

BERGAMASCO SHEPHERD DOG

ORIGIN & PURPOSE

The Bergamasco is an old, breed of a herding dog widespread across the Italian Alpine and pre-Alpine regions; a particularly large number of the breed could be found in the valleys of the Bergamo region where sheep breeding was carried out on a large scale. The dog was essential in aiding shepherds driving herds during the seasonal movement between the pastures of the Alpine regions and plains of the Po Valley. The Bergamasco Shepherd Dog was primarily used for cattle and started working with sheep later as agricultural needs changed. The Bergamasco is a tending dog. The first dogs were registered with the Italian Stud Book in 1891 and the first Bergamasco Shepherd standard was drafted in Italy in 1958.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Bergamasco shepherd is a medium-sized dog of rustic appearance with an abundant coat covering all parts of the body; powerfully constructed but very well proportioned. Conformation is that of a dog of medium proportions (mesomorphic) the body is square in outline, with well-balanced proportions in relation to size and the profiles of the head and body.

TEMPERAMENT

The function of the Bergamasco shepherd dog is to drive and tend herds and livestock in general, a task for which it is well suited. While they can be protective, they are not livestock guardians. The breed is alert, attentive, intelligent, patient and can be reserved with strangers. The breed is a vigilant guard and an excellent companion, known to establish a close relationship with people. The breed must never be aggressive or fearful, although a slight natural diffidence is mentioned as a somewhat typical characteristic of some sheepdogs.

SIZE

Height at the withers:

Dogs: Ideal height at the withers 60 cm (23 ½ in).

Bitches: Ideal height at the withers 56 cm (22 in).

Dogs or bitches 2 cm (¾ in) over or under ideal height are to be severely faulted.

Weight:

Dogs: 32 – 38 kg (70.5lb – 83.8lb).

Bitches: 26 –32 kg (57.3lb – 70.5lb).

Important Proportions:

The length of the body from the point of the point of shoulder to point of buttocks is equal to the height at the withers (i.e. square). The length of the head is 4/10th of the height at the withers. The depth of chest must be 50% of the height at the withers.

COAT

Hair: Very abundant and very long, varies depending on the region of the body. Rather harsh (similar to goat hair) with wavy flocks on the front part of the body, while from the middle of the chest region to the rear it is woolly and forms broad strands of varied length depending on the age of the dog; the woolly coat does not moult and traps the undercoat which is quite long and soft forming mats of felted hair which are very protective. The flocks start from the topline falling down the sides of the body. The hair on the head is less harsh and falls over the face. The hair on the ears is slightly wavy and soft

forming pointed fringes at the tip. The hair on the limbs must be evenly distributed all over with soft flocks on the forelegs and matted flock on the hind legs. The coat is soft in puppies and the flocks begin to form at 12–15 months. Their length depends on the age hence young dogs must not be penalised for a coat, which has not yet lengthened. In old dogs, too thick and long a coat that hampers normal movement and compromises the dog's welfare should be avoided. The coat should be cared for and kept clean; avoiding in particular matted flocks on the beard, muzzle and ears flaps.

Skin: Tight and fine all over the body, especially on the ears and forequarters. Neck without dewlap and head without wrinkles. Colour of the lip and eye rims must be black.

COLOUR

Solid grey or with grey patches of all possible shades of grey. A solid black coat is allowed providing the black is really opaque. Tinges of Isabella and light fawn permitted at the lower part of flocks (as a result of discoloration of old hair, not as a base color).

HEAD

The head is covered with abundant hair, making it appear large. Head shape with parallel planes proportionate in relation to the body. The length of the muzzle equals that of the skull. The skin must not be thick but tight without wrinkles.

Skull: Medium sized with top of skull tending towards flat, the upper longitudinal planes of the skull and the muzzle are parallel. The width must be less than half the total length of the head. The frontal region is well developed lengthwise and widthwise. The brow arches are well defined. The median frontal furrow (metopic suture) is marked; the occipital crest is well defined and pronounced. **Stop:** The stop is sloping, but accentuated due to the marked bones of the nose and forehead, the frontal protuberances and the superciliary arches. **Nose:** In line with the muzzle with curved upper profile, wide open nostrils, moist and large. Viewed in profile it must not appear protruding. The colour of the nose leather is black. **Muzzle:** Tapers progressively towards the nose with lateral surfaces converging slightly, so that the muzzle itself is not pointed but truncated, hence the front face of the muzzle is rather flat. Its length is the same as that of the skull. The muzzle measured at the mid-point, the width is approximately half of the muzzle's length. The depth of the muzzle must not be less than half of the muzzle's length. The upper profile of the muzzle is straight and the lower jaw, not the lip, defines the lower part of the muzzle. Due to this conformation, the lip commissure is not pendulous. The commissure of the lip joins up with an imaginary vertical line drawn down from the outer corner of the eye. The lower profile of the jaw is almost straight. **Lips:** Thin and divided under the nose forming a long arc one third of a circle; they are slightly developed hence only just covering the teeth. The lip rims are well pigmented. **Jaws/Teeth:** Upper and lower jaws well developed; the lower jaw broad. Teeth are white, complete in number and well-developed; incisors in regular alignment. Scissor bite. **Cheeks:** Not very prominent. **Eyes:** Rather large; neither bulging nor sunken, iris of a darker or lighter shade of chestnut colour depending on the colour of the coat. They are set forward looking; expression is soft, serene and attentive. The shape of the rim of the eyelid is slightly oval and the angle of the eyelid towards the horizontal is only slightly oblique. The eyelids fit tightly over the eye, with black-pigmented rims; eyelashes are particularly long so that they can lift the hair falling from the forehead over the eyes. **Ears:** Semi-drop ears set high, i.e. the last two thirds of the ear leather is pendant. When the dog is alert, the ear lifts slightly at the base. Triangular shape. Length is between 11 and 13 cm (4 ¼ to 5in), width 6.5 to 8 cm (2 ½ to 3 ¼ in). The

base is wide, extending at the back to the point where the head sets into the neck, while frontally reaching to the middle of the skull. The tip is slightly rounded.

NECK

Upper profile is slightly convex. The neck is slightly shorter than the head. The skin is never loose, consequently always without dewlap. Hair must be thick.

FOREQUARTERS

Legs are straight when viewed from the front and side and well-proportioned in relation to the size of the dog. **Shoulder:** Strong and massive. Long and set obliquely. Muscles must always be well developed.

Upperarm: Well-muscled, strong in bone and well angulated. The angle formed by the scapula and upper arm ranges between 105° and 125°. **Elbow:** Set on a plane parallel to the median plane of the body. The point of the elbow is located on an imaginary vertical line lowered from the back end of the scapula. The angle between upper-arm and forearm ranges from 150° to 155°. The hair hanging down from the elbows should be abundant, long and thick, tending to flocks.

Forearm: Straight; at least as long as the upper arm. Well-developed muscles and bone. **Carpus (Wrist):** In a straight line extending from the forearm; mobile and lean with the pisiform bone clearly protruding. **Metacarpus (Pastern):** Lean and mobile. Seen from the front, must be placed on the same vertical plane as the forearm.

Viewed in profile has a slight inclination from the back to the front. **Forefeet:** Oval shaped, arched with tight toes. Strong nails, curved and well pigmented and of dark colour, hard pads.

BODY

Chest: Must be broad and deep, reaching to the elbows. **Withers:** Prominent and long, well defined.

Back: Straight, well-muscled and of good width. Loin: Slightly convex, firmly joining the back and the croup. Loin decidedly shorter than the back (measured from the loin to the withers). The width of the loin is nearly the same as its length; muscles of the whole region are well developed. **Croup:** Broad, strong, well-muscled and slanting, with an inclination of approximately 30° below the horizontal.

Underline and belly: The lower profile of the belly is only slightly tucked up. The hollowness in the flanks is minimal.

HINDQUARTERS

Hindquarters in proportion to the size of the dog. Straight limbs seen from behind. **Thigh:** Long, broad, well-muscled with a slightly convex rear profile. The coxo-femoral angle (between pelvis and upper thigh) ranges between 100° and 105°. **Stifle (Knee):** Perfectly in line with the limb, neither turned in nor out. **Lower thigh:** Strong bone, lean muscles with marked leg groove. Inclination below the horizontal is about 55°. **Hock:** Joint well angulated. **Metatarsus (Rear pastern):** Strong, perpendicular to the ground.

Hind feet: Oval shaped, arched with tight toes. Strong nails, curved and well pigmented, dark in colour, hard pads.

TAIL

Set on the lower third of the croup, thick and strong at the root, it gradually tapers towards the tip.

Covered with slightly wavy goatlike hair. Length of tail often reaches the hock when the dog is standing; preferably it should be shorter. At rest the tail is carried sabre fashion i.e. pendant in the top two thirds, with the end third slightly curved. In action the dog waves his tail flag-like laterally.

GAIT

Free with long stride. The preferred gait is a rather extended trot, maintained for quite long periods. Due to his conformation, the dog can easily go into an ordinary gallop, which can be maintained for a relatively long period of time.

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 and its ability to perform its traditional work.

- Lack of sexual dimorphism (i.e. bitchy dogs or doggy bitches)
- Disproportionate head - small or too large
- Lack of Type

Severe Faults:

- Head planes convergent or divergent.
- Nose partially depigmented.
- Eyes with heterochromia of the iris, bilateral or monolateral (part of the iris blue), bulging or sunken, oval and slanting eyes.
- More than one missing tooth (except for PM1 and M3).
- Tail set too high or low, carried too high over the back or hanging loosely.
- Coat with no differentiation between woolly and goat-like hair, soft all over, short on the forelegs and on the muzzle, sparse hair on the tail, too thick and long so as to compromise the function of the dog.
- Colour other than permitted in the standard.
- Gait that is ambling or pacing continually.
- Size that is over or under the margins indicated by the standard.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.
- Muzzle (foreface) definitely convex (roman nose) or concave.
- Total de-pigmentation of the nose, lips, or eye-rims.
- Wall-eyed (mono or bilateral totally de-pigmented iris), small eye (microphthalmia), or cross-eyed.
- Bite - Overshot by more than 6.35mm (1/4in), or Undershot
- Tailless or stump tail; tail carried rolled over the back.
- White coat colour on more than 1/5th of the total body.