

SPANIEL (AMERICAN COCKER)

A Breed Standard is the guideline that describes the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed, and ensures that the breed is fit for function, with soundness essential. Breeders and Judges should, at all times, be mindful of features that could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare, or soundness of this breed.

Most recent changes to this Standard has an effective date of 22/04/2016

ORIGIN

United States of America.

UTILISATION

Flushing dog, companion.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. For interest, from Wikipedia: The American Cocker Spaniel]:

The word *spanyell* is thought to date from the late 12th century when it was used to name a type of dog imported into England from Spain. Records from the mid-14th century show that selective breeding took place, with the breed being separated into two distinct types, called Water Spaniels and land spaniels. By 1801, the smaller variety of Land Spaniel was called the Cocker or Cocking Spaniel, so named for its

use in flushing woodcock. Initially in the United Kingdom there were a few American Cockers that had accompanied service personnel to American bases in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, several came over with embassy staff and business people returning. In 1970, following full recognition by the Kennel Club, registration numbers increased.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The American Cocker Spaniel is the smallest member of the Sporting Group *[ed. South African Gundog Group]*. He has a sturdy, compact body, and a cleanly chiselled 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, 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

Size:

The ideal height at the withers for an adult dog is 38cm (15") and for an adult bitch 36cm (14"). Height may vary 1.3cm (½") above or below this ideal. A dog whose height exceeds 39cm (15½") or a bitch whose height exceeds 37cm (14½") shall be disqualified. An adult dog whose height is less than 36cm (14½"), and an adult bitch whose height is less than 34cm (13½"), shall be penalised. Height is determined by a line perpendicular to the ground from the top of the shoulder blades, the dog standing naturally with its forelegs and lower hind legs parallel to the line of measurement.

Proportion:

The measurement from the breastbone to back of thigh is slightly longer than the measurement from the highest point of 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.

HEAD

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

Expression: The expression is intelligent, alert, soft, and appealing.

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-chiselled with no prominence in the cheeks.

Muzzle: 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.

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

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 colour of the iris is dark brown and, in general, the darker the better. Disqualifications: eye(s) blue, blue-marbled, blue-flecked.

Ears:

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

Mouth:

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.

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.

Topline:

Sloping slightly toward muscular quarters.

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.

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.

[*refer note below]

FOREQUARTERS

The shoulders are well laid back forming an angle with the upper arm of approximately 90°, 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 that 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. Feet compact, large, round, and firm with horny pads; they turn neither in nor out.

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.

COAT

On the head, short and fine; on the body, medium length, with enough undercoat to give protection. The ears, chest, abdomen, and legs are well-feathered, but not so excessively as to hide the American 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 that permits easy care. Excessive coat or curly or cottony-textured coat shall be severely penalised. 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.

COLOUR & MARKINGS

- **Black Variety:** Solid colour 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.
- **Any Solid Colour Other than Black (ASCOB):** Any solid colour other than black, ranging from lightest cream to darkest red, including brown and brown with tan points. The colour shall be of a uniform shade, but lighter colour 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.

- **Parti-Colour Variety:** Two or more solid, well-broken colours, 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 colour 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-colours and may be of any of the usual roaning patterns. Primary colour which is ninety percent (90%) or more shall disqualify.
- **Tan Points:** The colour of the tan may be from the lightest cream to the darkest red and is restricted to ten percent (10%) or less of the colour 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.
 - a clear tan spot over each eye;
 - on the sides of the muzzle and on the cheeks;
 - on the underside of the ears;
 - on all feet and/or legs;
 - under the tail;
 - on the chest, optional; presence or absence shall not be penalised.
- Tan markings that are not readily visible or that amount only to traces, shall be penalised. Tan on the muzzle that extends upward, over, and joins shall also be penalised. 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.

GAIT

The American 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 co-ordinated, smooth, and effortless. The dog must cover ground with his action; excessive animation should not be mistaken for proper gait.

TEMPERAMENT

Equable in temperament with no suggestion of timidity.

***N.B.** Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.*

***Regardless of the provisions of the current KUSA-adopted standard, docked or formerly docked breeds may be shown at all FCI- and KUSA-licensed shows in South Africa, whether their tails are docked or natural. Under no circumstances are Judges permitted to discriminate against exhibits on the grounds of docked or natural tails, and equal consideration for awards must be given to either.**

DISQUALIFICATIONS

- Height: Males over 39cm (15½"); females over 37cm (14½")
- Eye(s) blue, blue-marbled, blue-flecked.
- Colour and Markings: The aforementioned colours are the only acceptable colours or combination of colours. Any other colours or combination of colours to disqualify. Black Variety: white markings except on chest and throat. Any Solid Colour Other Than Black Variety: White markings except on chest and throat Parti-colour Variety: Primary colour ninety percent (90%) or more
- Tan Points: Tan markings in excess of ten percent (10%). Absence of tan markings in Black or ASCOB Variety in any of the specified locations in an otherwise tan-pointed dog

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When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:

FCI Standard No. 167

FCI Classification: Group 8 – Retrievers, Flushing Dogs, Water Dogs

Section 2 – Flushing dogs
Without working trial.