
Spaniel (American Cocker)

Origin and Purpose

The Cocker Spaniel evolved from a very old type of dog classified generally as Spaniels. The name “Spaniel” is mentioned in various literatures and pictured in woodcuts as early as 1328. The English literature and letters of the day always accepted that Spaniels originated in Spain. The partridge and quail hunters of the early 1800’s wanted a smaller-sized dog who would simply find the game without disturbing it. Finally in 1892, the Kennel Club (England) recognized the “Cocker” as a classification and being a Spaniel that was less than 25 lb. (11-12 kg), and one that worked. The first Cocker was registered with the American Kennel Club in 1879. The Cockers at this time were long and low-bodied and were generally around 20 lb. (9-10 kg). In the early 1900’s, the American Spaniel Club, striving to maintain the Cocker in its sporting dog classification, made the standard call for a dog not less than 28 lb. (13 kg). It was during this time that the American Cocker Spaniel as we know it today really started to evolve into a separate and distinct breed of its own.

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 over-all 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, 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; equable in temperament with no suggestion of timidity.

Temperament

Above all he must be free and merry, sound, well balanced throughout, and in action show a keen inclination to work; equable in temperament with no suggestion of timidity. When the dog is in motion the tail action is merry.

Size

The ideal height at the withers for an adult dog is 15 inches (38 cm), and for an adult bitch 14 inches (35.5 cm). Height may vary one-half inch (1 cm) above or below this ideal. A dog whose height exceeds 15-1/2 inches (39 cm), or a bitch whose height exceeds 14-1/2 inches

(37 cm), shall be disqualified. An adult dog whose height is less than 14-1/2 inches (37 cm), or an adult bitch whose height is less than 13-1/2 inches (34 cm) shall be penalized.

Note: 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 the lower hind legs parallel to the line of measurement.

Coat

On the head, short and fine; on the body, medium length, with enough undercoating to give protection. The ears, chest, abdomen, and hind 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 sporting dog. The texture is most important. The coat is silky, flat or slightly wavy, and of a texture which permits easy care. Excessive or curly or cottony textured coat is to be penalized.

Colour

Black Variety

Solid colour black, to include black with tan points. The black should be jet; shadings of brown or liver in the sheen of 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.

ASCOB Variety

Any solid colour other than black and any such colour with tan points and any such colour with sable shadings. The colour shall be of a uniform shade but lighter colouring of the feather is permissible. A small amount of white on the chest and/or throat is allowed; white in any other location shall disqualify.

Particolour Variety

Two or more definite, well-broken colours, one of which must be white, including those with tan points and those with sable shadings; 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 particolours, and may be of any of the usual roaning patterns. Primary colour which is ninety per cent or more shall disqualify. Merle pattern in any colour shall disqualify.

Tan Points

The colour of the tan may be from the lightest cream to the darkest red colour and should be restricted to ten per cent 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) A clear tan spot over each eye
- (b) On the side of the muzzle and on the cheeks
- (c) On the undersides of the ears
- (d) On all feet and/or legs
- (e) Under the tail
- (f) On the chest, optional--presence or absence not 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 each of the specified locations in an otherwise tan-pointed dog shall disqualify.

Head

To attain a well-proportioned head, which must be in balance with the rest of the dog, it embodies the following: **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. **Muzzle** broad and deep, with square, even jaws. The upper lip is full and of sufficient depth to cover the lower jaw. 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 and black and tans. In other colours it may be brown, liver or black, the darker the better. The colour of the nose harmonizes with the colour of the eye rim. **Mouth:** the teeth are strong and sound, not too small, and meet in a scissors bite. **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. The expression is intelligent, alert, soft, and appealing. **Ears** lobular, long, of fine leather, well feathered, and placed no higher than a line to the lower part of the eye.

Neck and Shoulders

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. 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 considerable 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.

Body

The body is short, compact, and firmly knit together, giving an impression of strength. The distance from the highest point of the shoulder blades to the ground is fifteen per cent or approximately 2 inches (5 cm) more than the length from this point to the set-on of the tail. Back is strong and sloping evenly and slightly downward from the shoulders to the set-on of the docked or undocked tail. Hips are wide and quarters well rounded and muscular. 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. The American Cocker Spaniel never appears long and low.

Legs and Feet

Forelegs are parallel, straight, strongly boned and muscular and set close to the body well under the scapulae. When viewed from the side with the forelegs vertical, the elbow is directly below the highest point of the shoulder blade. The pasterns are short and strong. The hind legs are strongly boned and muscled with good angulation at the stifle and powerful, clearly defined thighs. The stifle joint is strong and there is no slippage of it in motion or when standing. The hocks are strong, well let down, and when viewed from the behind, the hind legs are parallel when in motion and at rest.

Feet

Compact, large, round, and firm with horny pads; they turn neither in nor out. Dewclaws on hind legs and forelegs may be removed.

Tail

The docked or undocked 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.

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 his 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 and excessive animation should never be mistaken for proper gait.

Faults

Dogs under 14-1/2 inches (37 cm), bitches under 13-1/2 inches (34 cm) penalized. Excessive or curly or cottony textured coat. Tan markings which are not readily visible or which amount only to traces. Tan on muzzle which extends upward, over and joins.

Disqualifications

1. Blacks and ASCOBS - white markings except on chest and throat.
2. Particolour: 90 per cent or more of primary colour.
3. Tan Points: tan markings in excess of 10 per cent.
4. Absence of tan markings in the black or ASCOBS variety in each of the specified locations in an otherwise tan-pointed dog.
5. Height: males over 15-1/2 inches (39 cm); females over 14-1/2 inches (37 cm).
6. Blue eyes or merle in any colour.

Scale of Points

Skull.....	8
Muzzle	10
Teeth	4
Eyes.....	6
Ears.....	3
Neck and Shoulders	15
Body.....	15
Legs.....	9
Feet	6
Stern	3

Coat	6
Colour and Markings.....	3
Action.....	12

Total	100
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