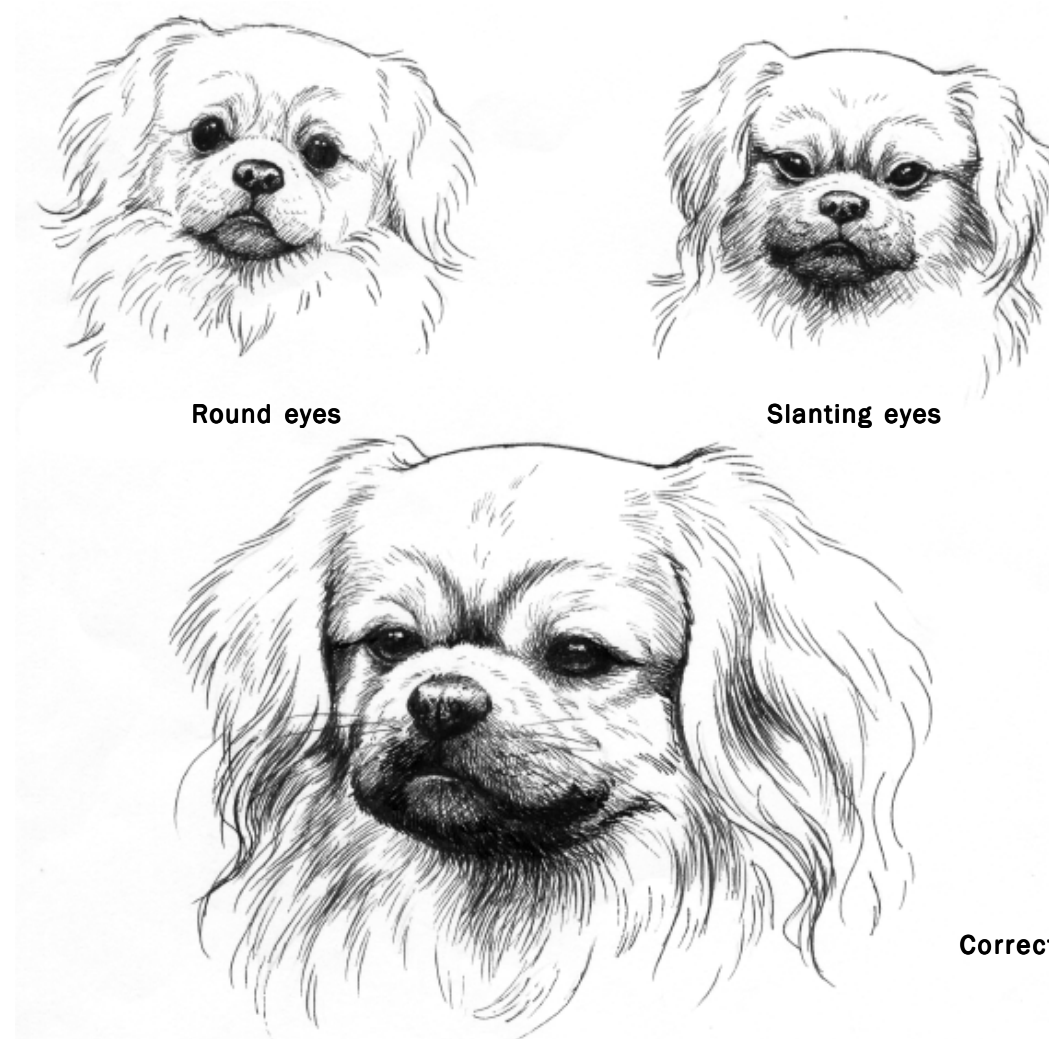


Fig 9. - Eyes

## • EARS

***Medium size, pendant, well feathered in the adult and set fairly high. They may have a slight lift from the skull but should not fly. Large, heavy, low set ears are not typical.***

The ears should not be too heavy or set too low. The ears are set just below the slightly domed head but never so low as to start just below eye level. They should not have a semi erect or erect ear.

The slight lift that is permitted is attractive and does enhance the oriental expression. If the ears have too much lift, this gives them a flyaway look. Large heavy ears are coarse and lack quality.

Ear colour can vary and it is common for dark hair to be interspersed with the normal coat colour. The long hair furnishings on the ears are most desirable and a distinctive feature of the breed. These ear fringes start growing high up behind the ear where it joins the skull and drape down and over the ear leathers. The latter are actually quite small and rose-petal shaped. They only appear larger because of the feathering, which covers them.



Ears too low set



Ears too high set and flying



Correct - Slight lift

Fig. 10- Ears

## • MOUTH

***Ideally slightly undershot, the upper incisors fitting neatly inside and touching the lower incisors. Teeth should be evenly placed and the lower jaw wide between the canine tusks. Full dentition desired. A level mouth is permissible providing there is sufficient width and depth of chin to preserve the blunt appearance of muzzle. Teeth must not show when mouth is closed***

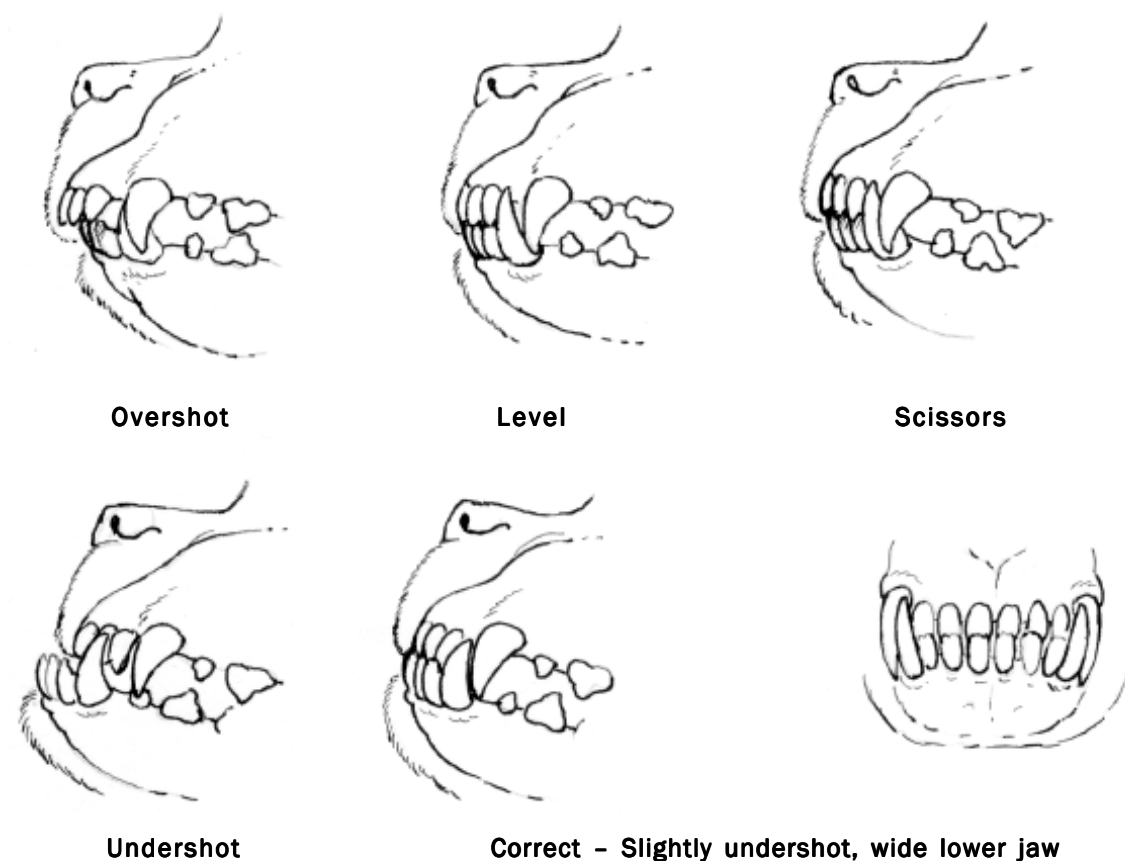
In the early days of the breed a good mouth was an exception, but generally today they are much improved.

One should look for a mouth with sufficient width and depth of chin to allow full dentition. However, it is important to remember that the mouth can be less than perfect and an otherwise excellent exhibit should not be discarded simply because it has a less than perfect mouth. Moreover, a judge should not put up an exhibit with only a good mouth. The rest of the dog's conformation and breed type must be taken into consideration.

An overshot or normal scissor bite is not acceptable because it results in the chin being insufficiently pronounced. The correct amount of chin is important because it contributes significantly to the much-desired oriental expression. A very undershot mouth is unattractive, especially if the tongue or teeth are showing. A level bite is permissible if the dog has sufficient chin to carry it off, and Tibetan Spaniels with this kind of bite are less prone to losing their teeth at an early age. The level bite may, however, result in the chin falling away so that the blunt profile of the muzzle is lost.

A broad bottom jaw does help to prevent the teeth from being uneven and will usually have the desired full dentition with all the bottom teeth in a straight line.

It is unfair to penalise an older dog with missing teeth because Tibetan Spaniels can begin to lose some of the front bottom teeth from around the age of 5 onwards. Above all else, judges of Tibetan Spaniels must put breed type and soundness before dentition.



**Fig. 11- Mouth**

## • **NECK**

***Moderately short, strong and well set on. Covered with a mane or 'shawl' of longer hair that is more pronounced in dogs than bitches.***

The neck should be neither long and swan-like nor short enough to give a stuffy appearance. Rather, it should be graceful and well set on and slope gently where the neck merges with the withers.

Insufficient neck often accompanies incorrect shoulder angulation and detracts from the aristocratic bearing that the breed is supposed to have.

The mane or shawl begins on the neck, lying flat. From there it fans out over the shoulders and halfway down the back. In bitches the shawl is usually only denoted by a change in colouring or fringes. Males, by contrast, develop a mane of hair with long fringes that fall over the shoulders and down the front legs to below the elbows. These fringes are often black-tipped.

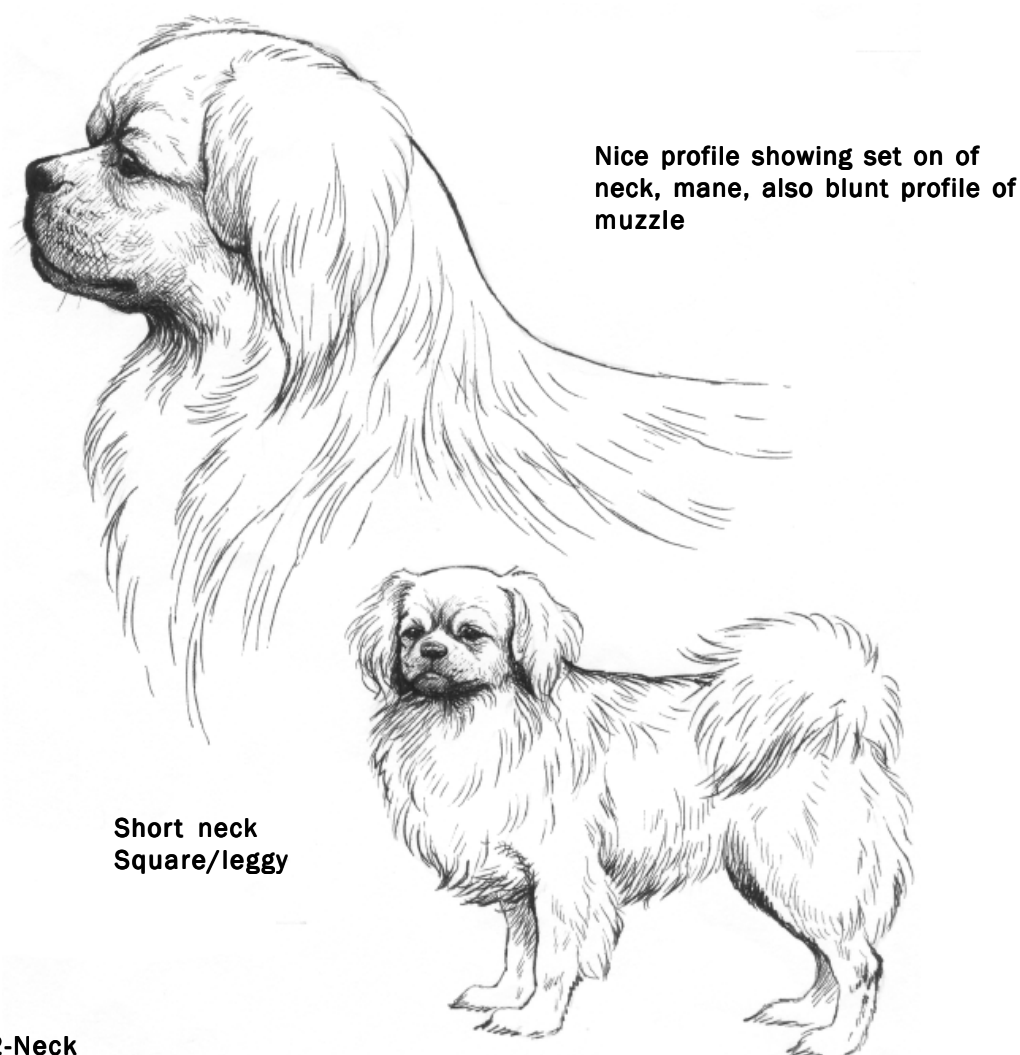


Fig.12-Neck

## • FOREQUARTERS

***The bones of the forelegs slightly bowed but firm at shoulder. Moderate bone. Shoulder well placed.***

The shoulders should be nicely laid back to allow for the brisk action, which is so attractive in the breed. The forequarters of the Tibetan Spaniel are very distinctive because a slight bow of the forelegs is required by the Standard. This is actually a slight outward bow of the radius bone. The leg may appear more bowed than it actually is due to the pad of muscle, often quite well-developed, on the outside of the foreleg between the elbow and pastern.

Under no circumstances should the dog be wide between the front legs, under the chest. The leg feathering also often adds to the illusion that the dog may be over-bowed. The correct amount of bowing may be ascertained by feeling the inside of the leg and radius.

Dogs that are over-bowed cannot possibly move correctly, as they tend to turn their front feet out and often move with a weaving or paddling action. Loose elbows and weak pasterns also tend to produce a floppy, loose action. A too straight front usually results in a 'leggy' appearance and is not characteristic of the breed. Legs must not be achondroplastic (dwarfed) such as those of the Dachshund or Basset Hound.

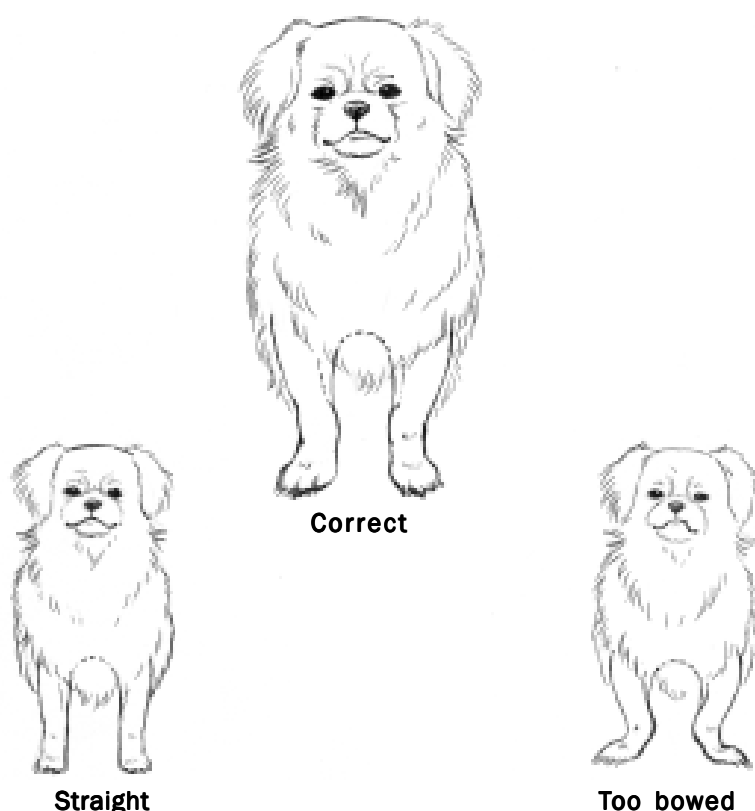


Fig. 13- Fronts

## • BODY

***Slightly longer from withers to root of tail than the height at withers, well ribbed with good depth, level back.***

The Tibetan Spaniel outline should NEVER fit into a square box, yet the dog should still appear balanced without any exaggerations. There should be a definite rectangle of daylight showing underneath the dog when it is standing.

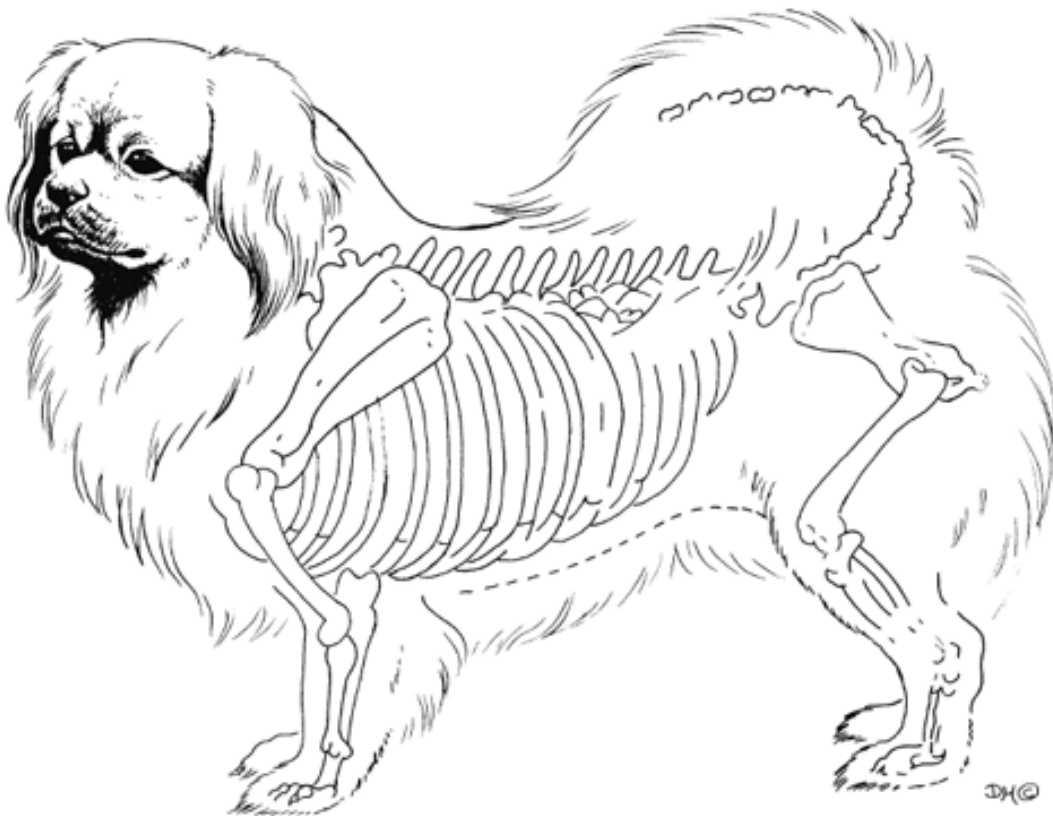
When assessing the body it is important to examine the top line with your hands because a heavy coat can disguise a poor topline.

The rib-cage should be well sprung but not to excess as this would push out the elbows. A flat or slab-sided rib-cage is undesirable because it restricts heart and lung room.

There should be a good depth of body, down to the elbow in a mature adult, but no deeper and the rib cage should be slightly long. They are not deep in sternum and you should not be able to get more than part of your hand between the front legs under the chest. The dog should be short-coupled behind the ribs.

The topline should be level with a strong loin, and the hindquarters should not be higher than the withers.

A hollow or roached back is most undesirable and is usually caused by excessive body length or poor muscle tone and weak loins, or all of these combined.



**Fig.14-Skeleton**



**Fig.15-Correct body proportions**

### ● **HINDQUARTERS**

***Well made and strong, hocks well let down and straight when viewed from behind. Stifle well developed, showing moderate angulation.***

Although a small breed, the Tibetan Spaniel should still be a well-constructed, sound little dog with no sign of weakness in the hindquarters. Poor hind movement, which lacks drive, must always be suspect.

The hindquarters should be well-made with strong hocks that are well let down. Cow hocks can put the stifle ligaments and muscles under strain and this can cause the dog to move too closely behind with no drive and a stilted or shuffling rear movement. Bow hocks cause the dog to toe in and also results in poor movement.

The stifle joint should be well-developed and moderately angulated. Straight stifles prevent the dog moving with the typical Tibetan Spaniel gait (see gait/movement page 18), and can also make them more prone to slipping patellas, but equally, an exaggerated angulation is quite wrong for this breed.

Poor action results from poor construction. A dog with a weak, sloping rump, cow hocks or a low-set tail will not move properly. The dog should have well-developed muscles in the buttocks and upper thighs to facilitate strong, sound movement.

It is important to note that the feathering on the hocks and breeches can sometimes disguise movement.



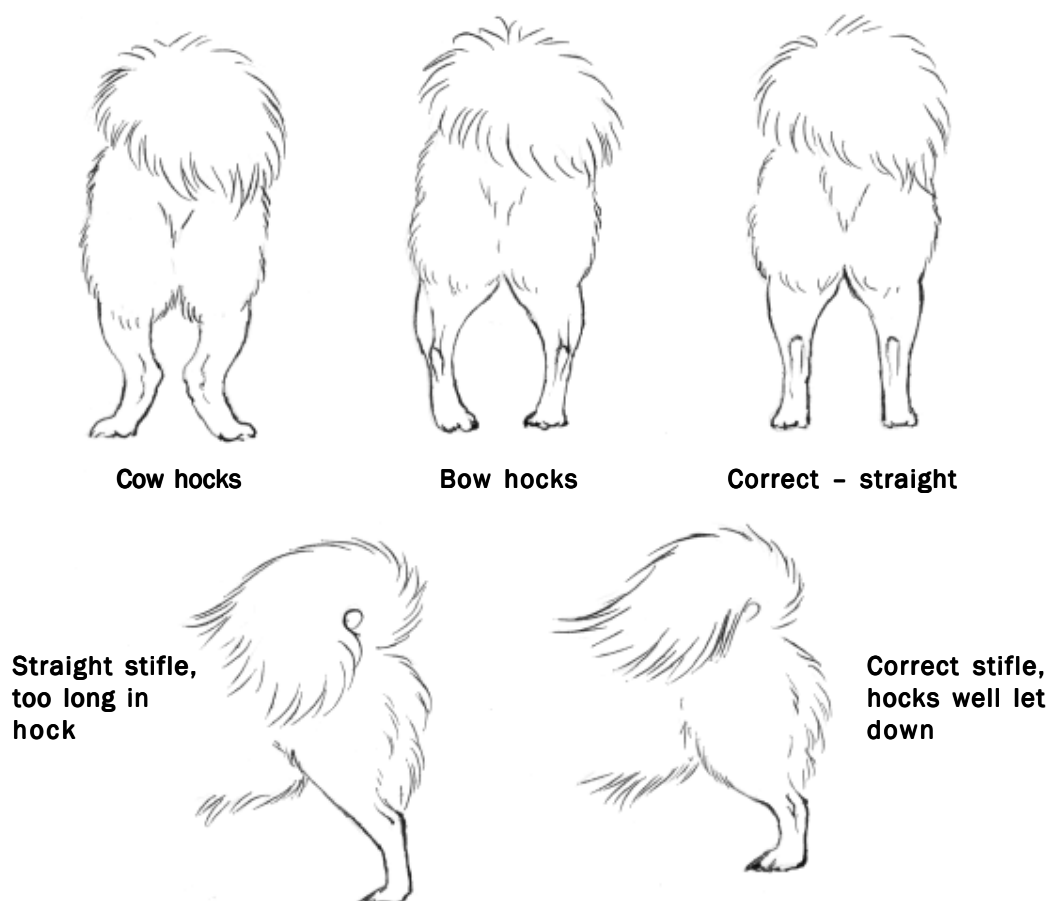


Fig. 16- Hindquarters

## • FEET

***Hare footed, small and neat with feathering between toes often extending beyond the feet. White markings allowed.***

The small, dainty, hare feet (as opposed to cat-like feet) of the Tibetan Spaniel are one of the main characteristics of the breed. There should be feathering on the toes that often extends beyond the feet and must never be cut or trimmed.

The Tibetan Spaniel should have strong pasterns that do not slope excessively. When a dog is 'down on pasterns' its body is not properly balanced and this causes it to move in a way which has been described as 'heavy on the forehand' or 'driving into the ground'. This is a very unattractive movement, which is ungainly and laboured and quite untypical of the breed.



Fig. 17- Feet

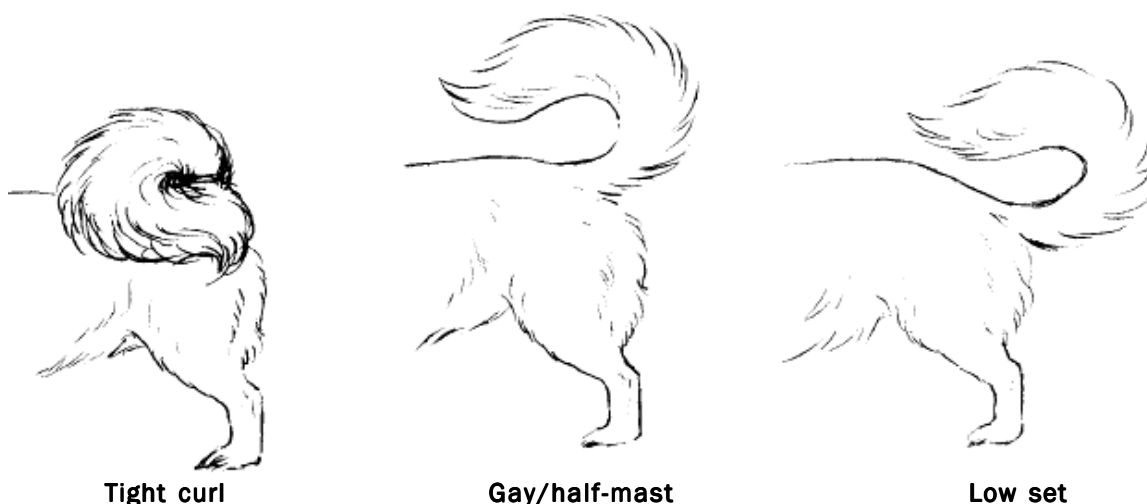
- **TAIL**

***Set high, richly plumed and carried in a gay curl over back when moving. Should not be penalised for dropping tail when standing.***

The tail should carry a lot of pluming and is held along the back, dropping to one side. The root of the tail should be set on high - it should spring from the top of the back rather than starting from a tucked under, behind the rump position. It is often held slightly higher when moving but gay tails or tight curls are not desirable. It is permissible for the tail to droop occasionally when the dog is standing.

A dropped tail does, however, make the Tibetan Spaniel look very long in the back and the overall picture presented in no way compares to a lovely sweeping plume held up and over the hindquarters. The tail should always be carried up when the dog is on the move.

The Tibetan Spaniel should not be penalised for having a kink in the end of its tail.



**Fig. 18- Incorrect tail carriage. For correct carriage see Fig. 2 and 3.**

- **GAIT/MOVEMENT**

***Quick moving, straight, free, positive***

The most essential point here is to look for straight, positive movement with good reach and drive. The typical brisk, 'look-at-me' gait is what is wanted. This, combined with the arrogant lift to the head, gives the breed an aristocratic air, which is most appealing.

The dog should cover the ground easily and lightly with very free action. When moving correctly, the dog should hold its head and tail up quite naturally. The forelegs should be thrown well out in front, i.e., good reach, with no plaiting or weaving. The head and neck should be carried proudly. Further, the dog should not toe in or out or swing the forelegs in a semicircle - a front that is too bowed will produce a rolling Pekingese movement.

The ideal movement is light, almost floating, but quite firm and positive. The hind legs should provide plenty of drive, the hind feet being placed straight under the hocks rather than turning in or out. It is not a high-stepping action but should cover plenty of ground and be perfectly straight and even. They should be moved around the ring at the dog's natural pace.

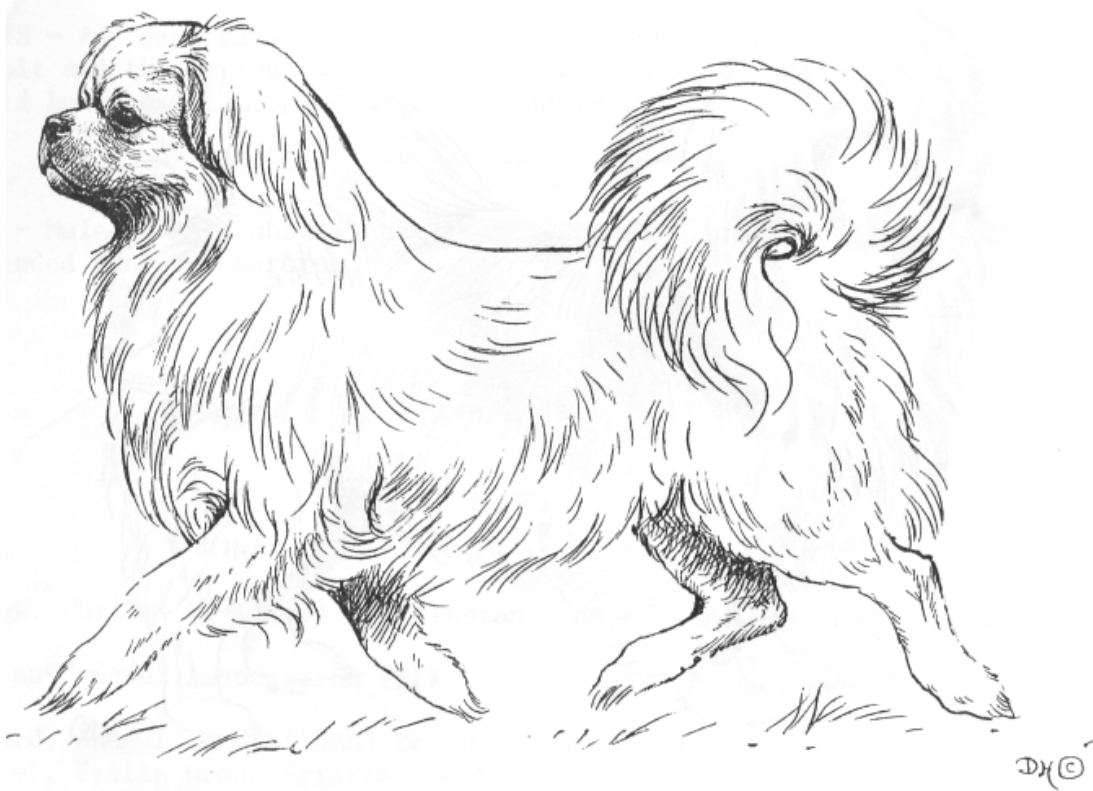


Fig. 19- Correct gait.

## • COAT

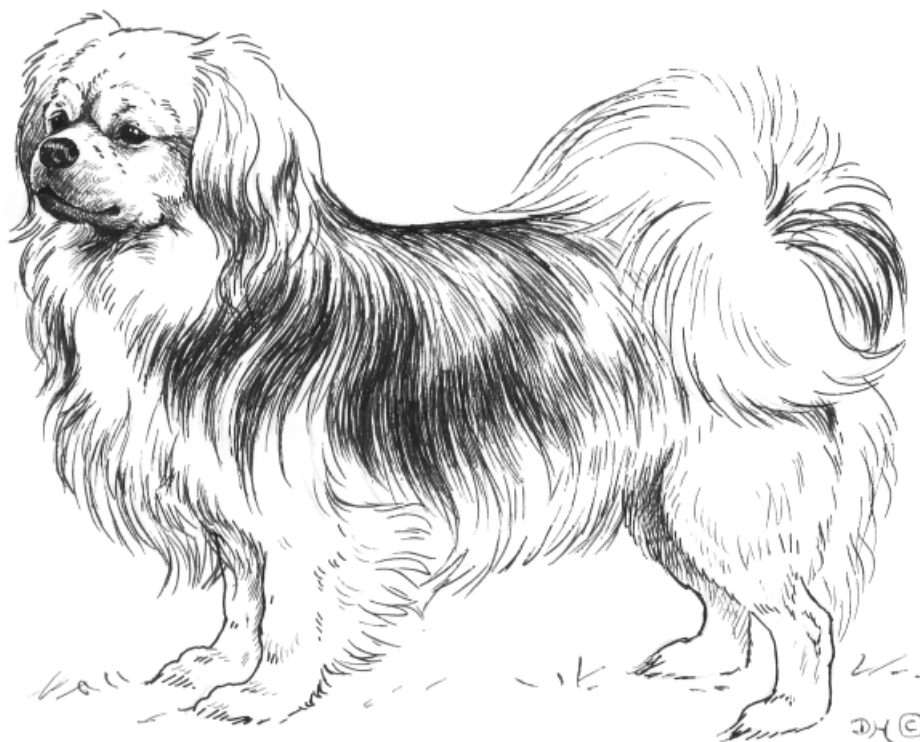
***Double coat, silky in texture, smooth on face and front of legs, of moderate length on body, but lying rather flat. Ears and back of forelegs nicely feathered, tail and buttocks well furnished with longer hair. Should not be over coated and bitches tend to carry less coat and mane than dogs.***

The Tibetan Spaniel is a dog that is not over-coated and should always be shown naturally. The term 'over-coated' does not apply to the mature male's lovely mane and fringes - it applies to general body coat. The coat should not be trimmed, nor should it be 'teased up' like that of the Pekingese. It should be neither a flowing coat nor a harsh 'stand off' coat.

It is important that it should have a silky texture - often showing an attractive burnished metallic sheen and should lie rather flat, even though it is a double coat.

There is a tendency for judges to put up over coated dogs rather than those with a more typical coat texture. There should be a rectangle of daylight showing beneath the dog in full coat and the coat should not be so profuse that it obstructs the dog's natural outline.

The furnishings are important on the hocks, forelegs, buttocks, ears and tail. It is quite permissible for self-colours to have darker or lighter hairs on the face, shawl and furnishings.



**Fig. 20- Ideal coat fringing and furnishings (male). Rectangle of daylight showing underneath.**

## ● COLOUR

### ***All colours and mixture of colours allowed.***

Colours are many and varied and some of them are very beautiful. The colours range from white to black, taking in all the creams, fawns, golds and sables, silver sable, parti-colours, tri-colours and black and tans, which can be black with tan, fawn, silver or white markings. The black and tan head is very difficult to judge because the black is so dense. Sometimes there is a black mask or muzzle, and this can be very attractive on the lighter colours. Often there are white markings on whole colours such as a blaze, collar or feet or leg markings. These white markings are not faults. The parti-colour should, however, preferably have even head markings - uneven markings can produce a clown-like appearance.

While all colours are permissible. It should be noted that liver or chocolate tend to have light eyes and liver or putty coloured pigmentation that, are listed under faults in the Standard. The mere fact that the dog is liver or chocolate does not discount faults in eye colour or pigmentation.

Judges may have preferences but it is important that all colours should have an equal chance and mixtures of colours are acceptable.

- **SIZE**

*Ideal weight: 4.1 - 6.8 kgs (9-15 lbs)*

*Height: About 25.4 cms (10 ins)*

**FAULTS**

*Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.*

*Coarseness of type, mean expression. Nervousness. Very domed or flat, wide skull. Accentuated stop. Long, plain down face without stop. Broad, flat muzzle, pointed, weak or wrinkled muzzle. Large, full eyes. Light eyes. Overshot mouth. Protruding tongue. Very bowed or loose front. Straight stifle, cow hocks. Cat feet. Liver or putty coloured pigmentation.*

It should be noted the Standard particularly refers to the fact : “Teeth must not show when mouth is closed”.

- **NOTE - Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.**

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