
Spaniel (English Springer)

General Appearance

The English Springer Spaniel is a medium-sized sporting dog with a most compact body, and a docked tail. His coat is moderately long, glossy, usually liver and white or black and white with feathering on his legs, ears, chest and brisket. His pendulous ears, soft and gentle expression, sturdy build and friendly wagging tail proclaim him unmistakably a member of the ancient family of spaniels. He is above all a well-proportioned dog, free from exaggeration, nicely balanced in every part. His carriage is proud and upstanding, body deep, legs strong and muscular with enough length to carry him with ease. His short level back, well-developed thighs, good shoulders, and excellent feet suggest power, endurance, and agility. Taken as a whole he looks the part of a dog that can go and keep going under difficult hunting conditions, and moreover he enjoys what he is doing. At his best he is endowed with style, symmetry, balance, and enthusiasm and is every inch a sporting dog of distinct spaniel character, combining beauty and utility.

In judging the English Springer Spaniel the over-all picture is a primary consideration. It is urged that the judge look for type which includes general appearance, outline, and temperament and also for soundness, especially as seen when the dog is in motion.

Inasmuch as the dog with a smooth easy gait must be reasonably sound and well balanced, he is to be highly regarded in the show ring; however, not to the extent of forgiving him for not looking like an English Springer Spaniel. A quite untypical dog, leggy, foreign in head and expression, may move well. But he should not be placed over a good all-round specimen that has a minor fault in movement. It should be remembered that the English Springer Spaniel is first and foremost a sporting dog of the spaniel family and he must look and behave and move in character.

Temperament

The typical Springer is friendly, eager to please, quick to learn, willing to obey. In the show ring he should exhibit poise, attentiveness, tractability, and should permit himself to be examined by the judge without resentment or cringing.

Size

The Springer is built to cover rough ground with ability and reasonable speed. He should be kept to medium size--neither too small nor too

large and heavy to do the work for which he is intended. The ideal shoulder height for dogs is 20 inches (51 cm); for bitches, 19 inches (48 cm).

Length of topline (the distance from top of the shoulders to the root of the tail) should be approximately equal to the dog's shoulder height – never longer than his height – and not appreciably less. The dog too long in body, especially when long in loin, tires easily and lacks the compact outline characteristic of the breed. Equally undesirable is the dog too short in body for the length of his legs, a condition that destroys his balance and restricts the gait.

Weight is dependent on the dog's other dimensions: a 20 inch (51 cm) dog, well proportioned, in good condition should weigh about 49-55 lb. (22-25 kg). The resulting appearance is a well knit, sturdy dog with good but not too heavy bone, in no way coarse or ponderous.

Coat and Colour

Colour may be liver or black with white markings; liver and white (or black and white) with tan markings; blue or liver roan; or predominantly white with tan, black or liver markings. On his ears, chest, legs and belly, the Springer is nicely furnished with a fringe of feathering (of moderate heaviness). On his head, front of forelegs, and below hocks on front of hind legs, the hair is short and fine. The body coat is flat or wavy of medium length, sufficiently dense to be waterproof, weatherproof and thornproof. The texture fine, and the hair should have the clean glossy, live appearance, indicative of good health. It is legitimate to trim about head, feet, and ears; to remove dead hair; to thin and shorten excess feathering particularly from the hocks to the feet and elsewhere as required to give a smart, clean appearance.

Head

The head is impressive without being heavy. Its beauty lies in a combination of strength and refinement. It is important that the size and proportion be in balance with the rest of the dog. Viewed in profile, the head should appear approximately the same length as the neck and should blend with the body in substance. The **skull** (upper head) to be of medium length, fairly broad, flat on top, slightly rounded at the sides and back. The occiput bone inconspicuous, rounded rather than peaked or angular. The foreface (head in front of eyes) approximately the same length as the skull, and in harmony as to width and general character. Looking down on the head the **muzzle** to appear to be about one-half the width of the skull. As the skull rises from the foreface it makes a brow or "stop", divided by a groove or fluting between the eyes. This groove continues upward and gradually disappears as it reaches the

middle of the forehead. The amount of “stop” can best be described as moderate. It must not be a pronounced feature as in the Clumber Spaniel. Rather it is a subtle rise where the muzzle blends into the upper head, further emphasized by the groove and by the position and shape of the eyebrows which should be well developed. The stop, eyebrow, and the chiseling of the bony structure around the eye sockets contribute to the Springer’s beautiful and characteristic expression.

Viewed in profile, the topline of the skull and the muzzle lie in two approximately parallel planes. The nasal bone should be straight, with no inclination downward towards the tip of the nose which gives a down-faced look so undesirable in this breed. Neither should the nasal bone be concave resulting in a “dish-faced” profile; nor convex giving the dog a “Roman nose”.

The **nostrils**, well opened and broad, liver colour or black depending on the colour of the coat. Flesh-coloured (“Dudley noses”) or spotted (“butterfly noses”) are undesirable. The cheeks to be flat (not rounded, full, or thick) with nice chiseling under the eyes. **Jaws** to be of sufficient length to allow the dog to carry game easily; fairly square, lean, strong, and even (neither undershot or overshot). The upper lip to come down full and rather square to cover the line of the lower jaw, but lips not to be pendulous or exaggerated. **Teeth** should be strong, clean, not too small; and when the mouth is closed the teeth should meet in an even bite or a close scissors bite (the lower incisors touching the inside of the upper incisors).

More than any other feature the **eyes** contribute to the Springer’s appeal. Colour, placement, size influence expression and attractiveness. The eyes to be of medium size, neither small, round, full and prominent, nor bold and hard in expression. Set rather well apart and fairly deep in their sockets. The colour of the iris to harmonize with the colour of the coat, preferably a good dark hazel in the liver dogs and black or deep brown in the black and white specimens. The expression to be alert, kindly, trusting. The lids, tight with little or no haw showing. The correct ear-set is on a level with the line of the eye; on the side of the skull and not too far back. The flaps to be long and fairly wide, hanging close to the cheeks, with no tendency to stand up or out. The leather, thin, approximately long enough to reach the tip of the nose.

Neck

The neck to be moderately long, muscular, slightly arched at the crest, gradually blending into sloping shoulders. Not noticeably upright or coming into the body at an abrupt angle.

Forequarters

Efficient movement in front calls for proper shoulders. The blades sloping back to form an angle with the forearm of approximately 90 degrees which permits the dog to swing his forelegs forward in an easy manner. Shoulders (fairly close together at the tips) to lie flat and mould smoothly into the contour of the body. The forelegs to be straight with the same degree of size to the foot. The bone strong, slightly flattened, not too heavy or round. The knee straight, almost flat; the pasterns short, strong; elbows close to the body with free action from the shoulders.

Body

The topline slopes very gently from withers to tail, the line from withers to back descending without a sharp drop; the back practically level; arch over hips somewhat lower than the withers; croup sloping gently to base of tail; tail carried to follow the natural line of the body. The body to be well coupled, strong, compact; the chest deep but not so wide or round as to interfere with the action of the front legs; the brisket sufficiently developed to reach to the level of the elbows. The ribs fairly long, springing gradually to the middle of the body then tapering as they approach the end of the ribbed section. The back (section between the withers and loin) to be straight and strong, with no tendency to dip or roach. The loins to be strong, short; a slight arch over loins and hip bones. Hips nicely rounded, blending smoothly into hind legs. The bottom line, starting on a level with the elbows, to continue backward with almost no up-curve until reaching the end of the ribbed section, than a more noticeable up-curve to the flank, but not enough to make the dog appear small waisted or tucked up.

Hindquarters

The Springer should be shown in hard muscular condition, well developed in hips and thighs and the whole rear assembly should suggest strength and driving power. The hip joints to be set rather wide apart and the hips nicely rounded. The thighs broad and muscular; the stifle joint strong and moderately bent. The hock joint somewhat rounded, not small and sharp in contour, and moderately angulated. Leg from hock joint to foot pad, short and strong with good bone structure. When viewed from the rear the hocks to be parallel, whether the dog is standing or in motion.

The feet to be round, or slightly oval, compact, well arched medium size with thick pads, well feathered between the toes. Excess hair to be removed to show the natural shape and size of the foot.

Tail

The Springer's tail is an index both to his temperament and his conformation. Merry tail action is characteristic. The proper set is somewhat low following the natural line of the croup. The carriage should be nearly horizontal, slightly elevated when dog is excited. Carried straight up is untypical of the breed. The tail should not be docked too short and should be well fringed with wavy feather. It is legitimate to shape and shorten the feathering but enough should be left to blend with the dog's other furnishings.

Gait

In judging the Springer, there should be emphasis on proper movement which is the final test of a dog's conformation and soundness. Prerequisite to good movement is balance of the front and rear assemblies. The two must match in angulation and muscular development if the gait is to be smooth and effortless. Good shoulders laid back at an angle that permits a long stride are just as essential as the excellent rear quarters that provide the driving power. When viewed from the front, the dog's legs should appear to swing forward in a free and easy manner, with no tendency for the feet to cross over or interfere with each other. Viewed from the rear, the hocks should drive well under the body following on a line with the forelegs, the rear legs parallel, neither too widely nor too closely spaced. Seen from the side, the Springer should exhibit a good long forward stride, without high-stepping or wasted motion.

Faults

1. Lack of true English Springer type in conformation, expression, or behavior. Excessive timidity, with due allowance for puppies and novice exhibits. But no dog to receive a ribbon if he behaves in a vicious manner towards handler or judge. Aggressiveness towards other dogs in the ring not to be construed as viciousness.
2. Over-heavy, cloddy build. Legginess, too tall for length and substance. Oversize or under size (more than 1 inch (3 cm) under or over the breed ideal).
3. Rough curly coat. Over-trimming especially of the body coat. Any chopped, barbered or artificial effect. Excessive feathering that destroys the clean outline desirable in a sporting dog. Off-colours such as lemon, red or orange not to place.
4. Oval, pointed, or heavy skull. Cheeks prominently rounded, thick and protruding. Too much or too little stop. Over-heavy muzzle. Muzzle too short, too thin, too narrow. Pendulous, slobbery lips.

- Under or overshot jaws a very serious fault, to be heavily penalized. Any deviation from standard for teeth. One or two teeth slightly out of line not to be considered a serious fault, but irregularities due to faulty jaw formation to be severely penalized.
5. Eyes yellow or brassy in colour, noticeably lighter than the coat. Sharp expression indicating unfriendly or suspicious nature. Loose droopy eyelids. Prominent haw (the third eyelid or membrane in the inside corner of the eye).
 6. Short round ears. Ears set too high or too low or too far back on the head.
 7. Short neck, often the sequence to steep shoulders. Concave neck, sometimes called ewe neck or upside down neck (the opposite of arched). Excessive throatiness.
 8. Shoulders set at a steep angle limiting the stride. Loaded shoulders (the blades standing out from the body by over development of the muscles). Loose elbows, crooked legs, bone too light or too coarse and heavy. Weak pasterns that let down the feet at a pronounced angle.
 9. Body too shallow, indicating lack of brisket. Ribs too flat sometimes due to immaturity. Ribs too round (barrel-shaped), hampering the gait. Sway back (dip in back), indicating weakness or lack of muscular development, particularly to be seen when dog is in action and viewed from the side. Roach back (too much arch over loin and extending forward into middle section). Croup falling away too sharply, or croup too high--unsightly fault, detrimental to outline and good movement. Topline sloping sharply, indicating steep withers (straight shoulder placement) and a too low tail-set.
 10. Too little or too much angulation. Narrow, underdeveloped thighs. Hocks too short or too long (a proportion of 1/3 the distance from hip joint to foot is ideal). Flabby muscles, weakness of joints. Thin, open or splayed feet (flat with spreading toes). Hare-foot (long, rather narrow foot).
 11. Tail habitually upright. Tail set too high or too low. Clamped down tail (indicating timidity or undependable temperament, even less to be desired than the tail carried gaily).
 12. Short, choppy stride, mincing steps with up and down movement, hopping. Moving with forefeet wide, giving roll or swing to body. Weaving or crossing of fore or hind feet. Cow-hocks--hocks turning in towards each other.