

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL



Extended Breed Standard of
**THE WELSH SPRINGER
SPANIEL**

Produced by

Welsh Springer Spaniel Club of NSW Inc.
in conjunction with
The Australian National Kennel Council

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Photo of a top winning UK bitch regarded by many breeders as one of the best Welsh Springers ever shown. Taken from Ref. (5).

HISTORY OF THE WELSH SPRINGER SPANIEL

The Welsh Springer Spaniel is described in the standard as a very ancient and distinctive breed of pure origin. Spaniels are considered one of the oldest dogs known to man. They appear to have been in Europe for centuries and are thought to have originated in Spain and arrived in England during the Dark Ages.

It is speculated that red and white spaniels were in Wales in the 6th century. Red and white tracking dogs were recorded in Wales in the 11th century in a passage in the *Mucinogen*, a book describing Welsh folklore. The term Spaniel was first used by Chaucer (1340-1400). The first mention of Springer Spaniels and in particular red and white spaniels was in Dr. Caius ' book *Treatise of English Dogges* published in 1570 in which he described the way that dogs were taught to let themselves be caught under the net. He classified Spaniels into a group known as Auscupatorii – those used for hunting of fowl. He subdivided this group into Land Spaniels and Water Spaniels. He refers to “ the spanniells whose skynnes are white and if they are marked with any spottes, they are commonly red.”

In the 16th century spaniels were used to drive birds towards fowlers who stood ready with their extended nets. Dogs and birds were both caught under the net. The spaniels used for this work were called sitting or setting spaniels and were the ancestors of the modern setters. With the invention of the gun, netting disappeared and game was caught by shooting. The setting spaniels were used to find the game and point it and the springing spaniels flushed the game from the cover so that it could be shot. The Welsh used the name Y Tarfgi or Starter to describe this work.

Numerous artists including Gainsborough and Stubbs included paintings of red and white land spaniels in their works in the 18th century. These types of dogs are considered the ancestors of the modern Welsh Springer Spaniel. During the 19th century, the work of Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel in their studies of origin of species and genetics respectively, led to a more scientific approach to the mating of dog breeds, which led to more distinctive types of dogs. The base type for the new Spaniel types was predominately the red and white land spaniel that in the 18th century was one of Britain's most popular dogs. By the end of the 1800s it had been replaced by a variety of other types of spaniels. The red and white spaniel became confined mainly to Neath Valley in Wales. These spaniels were of uniform type, although varying in their shade of colour and in nose colour, the flesh-coloured nose being considered more correct than the black. No very great attention was given to particular points except for sporting purposes. The spaniel's working ability was considered above all else. They were bred primarily for work, although some were seen at dog shows. There were classes for Welsh Spaniels and land spaniels of any variety. However there was much variation with offspring of English Springers being registered as Field Spaniels or Welsh Spaniels according to size and /or colour. Springers and Cockers could be produced in the same litter according to weight (under 25lbs Cockers and over 25lbs Springers).

In 1902, Mr A.T. Williams (Gerwyn) together with enthusiasts including Col. Blandy Jenkins (Llanharran) offered evidence to the Kennel Club that the Welsh Springer Spaniel was a separate breed, different from the English Springer Spaniel. Both these gentlemen could affirm that this breed of dog had been in their families for around 150 years. The plea was successful and the Kennel Club recognised the Welsh Springer Spaniel as a separate breed on 4th March 1902. The first official Standard was adopted in 1906.



Fig. 1

*Corrin , the first registered
Welsh Springer .
Aged 10 years .
Born 1893. Taken from Ref. 7 .*

In the late 1800s, the Sporting Spaniel Society was formed to bring the working spaniel back into dog shows and succeeded in obtaining a special class for working type spaniels. A Welsh dog was brought out at Birmingham in 1899 and won a class of twenty-four spaniels. This dog won at many of the early dog shows including a championship show at Crystal Palace and was known as "Corrin" (b.1893). He was originally registered as a Welsh Cocker, but in 1902 became the first registered Welsh Springer Spaniel. Corrin was owned by Mr A.T.Williams.

Soon after the recognition of the breed, the first Welsh Springer Spaniel Club was formed and the breed did fairly well, being popular as a working dog. Although the Llanharran kennel had disappeared, its name still lives on in the name of the red lozenge-shaped spot on the top of head between the ears, traditionally called the "Llanharran Spot" and is said to be a sign of pure origin by breed enthusiasts.

With the outbreak of WW1 all breed activities halted and a new club was formed after the war had ended. The club set out to safeguard the dual purpose of the breed and emphasis was placed on working qualities. Just prior to WW2, three new breeders arrived on the scene, Harold Newman (Pencelli), Cliff Payne (Tregwilym) and Hal Leopard (Rushbrooke) who were to have a tremendous influence on the breed. Mr Leopard's bitch, Goitre Lass, had nine litters and her name can be found in many Welsh pedigrees. It was thought that she came from a Cocker or English Springer cross with Welsh mating and that she was the origin of the modern dark-nosed strain of Welsh Springer. For a long time, pink noses and hazel eyes as well as dark noses and eyes were seen, but now the dark noses are much more common in the show ring, with flesh-coloured noses rarely seen.

The breed continued to develop in the 50s and 60s with registrations in 1969 reaching 385 and the Crufts entry for that year being 47. The show bench was going from strength to strength, however the field was having a difficult time. In 1963 the breed club split into Show and Field trial subcommittees. In 1965 a new club was formed (later called the Welsh and English Counties Spaniel Club) to conduct field trials for any variety of Spaniel. The Field Trial subcommittee was to serve as the committee of the new club. It has always been the aim of Welsh Springer enthusiasts that the breed does not become divided into "show types" and "field types" which has happened in other Spaniel breeds.

Currently Welsh Springer registrations are consistently around 450 p.a and they are considered a multi purpose breed, taking part in obedience, agility and field trials as well as the show ring where they have been successful at Crufts with two winning Best Gundog and others taking Reserve Gundog.

The breed thrives overseas due to the quality of exports, especially in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, France, U.S.A., Australia and N.Z. The breed was recognised in the U.S.A. in 1906 and a breed club was founded there in 1961. The first Welsh was imported into the Netherlands in 1908, while Scandinavia did not have Welsh Springers until the 1960s.

It is thought that Welsh Springers may have been imported into Australia between WW1 and WW2 as there are numerous anecdotal reports of sightings as far apart as Tasmania and Queensland . However none were registered with any Australian Canine Control and it is presumed that they were kept as pets or working gundogs.

The first registered litter was born on 30th April 1974 by Mr & Mrs Jeffrey of Lindfield N.S.W.

From this period until the present day, imports have continued to arrive in Australia and although the breed has never become numerically strong, it is in the hands of a dedicated group of enthusiasts who continue to breed Welshies that are competitive at the highest level in the show ring.

There are also those enthusiasts who use their Welshies as working dogs. Welsh Springers have been awarded titles in obedience, tracking, agility, jumping, field trials and Schutzhund.

Welsh Springer breeders, like their counterparts in the UK are working to maintain the dual purpose of their breed. To increase communication between all those involved with the breed a social club was formed in NSW in 1982. This evolved into the Welsh Springer Spaniel Club of NSW in 1984. An inaugural Open Show was held in April 1984. Since 1989 the club has held two championship shows per year. Membership of the club has averaged around ninety over the last few years and the club continues to unite Welshie enthusiasts whether showing, trialling or simply much loved family pets in the belief that “Welshies are Wonderful”.

Fig. 2



By courtesy of the Leger Gallery, London

Land Spaniel
Oil painting by George Stubbs, 1724-1806

Fig. 3



Fig. 2. Painting of a Land Spaniel by George Stubbs. The dog portrayed is typical of those of the late 18th century and is thought to be of the type that was the ancestor of the modern day Welsh Springer. Taken from Ref. 9.

Fig. 3. Famous painting by Maud Earl of two Welsh Springers from Longmydd Kennels 1906. This painting hangs in the Kennel Club rooms. Taken from Ref. 11.

DISCUSSION ON BREED STANDARD

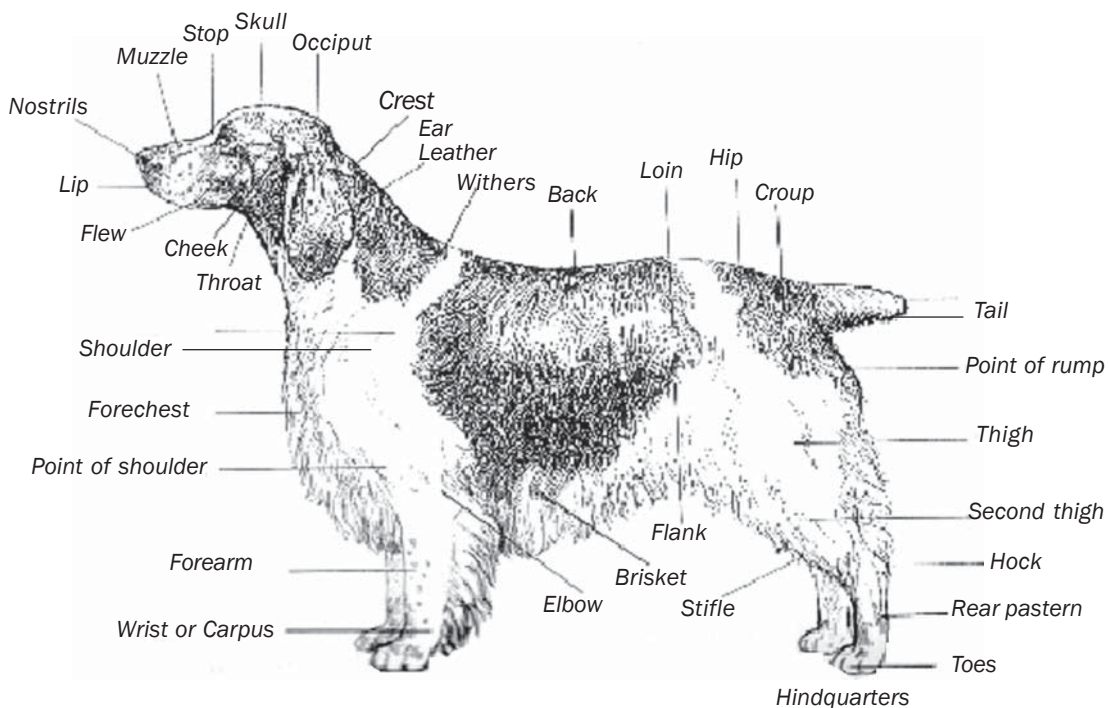


Fig. 4 Physical Features of the Welsh Springer. Taken from Ref. 10.

● GENERAL APPEARANCE

Symmetrical, compact, not leggy, obviously built for endurance and hard work. Quick and active mover, displaying plenty of push and drive.

Symmetrical is defined in the Oxford Concise English Dictionary as “Beauty resulting from the right proportion between the parts of the body — balance — harmony.” Compact is defined as “neatly put together”. Therefore by definition a neat, well balanced outline is required. Forequarter and hindquarter angulation should be balanced. The topline should not fall away, but flow from head to tail with a slight arch over the loin. There should be no suggestion of legginess and racy lines as seen in the English Springer Spaniel. It must be remembered that the Welsh Springer is a working gundog and should look as though it could do a day’s work in the field. He is to be a quick and active mover giving the impression of a bustling, alert dog. For this to be possible he needs to be strongly built throughout with well developed muscles. In action he does not move with the light movement of an English Springer, but moves with greater drive and thrust from the rear.

● CHARACTERISTICS

Very ancient and distinct breed of pure origin. Strong, merry and very active.

The origins have been discussed in the history section. Strong, merry and very active are fundamental features of a Welsh Springer. They should display inexhaustible energy to fulfill their allotted task as a clever gundog and persevering worker in the thickest cover and are also required to be strongly built and well boned.

● TEMPERAMENT

Kindly disposition, not showing aggression or nervousness.

The working ability of the Welsh Springer cannot be assessed in the show ring, however the general mental demeanour can be. The dog should be stable and happy as indicated by a lively tail action and should allow a judge to go over it without any problems. Young dogs may show a slight reserve, but once socialized correctly should never show fear or aggression. A poor temperament seriously affects a dog’s working ability. Any departure from a merry dog with a kindly disposition should be heavily penalised.

Welsh Springers are extremely loyal to their owners and may not seem as outgoing as other spaniels to strangers on first meeting. However they should always be amenable to handling.

● HEAD AND SKULL

Skull of proportionate length, slightly domed, clearly defined stop, well chiselled below the eyes. Muzzle of medium length, straight, fairly square . Nostrils well developed, flesh coloured to dark brown.

To maintain the symmetry required the head must be in balance with the body. As with most breeds, the head is paramount in establishing breed type and differentiates the Welsh Springer from other spaniels.

The skull is of proportionate length i.e. the skull and muzzle are of equal length. The distance between the end of the nose and the stop is equal to the distance from the stop to the occiput. The distance between the ears should also be the same length. A narrow, fine head is weak whilst a heavy head gives a coarse appearance. Earlier standards stated that “a short, chubby head is objectionable” meaning that too deep a skull and too short a nose is undesirable. An ideal head, when viewed from above has an oval shaped skull up to the stop, not a round or square shape. The entire head tapers gradually towards the nose. The skull should be slightly domed without a pronounced occiput. The stop is clearly defined, not simply a fluting between the eyes and raised brows like the English Springer. It should not be exaggerated and rises gradually.

Under the eyes is well chiselled, giving an aristocratic appearance, but should not be overdone giving a snipey look which indicates weakness. The muzzle is straight and fairly square and as the nostrils are to be well developed for scenting power, the terminal end of the muzzle should have reasonable width and good strength of underjaw to allow the dog to carry game. The upper lips just cover the lower lips, excess flews are not desirable.



Fig . 5 - A head study of male Welsh Springer showing an example of the correct head . Note also correct ears and expression. Taken from Ref . 11 .

Most spaniels have a skull and muzzle set on parallel planes. However the Welsh Springer has slightly divergent planes that greatly affect the appearance and expression and sets the Welsh Springer head apart from the other spaniels. It is stressed that this divergence is only slight and in no way gives a down faced appearance.

The nose of the Welsh Springer can be flesh coloured or dark brown. Although dark noses are more frequently seen now, it must be remembered that the flesh coloured nose was the original colour and must not be penalised.

When observing the overall head, the sex should be immediately apparent. Doggy bitches and bitchy dogs are undesirable.

● EYES

Hazel or dark, medium size, not prominent, nor sunken, nor showing haw.

The eyes should be medium sized, oval in shape and set well in the head. Eyes must not be prominent or showing haw as this could lead to injury when working in heavy cover. The eyes are not too close together, giving a mean expression, nor too wide apart on the side of the head. The expression should be soft, almost sad, but also show intelligence and alertness.

Two shades of brown are permissible: hazel or dark. The exact shade of hazel is not described in the Standard, but can be interpreted as light brown, tawny or ginger. Hazel eye colour tends to go with lighter coat colouring and flesh coloured noses, which were the original colours of the breed. The dark eye is seen with the deeper red coat and dark noses. However, combinations of the two are found i.e. lighter coats with dark eye and vice versa. Whatever one's personal preference, the Standard allows both eye colours so judges should not allow any colour preference to affect their decision. Yellow, bird of prey eyes are to be penalised.

● EARS

Set moderately low and hanging close to cheeks. Comparatively small and gradually narrowing towards tip and shaped somewhat like a vine leaf.

The ears are a breed hallmark. They lie flat against the cheeks and are set moderately low, level with the eyes. They are comparatively small and should not reach the end of the nose when drawn forward. The significant feature of the ears is their shape - "somewhat like a vine leaf", differing from the Cocker and English Springer, which have longer, lobular ears with heavy feathering. The Welsh Springer has lighter, setter-like feathering which is groomed to highlight the shape of the ear. Ear size varies a good deal within the breed, but the shape should always be the same and size kept as small as possible.

● MOUTH

Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. Upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

The Standard calls for a scissor bite with strong jaws. Prior to 1967 the Standard required for the mouth was "neither overshot or undershot". The change to the standard effectively outlawed the level bite, which up to that time had been commonly seen and is still seen today. An overshot bite gives a weak chin, which impairs the carrying of game. An undershot bite results in a heavy foreface and wrong expression. Both are foreign to a working gundog and should be penalised accordingly.

● NECK

Long, muscular, clean in throat, neatly set into sloping shoulders .

The neck is long and muscular and differs from the more moderate neck of the English Springer. A long neck enables the dog to pick up game in his stride when retrieving and also to raise his head high to catch the scent of game in the air. When gaiting in the show ring, the head is held proudly, however youngsters often move with their noses on the ground, sniffing any scent present. However with age, experience and training they will move with their heads up. Judges should not penalise a young Welsh for doing what comes naturally – sniffing the ground. Although the neck is long it should not be swan-like, but have strength and good muscle development with a slight arch at the base of the skull. A long neck goes with a good layback of shoulder and a short neck with an upright shoulder. Short necks are to be avoided as they make it more difficult to pick up game on the move and also result in a shorter stride. The Welsh is a clean-necked breed. No throatiness should be evident.

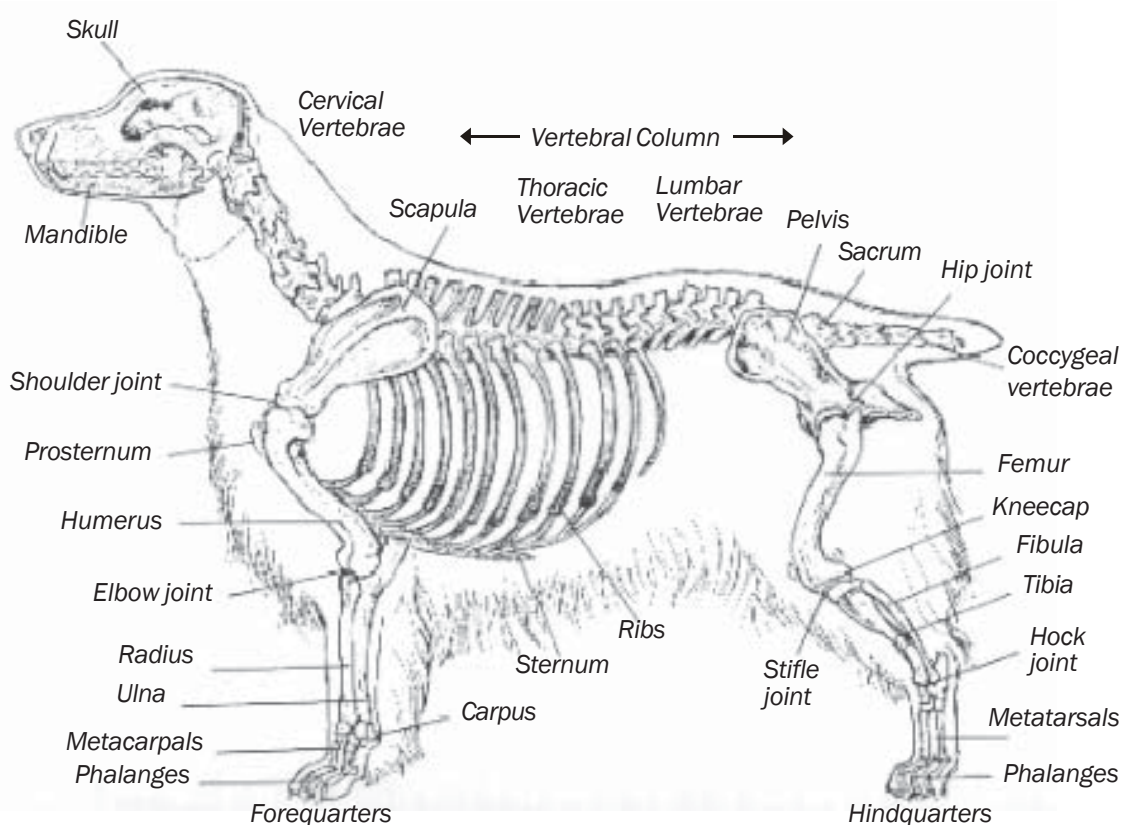


Fig. 6 - Skeletal structure of the Welsh Springer showing desired angulation and proportions.
Taken from Ref. 10 .

● FOREQUARTERS

Forelegs of medium length, straight, well boned.

The forelegs are of medium length as would be expected of a dog 48 cms (19") at the shoulder (bitches 46 cms (18"). The distance from withers to elbow equals the distance from elbow to the ground. There should be no appearance of legginess or shortness of leg.

The legs are straight and well boned giving the appearance of strength and quality; they should never be fine and spindly. The pasterns too, should be strong and have a slight slope to give flexibility as they act as shock absorbers and prevent knuckling over as the foot hits the ground. There is a medium width between the forelegs and the elbows are held close to the body.

The shoulder blades are fairly long and well laid back. The upper arm is only slightly shorter in comparison to the shoulder blade with which it forms a right angle. This results in the forelegs being well under the dog, in a straight line with the withers so that the elbows appear directly under the withers. It also means that the breed does not have a lot of prosternum. The front is similar to that of a small Irish Setter. Too much width between the forelegs, out at elbows and straight upper arms are all faults seen in the breed.

● **BODY**

Not long, strong and muscular, Deep brisket, well sprung ribs. Length of body should be proportionate to length of leg. Loin muscular and slightly arched. Well coupled.

The body of the Welsh Springer should give the impression of strength. The chest is well developed, reaching to the elbows. The ribcage is heart shaped and well sprung.

These properties give plenty of heart and lung room needed for endurance in the field. The loin is fairly short (about a hand's breadth in length), strong and muscular. There is a slight arch over the loin formed by the well-developed musculature, not a curvature of the spine. A strong loin is essential for the thrust and drive required in this breed. Only a very slight tuck up is seen under the loin, reinforcing the appearance of strength.

The length of the body is proportionate to the length of leg i.e. the dog should not appear long (often resulting from the legs being too short) nor square in outline (a result of legs being too long). A rectangular outline is required with approximate proportions being 10 long (point of shoulder to rear of thighs) to 8.5 high (height at withers).

The Welsh topline should have a level back, slight arch over the loin and a gentle rounding of the croup.

● **HINDQUARTERS**

Strong and muscular, wide and fully developed with deep second thighs. Hind legs well boned, hocks well let down, stifles moderately angled, neither turning in nor out.

The hindquarters are strong and muscular with well-boned hind legs. The hocks are well let down and straight when viewed from behind. These, combined with well-developed, deep second thighs enable the dog to produce the propulsion required.

The rear pasterns are vertical, short and firm. The angulation of the stifle is moderate.

Too much bend of stifle means that the hocks are too far behind the buttocks and not under the dog's body, which not only gives an incorrect sloping topline, but also reduces the powerful drive of the hindquarters. Too little angulation of the stifle gives rise to a stilted action lacking drive and results in the width of the second thigh being reduced. A vertical line drawn through the base of the tail should pass through the hind foot .

Looking down on the dog, the width of the withers should equal the width of the hindquarters. The hindquarter angulation is balanced with the forequarter angulation.

● FEET

Round, with thick pads. Firm and cat like, not large and spreading.

To be able to work in the field on all types of terrain and over long distances, a Welsh Springer must have compact, tightly knit, well-arched feet with deep pads. A foot which is large and spreading and lacking depth of pad will not stand up to a day's hunting. The shape of the foot is round. Nails are strong. The front feet are slightly larger than the rear feet, as they take the weight of the dog and the rear feet are used for driving.

● TAIL

Docked: Well set on and low, never carried above level of back. Lively in action.

Undocked: Well set on and low, never carried above level of back. Lively in action. Feathered. In balance with the rest of the dog.

The tail is set on low, due to the rounding of the croup. It should never be carried above the level of the back, which indicates a faulty hindquarter assembly (not enough slope of croup and straight stifles). The tail must be lively in action indicating an outgoing temperament and an interest in the surroundings. A tail carried tucked down indicates a timid, nervous dog and should be penalised. The tail is an extension of the spine and a good thick tail is an indication of good bone elsewhere and conversely with a fine boned tail.

With the ban on tail docking now in force, most Welsh in the ring now have long tails. These can make the dog look longer in outline especially in heavily marked dogs. Judges need to tune their eyes to looking at undocked dogs. The tail should be carried out behind the dog just below the topline when the dog is moving. The tip of the tail may curve slightly upwards, but if set on correctly, the tip of the tail should not pass through a vertical line drawn through the base of the tail. The tail has setter like feathering and in length reaches approximately to the hocks.

● GAIT/MOVEMENT

Smooth, powerful, ground covering action; driving from rear.

The Welsh Springer should impress as a quick and active mover with good reach in front and drive behind. The movement is tireless, effortless and ground covering. The topline remains firm on the move. If the forequarters are correctly constructed there should be no exaggerated lift in front, but a smooth forward stride with the front feet landing underneath the dog's nose.

Elbows remain tight against the body and there should be no knuckling over or weakness of pasterns. The dog does not appear wide or narrow in front when coming towards you. No winging, paddling or weaving but a straight through movement of the forelegs should be seen.

The hind legs provide powerful thrust and when viewed from the rear, the hocks remain firm (no cow hocks, sickle hocks or bow hocks). The hind legs should not be too close together or too wide apart .

Dogs are to be shown on a loose lead. Proud head carriage and a lively tail action complete the picture of this merry bustling dog.

● COAT

Straight or flat, silky texture, dense, never wiry or wavy. Curly coat highly undesirable. Forelegs and hind legs above hocks moderately feathered, ears and tail lightly feathered.

The coat of the Welsh Springer should never be wavy, curly or wiry. It should be straight, flat and have a soft, silky texture. It is a dense coat with a good thick undercoat to protect the dog against thick cover in all weather conditions.

Moderate feathering appears on the back of the forelegs, the fore chest, under the body and on the back of the hind legs above the hock. Feathering on the ears is setter like and the surplus is usually trimmed to reveal the vine leaf shape of the ear. The tail also has setter like feathering.

● COLOUR

Rich red and white only.

The colour of the Welsh Springer is distinctive among spaniels and is a hallmark of the breed. Rich red and white only is called for. There are no requirements for particular markings, any markings are acceptable. Care should be taken when assessing the breed as some markings can create an illusion, such as the amount of white on the head can alter its appearance. Similarly with body markings, a heavy mantled coat can make a dog look longer in body.

The amount of white varies greatly. Many who work their Welsh prefer more white on the coat as this makes them more visible in the field. Ticking on the coat also varies, some dogs have very little ticking whilst others are heavily ticked. Either is acceptable.

There are various shades of red, all of which are acceptable. Early in its history the Welsh Springer could also be orange and white. In 1921 the Standard for colour read “red or orange and white (red preferable)”. The reds seen currently in the show ring range from a sandy red to full reds with the darker shades predominating. There are an increasing number of dark red coats, almost liver in shade that is attractive and therefore popular in some quarters. However they are not universally liked as some feel that they are too far removed from the original colour. The word “dark” was removed from the Standard in 1967.

The phrase “a good dog cannot be a bad colour” should be borne in mind by judges. As long as a dog can be described as rich red and white, its colour is acceptable. The shade of red can vary, but it should always be rich, never washed out.

● **SIZE**

Approx. height : **Dogs 48cms (19”) at withers.**
 Bitches 46cms (18”) at withers.

The requirement for the size of the Welsh Springer has changed several times since it was first drawn up in 1906. Originally it was only a weight description “weight 35lbs to 45lbs”. In 1967 the Kennel Club requested that a height clause be included. The resulting clause “that the size was between a Cocker Spaniel and an English Springer Spaniel” was not accepted by the Kennel Club. In 1968 the weight clause was deleted and the size was included to read “a dog not to exceed 19” at the shoulder and the bitch 18 “approximately”. The height clause was again amended in the late 70s and is now simply “Approx height: Dogs 48cms (19”) at withers. Bitches 46cms (18”) at withers”.

This gives the judge some leeway when evaluating size. However balance and breed type are the most important requirements. A Welsh slightly over the height requirement and one slightly below the height requirement should be judged equally. It should be remembered that the dog is required to work in heavy cover by moving through undergrowth and therefore should not be so large that this becomes difficult or so small that it would have problems forcing its way through bushes.

The original weight clause formerly included in the Standard of about 20 kgs is still relevant today.

● **FAULTS**

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog and on the dog’s ability to perform its traditional work.

● **NOTE**

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

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