

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, July 1987

THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel resembling the small Toy Spaniel of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries became virtually extinct in Victorian times. The breed was revitalized in the first quarter of this century, recognized officially in Britain in 1945, and in Canada in 1957. In the United States this breed competes for Specialty points awarded not by the American Kennel Club but by the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club U.S.A. At all breed shows south of our border the Cavalier competes in the AKC Miscellaneous Class.



A major concern of Canadian breeders is that the Cavalier, largest of the toy breeds, be judged primarily as a sound Toy Spaniel – not as a sound Sporting Spaniel. This concern was confirmed in a Canadian questionnaire when several judges suggested that the Cavalier be removed from the Toy Group. This suggestion would indicate that some very large Cavaliers are in competition. Having made this point, the six examples I have illustrated here are all 12-13 inch (30-33 cm) at the shoulder and, as in reality, weigh closer to 18 lbs. than the allowed 12-18 lbs.

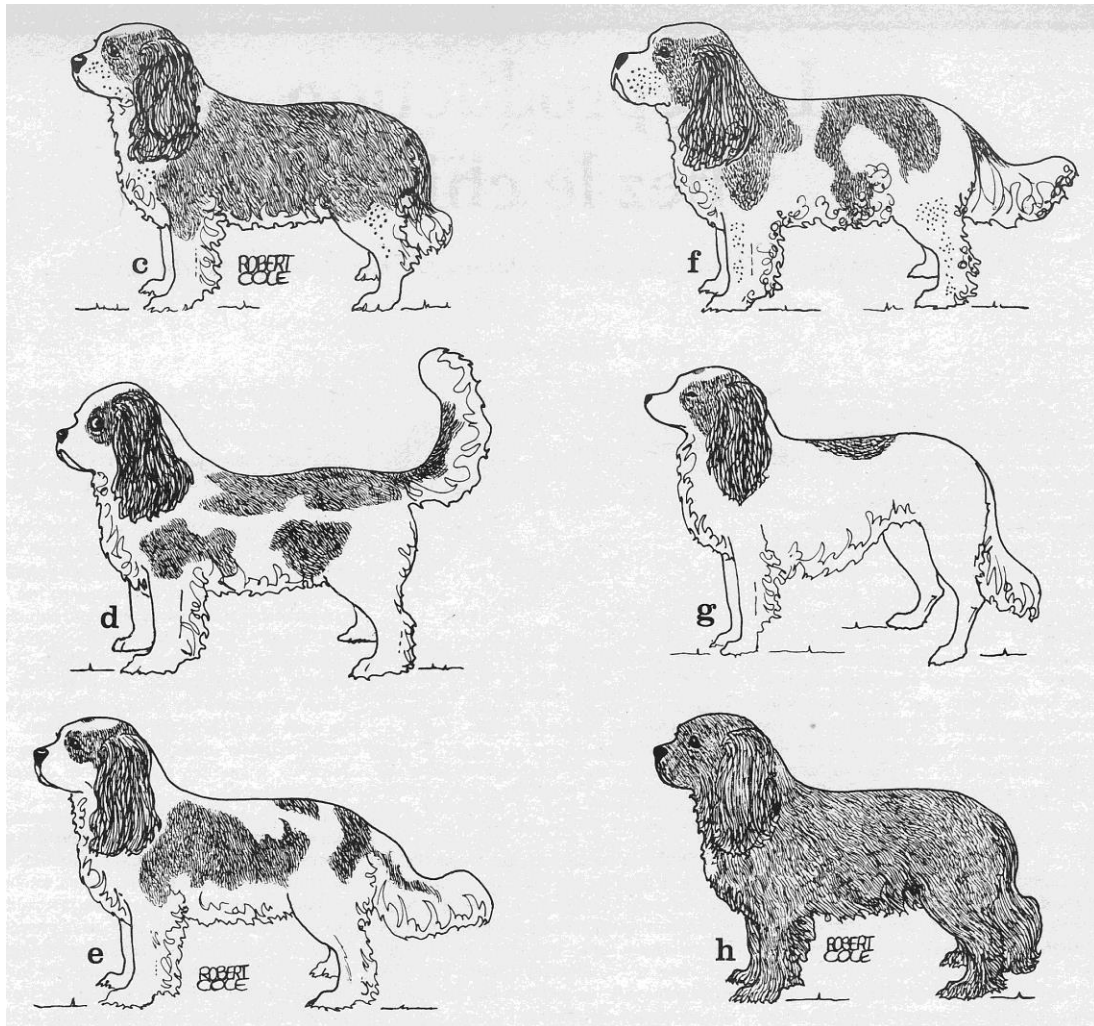
Another important breeder concern is the distinctive Cavalier head (a). A pioneer Standard Committee placed so much emphasis on the Cavalier's head that 55 points out of a possible 100 had to be allocated to this one feature. The point allocation system has since been abandoned but the high percentage of points once given to the head indicates the concern then (and now) that the head set the breed apart and especially not resemble that of the English Toy Spaniel (b) a popular breed long recognized by the CKC.

The head of the English Toy spaniel is domed, whereas the Cavalier's skull is flat – not perfectly flat but its high set ears help to make it appear so. The English Toy, as can be seen in the comparison sketch, has a more pronounced stop than the Cavalier and its nose turns up between its eyes. The lower jaw also turns up.

The Cavalier's head is quite distinctive. The head is one third muzzle to two thirds skull, a ratio in keeping with its function as a Toy, not a game carrying Sporting breed. Neither the black nose nor the underjaw turns up. The head should not be domed as the English Toy Spaniel, or the muzzle shaped like that of a Basenji. It should not have houndy lips, like that of the Basset. Ear leather should be long and covered with long silky hair. Eyes must be dark, large and almost round but not prominent. There should be slight cushioning beneath the eyes which when absent makes the muzzle sometimes appear long and detracts from the gentle, sweet expression characteristic of the Cavalier. The nose must be black, the teeth preferably meeting in a scissors bite although a level bite is permitted. In addition, a slightly undershot bite in an otherwise well balanced head should not be penalized in favour of a level mouth with plain or hard expression. Given this direction, the Standard leaves scope for acceptance of different types of Cavalier heads, none to be confused with that of any other breed.

Awareness of small size, also that the Cavalier is primarily a Toy breed, and of those features which set the head apart, serves as a basis for judging this active, graceful and well balanced breed. I have provided six Cavalier examples. *You be the judge.* On the basis of what you already know, pick your four winners, then

come back and we will discuss each dog individually and in doing so focus on those aspects considered most important to this breed.



FIRST PLACE

If you chose this Blenheim Cavalier 'e' you chose – in my opinion – the best example in one of the four acceptable colours; Blenheim, Ruby, Tri-colour, and Black and Tan (the latter two colours are not illustrated but all colours will be described).

This example has a soft, silky coat free of curl, and the feathering on the feet is a distinctive breed characteristic. The colour is dark chestnut red, not biscuit or orange. The red markings are nicely broken up on a pearly white ground complimenting a moderately angulated shoulder blade and upper arm. The chest is deep, the loin short, and angulation moderate at stifle and hock.

The head is nicely shaped and marked, the colour spaced by the white blaze between the ears. There is and *must* be red around each eye and the ears *must* be red (disqualification when not present in Canada). Between the ears in the centre of the white is the valued lozenge or thumb print. The lozenge is unique and highly desirable but not essential (about one in five are born with it). Unfortunately this obvious head characteristic is often leaned on too heavily both in the show ring and the whelping box.

RUBY COLOUR

Represented by Cavalier 'h', is the only true self-colour. This should be a rich red, not a sandy orange colour and not with a liver tinge. The white spot on this example's shirt front is faulty.

TRI-COLOUR (not illustrated)

Has a black marking well broken upon a pearly white ground with rich tan markings over the eyes, on cheeks, inside the ears, inside the legs, on the chest, legs and under the tail. The tan must be a rich tan. If a tri-colour Cavalier has a white rump and the base of the tail is white, the tan will understandably be absent. As with the Blenheim, a heavily marked dog displaying true Cavalier type should not be penalized in favour of a better marked dog of lesser quality.

BLACK AND TAN (not illustrated)

Has jet black marking with rich tan (not yellowish) markings over the eyes, on cheeks, inside legs and on the underside of the tail. Tan on the face should be evenly marked. Some Cavaliers are free of tan over the muzzle; in others the tan joins across the muzzle as an acceptable band.

SECOND PLACE

The Ruby Cavalier 'h' that I have selected is similar in head and balance to the first place winner. The foreleg is as long as the body is deep, the elbow is level with the bottom of the chest, the overall length of body slightly longer than height. Angulation is moderate front and rear, and (as is characteristic of the Cavalier) there is no tucked up appearance. An obvious fault is the spot of white on the chest.

If the first place Blenheim lacked the lozenge I would have still given it first. If the Blenheim's white blaze was slipped, causing the head to appear unbalanced, I would in this breed fault it more heavily than the white hairs on this Ruby's chest.

THIRD PLACE

I would give to Cavalier 'c'. too much eye white is showing around the eye's iris and the dog is poorly marked but it is sounder and more typical than any one of the other three. To balance the tail to the dog almost one third of the tail has been docked ensuring as required that a white tip remains. The majority of breeders in the U.K., the U.S.A. and Canada no longer dock tails.

FOURTH PLACE

Three Cavaliers are left and, as often happens in judging, deciding on the fourth place often is made especially interesting by the required trade-off of a number of virtues and faults, some of the latter not yet mentioned.

At this scale it is not possible to illustrate all of the faults that might be present. However, if the Cavalier you have selected for fourth place possessed (1) a butterfly nose; (2) a putty nose; (3) a light eye; or (4) small nostrils, it would have to be heavily penalized.

As for myself I would give fourth place to Cavalier 'f'. The coat is not free from curl (a slight wave would be permissible) and its muzzle is much longer and heavier than is desirable. There are freckles on the muzzle (more than three or four upset some breeders). Somewhat less superficial are the flecks in the white coat on chest and flank. On the credit side this dog is sound, the elbows held tight to the body, there is a good spring of rib, and the body is short coupled and bone is of moderate weight.

Cavalier 'd' possesses the undesirable domed skull, up turned nose, and the up turned jaw associated with the English Toy Spaniel and foreign to the Cavalier. Its eyes are too prominent. Its tail is carried high not due to an incorrectly angled pelvis but due to a flat sacrum (where tail joins body). This form of level sacrum and high carried tail probably harks back to early crosses to Toy breeds possessing this feature. You have probably noticed the topline is weak and the loin is long.

Cavalier 'g' is shelly, lacking depth of body and moderate bone weight. The body appears long because of inadequate shoulder blade and upper arm angulation. Its neck is short and stuffy. Its muzzle is snipey and the eye is too small producing a hard expression. Instead of a broken coat colour this example has only a saddle – appealing to some but a fault for this breed. Lastly (and too often seen in this breed). This example is cowhocked and sickle-hocked, the latter fault bringing the feet forward for support under, rather than slightly rearward of, the pelvis.

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FIVE HEADS

Decide which one of these five Cavalier King Charles Spaniel heads best represents typical; then before you read the description, place the remaining four heads in order of merit. Following this, compare the two drawings of Blenheim dogs (a colour variety with rich chestnut markings well broken up on a pearly white ground) stacked in profile, and decide which one comes closest to my description of the ideal.

The other three permitted colours are tri-colour, black and tan, and a whole coloured rich red called ruby. I chose to use the red-and-white Blenheim because detail is easier to see.

HEAD D

You probably had little difficulty deciding that Head D was closest to ideal. In the show ring, differences can often be more subtle, but appreciation for typical is no less.

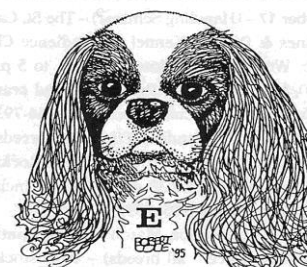
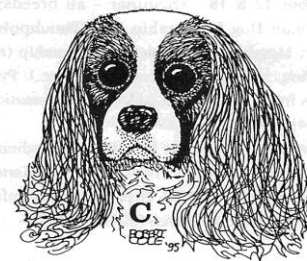
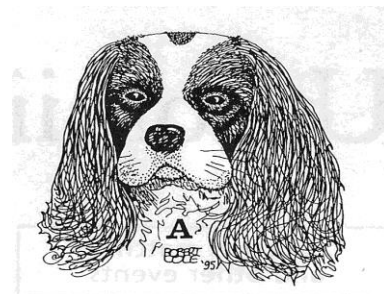
Appreciation begins with an almost flat skull between long, high set ears covered with silky feathering. The eyes are large, round and set well apart, their colour a dark warm brown, giving a lustrous, limpid look.

The stop is described as shallow to differentiate from the King Charles Spaniel, or the English Toy Spaniel as it is known in North America. The muzzle is about (“about” is better than “at least”) four centimeters (1.5 inches) long from base of stop to tip of nose. The muzzle, when viewed from above, is wider at the stop than at the tip; when viewed in profile, the muzzle is deeper at the stop than at the tip. The nose is black, the nostrils large and open. The lips are fully pigmented, well developed but not pendulous. The cushioning below the eyes contributes to the characteristic gentle expression.

The teeth are strong and regular; the bite a complete scissors bite (Canada and the U.S.A. permit a pincer bite). An undershot bite is greatly discouraged because it harks back to the shorter, turned up, undesirable English Toy Spaniel muzzle configuration. However, if this best head was only slightly undershot, I would not favour any of the other four heads over it

HEAD A

This second-place head has two faults; the small eyes produce a hard expression and the lips (flews) are heavy and hang low (usually accompanied by throatiness). On the credit side, this Blenheim’s head is the only one of the five that possesses the desirable but not essential lozenge mark in the centre of the white blaze. As for the blaze, it is important to know that the evenly divided colour on each side of a



Blenheim or tri-colour's white blaze must extend around the eyes as well as down over the ears. Failure for the colour to do so (clown face) in Canada means disqualification.

HEAD B

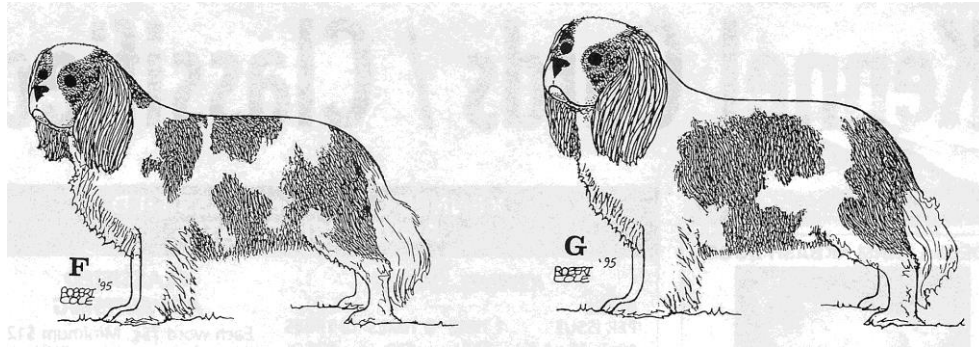
This heavy Cavalier's round skull is faulty, as are his light eyes. Light eyes give an alien look to the dog, and Susan Burgess, a respected English breeder; has stated that light eyes are one of the hardest Cavalier faults to breed out. This head also lacks the desired cushioning beneath the eyes that contributes much to sweet, gentle expression. My choice for third place was between wide-skull Head B and narrow-skull Head C.

HEAD C

The overly large eyes and narrow head on this probably too lightly boned Cavalier are disturbing, but compared to the coarseness of Head B with its light, staring eyes, I went with Head C for third place. This decision took time, and as always, when confronted with such diverse departures, one is never wholly satisfied.

HEAD E

This head had a number of faults – some obvious, and some, from this angle, not so obvious. The skull is round, which lowers the ears, the forehead is domed; the eyes are oval with the white showing; and the muzzle is short and lacking in depth. Aside from a black nose with wide, open nostrils, this head has few redeeming features.



IN PROFILE

The Cavalier is a “well balanced dog”. I interpret well balanced to mean not only balanced front with rear but also slightly longer in body than tall. I prefer that the slightly arched neck be described as moderately long rather than fairly long. There should be a degree of forechest in front of the point of shoulder. The shoulder blade is well laid back, and the upper arm of equal appearing length slopes rearward. The elbow sets close, level with the bottom of the brisket, half the distance from withers to ground. Bone is neither heavy nor light. Front pasterns have a slight slope. Feet are compact and well feathered, the hairy “bedroom slippers” being a Cavalier characteristic.

The back and short loin are level, there is a good spring of rib and the croup slopes slightly down to root of tail. The tail sets so as to be carried level with the topline and, if colour is broken, the tip should be white. There is no appearance of tuck up under the flank. There is good angulation at stifle and hock, and the relatively short rear pasterns are set vertically, viewed from the side or from behind.

Height is 30 to 33 centimeters (12 to 13 inches). Weight in Canada and the U.S.A. is between 6 and 8.25 kilograms (12 to 18 lbs.). Cavalier F is a Toy dog, and this fact must never be lost sight of. Dog G represents an excessively large dog weighing about 11 kilograms (24 pounds), and should not be placed Winners, even if he is the only exhibit. The Cavalier may be one of the largest breeds in the Toy Group, but he definitely is a Toy dog. It is the sight of these enormous Cavaliers that causes people to wonder if the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel should be removed from Group 5.