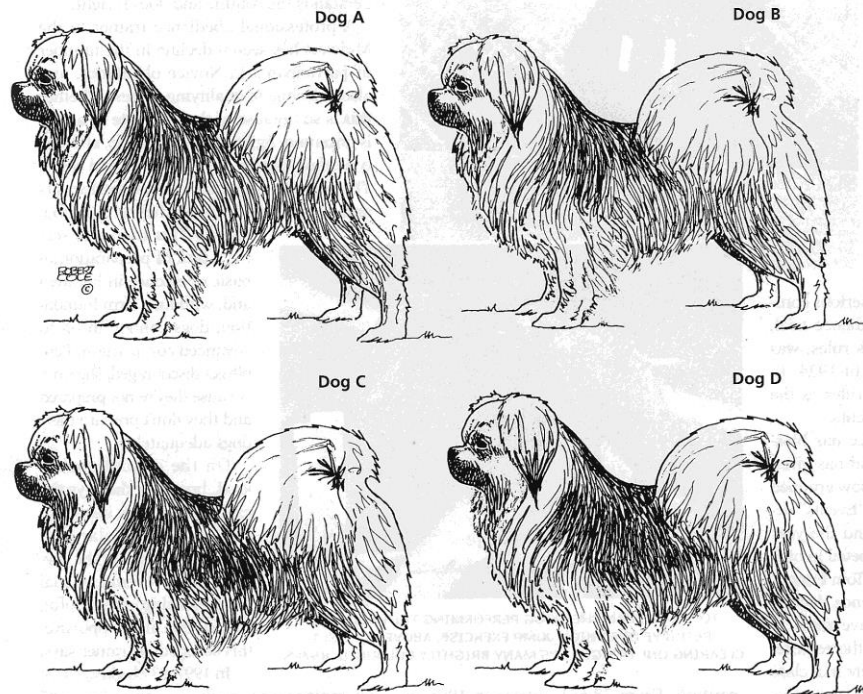


YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

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THE TIBETAN SPANIEL



DOG A OR DOG B?

One of these two Tibetan Spaniels represents typical balance for this small, active Non-Sporting breed; the other demonstrates a particular departure from correct balance. Choose between the two. In what way does the other dog depart from what you perceive as typical balance?

The standard leaves a great deal to the imagination when it comes to describing all the parts that combine to produce typical Tibetan Spaniel balance. It does inform that “the neck is moderately short; that height is about 10 inches; and that the body is slightly longer from the point of shoulder to root of tail than the height at withers.” Unfortunately this information is not enough and we must turn to published interpretations and analyses of the standard by experts in the breed.

The Tibetan Spaniel is fortunate in regard to having a number of informative published books on the breed, plus two illustrated standards. They combine to fill in some of the empty spaces.

THE FORELEG

The Tibetan Spaniel possesses an unusual foreleg, which we will discuss in detail when we examine this breed viewed from the front. However, in profile, the only difference between Dog a and Dog B is length of leg.

How long should the Tibetan Spaniel’s foreleg be? The norm is a leg length equal to the depth of body. The standard is silent on this question, as are books on the breed. However, the skeletal drawings in

both illustrated standards depict the ratio of body depth to foreleg length as five to three, which is quite a short foreleg. Dog B has a short foreleg; Dog A is too high on the leg for a Tibetan Spaniel.

DOG C OR DOG D?

Again, one of these two Tibetan Spaniels represents typical balance and the other demonstrates a departure. Having an image of typical in mind, making a choice between these two examples is easier. However, the real question is: what is the reason for the other dog's balance departure?

ELBOW POSITION

Dog C doesn't depart from typical balance simply because he is one inch shorter in height. The reason is more complex than that.

Have you determined what it is? If you are familiar with the Pekingese front or the fronts on any of the wrap-around, low-slung breeds, I'm sure you are aware that Dog C's elbow is positioned too high up on his body, the body slung between the front legs.

I might not have included this departure if the standard had simply included the advice that the elbow should be level with the deepest part of the brisket (bottom of the chest). Dog C's body has dropped down between the front legs and the elbow is positioned above (higher than) the brisket.

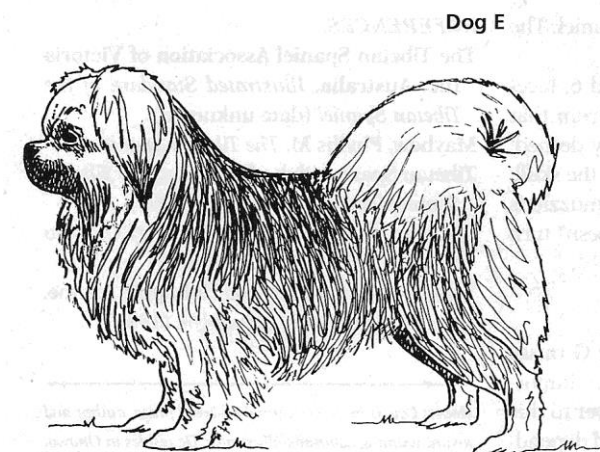
DOG D AGAIN

There are three additional front end parts worthy of discussion, which are not mentioned in the standard. All are visible on typical Dog D. The first is the astounding degree of forechest possessed by this breed. The forechest seldom, if ever, receives mention. Why? I have come to the conclusion that the Tibetan Spaniel forechest is so seldom absent that fanciers take this enviable breed characteristic for granted.

The second part worthy of mention is the length and angle of this breed's upper arm. It slants at almost a right angle to the shoulder blade, and is of sufficient length that it positions the elbow well rearward on the dog's body.

The third part not mentioned in the standard is the strong, slight slope to the front pastern. This slope is necessary in order to position the front foot forward directly under the centre of support, as well as to absorb shock.

Combined, as on Dog D, these three parts plus a well laid shoulder blade and short legs produce a distinctive, if not unique balance; one that is easier for me to depict than to describe.



ONE FAULT OR TWO?

Your eye should appreciate Dog E's many virtues but should also be initially disturbed by two features. What are they?

The first feature is a definite fault. Dog E's short rather than "moderately short" neck should disturb your sense of Tibetan Spaniel balance.

The second feature is the tail. It is not fully carried in a gay curl over the back. It is important to know that it doesn't have to curl over the back when standing. The standard advises that the curl occurs "when the dog is moving". In addition, the American illustrated standard advises that: "It is perfectly natural for the tail to be dropped down behind the dog when standing at rest, adopting the 'lion' position. This

position should not be penalized in the ring as long as the tail is carried well over the back when moving, as it does not denote a nervous temperament in these cases. An obvious nervous dog is another matter and should be penalized."

I could leave the tail there, but I know you are asking how high is 'set high'? Does the tail join the body high and curl forward in the manner of a Lhasa Apso? A Basenji? Or perhaps that of a Finnish Spitz?

“Set high” is interpreted as, “it should spring from the top of the back...” in both illustrated standards. Based on that information, I conclude that there is very little, if any, rounding of the croup immediately in front of the tail. The tail projects out at two o’clock, then goes up and curls forward, the tip being carried on the top of one hip. (A kink at the end of the tail is of no real significance.)

FEET

Somewhere along the line I should have mentioned the Tibetan Spaniel’s distinctive feet. The breed should have a small and neat hare foot. A cat foot is faulted. Feathering on the toes sometimes extends beyond the feet and should never be cut.

It is permissible, however, to trip away the tufts of hair that grow down from in between the toes and under the pads, for safety and cleanliness.

FIGURES 1, 2, 3, AND 4?

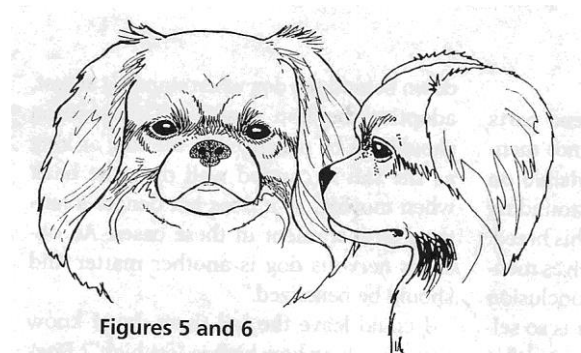
Now we come to the unorthodox short front legs, viewed face-on. It is crucial to type that you appreciate this breed’s distinctive front assembly. The standard advises: “The moderate bones of the forelegs are slightly bowed but firm at the shoulder. Faults – very bowed or loose front.”

Fiddle-fronted Figure A is “very bowed” and his elbows are not tight to the body. The straight legs on Figure 1 are incorrect. This illustration has been included to provide a contrast to the correct, “slightly-bowed” Figure 2. Perhaps the most serious departure, wrap-around front Figure 3, is included to remind that the chest should not drop down between the front legs in the manner of a poor quality Pekingese. (The bottom of the Pekingese’s chest should rest on the inner curve of the forearm.)

FIGURES 5 AND 6

It is important to think of the Tibetan Spaniel as a separate breed, not a poor quality Pekingese. Granted, the two breeds appear similar; however, that which is a virtue in a Pekingese is a fault in a Tibetan Spaniel. The head is a good example.

This correct head (Figures 5 and 6; face on and in profile) is far different from that of a Pekingese: the skull is slightly domed; the fairly high set ear may lift from the skull; the dark brown eyes are oval; the muzzle is about 1 ½ inches long; the nose doesn’t turn up; and there are no wrinkles.



Figures 5 and 6

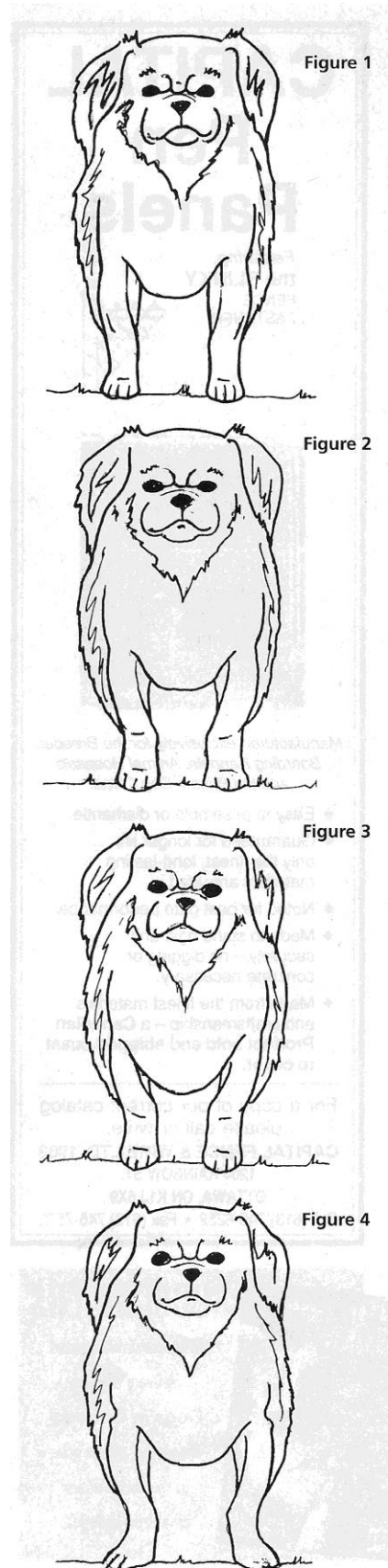


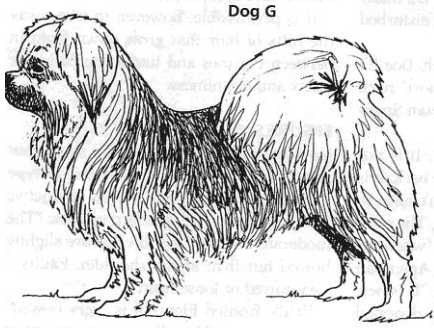
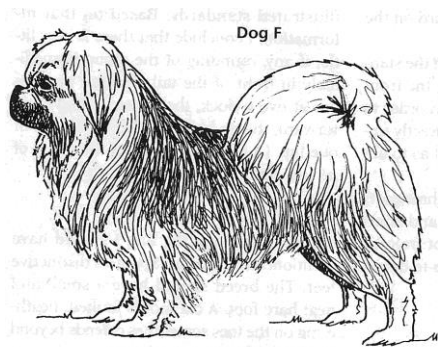
Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

TYPE OR SOUNDNESS?



Deciding between Dog F and Dog G raises the age old question: which is more important – type or soundness? The answer to this question varies from breed to breed depending on its purpose. It also depends on how important distinctive type characteristics are to a particular breed, especially those of the head. The answer also varies each time two dogs compete, as no two situations and no degree of departure are ever the same. The situation is compounded when the two dogs under consideration are of different sexes.

The question of which is more important, type or soundness, is more likely to be answered given two specific dogs of the same breed, the same size, the same sex, and equally well groomed and handled – such as Dog F and Dog G.

FIRST PLACE?

Let's say Dog G has a perfect head, his faults confined to a degree of steepness in both front and rear. Let's say Dog F is very sound, his faults confined to his upturned muzzle, a bite undershot three-eighths of an inch (ideal is a reverse scissors) and a gap indicating that one of the six lower incisors is missing. Which dog would you place first?

My decision applies only to this breed and only to this set of circumstances. This being a head breed, my first inclination was to go for Dog G. However, the more I looked, the more problems I had with the degree of Dog G's unsoundness. The too-far-forward front leg has destroyed the Tibetan Spaniel balance, as has the topline. I decided in favour of Dog F.

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