

Great Pyrenees

General Appearance

The Great Pyrenees dog conveys the distinct impression of elegance and unsurpassed beauty combined with great overall size and majesty. He has a white or principally white coat that may contain markings of badger, grey, or varying shades of tan. He possesses a keen intelligence and a kindly, while regal, expression. Exhibiting a unique elegance of bearing and movement, his soundness and coordination show unmistakably the purpose for which he has been bred, the strenuous work of guarding the flocks in all kinds of weather on the steep mountain slopes of the Pyrenees.

Size

The height at the withers ranges from 27 inches to 32 inches (69 - 81 cm) for dogs, and from 25 inches to 29 inches (64 - 74 cm) for bitches. A 27 inch dog weighs about 100 pounds (45 kg) and a 25 inch bitch weighs about 85 pounds (37 kg). Weight is in proportion to the overall size and structure.

Proportion

The Great Pyrenees is a balanced dog with the height measured at the withers being somewhat less than the length of the body measured from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh (buttocks). These proportions create a somewhat rectangular dog, slightly longer than it is tall. Front and rear angulation are balanced.

Substance

The Great Pyrenees is a dog of medium substance whose coat deceives those who do not feel the bone and muscling. Commensurate with this size and impression of elegance, there is sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame.

Faults

Size

Dogs and bitches under minimum size or over maximum size.

Substance

Dogs too heavily boned or too lightly boned to be in balance with their frame.

Head

Correct head and expression are essential to the breed. The head is not heavy in proportion to the size of the dog. It is wedge-shaped with a lightly rounded crown.

Expression

The expression is elegant, intelligent and contemplative.

Eyes

Medium sized, almond shaped, set slightly obliquely, rich dark brown. Eyelids are close fitting with black rims.

Ears

Small to medium in size, V-shaped with rounded tips, set on at eye level, normally carried low, flat, and close to the head. There is a characteristic meeting of the hair of the upper and lower face which forms a line from the outer corner of the eye to the base of the ear.

Skull and Muzzle

The muzzle is approximately equal in length to the back skull. The width and the length of the skull are approximately equal. The muzzle blends smoothly with the skull. The cheeks are flat. There is sufficient fill under the eyes. A slight furrow exists between the eyes. There is no apparent stop. The bony eyebrow ridges are only slightly developed. Lips are light fitting with the upper lip just covering the lower lip. There is a strong lower jaw. The nose and lips are black.

Teeth

A scissor bite is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable. It is not unusual to see dropped (receding) lower central incisor teeth.

Faults

1. Too heavy head (St. Bernard or Newfoundland-like).
2. Too narrow or small skull.
3. Foxy appearance.
4. Presence of an apparent stop.
5. Missing pigmentation on nose, eye rims, or lips.
6. Eyelids - round, triangular, loose or small.
7. Overshot, undershot, wry mouth.

Neck

Strongly muscled and of medium length, with minimal dewlap.

Topline

The backline is level.

Body

The chest is moderately broad. The rib cage is well sprung, oval in shape, and of sufficient depth to reach the elbows. Back and loin are broad and strongly coupled with some tuckup. The croup is gently sloping with the tail set on just below the level of the back.

Tail

The tailbones are of sufficient length to reach the hock. The tail is well plumed, carried low in repose and may be carried over the back, “making the wheel” when aroused. When present, a “shepherd’s crook” at the end of the tail accentuates the plume. When gaiting, the tail may be carried either over the back or low. Both carriagees are equally correct.

Fault

Barrel ribs.

Forequarters

Shoulders - The shoulders are well laid back, well muscled, and lie close to the body. The upper arm meets the shoulder blade at approximately a right angle. The upper arm angles backward from the point of the shoulder to the elbow and is never perpendicular to the ground. The length of the shoulder blade and the upper arm are approximately equal. The height from the ground to the elbow appears approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the withers.

Forelegs

The legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. The elbows are close to the body and point directly to the rear when standing and gaiting. The forelegs, when viewed from the side, are located directly under the withers and are straight and vertical to the ground. The elbows, when viewed from the front, are set in a straight line from the point of shoulder to the wrist. Front pasterns are strong and flexible. Each foreleg carries a single dewclaw.

Front Feet

Rounded, close-cupped, well padded, toes well arched.

Hindquarters

The angulation of the hindquarters is similar in degree to that of the forequarters.

Thighs

Strongly muscular upper thighs extend from the pelvis at right angles. The upper thigh is the same length as the lower thigh, creating moderate stifle joint angulation when viewed in profile. The rear pastern (metatarsus) is of medium length and perpendicular to the ground as the dog stands naturally. This produces a moderate degree of angulation in the hock joint, when viewed from the side. The hindquarters from the hip to the rear pastern are straight and parallel, as viewed from the rear. The rear legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. Double dewclaws are located on each rear leg.

Rear Feet

The rear feet have a structural tendency to toe-out slightly. This breed characteristic is not to be confused with cow-hocks. The rear feet, like the fore feet, are rounded, close-cupped, well padded with toes well arched.

Faults

Absence of double dewclaws on each rear leg.

Coat

The weather resistant double coat consists of a long, flat, thick, outer coat of coarse hair, straight or slightly undulating, and lying over a dense, fine, woolly undercoat. The coat is more profuse about the neck and shoulders where it forms a ruff or mane which is more pronounced in males. Longer hair on the tail forms a plume. There is feathering along the back of the front legs and along the back of the thighs, giving a "pantaloon" effect. The hair on the face and ears is shorter and of finer texture. Correctness of coat is more important than abundance of coat.

Faults

Curly coat. Stand-off coat (Samoyed type).

Colour

White or white with markings of grey, badger, reddish brown, or varying shades of tan. Markings of varying size may appear on the ears, head (including a full face mask), tail, and as a few body spots. The undercoat may be white or shaded. All of the above described colourings and locations are characteristic of the breed and equally correct.

Faults

Outer coat markings covering more than one third of the body.

Gait

The Great Pyrenees move smoothly and elegantly, true and straight ahead, exhibiting both power and agility. The stride is well balanced with good reach and strong drive. The legs tend to move toward the center line as speed increases. Ease and efficiency of movement are more important than speed.

Temperament

Character and temperament are of utmost importance. In nature, the Great Pyrenees is confident, gentle, and affectionate. While territorial and protective of his flock or family when necessary, his general demeanor is one of quiet composure, both patient and tolerant. He is strong willed, independent and somewhat reserved, yet attentive, fearless and loyal to his charges both human and animal.

Fault

Although the Great Pyrenees may appear reserved in the show ring, any sign of excessive shyness, nervousness, or aggression to humans, is unacceptable and must be considered an extremely serious fault.

