

# YOU BE THE JUDGE

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## THE ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL

Based on the AKC standard approved February 12, 1994

### YOUR TASK

Let's begin with an inadequate attempt to visually interpret the head, then take a look at 26 numbered virtues. After reviewing the breed's history and purpose take a close look at a class of six ESSs and identify their 26 faults. Select four dogs having faults that least affect type and function, then place the four in order of the least objectionable.

### THE HEAD

In producing this drawing my intent was to fashion a head that is impressive without being heavy – an alert dog with a kindly, trusting expression. The stop, eyebrows and chiseling of the bony structure around the eye sockets contribute to this expression, as does the groove or fluting between the eyes, disappearing as it reaches the middle of the forehead. The muzzle is approximately the same length as the skull, and the toplines of the skull and muzzle lie in approximately parallel planes. The nostrils are wide open and broad. The teeth are strong, clean, of good size and, ideally, meet in a scissors bite. A pincer bite or one or two incisors out of line are minor faults. Undershot, overshot and wry mouths are serious faults.

The eyes are medium in size, not prominent or sunken, but well set in, almond in shape with an alert, kind expression. They must show no haw. A mouse like eye without expression is objectionable. The colour of the eyes should tone with the coat – dark hazel with the liver and white, and dark brown to almost black for the back and whites. Some puppies have a lighter than desired eye; however, in this breed, provided there is a dark rim around the iris, the eye will darken with age. Rim pigmentation is the same as for the nose.

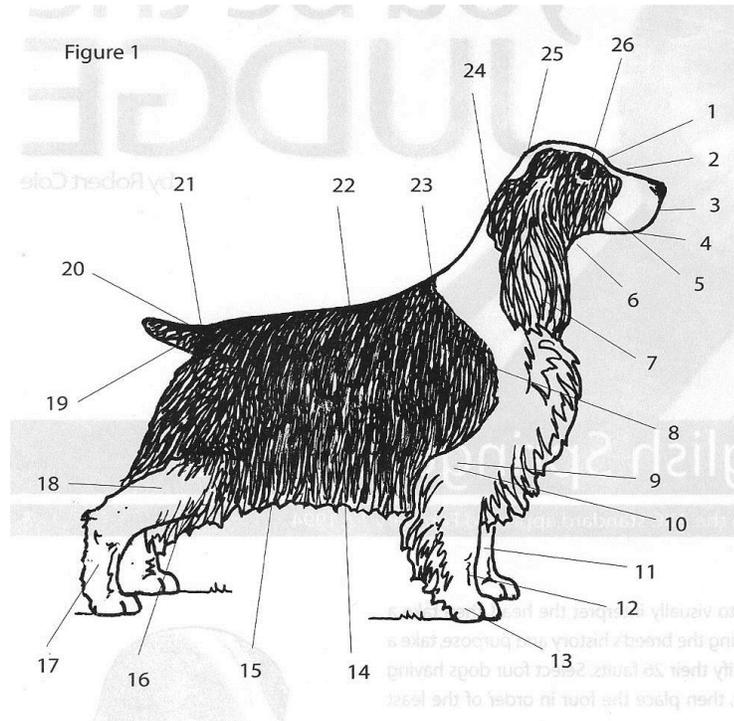
The ears are lobular, of good length and width, and set fairly close to the skull in line with the eye. The feathering is for protection of the shoulders when going through cover, and should be of a moderate length. It will also aid in balancing the head when viewed from the front. If the feathering is too long, it obscures the neck when viewed from the side and alters the outline and balance of the dog. The texture of the ear is neither too thick nor too thin (moderate!). the ears are quite mobile and puppies, in particular, tend to carry them high when alert.

When examining the head, remember that colour markings can sometimes be misleading. A wide blaze can make a head appear wider, whilst a solid liver or black head may look plain. The head viewed in profile should appear approximately the same length as the neck. Of interest to sellers and buyers, puppies may have a bump on the skull combined with hollows behind the eyes. As the pup matures and the skull develops, these should disappear.



## THE 26 VIRTUES OR POINTS

The Springer is a medium sized sporting dog with a compact body and docked tail. Taken as a whole (Figure 1), he looks like a dog that can go, and keep on going, all day under difficult conditions, displaying stamina and style. His coat is close, straight and weather resistant, never coarse, with moderate feathering on the ears, forelegs, body and hindquarters. He may be black and white or liver and white or either of these colours with tan markings. I have indicated and listed 26 points that are of importance to this gun dog.



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| 19) Tail follows line of croup, carried horizontally or slightly elevated. | 23) Shoulder blade tips fairly close                 |
| 20) Hips nicely rounded  | 24) Neck arched, moderately long, clean              |
| 21) Length of body slightly greater than height                            | 25) Occiput bone rounded, inconspicuous              |
| 22) Back strong, no dip on roach   | 26) Eyes dark hazel, black or brown, with tight lids |

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The English Springer Spaniel's history and purpose act as a backdrop against which the breed is judged. As early as 1507, dog literature contains references to spaniels – sporting dogs taken to Britain from Spain (from which country these breeds take the name “spaniel”). At that time, Dr. Caius, first chronicler of dog breeds, divided the “spanielles” into two groups: those that worked in water and those that were used for hunting on land. It is from the land spaniels that the English Springer descends.

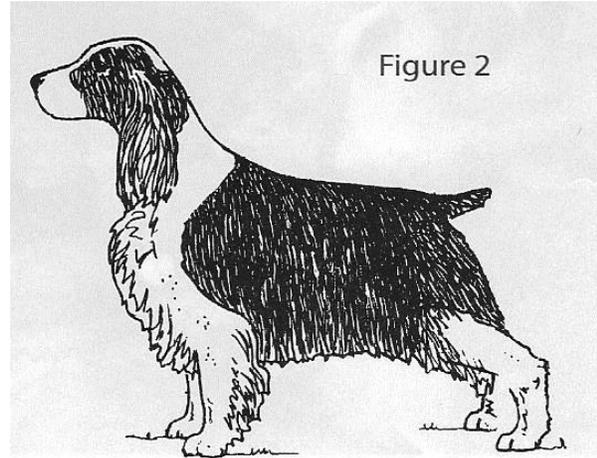
By the year 1800, the land spaniel group had been subdivided into two more groups: those weighing up to 25 pounds were called “cockers” or “cocking spaniels” because they were used chiefly for hunting woodcock; the larger dogs, weighing about 45 pounds and used for springing game for the net and later for the gun, became known as “springers”.

First exhibited in the 1850's as the Norfolk Spaniel, the breed was given its present name after the formation of the Sporting Spaniel Club founded in 1885. The first field trial for spaniels, sponsored by this club, was held in 1899, and by 1902 there was sufficient interest in the English Springer to warrant its official recognition as a separate breed by The Kennel Club (England). The following year the breed was shown for the first time at an English championship event.

The breed came to this continent in 1907 and a Spring club was formed in 1927. The English Springer has earned a reputation as an outstanding all purpose sporting dog and has accounted for some spectacular winning in the show ring. (Based on the breed's introduction in *The Canadian Kennel Club Book of Dogs*, 1988).

### FORM AN IMAGE OF TYPICAL

The same English Springer that served as a model in the identification of 26 virtues now serves (Figure 2) as a representation of typical in contrast to the forthcoming horrible class of six. The standard wants us to be aware that the English Springer Spaniel is a medium sized sporting dog, with a compact body and a docked tail. His coat is moderately long with attractive feathering on his legs, ears, chest and brisket.

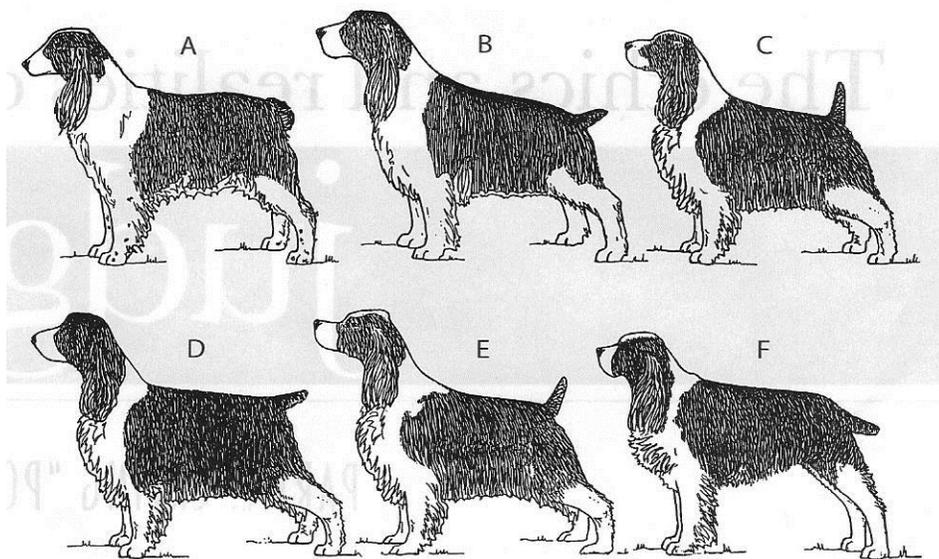


He is above all a well-proportioned dog, free from exaggeration, nicely balanced in every part. His pendulous ears, soft gentle expression, sturdy build and friendly wagging tail unmistakably proclaim him a member of the ancient spaniel line. His carriage is proud and upstanding, body deep, legs strong and muscular, with enough length to carry him with ease.

Taken as a whole, the English Springer Spaniel suggests power, endurance and agility. He looks the part of a dog that can go and keep going, under difficult hunting conditions. At his best, he is endowed with style, balance and enthusiasm, and is every inch a sporting dog of distinct spaniel character, combining beauty and utility. With an image of typical in mind you are now prepared to find the horrible six's 26 faults.

### THE HORRIBLE SIX

Not in my wildest nightmares do I see six English Springer Spaniels of this horrible quality entering your ring, each trying to outdo the other in the number of seriousness of faults. However, you should be prepared for the unexpected and give some thought to your reaction to certain departures as they relate specifically to this breed. To do this, I have given these six English Springer Spaniels a total of 26 faults. You are aware of the 26 virtues. Can you find the 26 faults?



## TWENTY SIX FAULTS

- 1) Snipey muzzle
- 2) Sloping stop
- 3) Pronounced rise over loin
- 4) Clamped tail (indicating timidity)
- 5) Blocky muzzle (below nose)
- 6) Ear set too far rearward
- 7) Diverging head planes
- 8) Very heavy body and bone
- 9) Low set on of tail
- 10) Long rear pasterns
- 11) Coarse, lumpy skull
- 12) Short legs
- 13) High tail set (terrier like)
- 14) Roman nose
- 15) Pronounced stop
- 16) No arch to neck
- 17) Low withers (makes topline look long)
- 18) Flat croup
- 19) Dish face
- 20) Poor feet
- 21) Pronounced occiput
- 22) Short muzzle
- 23) Low set on of tail
- 24) Too much tuck up
- 25) Steep front and rear
- 26) Short neck

## PLACE FOUR DOGS

Of course you could withhold any or all the ribbons on these six, but if you did for this illustrated judging scenario, it would mean never knowing to what degree you could forgive certain form or function faults. As you know, it is easier to judge a good class of dogs than it is to judge a poor class.

When you have a very poor class you cannot say, "Which one would I breed to?" because you wouldn't, and I don't think there is one you want to especially take home. So you might ask yourself, "Which one would I shoot over?" If you ask this question, perhaps that is the dog you should put first and so on, down to fourth.

Each of the horrible six has at least one serious fault. Dog A's snipey muzzle could not carry a heavy bird; heavy Dog B would tire early; short legged Dog C has a type problem; Dog D, to compensate for his less angulated forequarters, will adopt a rear end rotary (bike pedal like) action; Dog E's poor feet will not carry him far; and Dog F's short neck will not allow him to easily pick up game. These are major considerations, but there are other serious faults, such as dish faced Dog E and the pronounced occiput on the same dog, to take into consideration.

Taking these and other faults (as well as virtues) into consideration, which four of the six dogs disturbs you the least? My selection follows: Dog A and Dog F are out of the running. Of the remaining four, I went with Dog C for first, Dog D for second, Dog B for third and Dog E for fourth because it was difficult to see beyond Dog E's poor feet, let along his dish face and occiput, to appreciate his otherwise good form. If you did not match my selection I am not surprised; the variables are many. I mulled it over longer than it would hve taken in the show ring.