

THE



COCKER SPANIEL

Presented by



A STUDY OF THE COCKER SPANIEL

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PREFACE

This publication was prepared by the Standard Committee of the American Spaniel Club, Inc. and approved by the Officers and Board of Directors.

It is intended as an aid for breeders, exhibitors, owners, and fanciers of the Cocker Spaniel, but mainly as a guide for judging the breed.

In order to accomplish the above objectives we have included appropriate illustrations and discussion of the official standard covering both the virtues and faults of the breed.

This publication includes the latest change to the standard voted on by the membership, fall 2017. The official standard for the Cocker Spaniel, approved January 9, 2018, effective March 1, 2018, is in RED ink, annotated in BLACK ink.

We hope you find this “Study of the Cocker Spaniel” helpful.

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DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to the American Spaniel Club Education Committee of 1987. Their publication was the 1988 Dog Writers Association of America writing competition winner.

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COCKER SPANIEL

*The Spaniel family is a large one, of considerable antiquity. As far back as 1368 we find mention of the **Spanyell** which came to be divided into two groups, the land spaniel and the water spaniel. A further division separated the land spaniels on a basis of size when the "cockers" and the toys were separated from spaniels of larger dimensions. Then as the cockers and the toys were used for markedly different purposes, these two were once more divided. The toys eventually became the English Toy Spaniels which were maintained principally as pets or comforters while the Cockers retained their early classification as sporting dogs. That is why the Cocker is called the smallest member of the sporting dog family.*

As a valued helpmate to the huntsman, this dog was known in his early days by various names, among them "cocker," "cocking spaniel," and finally Cocker Spaniel, the name derived, according to some authorities, from especial proficiency on woodcock. Not until 1883 were classes provided for him at English bench shows; and not until 1892 was he given breed status in England's Kennel Club stud book. In this country, the Cocker has been exhibited since the early 1880s. Field trials for the breed

were started in the United States by the Cocker Spaniel Field Trial Club in 1924. As developed here, the Cocker has evolved somewhat different in type, size, and coloring from the breed now recognized as the English Cocker Spaniel.*

The American Spaniel Club is the parent club of the Cocker Spaniel and was established in 1881. The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America was formed in 1935. The two cocker spaniels were shown together as different varieties at this time. Mrs. Geraldine R. Dodge, president of the English Cocker Spaniel Club, made an extensive search of pedigrees of the cockers in England, Canada and the United States. In order to separate the pure English lines of descent entirely from the Cocker admixture of the United States, her research went back to the official cocker history abroad in 1892. This separation was finally accomplished in 1941. At this time the English Cocker fanciers were able to advise with authority on selection and breeding. The American Kennel Club recognized the separation of the breed in September 1946 but it was not until January 1947 that English Cocker Spaniel breed registrations appeared in the stud book under their own heading.

The Cocker Spaniel's inherent desire to hunt renders him a capable gun dog when judiciously trained. The usual method of hunting is to let him quarter the ground ahead of the gun, covering all territory within gun range. This he should do at a fast, snappy pace. Upon flushing the game he should stop or preferentially drop to a sitting position so as not to interfere with the shot, after which he should retrieve on command only. He should, of course, be so trained that he will be under control at all times. He is likewise valuable for occasional water retrieving and as a rule takes to water readily.*

While the Cocker Spaniel does have a more profuse coat than the English Cocker, the breed does very well in the field, and with proper coat texture (not wooly or cottony) the coat does not cause a problem. The breed is excellent in conformation, obedience and field work, with many having dual and triple titles. As a pet and companion his popularity has been exceptional; he is a great lover of home and family, trustworthy and adaptable.

*American Kennel Club, The Complete Dog Book

PURPOSE

The popularity of the Sporting Spaniel is established for all time. As the smallest Spaniel, the Cocker Spaniel's inherent desire to hunt renders him a capable gun dog when judiciously trained.

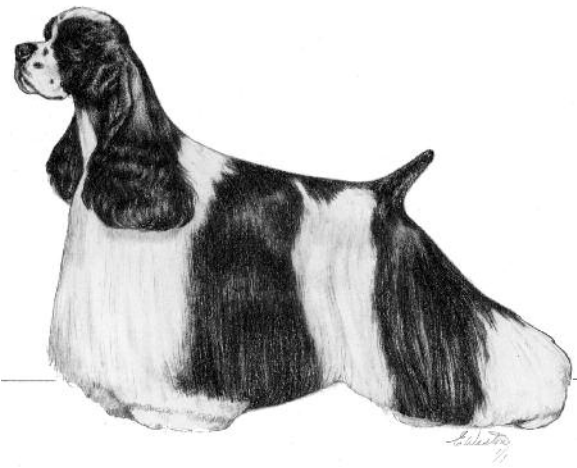
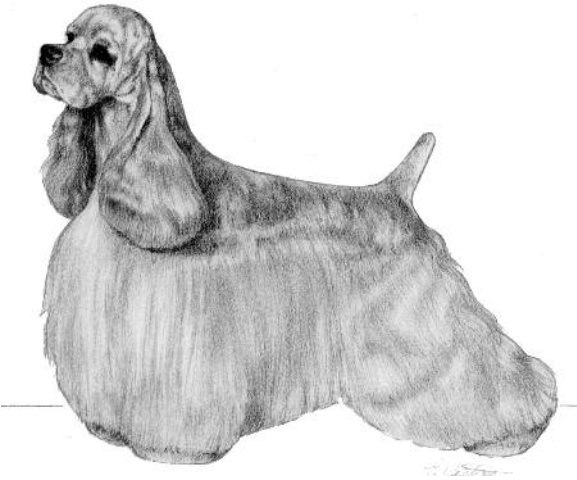
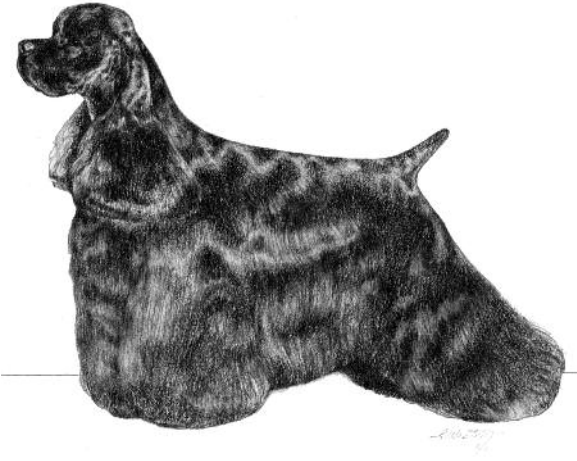
The usual method of hunting is to let him quarter the ground ahead of the gun, covering all territory within gun range. He should hunt game methodically and at a moderate pace. He will clearly indicate game by animated body movements and vigorous tail wagging. A bold flush will follow. Upon flushing the game, he should stop or preferably drop to a sitting position so as not to interfere with the shot. He should then retrieve the game on command only. He should be trained so that he will be under control at all times. He is likewise valuable for occasional water retrieving and readily takes to water.

The breed is excellent in Breed, Performance, Therapy, and Field work, with many having titles in multiple AKC venues.

As a pet and companion, the Cocker Spaniel's popularity has been exceptional. He has ardent love of family and home.

Subject matter is identified as follows:

1. *Sections of the Official Standard in Red Italics*
2. **Additional notes and explanations which will help you better understand the Official Standard in Bold.**



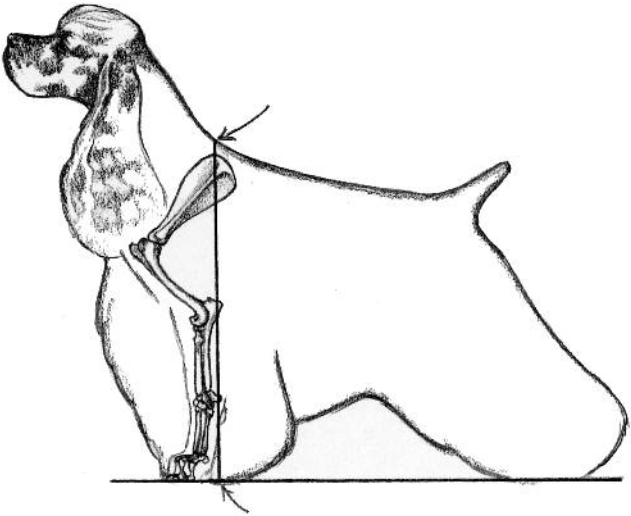
General Appearance

The Cocker Spaniel is the smallest member of the Sporting Group. He has a sturdy, compact body and a cleanly chiseled and refined head, with the overall dog in complete balance and of ideal size. He stands well up at the shoulder on straight forelegs with a topline sloping slightly toward strong, moderately bent, and muscular quarters. He is a dog capable of considerable speed, combined with great endurance. Above all, he must be free and merry, sound, well balanced throughout and in action show a keen inclination to work. A dog well balanced in all parts is more desirable than a dog with strongly contrasting good points and faults.

Size, Proportion Substance

Size

The ideal height at the withers for an adult dog is 15 inches and for an adult bitch, 14 inches. Height may vary one-half inch above or below this ideal. A dog whose height exceeds 15½ inches or a bitch whose height exceeds 14½ inches shall be disqualified. An adult dog whose height is less than 14½ inches and an adult bitch whose height is less than 13½ inches shall be penalized. Height is determined by a line perpendicular to the ground from the top of the shoulder blades, the dog standing naturally with the forelegs and lower hind legs parallel to the line of measurement.



Correct Place to Measure Height

Leeway of one-half inch above and one-half inch below the ideal is allowed, a difference hardly apparent to the eye. As a judge, if you have any suspicion whatsoever that a Cocker might be too tall you must measure this exhibit (call for the wicket.)

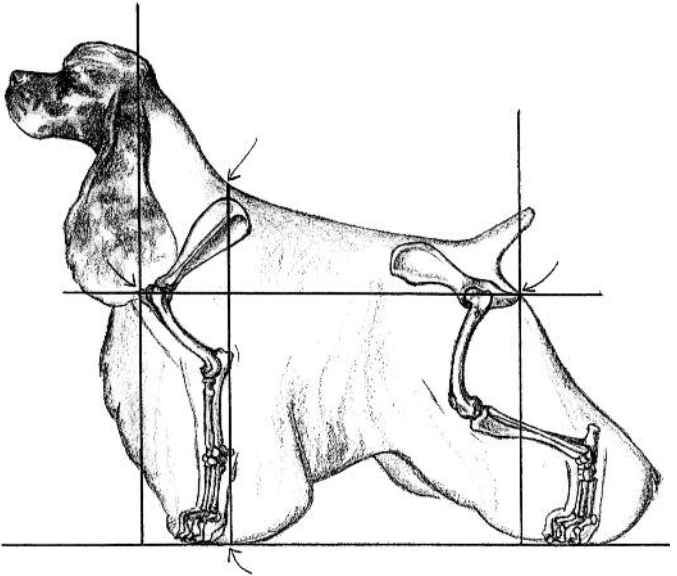


Wicket Measurement

Proportion

The measurement from the breastbone to the back of thigh is slightly longer than the measurement from the highest point of the withers to the ground. The body must be of sufficient length to permit a straight and free stride; the dog never appears long and low.

The relative height to length ratio should be the same when the dog is in motion as well as when stacked. Cockers should appear well up on leg. Excessive furnishings on a correctly proportioned dog may make it appear to be low on leg.



Substance

The Cocker is a medium boned flushing spaniel neither slightly built nor cloddy in substance.

Head

To attain a well proportioned head, which must be in balance with the rest of the dog, it embodies the following:

The head of the Cocker Spaniel is a thing of beauty and a trademark of the breed. Its beautiful dark and expressive eyes are enhanced by a deep square muzzle, which is framed by long, low set and silky ears.



The female's head is more feminine and smaller than the male's head, but each should be in balance with the body upon which it is set.



The male's head should be stronger in appearance than the female's but both have the typical soft expression. A well-chiseled head is an important element of Cocker type.



Expression

The expression is intelligent, alert, soft and appealing.



Eyes

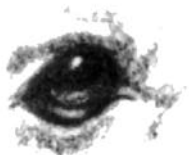
Eyeballs are round and full and look directly forward. The shape of the eye rims gives a slightly almond shaped appearance; the eye is not weak or goggled. The color of the iris is dark brown and in general the darker the better. Disqualifications - Eye(s) blue, blue marbled, blue flecked.



The standard's description of the eye and expression is very explicit. Eyes may appear larger than desired, partly because of loose fitting rims and/or because the rim is round rather than almond shaped. The lack of pigment in eye rims makes the eyes appear larger than they are.



Correct



Loose



Round

Light eyes can create a harsh expression. Disqualifications - Blue eye(s), blue marbled, blue flecked. Small eyes are not soft and appealing. If the eyes are not deep set they have a peculiar stony look and lose their soft, soulful, intelligent expression. The eye rims should be dark or black and the eyelids should fit tightly around the eyes for protection when working in the field. Droopy eye rims, which reveal the haw, are not desirable.

The beautiful Cocker expression is one of the best-known characteristics of the breed. While the eyes depend on harmony, balance and the correctness of other parts, they are the most important feature in attaining the correct expression.



Ears

Lobular, long, of fine leather, well feathered, and placed no higher than a line to the lower part of the eye.



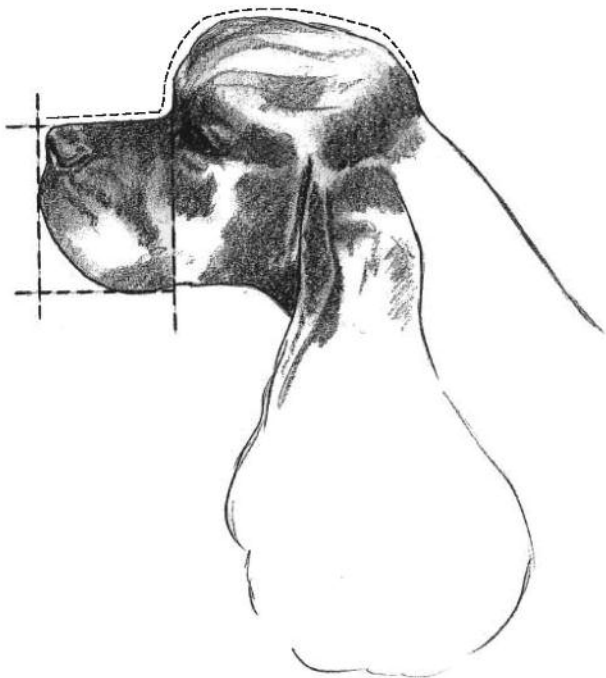
More importance should be given to ear placement than ear length. The ear leather should reach at least to the end of the nose when brought forward, and be fine, not thick and/or heavy.

When the highest point of the ear is at or below eye level or set on with a downward angle toward the back of the skull, the ears will look long and low set. The ears should fold forward to frame the face. The hair ends should be evened off to complete the soft look.

In the field, this correct placement allows the ears to direct the scent of the bird more readily to the dog's large nose.

Skull

Rounded but not exaggerated with no tendency toward flatness; the eyebrows are clearly defined with a pronounced stop. The bony structure beneath the eyes is well chiseled with no prominence in the cheeks. The muzzle is broad and deep, with square even jaws. To be in correct balance, the distance from the stop to the tip of the nose is one half the distance from the stop up over the crown to the base of the skull.



Although it is not specified in the standard, it is widely accepted that, in order to be in balance, the width of the lower portion of the muzzle should be approximately the same width as the widest part of the skull. The distance from the stop to the tip of the nose should be one-half the distance from the stop up over the crown to the base of the skull.

Muzzle

The muzzle should always have sufficient depth with no tendency toward snippiness. The width of the muzzle should approximate the width of the crown (back skull)

The muzzle should have a clean appearance with no folds or excess skin. It should appear square and full with sufficient lip to cover the lower jaw. The Cocker is a sporting dog; he should have a muzzle which is long enough to be able to pick up and carry a bird and roomy enough to accommodate a scissors bite.

The muzzle must be in balance with the head. A muzzle too short or too long is not correct. The muzzle should not drop off at the end creating a "Roman nose" nor should it have a scooped out appearance with the nose appearing high (dish faced).



Nose

Of sufficient size to balance the muzzle and foreface, with well developed nostrils typical of a sporting dog. It is black in color in the blacks, black and tans, and black and whites; in other colors it may be brown, liver or black, the darker the better. The color of nose harmonizes with the color of the eye rim.

As a bird dog the Cocker must have sufficient nasal capacity to find game. Thus large, open nostrils are very important. The nose may be black, brown or liver but the darker the nose the better. Nose color should harmonize with the eye rim color. A pink or spotted nose is faulty. A large dark nose is also a very important factor in giving the Cocker head its beautiful, soft, appealing look.



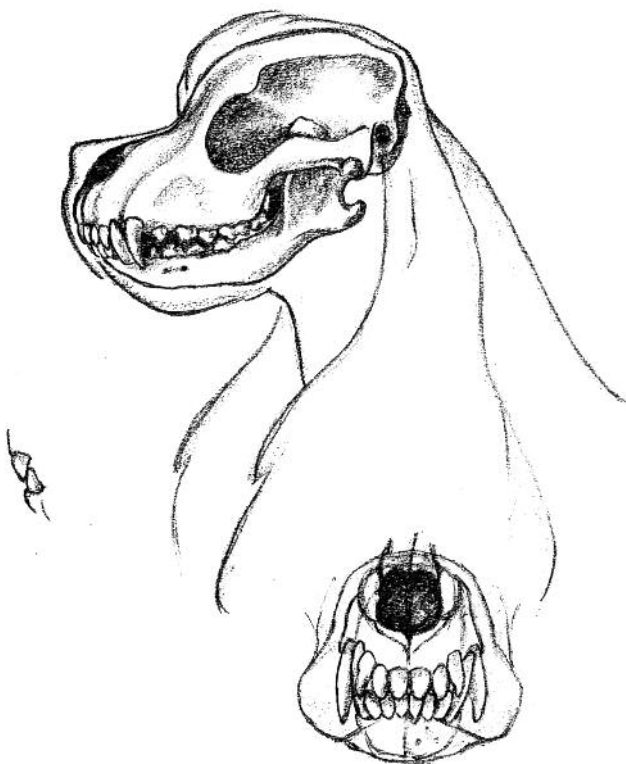
Lips

The upper lip is full and of sufficient depth to cover the lower jaw.



Teeth

Teeth strong and sound, not too small and meet in a scissors bite.



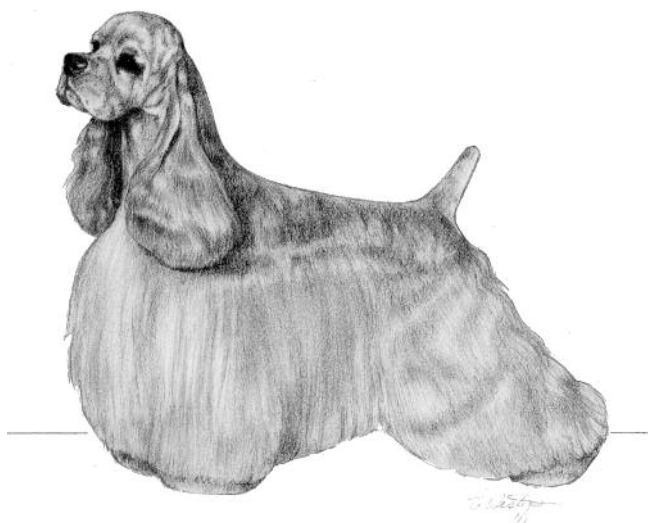
The mouth must be large with good sized and well-formed teeth, which will enable the Cocker to carry a game bird. Tiny, toy-like teeth should be penalized, but not over larger, misplaced or misaligned teeth.

A slightly “off” mouth (bite) in a quality animal can be tolerated but is not preferred.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck

The neck is sufficiently long to allow the nose to reach the ground easily, muscular and free from pendulous "throatiness." It rises strongly from the shoulders and arches slightly as it tapers to join the head.



A good neck, fitting into well knit, sloping shoulders, enables the Cocker to cover ground efficiently. A Cocker with a short neck and straight front assembly is unable to reach full extension and the gait will be restricted. This is very faulty in a Cocker.

Any tendency toward pendulous throatiness should not be condoned.

Topline

Sloping slightly toward muscular quarters.

The relative height to length ratio should be the same when the dog is in motion as well as when stacked .

The standard calls for a slightly sloping topline.

A level topline is acceptable but not preferred. A reverse topline or an exaggerated slope, which is increasingly seen in the ring today, is incorrect.

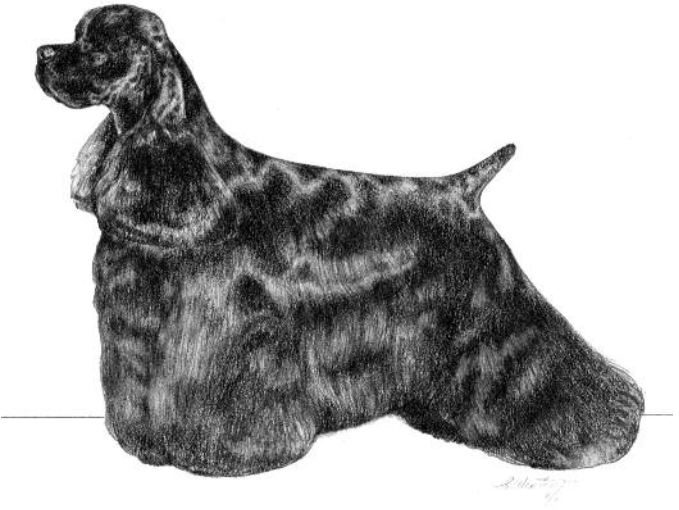


Picture of Cocker in motion

This dog has a correct topline, tail set and carriage while in motion. The back standing or in motion should be strong and hard with no tendency to drop off behind the shoulders and with no tendency toward rumpiness. Hipbones should never be readily apparent and there should be a good cushion of muscles over them.

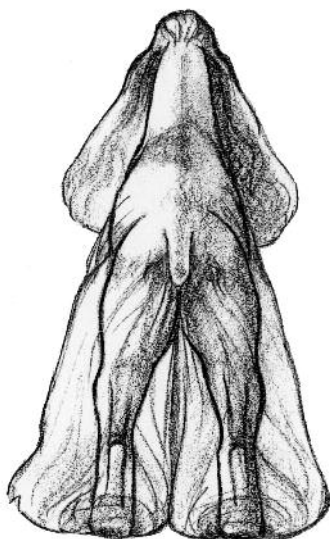
Body

The chest is deep, its lowest point no higher than the elbows, its front sufficiently wide for adequate heart and lung space, yet not so wide as to interfere with the straightforward movement of the forelegs. Ribs are deep and well sprung. Back is strong and sloping evenly and slightly downward from the shoulders to the set-on of the docked tail.



Judging the Body

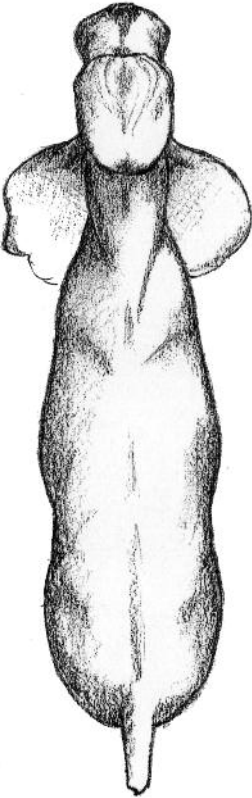
To judge the body you must see the dog from the side, the front, the rear and above. From the side you check the topline, underline and the forechest. From the front you check the width and fullness of the chest. From the rear and above you check the width at shoulders, spring of rib, length of loin and hips.



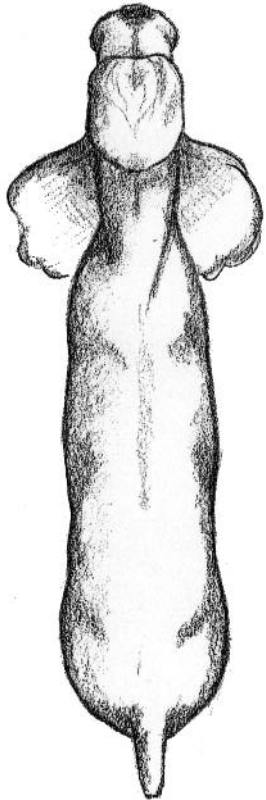
Rib Spring

The ribs must be wide, well sprung and deep. This does not mean so wide as to force the elbows out. The Cocker is never barrel-chested, but the rib cage should have sufficient width and depth to provide ample room for heart and lungs.

When one looks down on the dog, the ribs and muscles of the hips should be about the same width. The loin comes in slightly from the width of the ribs and flows back to the full width again over the hindquarters.



Good Rib Spring



Slab-Sided

Forequarters

The shoulders are well laid back forming an angle with the upper arm of approximately 90 degrees which permits the dog to move his forelegs in an easy manner with forward reach. Shoulders are clean-cut and sloping without protrusion and so set that the upper points of the withers are at an angle which permits a wide spring of rib. When viewed from the side with the forelegs vertical, the elbow is directly below the highest point of the shoulder blade. Forelegs are parallel, straight, strongly boned and muscular and set close to the body well under the scapulae. The pasterns are short and strong. Dewclaws on forelegs may be removed.

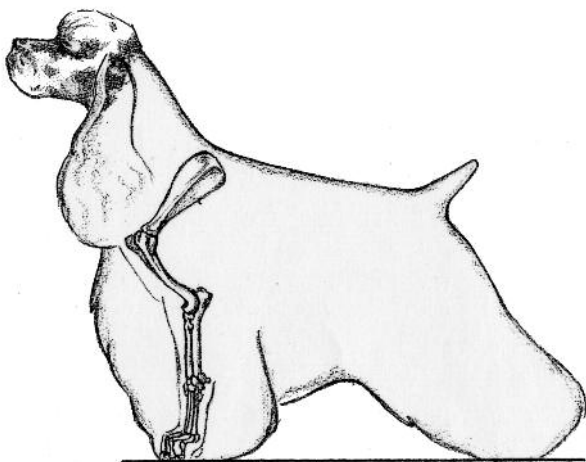


Shoulders

Since sporting spaniels must move efficiently all day, proper and balanced front and rear angulation is an absolute must.

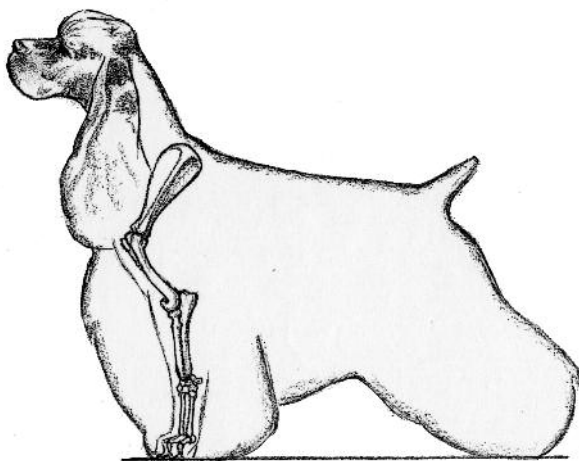
The ideal shoulder blade and upper arm are both angled at approximately 45 degrees to a horizontal line parallel to the floor. They meet at the point of the shoulder to form an approximate 90 degree angle.

Proper shoulder layback is difficult to envision. However, the accompanying illustrations should be helpful. Shoulders should be formed to allow perfect freedom of action to the forelegs. Ideal angles, measured to the degree, are approximate, but a 45 degree layback is generally acknowledged to be the ideal, forming a near right angle with the upper arm at the point of the shoulder. A dog having such an assembly should have good reach and excellent shock absorbency. With the point of support (feet) directly beneath the shoulder blades, the front is well balanced, ready for action.



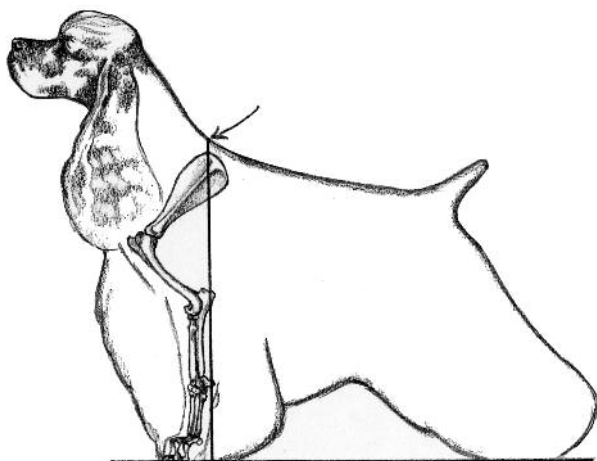
Correct Angulation

Lack of angulation will tend to limit the dog in forward reach. Also objectionable is a shoulder blade and upper arm of unequal length, rough shoulders, excessive width between the shoulder blades and/or anything that prohibits a long reaching stride. The space between the tips of the shoulder blades should be minimal; about a man's thumb width is most desirable.



Straight Shoulder

Proper front angulation can be visualized by drawing a straight line from the top of the shoulder blade downward, touching the back of the elbow as it falls to the ground. The upper arm appears nearly equal in length to the shoulder blade. The elbows fit tightly to the body, are not prominent, and are set well under the dog.



Laid Back Shoulder

Forechest

The angles addressed in the standard should give the dog forechest. The forechest should consist of a prosternum with fill on the sides and with fill covering the prosternum. This results in a rounded chest. The prosternum should not be protruding. This will provide a rounded chest which gives protection to avoid injury as this small hunting dog goes through the thicket to perform the quest for which it was bred.

Suggested Examination Instructions: The forechest should be evaluated by running your hand down the front to determine depth and from the side to evaluate the correctness of the layback of shoulders, width between blades, the fill and smooth cushioning along with positioning of withers/shoulder blade to the foreleg. There should be no prominent protrusion of the point of prosternum, nor should the chest be too wide to prevent correct forward movement.

Hindquarters

Hips are wide and quarters well rounded and muscular. When viewed from behind, the hind legs are parallel when in motion and at rest. The hind legs are strongly boned, and muscled with moderate angulation at the stifle and powerful, clearly defined thighs. The stifle is strong and there is no slippage of it in motion or when standing. The hocks are strong and well let down. Dewclaws on hind legs may be removed.

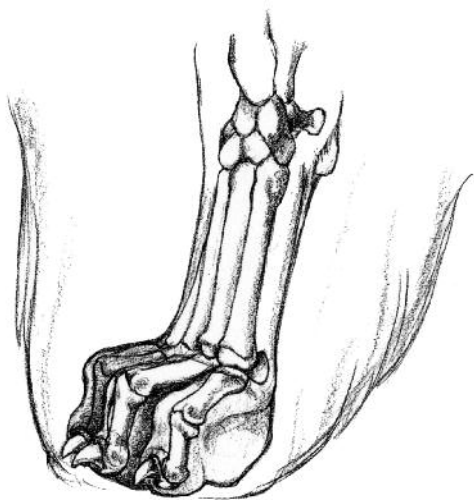


To balance the front assembly, the hind legs should have sufficient angulation with strong stifle joints, powerful upper and lower muscled thighs and well let-down hocks.

Feet

Feet compact, large, round and firm with horny pads; they turn neither in nor out.

Feet should be closely set and strong, pads well developed and tough, toes well arched and protected with short thick hair trimmed flush with the pads. [Note: short hair, thick pads and tight feet protect the dog from ice, pebbles, thorns, etc. in the field.] The dog whose toes are not arched, with splayed feet or tender pads is constantly aggravated and has lost the foot's ability to absorb shock.



Remember that the Cocker Spaniel is a sporting dog and should be viewed for endurance in the field for long periods of time. Over-angulation of the back legs contributes to an exaggerated topline which is not desirable. The stifle should be strong but examination should not include cranking the rear legs which is detrimental to the dog. Cow hocking, which of course is a fault, may be the result of weak stifles.

Proper construction of legs and feet is crucial for a sporting dog. The dog must be balanced fore and aft with corresponding front and rear angles and sufficient bone for strength and endurance.

Tail

The docked tail is set on and carried on a line with the topline of the back, or slightly higher; never straight up like a terrier and never so low as to indicate timidity. When the dog is in motion the tail action is merry.

The tail is the barometer of temperament. The merry Cocker should hold its tail confidently. The length of the docked tail should be in balance with the size of the dog, not short and stubby, nor excessively long. As this is a man-made error, the penalty should be slight.

When the dog is stacked, the tail should never be spiked (pushed unnaturally out of position.).

The set of the tail will determine the tail carriage. A steep croup will cause a low tail set and a flat croup will frequently cause a high tail set. A slightly higher tail carriage is preferable to a lower one.

An incorrect tail set (high or low) implies improper construction in the croup area and is caused by other structural faults. Therefore, judges should pay particular attention to the rest of the hindquarter construction.

“The tail must above all be merry.”



Judging the Cocker Spaniel With A Natural Tail

(Revised by the Board of Directors on February 28, 2018.)

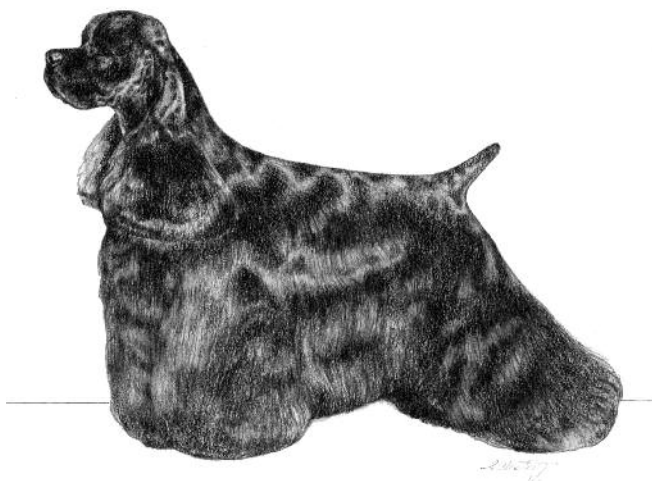
The Cocker Spaniel is a docked, hunting breed. The characteristic incessant, merry action of the tail while working in thick, dense cover that is sometimes deeper than the dog is tall, necessitates docking to prevent injury.

The ASC membership voted in 2017 not to change the breed standard as regards docked tails. Thus, the ASC continues to support docked tails as an important characteristic required by the breed's function as a hunting dog. But, in accordance with A.K.C. rules (Chapter 7, Section 15), a judge may either choose to judge a Cocker Spaniel with an undocked tail, considering the tail to be a fault, or excuse the dog after examination. The ASC will support your decision to judge or excuse an undocked dog.

In judging a Cocker Spaniel with an undocked tail, it is expected that you would prioritize your judging by virtues and factor in faults lastly. The natural tail is thick at the root (consistent with the required generous amount of bone), tapering to the end, and ideally not reaching below the hock joint. As the Cocker Spaniel has always been and should continue to be a docked breed, determine the tail carriage of an undocked tail by observing the first quarter to third of the tail as the dog is being moved.

Coat

On the head, short and fine; on the body, medium length, with enough undercoating to give protection. The ears, chest, abdomen and legs are well feathered, but not so excessively as to hide the Cocker Spaniel's true lines and movement or affect his appearance and function as a moderately coated sporting dog. The texture is most important. The coat is silky, flat or slightly wavy and of a texture which permits easy care. Excessive coat or curly or cottony textured coat shall be severely penalized. Use of electric clippers on the back coat is not desirable. Trimming to enhance the dog's true lines should be done to appear as natural as possible.



Coat Volume

The standard stresses the importance of sufficient but not excessive coat. Proper trimming will help satisfy this requirement by removing enough hair so that the outline can be seen.

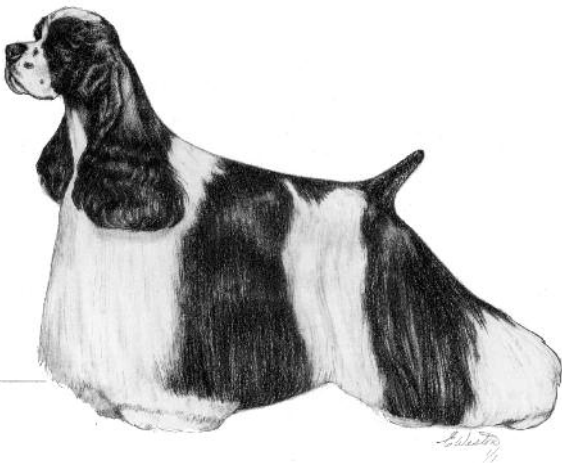
Coat Texture

The texture of the Cocker coat is the most important coat issue. Improper texture, more than the amount of coat, causes problems. A coat with good texture is relatively carefree. Excessive and/or poor texture coat is a grave problem in the breed.

Our standard describes one dog that can function in the field and in the show ring. In spite of that, the Cocker has become increasingly heavy coated. Therefore, the texture and proper length of the coat is exceedingly important to his dual role. Excessive and/or cottony coat must be discouraged. A coat that quickly knots or that nearly drags the ground makes the dog very undesirable for fieldwork. The underlying message in the standard is that form follows function; this indicates a dog with the stamina to hunt all day long in modest cover and come back the next day for more.

Weighing The Coat Factor

Improper coat volume and texture are two of the faults that can keep a Cocker from properly performing his function. These problems must be weighed along with the other characteristics that can affect this ability when selecting a specimen closest to the ideal.



Grooming

Although it is not discussed in the standard, grooming is an important element in presenting the Cocker Spaniel. Proper grooming not only enhances the dog's true line and elegance but is necessary for good hygiene. A properly groomed Cocker will have a totally natural appearance, giving the impression that the dog has not been groomed at all.

The head is closely trimmed to keep the appearance clean and protect the eyes and ears from infection. The trimmed areas should be blended neatly with the untrimmed areas for clean lines.

The correct amount of guard hair and topcoat on the back are necessary for the protection of the sporting dog in the field. It is important that not all of the guard hair and topcoat be removed. As stated in the standard, clippers should never be used to trim the back coat.



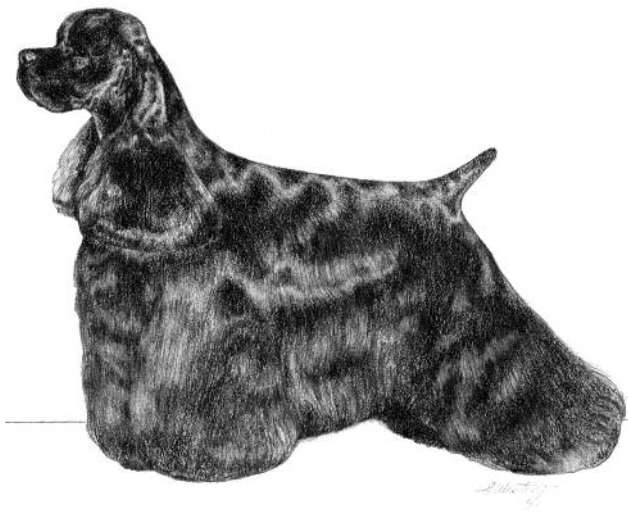
COLOR AND MARKINGS

Black Variety

Solid color black to include black with tan points. The black should be jet; shadings of brown or liver in the coat are not desirable. A small amount of white on the chest and/or throat is allowed; white in any other location shall disqualify.

While the tan shades can vary, the standard is clear that the black must be solid and shiny. A white spot larger than the area equivalent to a half-dollar or wider than a pencil-thin strip should be penalized, but not disqualified.

The coat should have a healthy gloss to indicate condition. The rust coloring which appears in some coats is to be regarded unfavorably. The B/T shown in this Variety should have the same quality and the tan markings may range from the lightest cream to the darkest red.

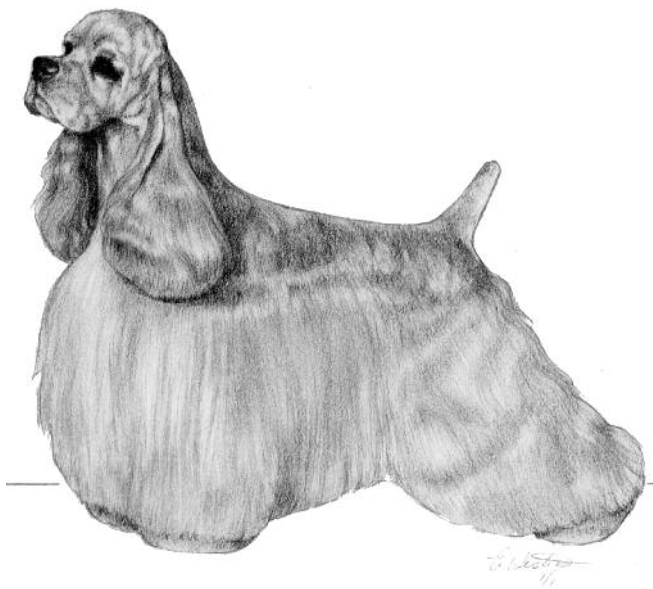


Any Solid Color Other than Black (ASCOB) Variety

Any solid color other than black, ranging from lightest cream to darkest red, including brown and brown with tan points. The color shall be of a uniform shade, but lighter color of the feathering is permissible. A small amount of white on the chest and/or throat is allowed; white in any other location shall disqualify.

Color of the furnishings can vary widely from the body shade. Uniform color is preferred but texture of coat is more important. A white spot larger than the area equivalent to a half-dollar or wider than a pencil-thin strip should be penalized, but not disqualified.

The ASCOB Variety has a wide assortment of colors. The “Buff” color may range from a setter red color to a light cream colored dog. This variety also includes brown, sometimes referred to as liver or chocolate. It may range from a reddish brown to a deep, intense brown, and may be tan pointed. The tan markings may be the same coloration as found on the black/tan.



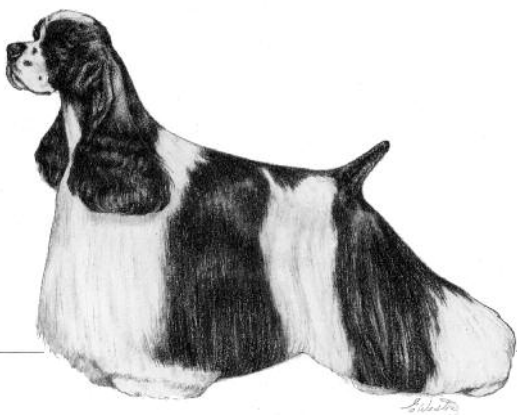
Parti-Color Variety

Two or more solid, well broken colors, one of which must be white; black and white, red and white (the red may range from lightest cream to darkest red), brown and white, and roans, to include any such color combination with tan points. It is preferable that the tan markings be located in the same pattern as for the tan points in the Black and ASCOB varieties. Roans are classified as parti-colors and may be of any of the usual roaning patterns. Primary color which is ninety percent (90%) or more shall disqualify.

The parti-color Variety allows the breeder a great deal of flexibility in color combinations. It includes black/whites, red/whites, brown/whites, tri-colors and roans.



The solid colors should be distributed over the coat in reasonably sized patches. Dogs that have a minimum amount of solid markings are losing their identity as parti-colors. It is preferable that the eye rims and ears be of a solid color. In the tri-colors the tan pattern is the same as in the black and ASCOB varieties. Roans may be black, brown or strawberry; they are seldom seen in the Cocker.



Tan Points

The color of the tan may be from the lightest cream to the darkest red and is restricted to ten percent (10%) or less of the color of the specimen; tan markings in excess of that amount shall disqualify. In the case of tan points in the Black or ASCOB variety, the markings shall be located as follows:

- 1) A clear tan spot over each eye;*
- 2) On the sides of the muzzle and on the cheeks;*
- 3) On the underside of the ears;*
- 4) On all feet and/or legs;*
- 5) Under the tail;*
- 6) On the chest, optional; presence or absence shall not be penalized.*

Tan markings which are not readily visible or which amount only to traces, shall be penalized. Tan on the muzzle which extends upward, over and joins shall also be penalized. The absence of tan markings in the Black or ASCOB variety in any of the specified locations in any otherwise tan-pointed dog shall disqualify.

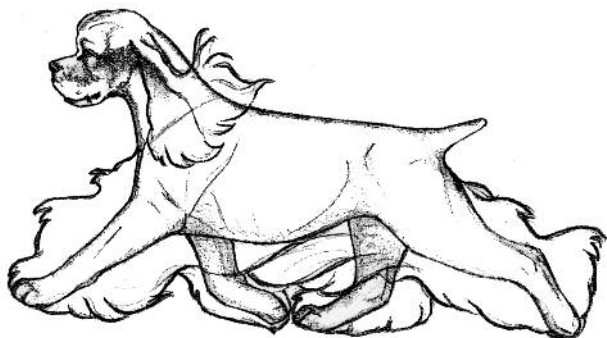
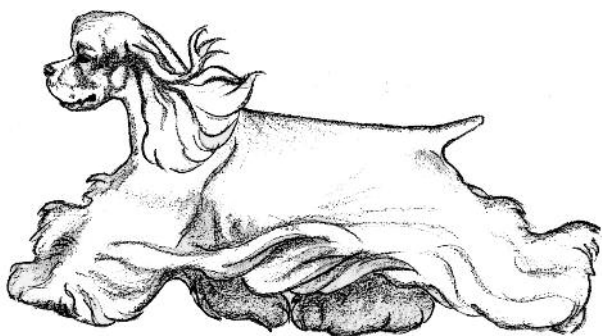
Black hairs in tan markings are normal in the breed.



Gait

The Cocker Spaniel, though the smallest of the sporting dogs, possesses a typical sporting dog gait. Prerequisite to good movement is balance between the front and rear assemblies. He drives with strong, powerful rear quarters and is properly constructed in the shoulders and forelegs so that he can reach forward without constriction in a full stride to counterbalance the driving force from the rear. Above all, his gait is coordinated, smooth and effortless. The dog must cover ground with his action; excessive animation should not be mistaken for proper gait.

Gait is the conclusion and result of the dog's conformation; the outward expression of soundness. Soundness, in turn, is one of the most important qualities and is best determined by moving the dog. Remember the Cocker is a sporting dog capable of considerable speed combined with great endurance.



As in other breeds, the Cocker is judged from three views: in profile, going away and straight back to the judge. The side view allows you to assess overall balance and symmetry of the front and rear. Do the front and rear halves move in harmony rather than as two separate parts? Does the dog in motion appear as he does stacked (i.e., with a slightly sloping topline, hard back with tail carried on a line with the topline of the back or slightly higher)? There should be no breaks in the topline such as a drop off behind the shoulders, dip or roach in the back, nor a low tail set. The dog should never appear higher in the rear than at the shoulders.

The front extension should be at least to the nose with rear extension of an equal distance. The topline moving should remain firm without bounce. Hackney gait or highflying fronts are examples of ineffectual movement. Remember, the gait should be coordinated, smooth and effortless.

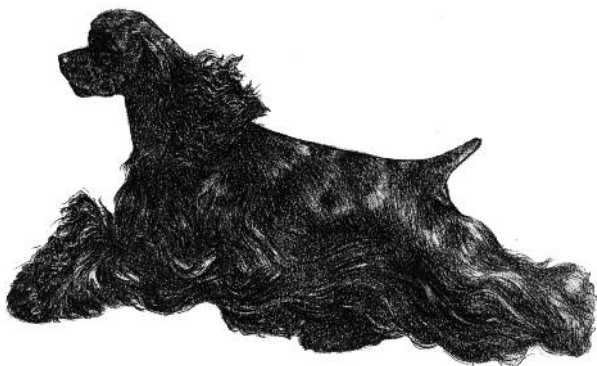


With Correct Movement

Going away and coming back, the dog should move “straight” (i.e., he should move so that his front and rear legs on each side move in a line with each other) and converge towards a center-line of gravity as speed increases but never single tracking or crossing over.

As the dog moves away you should be able to see the pads of the feet confirming proper rear extension. Major faults to watch for are slippage of stifle, cow hocks, and/or bowed rear legs. Side winding usually indicates the rear is overpowering the front.

When coming back he should move “freely” with no excessive action. Watch for elbows being thrown, pounding fronts, high stepping, and/or hackney action. When the dog stops he should set square with front feet beneath the point of shoulder and the rear setting wide and strong. The dog should appear sound.



With incorrect hackney movement

The Cocker Spaniel Should Not Move At Excessive Speed

Speed in the ring makes it difficult to evaluate proper movement. Excessive animation and speed should not be confused with proper movement. Due to incorrect front and rear construction some dogs will require twice as many steps to cover the same amount of ground as a correctly constructed dog.

Freedom of movement can be greatly compromised by too tight a lead. However, the Cocker is bred to hunt using its nose. When gaitting on a dead loose lead, most Cockers will drop their heads to scent the ground. A lead used with "light" tension still allows free and natural head carriage. Head carriage that is too high can interfere with fluid forward motion.

To conclude, remember the importance of balance, soundness, strength and endurance. He must be free and merry and show a keen inclination to work.

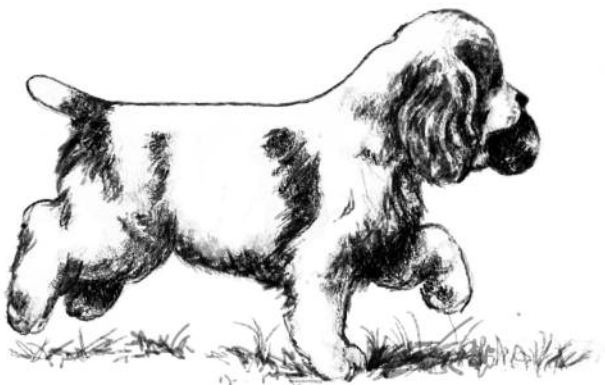
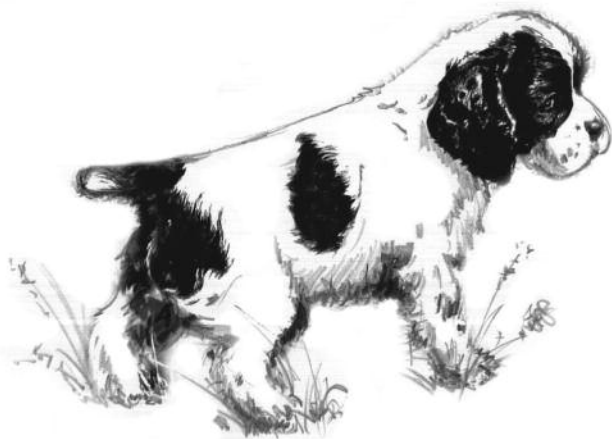


Temperament

Equable in temperament with no suggestion of timidity.

Above all the Cocker is merry and affectionate. A good time to judge temperament is while the dog is gaiting or standing free. The tail should be held confidently and preferably be wagging. The Cocker should be approachable by other dogs and people with no sign of aggression or shyness.

Not being able to examine the Cocker easily is unacceptable behavior and should be penalized. Exceptions can be made for typical playful puppy behavior.



Disqualifications

Height

Males over 15½ inches; females over 14½ inches.

Eyes

Eye(s) blue, blue marbled, blue flecked.

Color and Markings

The aforementioned colors are the only acceptable colors or combination of colors. Any other colors or combination of colors to disqualify.

Black Variety

White markings except on chest and throat.

Any Solid Color Other Than Black Variety

White markings except on chest and throat.

Parti-color Variety

Primary color ninety percent (90%) or more.

Tan Points

*(1) Tan markings in excess of ten percent (10%);
(2) Absence of tan markings in Black or ASCOB Variety in any of the specified locations in an otherwise tan pointed dog.*



THE END

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