

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

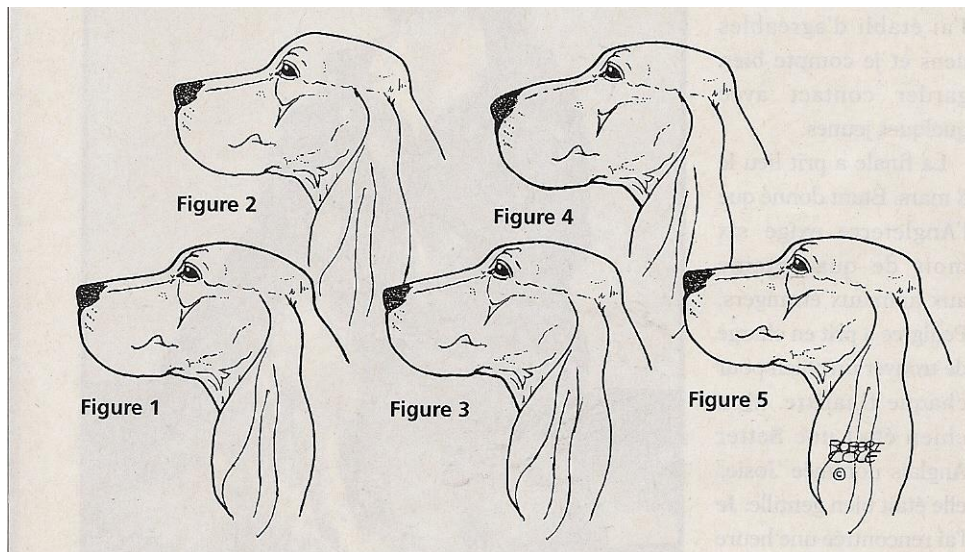
From *Dogs in Canada*, July 1998

Based on *The Canadian Kennel Club and country of origin standards*.

WHICH HEAD IS CORRECT?

Decide which one of these five English Cocker Spaniel heads is most correct, then determine in what single way each of the other four profiles departs from typical.

The most correct head is Figure 5, and its virtues will be highlighted by contrasting it to the head of its American cousin. The departures are: Figure 1 has a receding back topskull; Figure 2 has a pronounced stop; Figure 3 has a downfaced muzzle; and Figure 4 has a Roman muzzle.



COCKER VS COCKER

Compare English Cocker head Figure 6 to American Cocker head Figure 7. The head is an important English Cocker breed characteristic and in no way must it resemble the head of its American cousin. There are three major differences – what are they?

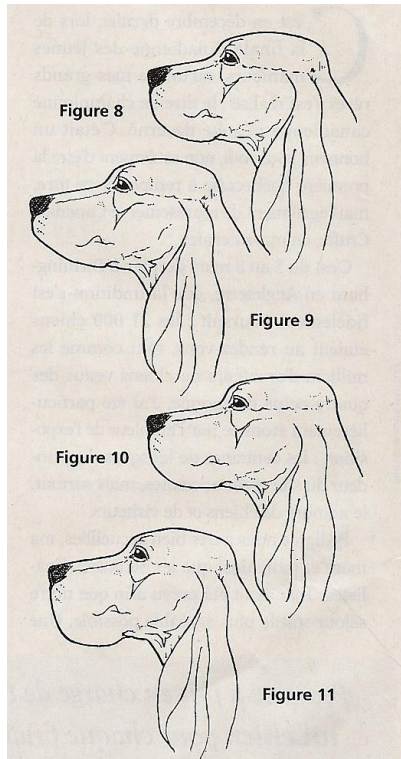
The English Cocker's muzzle is equal in length to the measurement of the stop to the base of the skull; the American Cocker's muzzle is equal to one half of the distance from the stop up over the crown to the base of the skull.

The English Cocker's skull is arched and slightly flattened, with a moderate stop and the brow not appreciably higher than the backskull; the American Cocker's skull is round and the stop is pronounced.

FOUR MORE HEAD FAULTS

Having viewed a correct head (Figure 5) and found faults on three more, you're invited to do the same for Figures 8,9,10, and 11.

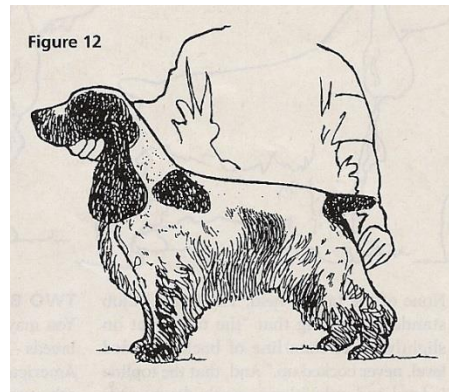
In numerical order but not necessarily in degree of fault severity, the four faults (one on each head) are a short muzzle, a snipey muzzle, a flat skull and pendulous lips.



TYPICAL

Figure 12 represents my interpretation of The Kennel Club standard's intent. It differs from my North American typical (but not necessarily Canadian) only in having a gentle slope downwards to the tail from the end of the loin to the set of the tail, and the tail set on slightly lower than the line of the back, carried level, never cocked up.

The clean neck is of moderate length, set neatly into fine sloping shoulders, The body is strong and compact, the chest well developed, the brisket deep, the loin short and the topline level. There is a good bend of stifle.



LEG LENGTH

Correct length of leg is an important gun dog consideration in formulating an image of typical for a specific breed.

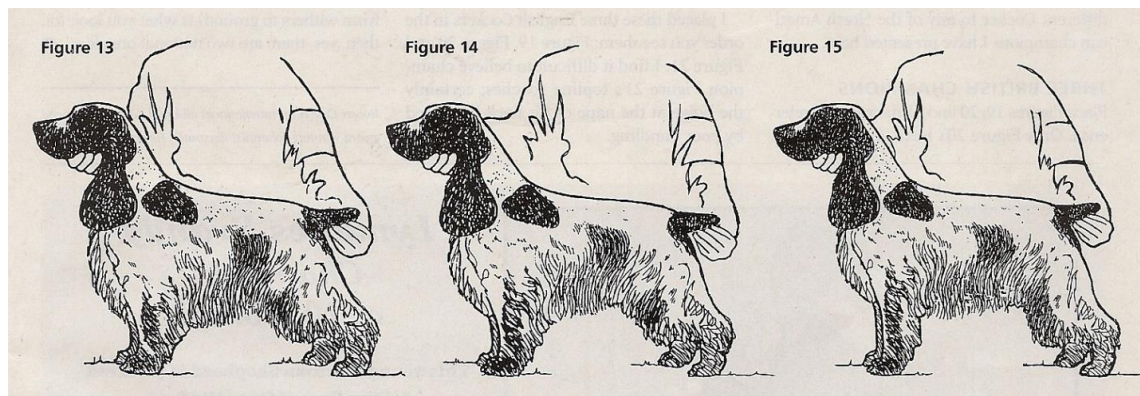
The British standard advises "Legs well boned sufficiently short for concentrated power. Not too short to interfere with tremendous exertions expected from this grand, sporting dog." The asking for "sufficiently short but not too short" sounds ambiguous, but actually it isn't. It is the standard's way of saying not an English Springer image but also not a Clumber. The CKC standard does not include leg length.

Having a "not too profuse" hair covering further complicates formulating an image of typical leg length so what I have done is present you with three hairy leg lengths and let you search with your optic senses to find the correct leg length.

Figures 13, 14 and 15 are all the same height, and have the same length of body, head and tail. Their only difference is their length of leg in ratio to their hidden depth of body. Elbows of each are level with the brisket. Only one possesses correct English Cocker proportions. Which one?

If your eye readily recognized Figure 14 as having correct English Cocker proportions you have formulated a picture of balance for this active breed.

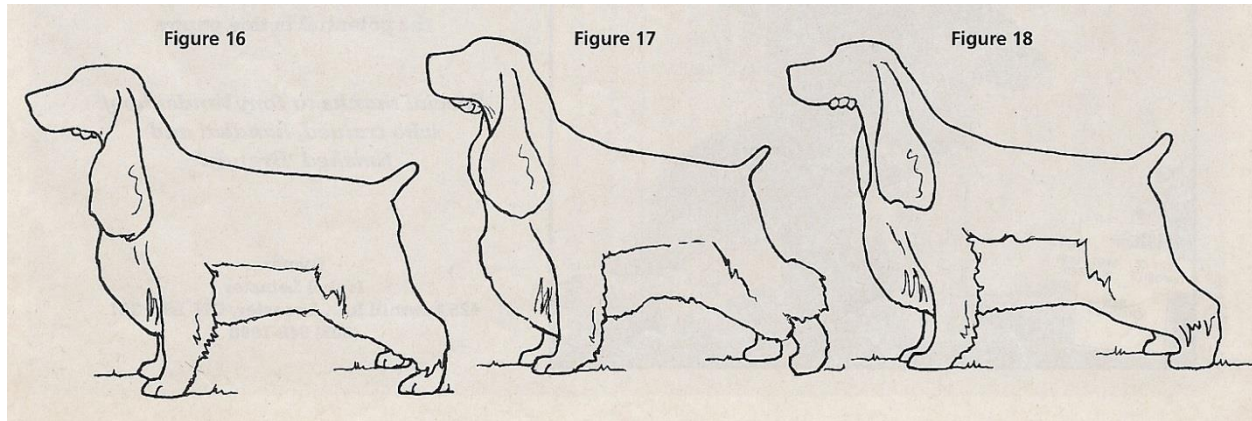
Longer legged Figure 15's departure from type is more obvious than shorter legged Figure 13. If this was a short-coated breed, the short legs would be more easily discernible. Grooming (not a factor in this scenario) also plays an important role in the presentation of English Cocker balance.



PLACE ALL THREE

Place Figures 16, 17 and 18 in order of preference. All three real-life English Cockers in this class are North American champions and have won one or more specialties within the last two decades.

I have kept these drawings simple, leaving out the eyes and keeping detail to a minimum. There are fingers under each jaw and supporting each of their tails – a practice intended to make the dog appear more attentive, the throat cleaner (drier), to provide rear end control.



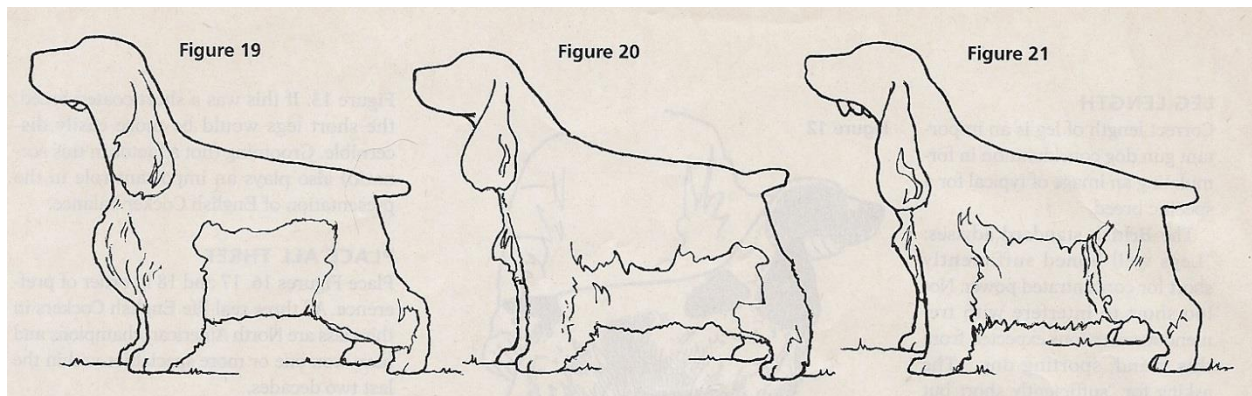
My order of preference is Figure 18, Figure 16, then Figure 17. Take note of the presence or absence of shelf over the buttocks, the subterfuge produced by grooming to give the impression Figure 17 possesses greater hind leg angulation, and the thin tail on Figure 17. Heads you know about.

BRITISH TYPE

Louise Shattuck writes about the square proportions she encountered on her yearly visit from America to Britain and of the comments made by several breeders there who talked at length about how an English Cocker should fit into a square. Ms. Shattuck's observations came to mind because during the process of selecting representative British champions, I was surprised to discover that advertisers in Britain were promoting a very different Cocker to any of the North American champions I have presented here.

THREE BRITISH CHAMPIONS

Place Figures 19, 20 and 21 in order of preference. Only Figure 20's head is unsupported. None of the tails is held. The Kennel Club standard advising that "the tail is set on slightly lower than line of back ... carried level, never cocked up." And, that the topline is level and only "slopes gently downwards from end of loin to set on of tail". The Kennel Club standard does not mention a forechest and only one of these three appears to have any. Buttocks are not mentioned or present in this class.



I placed these three English Cockers in the order you see them: Figure 19, Figure 20 and Figure 21. I find it difficult to believe champion Figure 21's topline roaches; certainly the bulge at the nape of his neck is created by poor handling.

TWO BREEDS?

You may be asking yourself if there are two breeds – ie., an English Cocker and a North American English Cocker. You might also ask yourself which Cocker you would put up between American champion Figure 18 and English champion Figure 19? Choice of Figure 19 won't answer the question of one breed or two because neither of these Cockers is without faults. If, however, square (the same length from forechest to buttocks as height from withers to ground) is what you look for, then, yes, there are two national breeds.