

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

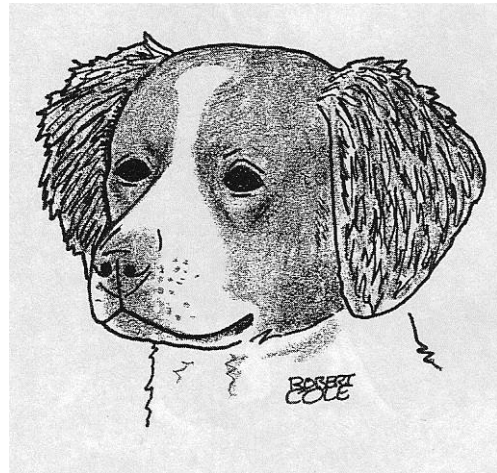
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THE BRITTANY SPANIEL

TWO VARIETIES

Since returning from a judging trip to Europe, I have reached the conclusion, as others have before me, that Brittany breeders in Canada have created a show variety HPR (hunt, point and retrieve) gun dog so far removed from that of the FCI country of origin variety that it should be called the *Canadian Brittany*.

Leslie Andreas commented in her 'Breedlines' column in the June 1988 issue of *Dogs in Canada* that "the French version of the Brittany is so different from the Canadian that they are not the same breed. They don't look alike, they don't work in the same manner in the field and temperament is different. Even without the colour difference I can tell them apart."



DOG A OR DOG B?

If you are not familiar with the breed and have not decided which of these two Brittany represents the Canadian type, a further comment by Andreas will help. She remarks, "...there are irreconcilable differences going beyond the issue of colour! ... purchases of dogs from Europe need to know that they are buying into a heavier-bodied, black-pigmented, shorter range French type as opposed to the rangier, faster, traditionally coloured Canadian version." (Any black is a disqualification in Canada.)

The incorrect one o'clock tail angle on Dog B draws attention to the current American trend of pushing up the Brittany's tail, perhaps to make the body appear shorter than it actually is. It is conceivable that, within a short span of time, breeders could produce a level sacrum and the exhibitor's hand could relax.

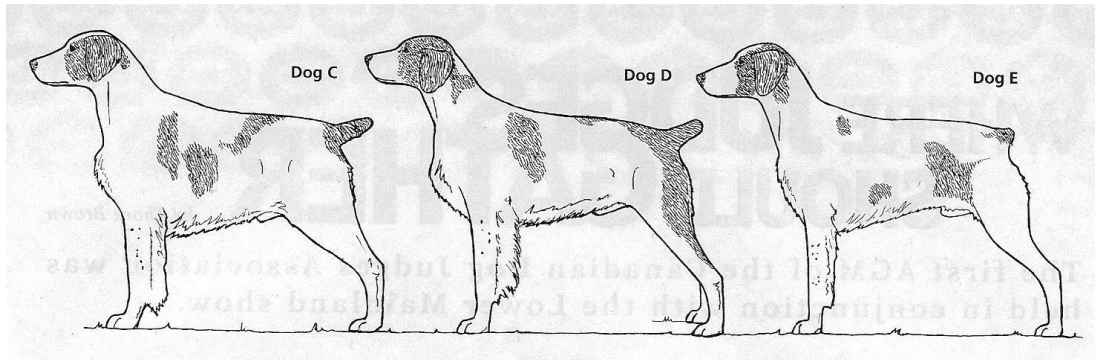
DOGS C, D AND E

How would you place these three group winners? They represent, in part, balance differences within the breed. All three are 20 ½ inches tall (over is a disqualification). Their heads differ in that Dog D's ears could be set on higher and Dog E's muzzle could be a little shorter, but that doesn't necessarily make Dog C the winner.

Which one of these three dogs conforms to the requirement for a compact, closely knit dog of medium size, having the appearance – as well as the agility – of a great ground coverer?

The Brittany should be rugged without being clumsy. He can be tailless or have a docked to about four inches. He is so leggy that his height at the shoulders is approximately the same as the length of his body from the forechest to the rump. The breed is not too light in bone, yet never heavy boned. The ideal foot is halfway between the hare and the cat foot.

The neck is of medium length, free from throatiness; however, this is not a serious fault unless accompanied by dewlaps. The chest is deep, reaching to the elbow. The length of the loin will allow about three or four fingers to fit between the last rib and the thigh. The topline slopes slightly from withers to croup, where there is another slight drop from the hips to the root of the tail. Tuck up is not extreme.

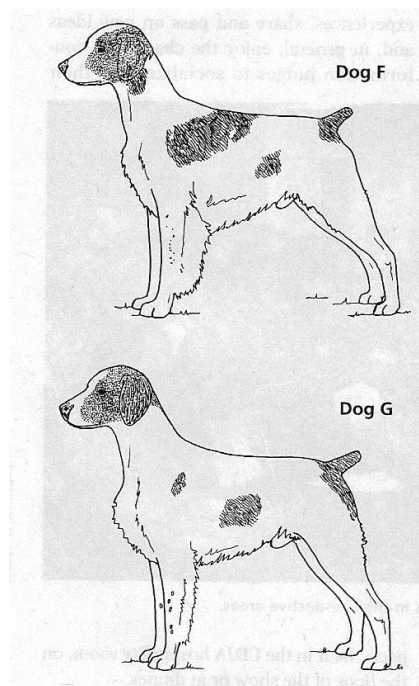


The head is distinctive. The expression is alert and eager, but is also the soft expression of a bird dog. Preference should be for the darker eyes, though lighter shades of amber should not be penalized. Ears are set high, above the level of the eyes. The skull is rounded and very slightly wedge shaped. The stop is well defined but gently sloping. The muzzle is about two-thirds the length of the skull. The lips are tight and dry, with the upper lip overlapping the lower. The bite is a true scissors bite.

The sloping shoulder blades have perhaps two thumbs' width between them. The blade and upper arm form a nearly 90 degree angle. The front pasterns slope slightly. Steep shoulder blades and legs down in the pasterns receive special concern in the standard.

The hindquarters are broad, strong and muscular, with powerful thighs and well bent stifles. The rear pasterns are moderately short, pointing neither in nor out, and should be perpendicular when viewed from the side.

The coat is flat or wavy, never curly; the texture is neither wiry nor silky. Colour is orange and white or liver and white, in either clear or roan patterns. Some ticking is desirable. The orange and liver are found in standard, parti-colour or piebald patterns.



MY OPINION

Dog E is unbalanced front to rear and, therefore, is not in contention for first in this class. His front pasterns lack a slight slope and, in the rear, the second thigh is too long.

The decision for first between Dog C and Dog D is interesting. Dog C's front pasterns have a trifle too much slope and Dog D lacks angulation in the stifle. Examples like Dog D may be the reason the Brittany standard adds, "A Brittany should not be condemned for straight stifle until the judge has checked the dog in motion from the side." An interesting and unusual direction but perhaps not for this particular square breed. Although these two Brittanys present two quite different outlines, the decision is close. I went with Dog C.

DOG F OR DOG G?

Now you are aware, if you weren't already, of most Brittany virtues and faults. Does this help you decide which of these two Brittanys should place first? Each has won a BISS and a BIS. Dog F stands 19 inches; Dog G stands 20 inches. They both are very close to being square. I was going to use only one of these examples to represent typical until I compared the two and found there were sufficient differences in balance to warrant sketching them both and

letting you decide.

Since both dogs are BISS and BIS winners, you could adopt the attitude that you cannot make the wrong decision, but that's not what judging is all about. You bring certain knowledge, experience and ability into the equation. Stacked in profile, which dog do you prefer? My choice is Dog G.