



GROUP I: SPORTING DOGS

SPANIEL (ENGLISH COCKER)

RECOGNIZED: 1940

Effective: January 2020

The breed standard outlines the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance of a breed, and ensures that a dog can carry out its original purpose. Breeders and judges should be mindful to prioritize dogs that are healthy and sound in both mind and body.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

This smallest of the British gun dogs is a compact, cobby, substantial dog who gives the impression of “pounds for inches” without being cloddy. He is an active, merry sporting dog who stands well up at the withers, alive with energy, with a powerful and effortless gait. He is capable of penetrating dense cover to flush and retrieve game. The incessant action of tail while at work gives the impression of a dog that is not only bred for hunting but also really loves to work. He is an attractive dog of balance, both standing and moving. This is a breed of moderation in all things without exaggeration in any way, the whole worth more than the sum of its parts.

TEMPERAMENT

The character of the English Cocker is of great importance. He is noted for his merry, affectionate disposition. He is a responsive, willing worker, both in the field and as a faithful companion.

SIZE

Height at the withers: Dogs, 40.75 to 43.25 cm (16 to 17 in); bitches, 38 to 40.75 cm (15 to 16 in)

Weight: Dogs, 12.75 to 15.5 kg (28 to 34 lb); bitches, 11.75 to 14.5 kg (26 to 32 lb)

Proper physical conformation and balance should be considered more important than weight or height, but a height exceeding 43.25 cm (17 in) or weight exceeding 15.5 kg (34 lb) should be faulted as this is traditionally a smallish breed.

COAT

The coat on the head should be short and fine. That on the body should be flat or slightly wavy, silky in texture, and of medium length with enough undercoat to provide protection. The English Cocker is well feathered but not so profusely as to hide the true lines or interfere with his field work.

COLOUR

Particolours are combinations of white with black, liver or shades of red or orange, either clearly marked, ticked or roaned, all with or without tan markings. A roaning pattern of white and black hair is commonly referred to as “blue.” In particolours, it is preferable that any solid markings be broken on the body and more or less evenly distributed. Absence of markings on the head and/or on the body is acceptable.

Solid colours are black, liver or shades of red or gold, all with or without tan markings. White markings on a solid dog do not make it a particolour dog, and, with the exception of a small area on the throat or shirt front, are highly undesirable.

Black and tan and liver and tan are considered solid colours. In black and tans, the coat should be black (with tan markings as described below).

Tan markings that are clearly defined and of a rich shade of red or gold may appear in conjunction with black, liver and particolour combination of those colours. Tan should appear as follows: as spots over the eyes, on the sides of the muzzle, on the undersides of the ears and (optionally) on the throat and chest. It should also appear on all four legs and feet as well as under the tail.

Any colour other than those listed should be judged as a fault.

HEAD

The head at the first impression appears strong, yet free from coarseness with a softly contoured skull. The desirable proportion of the head is approximately one-half muzzle and one half skull measured from nostril to stop and from stop to occiput. The **skull** should be arched and slightly flattened when seen both from the side and from the front. When viewed in profile the brow should not be appreciably higher than the occiput. When viewed from above, the back of the skull should not be appreciably wider than the front of the skull. Although the **muzzle** is not long, there is chiselling beneath the eyes so that the impression, when viewed from the front, is that the muzzle is longer than it actually is. The stop should be definite, but moderate and slightly grooved. The head, taken as a whole, is neither long nor heavy, nor narrow and lacking in strength, and the parts taken as a whole combine to produce the expression that is distinctive of the breed. **Ears** are lobular, set low and close to the head, leather fine and extending approximately to the nose, well covered with long, silky, straight or slightly wavy hair. The expression should be soft, melting, alert and intelligent. The **eyes** should be medium in size, full and slightly oval or almond shaped, set fairly wide apart but looking forward with tight lids. The haws are inconspicuous and preferably pigmented but may be unpigmented. The eye colours are dark brown except in liver and liver particolours where hazel is permitted, but the darker the brown the better. On no account should the eyes be round or have a black, piercing or hard appearance. Correct eyes are an essential part of the desired expression. The **nose** should be black except in livers and liver particolours where it will be brown, though it is not uncommon for reds, goldens and their corresponding particolours to lose their black pigmentation during cold weather. The nostrils should be wide for proper scenting ability. The **jaw** should be strong and capable of carrying game, with good strength and width of bottom jaw. The lips should be softly curved but not pendulous or showing prominent flews. A scissors bite is preferred; however, a level bite should not be severely penalized. An overshot or undershot bite is to be severely penalized.

NECK

The neck should be of moderate length, clean and muscular, arched towards the head, and set cleanly into sloping shoulders.

FOREQUARTERS

The **shoulders** should be sloping and fine, and fit flat and smoothly onto the body. When viewed from the front, the shoulders should slope inwards, with the front edges slightly closer to the midline than the rear edges. When viewed from the side, the spine of the shoulder blade should slope towards the rear between 45° and 50° to the horizontal. The **upper arm** should be long and be approximately 90° to the spine of the shoulder blade. The **forelegs** should be straight and strong with round bone nearly equal in size from the elbow to the heel. The elbows should be set close to the body. The **pasterns** should be short, straight, and strong. There should be free action from the shoulders right down to the pasterns.

BODY

The body should be compact, showing strength without cloddiness. The **chest** should be deep, reaching to the elbows, with good spring of rib, but not so wide as to interfere with the action of forelegs, nor so narrow as to appear pinched. The height at the withers is slightly greater than the distance from the withers to the set on of tail. The **forechest** should be well developed with the prosternum projecting moderately beyond the shoulder points. The **brisket** should reach to the elbow and, from a point just behind the elbow, slope gradually to a moderate tuck-up. A “herring gut” is most undesirable. The **ribs** should be well sprung and spring gradually to mid-body, tapering to the back ribs which should be of good depth and extend well back. The **back** should be short

and strong and the loin short, broad and slightly arched without apparent rise over the topline which should be firm and straight and drop slightly and gradually from the withers to the commencement of the croup. The croup should be gently rounded.

HINDQUARTERS

The **hips** should be rounded, and the thighs broad, well developed and muscular, giving abundance of propelling power. The **stifles** should be strong and well bent. The **hock** (from the point of the hock to the pad) should be moderately short, strong and well let down. When viewed from above, the width of the hindquarters should be equal to the spring of rib. When viewed directly from behind, the width of the hindquarters should be such that the ribs, although well sprung, are not visible. The size of the **feet** should be in proportion to the legs, firm, round, and cat-like with thick pads and strong, well-arched toes.

TAIL

The tail should be set on slightly lower than the line of the back, with no tendency to fall away sharply, merry in action and carried level or slightly lower, but never cocked up. It is traditionally docked to prevent injury when working. An undocked tail should be slightly curved, of moderate length, ideally not reaching below the hock, strong at the root, tapering to a fine tip, well feathered, lively in action and carried on a plane not higher than the level of the back.

Proper physical conformation and balance of the overall dog, including set on and carriage of the tail, should be considered more important than whether the tail is or is not docked, and whether or not an undocked tail satisfies the description mentioned above.

GAIT

The English Cocker is expected to be able to hunt in dense cover and upland terrains. His gait is accordingly characterized more by drive and the appearance of power than by great speed. He covers ground effortlessly and with reasonable extension both in front and in rear appropriate to his moderate angulation. Although he hunts with his head down, in the show ring he is expected to carry his head proudly and retain the same topline while in action as when standing for examination.

Coming and going, he moves in a straight line without crabbing or rolling. He should move with width between the front legs, and between the rear legs, appropriate to his build and gait. This is not a single tracking breed, and his action both fore and aft is characterized by “straight through” reach and drive.

FAULTS

Any deviation from the standard is a fault. In determining whether a fault is minor, serious or major, two factors should be used as a guide:

- 1) The extent to which it deviates from the standard.
- 2) The extent to which such deviation would actually affect the ability of the dog to perform its breed function.

