
Spaniel (English Springer)

Origin and Purpose

The English Springer Spaniel is one of the oldest British land Spaniels and best-established sporting gun dogs whose ancestors can be traced back into the dim & distant reaches of time. The English Springer Spaniel evolved from an ancient type of dog classified generally as Spaniels. The name “Spaniel” is mentioned in various literatures and pictured in woodcuts as early as 1328. The name “Springer” undoubtedly came from his actions in the field where he sprang at his quarry and flushed it for the net, falcon or greyhound. The breed was first recognized as a separate breed from the “cocker” in 1902. Highly prized for his soft mouth, today he is used to find, flush and retrieve game for the gun.

General Appearance

The English Springer Spaniel is a medium-sized sporting dog, well proportioned, free from exaggeration, nicely balanced in every part. He is the highest on leg and raciest in build of all British land Spaniels. His pendulous ears, soft gentle expression, sturdy build and friendly wagging tail proclaim him unmistakably a member of the ancient family of spaniels. His carriage is proud, his body deep, and his legs strong and muscular with enough length to carry him with ease. He looks the part of a dog that can go and keep going under difficult hunting conditions. At his best he is endowed with style, symmetry, balance and enthusiasm and is every inch a sporting dog of distinct spaniel character, combining beauty and utility.

Temperament

The typical Springer is friendly, eager to please, quick to learn and biddable. In the show ring he should exhibit poise, attentiveness, tractability, and should permit examination without resentment or cringing. A Springer showing aggression toward people, other dogs or excessive timidity (with due allowance for puppies) is not in keeping with a sporting dog character and purpose and should be faulted.

Size

The Springer is built to cover rough ground with ability and reasonable speed. He should be kept to medium size: neither too small and light nor too large and heavy to do the work for which he is intended. The ideal shoulder height for dogs is 51 cm (20 in.); for bitches, 48 cm (19 in.).

Weight is dependent upon the dog's other dimensions: a 51 cm (20 in.) dog, well proportioned, in good condition should weigh about 22-25 kg (49-55 lb.). A 48 cm (19 in.) bitch will weigh about 18-22 kg (40-44 lb.). The resulting appearance is a well-knit, sturdy dog with good but not too heavy bone, in no way coarse or ponderous. A dog or bitch within one inch of the breed standard either way at the withers is not to be faulted.

Coat and Colour

The Springer has a thick double coat that is water, weather and thorn proof. His body coat of medium length may be flat or wavy. The coat on his head, front of forelegs and front of hind legs is short and fine. His ears, chest, back of legs, belly and britches are nicely furnished with moderate, but not heavy, fringing. Correct quality and condition of coat should take precedence over quantity. Trimming may be done to the head, neck, ears, hocks, feet and furnishings and dead undercoat may be removed to make a neat appearance. Excessive trimming that removes the protective quality of the coat should be faulted. All the following combinations of colours and markings are equally acceptable: Black or liver with white markings or white with black or liver markings; Blue or liver roan; Tricolour: black and white or liver and white with tan markings. Any white portion of the coat may be flecked with ticking.

Head

The **head** is impressive without being heavy. Its beauty lies in a combination of strength and refinement. It is important that the size and proportion be in balance with the rest of the dog. Viewed in profile, the head should appear approximately the same length as the neck. The **skull** is to be of medium length, fairly broad, flat on top, slightly rounded at the sides and back. The occipital bone is inconspicuous, rounded rather than peaked or angular. The **muzzle** is approximately the same length as the skull, and in harmony as to width and general character. Looking down on the head the muzzle is to appear to be about one-half the width of the skull. The skull rises from the muzzle and makes a brow or "stop", divided by a groove or fluting between the eyes. This groove continues upward and gradually disappears as it reaches the middle of the forehead. The "stop" is moderate with a subtle rise where the muzzle blends into the upper head, further emphasized by the groove and shape of the well developed eyebrows.

The chiselling of the bony structure around the eye, the stop, eyebrows and flat cheeks contribute to the Springer's beautiful and characteristic expression. When viewed in profile, the skull and the muzzle lie in two approximately parallel planes. The nasal bone should be straight (neither concave, "dish-faced"; nor convex, Roman nosed). The **nostrils**, should be well opened, broad, and liver or black coloured depending upon the colour of the coat. Flesh-coloured noses (Dudley) or spotted noses (butterfly) are undesirable.

The square, strong **jaws** are to be of sufficient length to allow the dog to carry game easily. Flews come down to fully cover the lower jaw, but are not pendulous. The **teeth** should be strong, clean and not too small. The incisors should meet in a close scissors or even bite. More than any other feature the eyes contribute to the Springer's appeal. Colour, placement, and size of the eyes influence expression and attractiveness. The **eyes** are to be of medium size, almond or oval in shape. The eyes are set rather well apart and fairly deep in their sockets. The iris colour is to harmonize with the coat colour, preferably a dark hazel in the liver dogs and black or dark brown in the black dogs. The expression should signify an alert, kind and trusting nature. The lids are tight with little or no haw showing. The **ears** are lobular in shape, nicely feathered with thin, fairly wide ear leathers that are long enough to reach to the tip of the nose. The ear-set is in line with the corner of the eye, not too far back and the ears hang close to the cheeks with no tendency to stand up or out.

Neck

The moderately long, strong, muscular neck is well set on, tapers towards the head, is arched slightly at the crest and is approximately the same length as the head.

Forequarters

Efficient front movement calls for proper forequarter assembly that allows the dog to swing his forelegs forward in an effortless manner. The shoulders lie flat and fairly close together at the tips, flowing smoothly into the contour of the body. The shoulder blade, measured from top of withers to point of shoulder, and upper arm, measured from point of shoulder to elbow, should ideally be of equal length forming an almost 90 degree angle. This puts the front legs well under the body and the elbows, close to the body, in line with the tips of shoulder blades. The strong forelegs are straight with moderate bone; neither too heavy, nor

too light. The bone is slightly flattened and does not taper or change size from the elbow to the foot. The slightly sloping pasterns are short and strong. The forefeet are tight, well arched and round or slightly oval with thick pads. Dewclaws may or may not be present.

Body

The length of body, when measured from the point of shoulder to the point of buttocks, is slightly greater than the height at the withers. The backline slopes very gently from withers to tail and the back is firm and level. The body is short coupled and strong. The chest is should be deep and reach to the level of the elbows. The well developed forechest should not be too wide or round as to interfere with the action of the front legs. The ribs are well-sprung, fairly long and taper as they approach the flank. The loin is short, muscular and has a slight arch. The hips are nicely rounded and blend into the hind legs. The underline rises gently towards the rear.

Hindquarters

The Springer should be shown in hard muscular condition with well developed hips and thighs and the rear assembly should suggest strength and driving power. For functional efficiency the angulation of the hindquarters should be neither more than, nor less than, that of the forequarters. Thighs are broad and muscular. Stifle joints are strong and moderately bent. The hock joints are somewhat rounded. The rear pasterns are short and strong (measuring about one-third the distance from hip joint to foot) with good bone. When viewed from behind, the rear pasterns to be parallel. The hind feet are tight, compact, slightly smaller than the forefeet and well rounded with strong thick pads. Dewclaws may or may not be present..

Tail

The Springer's tail is an index both to his temperament and his conformation. Merry tail action is characteristic of the breed. The proper tail set is slightly low as a natural continuation of the gently rounded croup. The tail is carried horizontally or slightly elevated. A clamped tail that may indicate timidity or an unreliable temperament or a tail carried at a right angle to the backline should be faulted. The tail may be docked or undocked. The docked tail is strong at the root, tapered to the end and in balance with the rest of the dog. The undocked tail is strong at the root, tapered to a fine tip and in balance with the rest of the dog. Feathering, if present, will be in balance to the rest of the coat.

Gait

The English Springer's movement is strictly his own. When evaluating the Springer, the final test of a dog's conformation and soundness should emphasize proper movement. Prerequisite to good movement is balance of the front and rear assemblies. The two must match in angulation and muscular development if the gait is to be smooth and effortless. Well laid back shoulders laid that permits a long stride and excellent rear quarters that provide the driving power are both essential to correct movement. When viewed from the front, the forelegs should swing forward from the shoulder in a free and easy manner, with no tendency for the feet to interfere with each other. From the rear, the parallel hocks should drive well under the body in line with the forelegs. Viewed from the side, the Springer should exhibit a good long forward stride. As speed increases legs naturally converge toward a centre line of travel.

Faults

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault. The seriousness of the fault should be in regard to the proportion of its degree and its effect on the health and ability of the dog to perform the job for which the breed was established.

1. Lack of true English Springer type in conformation, expression, or behaviour.
2. A Springer showing aggression toward people or other dogs is not in keeping with a sporting dog character or purpose.
3. Rough curly coat; excessive over-trimming that removes the protective quality of the coat; off-colours such as lemon, red, orange (major fault).
4. Oval, pointed, or heavy skull; too short, thin, narrow or heavy muzzle, too much or too little stop; faulty jaw formation (major fault); round, thick or protruding (lips). Eyes: small, round, prominent, droopy, yellow, or significantly lighter than coat colour; eyes that have a harsh expression; droopy eyelids; prominent haw. Ears: short or round ears; incorrect ear set.
5. Short or concave (ewe) neck, excessive throatiness.
6. Steep or loaded shoulders; loose elbows; crooked legs; weak or straight pasterns.
7. Sharp slope to backline; body too shallow; ribs too flat or too round; sway back or roach back; too much or too little tuck up.

8. Too much or too little angulation; narrow or underdeveloped thighs; too short or too long hocks; splayed or hare feet.
9. Too low or too high tail set; too steep or too high croup. Tail carried at a right angle to the backline, a clamped tail.
10. Short, choppy, mincing, or hopping steps;. moving with forefeet wide; cow or sickle hocks.