

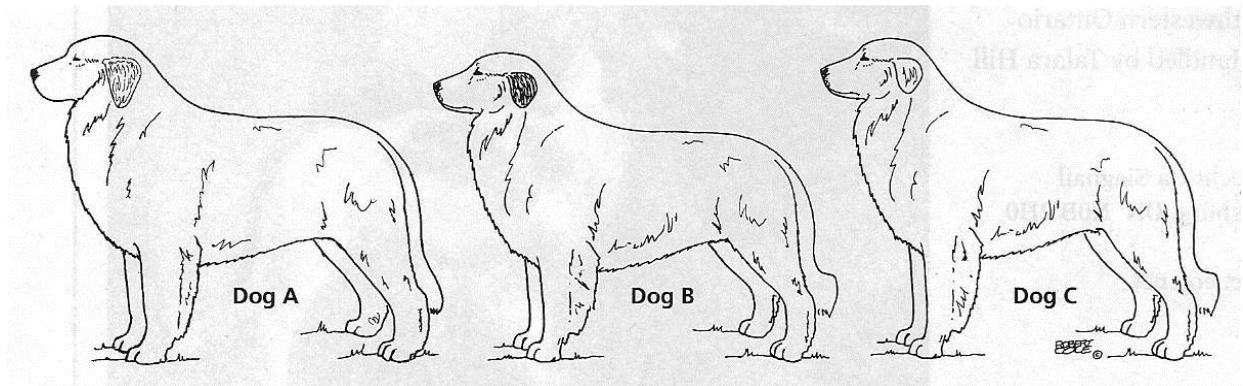
YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, May 1998

THE GREAT PYRENEES

Place Dogs A, B and C in order of merit, based on what is visible. All three dogs are slightly longer than tall – their lengths ranging from 29 to 32 inches (dogs 27 to 32 inches; bitches 25 to 29 inches).



FACTORS

The intent in selecting these particular Open males is to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Great Pyrenees head in profile (and the effect of departures), the consideration given to bone weight, and the effect that height departure has on balance in this breed.

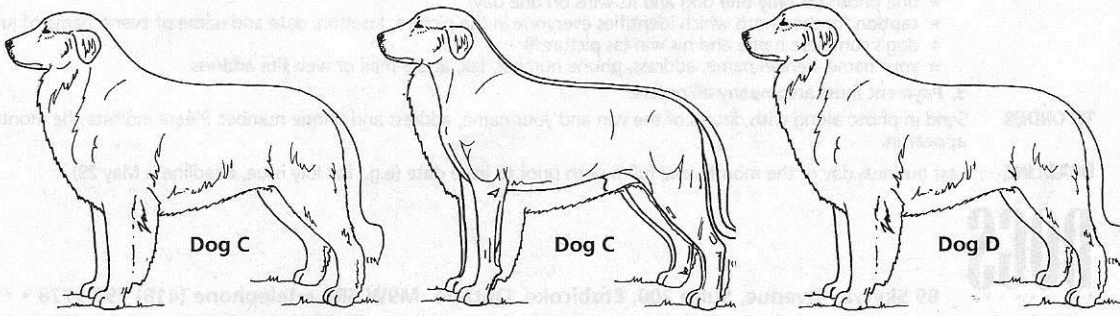
Dog A is 32 inches tall. He conveys the “distinct impression of great overall size and majesty.” However, he is too heavily boned to convey “elegance and unsurpassed beauty,” and his head is incorrect. A correct head is important in this breed. The 1935 CKC standard allotted more than 30 points (out of a possible 100) to the head, and this importance hasn’t diminished. This dog’s head has three visible faults: the ears are too big, the heavy flews cover the whole underjaw and the stop is apparent.

Dog B has a good head. The stop is correctly ‘not apparent’. The ears are small, v-shaped with rounded tips, set on at eye level and lie flat and close to the head. The lips are tight fitting with the upper lip just covering the lower lip. There is a strong lower jaw. This dog’s problem is balance. His legs are short; the forelegs are about 1 ½ inches shorter than his body is deep. The revised standard wisely advises that the elbow should be level with the brisket approximately *half the height of the dog*.

In this class, I would place Dog C first – not a difficult decision. Greater height favoured Dog A; however, his overly heavy bone is as great a handicap in guarding shepherd and sheep as Dog B’s short legs. Dog B’s correct head – a major breed requirement – won him second place

DOG C COVERED AND UNCOVERED

According to the standard: “The Great Pyrenees is a dog of medium substance whose coat deceives those who do not feel the bone and muscle.” Since you cannot avail yourself of a hands-on examination to determine what I believe is “medium substance”, I have provided a see-through visual interpretation of what your hands would find under Dog C’s double coat.



THE HEAD

One of the most important and misunderstood Great Pyrenees head characteristics is found in the advice, “there is no apparent stop”. If I could not draw, I would not attempt to describe in words alone what “no apparent stop” means. Dog C’s stop is not obvious; it is there, but it doesn’t show plainly. If I modify his stop the thickness of a pen line, the head will depart from correct type.

The same applies to Dog C’s muzzle length, slightly rounded crown and tight lips – a situation where, when these departures occur, they tend toward Newfoundland and St. Bernard heads.

Not visible in profile, you should also be aware that the eyes are medium in size, almond shaped and set slightly obliquely. Colour is a rich dark brown. Eyelids are close fitting with black rims. (The nose and lips are also completely black.) The expression should be elegant, intelligent and contemplative.

OTHER FEATURES

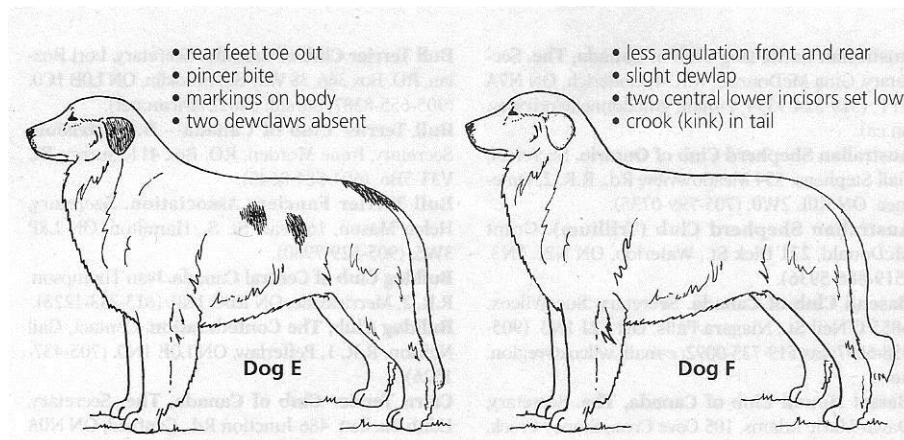
See-through Dog C illustrates a degree of forechest, a level topline, a gently sloping croup and some tuck-up. The tail sets on just below the level of the back and, when carried low in repose, reaches to the hock. When in motion the tail may be carried either over the topline in an open wheel or low. Both are correct.

DOG C AND DOG D

The neck on Dog C may appear somewhat short. It could be that it is. The previous AKC standard called for a “short, stout and strongly muscular neck”. The word “short” has long been a subject of debate. The French and British describe the neck as “fairly short”.

Canadians describe it as “medium length”. I believe “fairly short” best describes the Great Pyrenees length of neck. When I add one inch to Dog C’s fairly short neck to produce Dog D, the end result is a remarkable departure from correct Great Pyrenees balance.

DOG E OR F?



If your assessment of the two males in this class was limited to visual observation, selecting the best Great Pyrenees would be easy. The only difference being that one is better angulated than the other. However, as you can see by the list of features relating to each dog, the choice has been made more difficult. The first question you should ask is, which of these eight features are faults?

If you're familiar with the revised standard, and know which features on these two lists are acceptable departures, desirable breed characteristics and faults, you can make an informed decision.

THE EIGHT FEATURES

Were you aware that it is neither unusual nor incorrect to find a Great Pyrenees whose rear feet toe out slightly? However, if they do, the legs themselves must be straight when seen from behind (not cowhocked). A scissors bite is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable. Markings of varying sizes may appear on the ears, head (including a full face mask), tail and as a few body spots (more than one-third outer coat colour markings is a fault).

Minimal dewlap is permitted. It is not unusual to find the lower central incisors set a little lower in this breed. Near the end of the tail, it is not unusual to find a 'kink' or 'shepherd's crook' (where one or two bones angle away from the straight tail alignment).

It would be a disservice to the breed to fault any of the foregoing desirable breed characteristics or acceptable departures – which brings us to the actual faults. Each dog has one: Dog E is missing two dewclaws and Dog F lacks the desired angulation front and rear. Reduced to just one fault each, the question then is, which is the more serious?

The revised CKC standard states that, "Double dewclaws are located on each rear leg" and under the list of faults advises, "Absence of double dewclaws on each rear leg is a fault." The informative *Great Pyrenees Standard Visualization and Commentary* produced in 1994 by the Great Pyrenees Club of America and illustrated by Marcia R. Schlehr tells us, "While these dewclaws do not serve a recognized function today, they are a traditional breed characteristic." How important a characteristic? The club doesn't say, nor does the standard use the word "must", so the determination is yours.

Of course, you'll base your decisions on the CKC standard. However, would you be influenced by the knowledge that the French standard (1970) cites, "absent dewclaws, single dewclaw, or poorly develop dewclaw as a disqualification," or that the British standard (1994) advises, "lack of this identifying characteristic is totally undesirable"?

Based on the fact that the revised CKC standard lists absence of dewclaws as a fault but doesn't add the word "serious", and the GPCA visualized commentary limits its comments to advising that dewclaws are a traditional breed characteristic, I would place (in North America) the sounder, better angulated and functionally superior Dog E first.