



**English Cocker Spaniel
Club of America, Inc.**

**Breed Education
Presentation**

V 4.22

Official Standard for the English Cocker Spaniel

General Appearance: The English Cocker Spaniel is an active, merry sporting dog, standing well up at the withers and compactly built. He is alive with energy; his gait is powerful and frictionless, capable both of covering ground effortlessly and penetrating dense cover to flush and retrieve game. His enthusiasm in the field and the incessant action of his tail while at work indicate how much he enjoys the hunting for which he was bred. His head is especially characteristic. He is, above all, a dog of balance, both standing and moving, without exaggeration in any part, the whole worth more than the sum of its parts.

Size, Proportion, Substance:

Size-Height at withers: males 16 to 17 inches; females 15 to 16 inches. Deviations to be penalized. The most desirable weights: males, 28 to 34 pounds; females, 26 to 32 pounds. Proper conformation and substance should be considered more important than weight alone.

Proportion-Compactly built and short-coupled, with height at withers slightly greater than the distance from withers to set-on of tail.

Substance-The English Cocker is a solidly built dog with as much bone and substance as is possible without becoming cloddy or coarse.

Head:

General appearance: strong, yet free from coarseness, softly contoured, without sharp angles. Taken as a whole, the parts combine to produce the expression distinctive of the breed.

Expression-Soft, melting, yet dignified, alert, and intelligent.

Eyes-The eyes are essential to the desired expression. They are medium in size, full and slightly oval; set wide apart; lids tight. Haws are inconspicuous; may be pigmented or unpigmented. Eye color dark brown, except in livers and liver parti-colors where hazel is permitted, but the darker the hazel the better.

Ears-Set low, lying close to the head; leather fine, extending to the nose, well covered with long, silky, straight or slightly wavy hair.

Skull-Arched and slightly flattened when seen both from the side and from the front. Viewed in profile, the brow appears not appreciably higher than the back- skull. Viewed from above, the sides of the skull are in planes roughly parallel to those of the muzzle. Stop definite, but moderate, and slightly grooved.

Muzzle-Equal in length to skull; well cushioned; only as much narrower than the skull as is consistent with a full eye placement; cleanly chiseled under the eyes. Jaws strong, capable of carrying game. Nostrils wide for proper development of scenting ability; color black, except in livers and parti-colors of that shade where they will be brown; reds and parti-colors of that shade may be brown, but black is preferred. Lips square, but not pendulous or showing prominent flews.

Bite-Scissors. A level bite is not preferred. Overshot or undershot to be severely penalized.

Neck, Topline and Body:

Neck-Graceful and muscular, arched toward the head and blending cleanly, without throatiness, into sloping shoulders; moderate in length and in balance with the length and height of the dog.

Topline-The line of the neck blends into the shoulder and backline in a smooth curve. The backline slopes very slightly toward a gently rounded croup, and is free from sagging or rumpiness.

Body-Compact and well-knit, giving the impression of strength without heaviness. Chest deep; not so wide as to interfere with action of forelegs, nor so narrow as to allow the front to appear narrow or pinched. Forechest well developed, prosternum projecting moderately beyond shoulder points. Brisket reaches to the elbow and slopes gradually to a moderate tuck-up. Ribs well sprung and springing gradually to mid-body, tapering to back ribs which are of good depth and extend well back. Back short and strong. Loin short, broad and very slightly arched, but not enough to affect the topline appreciably. Croup gently rounded, without any tendency to fall away sharply.

Tail-Docked or undocked. Set on to conform to croup. Ideally, the tail is carried horizontally and is in constant motion while the dog is in action. Under excitement, the dog may carry his tail somewhat higher, but not cocked up.

Forequarters:

The English Cocker is moderately angulated. Shoulders are sloping, the blade flat and smoothly fitting. Shoulder blade and upper arm are approximately equal in length. Upper arm set well back, joining the shoulder with sufficient angulation to place the elbow beneath the highest point of the shoulder blade when the dog is standing naturally. Forelegs-Straight, with bone nearly uniform in size from elbow to heel; elbows set close to the body; pasterns nearly straight, with some flexibility. Feet-Proportionate in size to the legs, firm, round and catlike; toes arched and tight; pads thick.

Hindquarters:

Angulation moderate and, most importantly, in balance with that of the forequarters. Hips relatively broad and well rounded. Upper thighs broad, thick and muscular, providing plenty of propelling power. Second thighs well muscled and approximately equal in length to the upper. Stifle strong and well bent. Hock to pad short. Feet as in front.

Coat:

On head, short and fine; of medium length on body; flat or slightly wavy; silky in texture. The English Cocker is well-feathered, but not so profusely as to interfere with field work. Trimming is permitted to remove overabundant hair and to enhance the dog's true lines. It should be done so as to appear as natural as possible.

Color:

Various. Parti-colors are either clearly marked, ticked or roaned, the white appearing in combination with black, liver or shades of red. In parti-colors it is preferable that solid markings be broken on the body and more or less evenly distributed; absence of body markings is acceptable. Solid colors are black, liver or shades of red. White feet on a solid are undesirable; a little white on throat is acceptable; but in neither case do these white markings make the dog a parti-color. Tan markings, clearly defined and of rich shade, may appear in conjunction with black, livers and parti-color combinations of those colors. Black and tans and liver and tans are considered solid colors.

Gait:

The English Cocker is capable of hunting in dense cover and upland terrain. His gait is accordingly characterized more by drive and the appearance of power than by great speed. He covers ground effortlessly and with extension both in front and in rear, appropriate to his angulation. In the ring, he carries his head proudly and is able to keep much the same topline while in action as when standing for examination. Going and coming, he moves in a straight line without crabbing or rolling, and with width between both front and rear legs appropriate to his build and gait.

Temperament:

The English Cocker is merry and affectionate, of equable disposition, neither sluggish nor hyperactive, a willing worker and a faithful and engaging companion.

Approved October 11, 1988

Effective November 30, 1988

Revised November 1, 2023

History

Cockers were developed in England to hunt woodcock, hence the name. They were bred to go in and out of dense cover, and to be strong enough to pick up and retrieve relatively hefty game.



- Spaniels have been in existence since at least 1300s.

- 1800's they were divided into "springing" spaniels and "cocking" or "field" spaniels.

- 1870 Field (Cocker) Spaniels were divided into 2 categories, over 25 lbs. and under 25 lbs., Cockers being in the lower category.



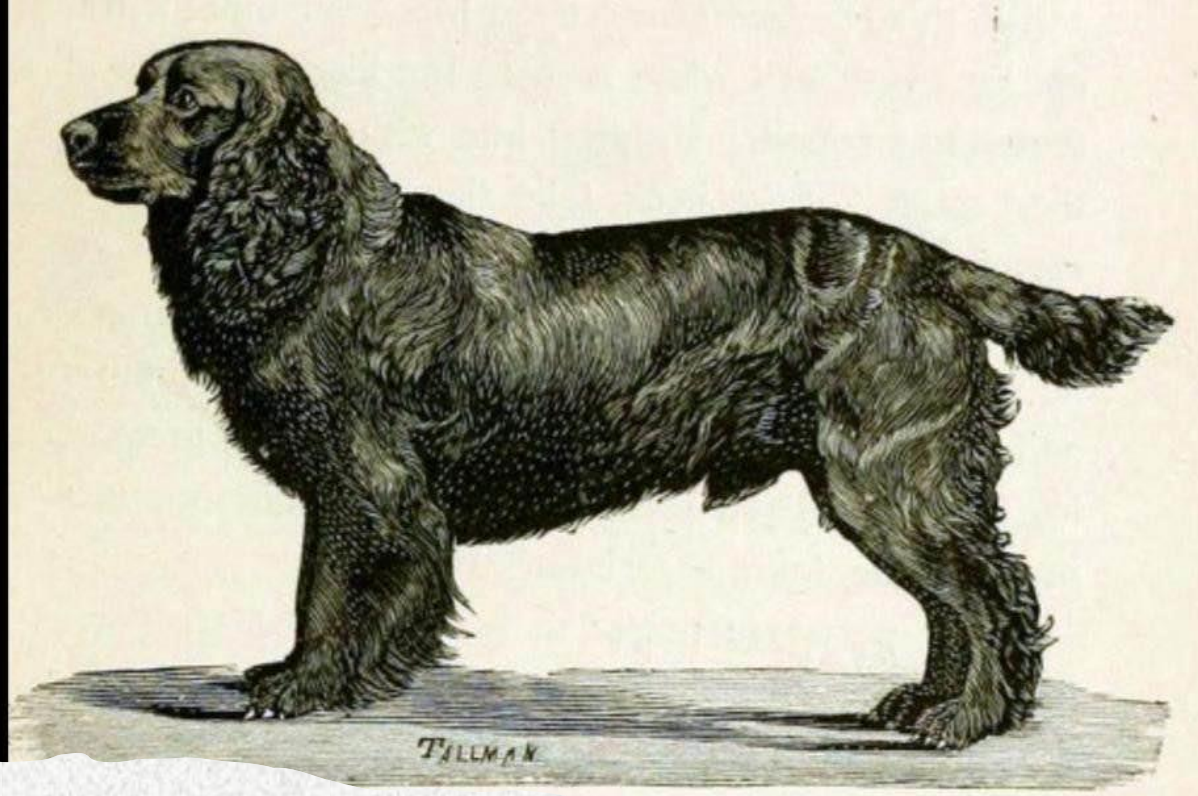
- The breed is known as The Cocker Spaniel the world over. Only in North America is it known as the English Cocker Spaniel.

- 1946 the AKC recognized the English Cocker Spaniel as separate breed from its American cousins.

- Recognized as a separate breed by the Kennel Club in 1892.

- 1935 the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America was formed.

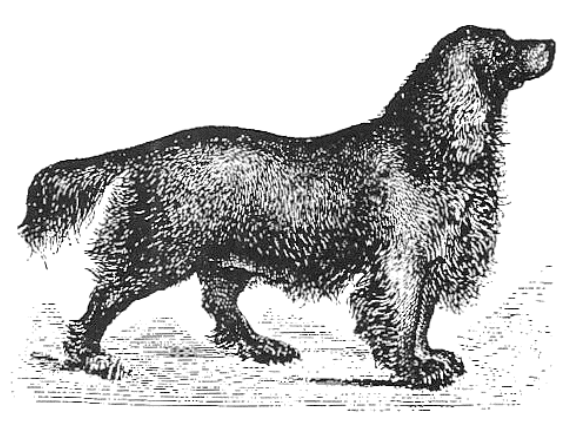
- In the USA, English Cockers and American Cockers were shown as varieties of the same breed.



1879 – “Obo”, the taproot of all Cockers

Obo was 10” at the withers, 16” long from withers to set on of tail and weighed 22 lbs.

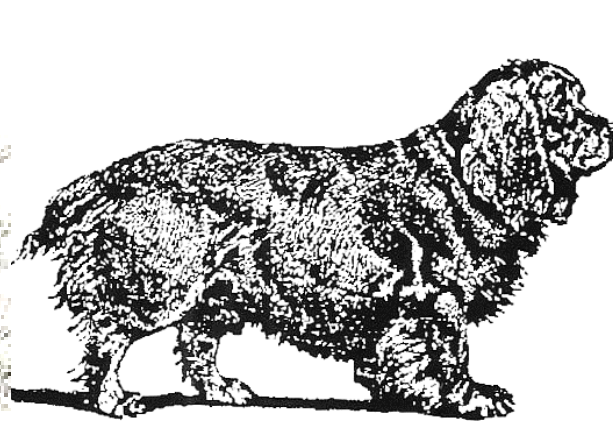
Developing Type through the Years



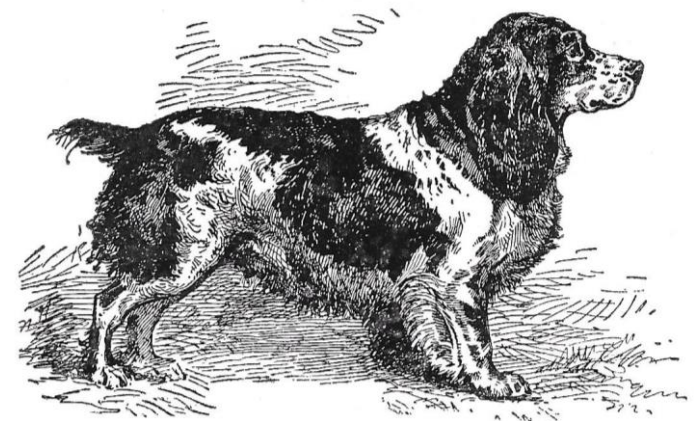
1860s



1870s



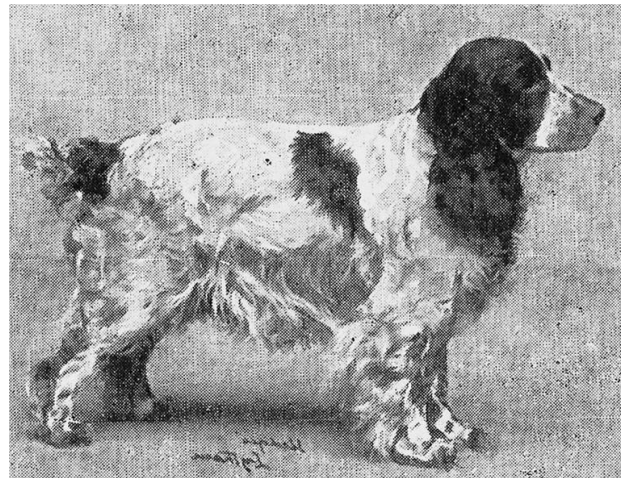
1880s



1890s



1900s



1910s



1920s



1930s

Diversity in make and shape eventually stabilized to a more balanced dog with the stationing we see today.

English Cocker Spaniels in the 1920s

Both exhibit the basic essentials of the breed

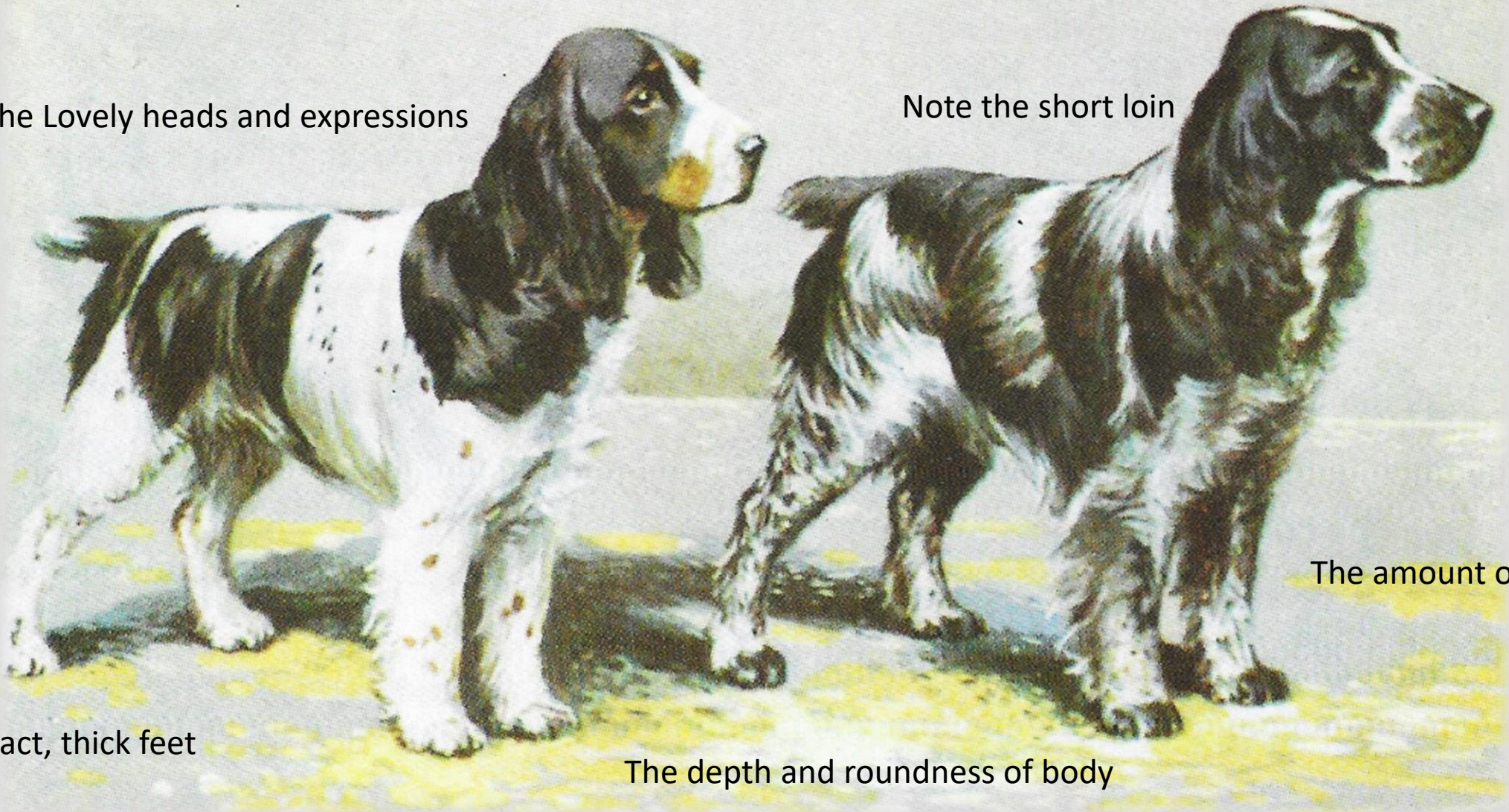
The Lovely heads and expressions

Note the short loin

The amount of bone

The compact, thick feet

The depth and roundness of body



Maintaining Type



1940s



1950s



1960s



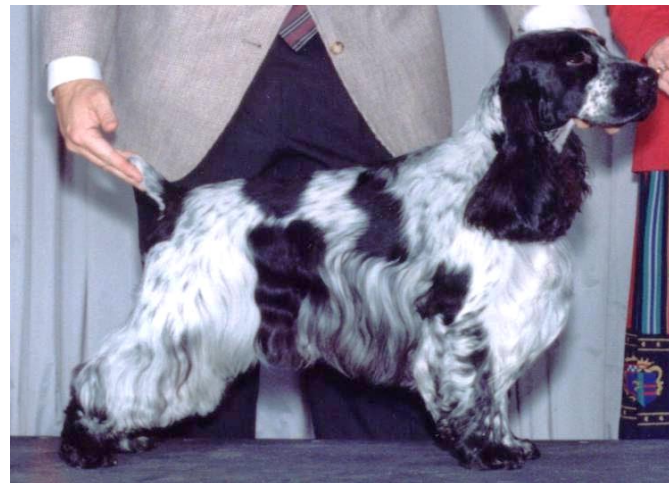
1970s



1980s



1980s



1990s

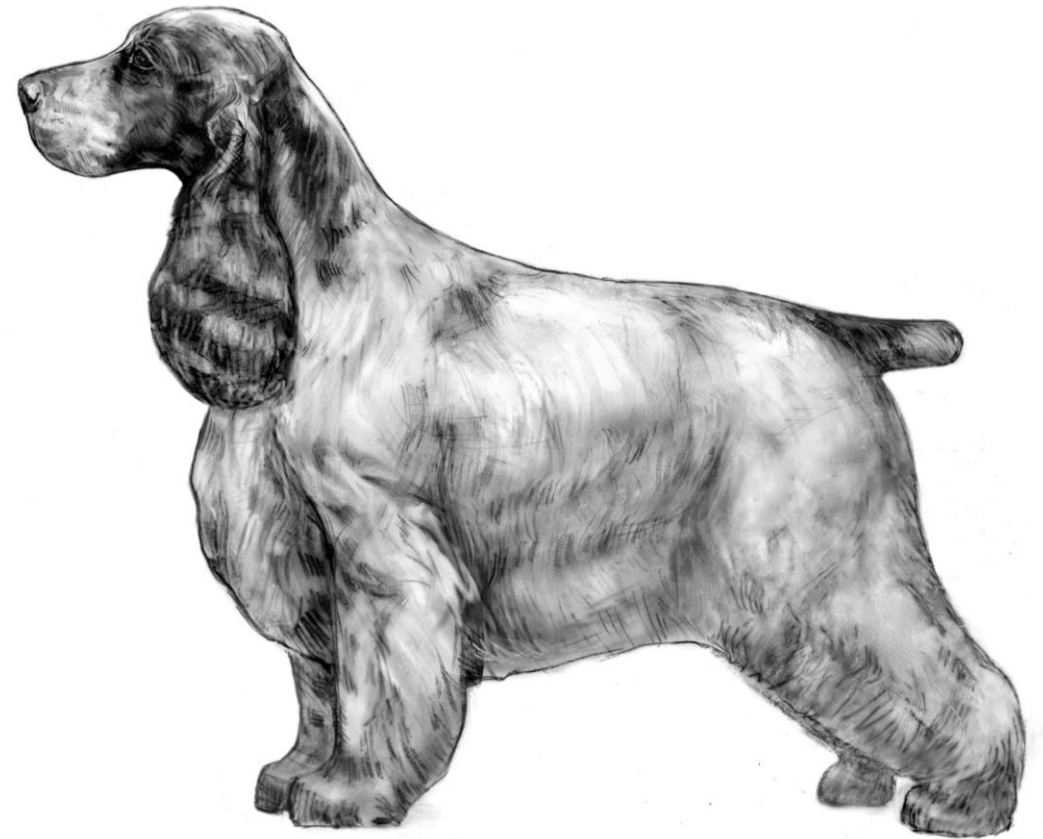


2000s (to present)

Make and shape is the essence of breed type. As illustrated below, the English Cocker described in the standard has remained unchanged for nearly a century.



G. B. ShCh Am. Ch. Surmise of Ware
*Whelped in England in 1934,
imported to the US by Mrs. Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge*



ECSCA Illustrated Standard, 2019
Illustration by Patricia Janzen



Function,
The Original Purpose

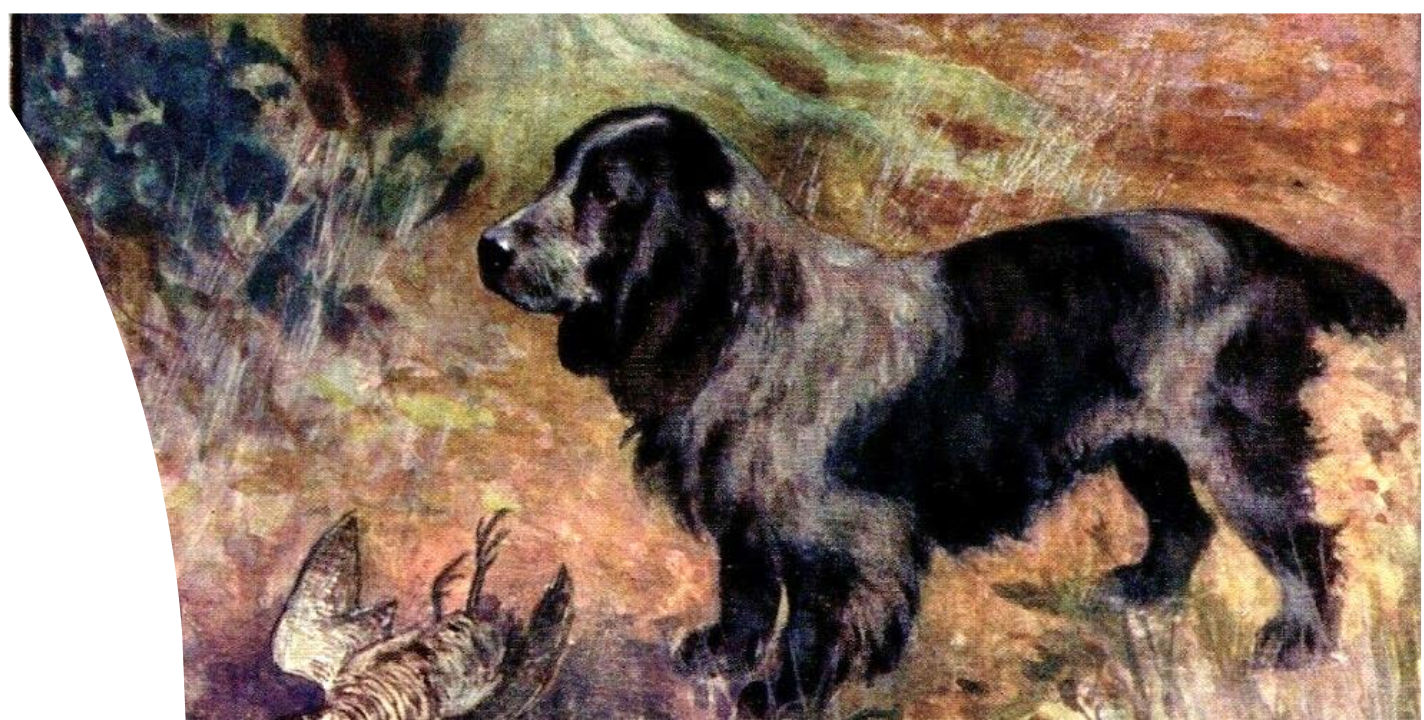
When the era of big, English estates with gamekeepers and kennels of dogs at hand came to an end, there arose a need to develop a dog that could work as a personal “Jack of all trades” gun dog.

Such a breed must be able to find, flush and retrieve game (even from water), whatever would fill the pot for the evening meal. Likely quarry would have been woodcock, duck, pheasant or even hare.

As you might imagine, after a good day's hunt, there would often have been a quick stop at the local pub on the way home. Not just a valued hunting dog, but a treasured household companion.

All of this would require a dog with a biddable, yet equable disposition.

It just so happened that this breed, the merry, game little Cocker, fit the bill perfectly.





Developed as an all purpose, personal gundog.

- Covers ground thoroughly in a quartering action.
- Speed is moderate, characterized by the appearance of power rather than speed.
- Range will vary but generally works relatively close to hunter.
- Has a determined flush.
- Retrieves with a firm but gentle mouth.
- Capable of handling water retrieve as necessary, generally inclined to enter water in a more deliberate manner.

“He is alive with energy; his gait is powerful and frictionless, capable both of covering ground effortlessly and penetrating dense cover to flush and retrieve game. His enthusiasm in the field and the incessant action of his tail while at work indicate how much he enjoys the hunting for which he was bred.”





- This breed exhibits a merry temperament and hunts with enthusiasm. They are characterized by an animated "bustling" manner accompanied by a "busy" tail as the dog works through cover.
- They are fearless of heavy cover.
- The pursuit of game birds was the reason for the breed's development and existence.





Here is an English Cocker working in England. Note the thick brush and cover.

This breed was developed to push into that thicket and flush the game that was hiding inside and underneath. Therefore, they are built more like a weightlifter than a long-distance runner.



General Appearance

Now we get into the standard and the questions you must ask yourself as you mull over which dogs come closest to ideal. It is easy to lose sight of the functionality of this breed when you're looking at what Anne Clark referred to as "the fiddly bits", the glamorous coat, all blown out and tidied up into a flashy silhouette.

In this breed we have very clever breeder/owner/handlers who know how to carve a dog out of a pile of hair. Your job, as a judge (or breeder), is to make sure the dogs are correctly made, round, cobby and big-bodied Cockers. You should not reward a dog that is all beauty in silhouette, but so narrow and lacking in substance that they couldn't possibly perform the function for which they were bred.

The biggest misconception about this breed is that it is a small version of a Setter. Wonderful dogs those Setters, but so very different from a correct Cocker. The English Cocker is most definitely all Spaniel and a beautifully unique breed unto itself.

Key Points - Basics of the Breed

- **Balanced, moderate, no exaggerations**
- **Compact, “Cobby” and “Cockery”**
- **Substantial**
- **Appealing head and eye**
- **Efficient gait**
- **Merry disposition**



Moderation:

The avoidance of excess or extremes

“He is, above all, a dog of balance, both standing and moving, without exaggeration in any part”

- The standard calls for moderation six times and it is implied several more times throughout.
- Balanced, all parts in harmony, with no one feature standing out.
- Balance and moderation are essential in order for the dogs to be athletic enough to work in tough terrain, quartering and pushing into the thicket and hedgerow to flush and retrieve game.



“Cockery, Cobby?”

The term “cobby” harkens back to a Welsh Cob, a workman-like, sturdy, stout and thick-set horse used to draw carts.
The antithesis of a Thoroughbred.



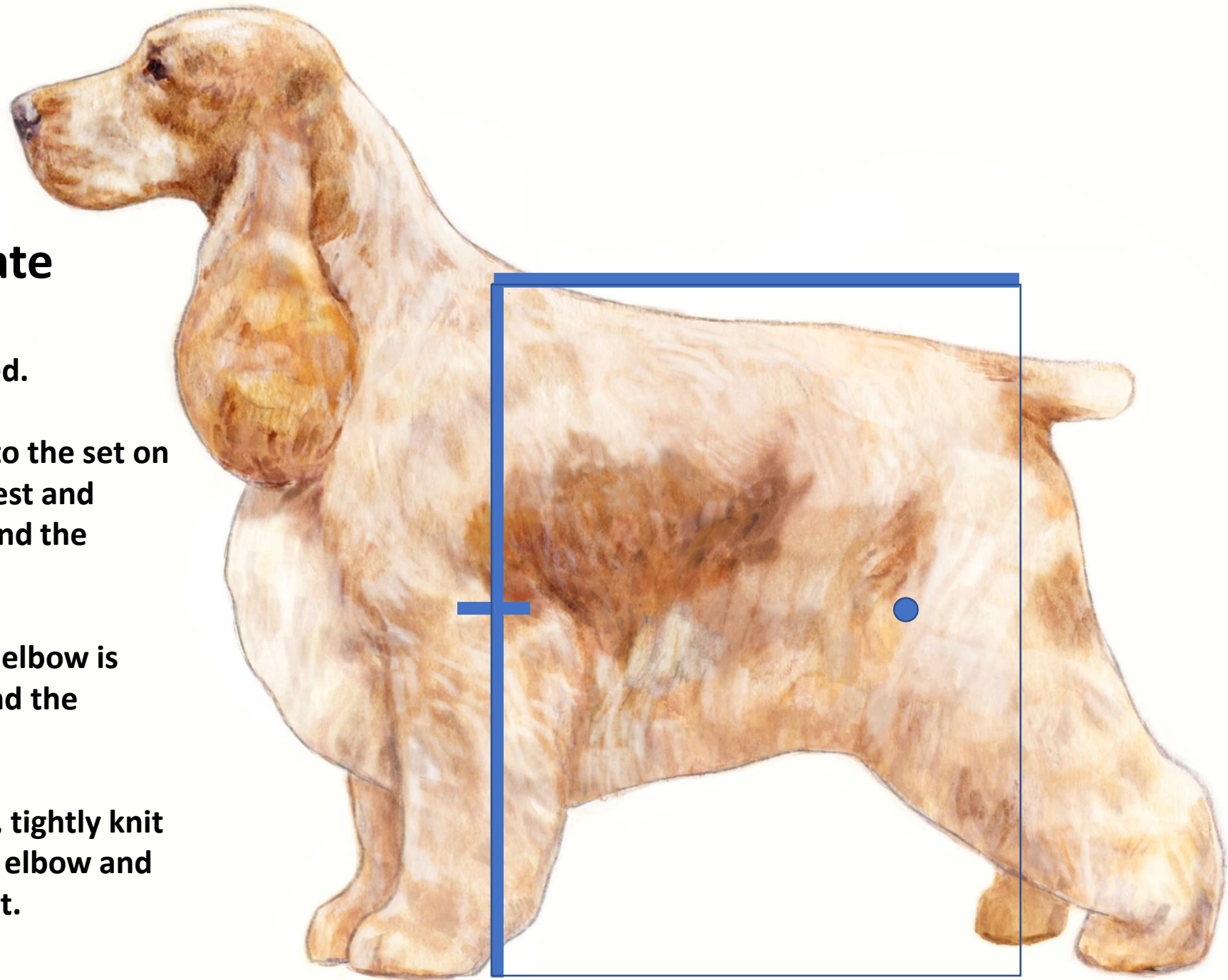
A rounded, softly contoured appearance, with no sharp angles or lines.

This is a short-coupled, tightly knit, one-piece dog.

Proportion

Balanced and Moderate

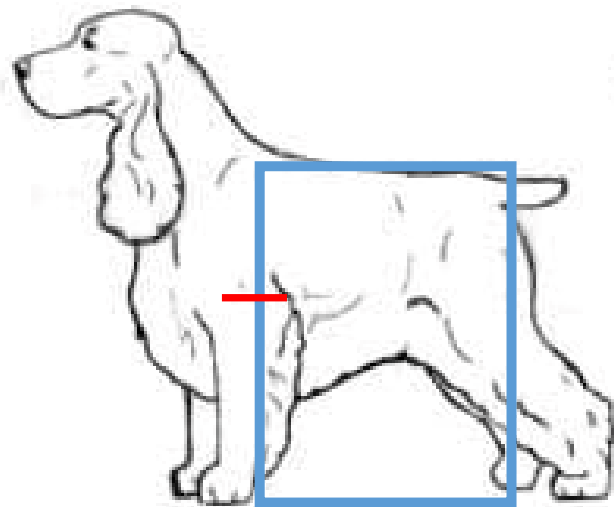
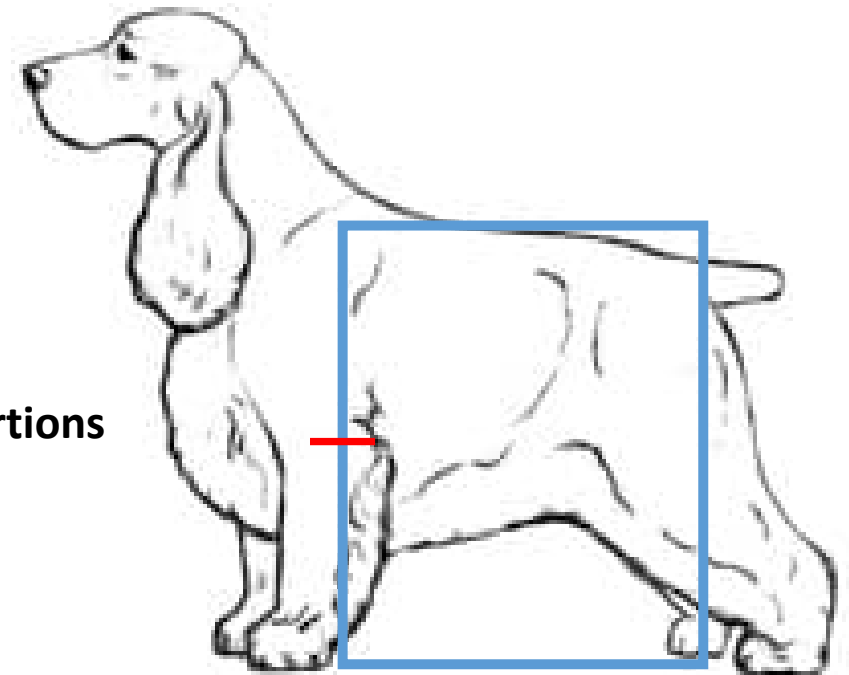
- **Compactly built and short-coupled.**
- **Slightly taller than long (withers to the set on of tail). With the required forechest and rounded, muscular buttocks behind the tailset.**
- **Neither leggy nor low on leg, the elbow is midpoint between the withers and the ground.**
- **As a result of being short-backed, tightly knit and cobby, the distance between elbow and the front of the thigh will be short.**



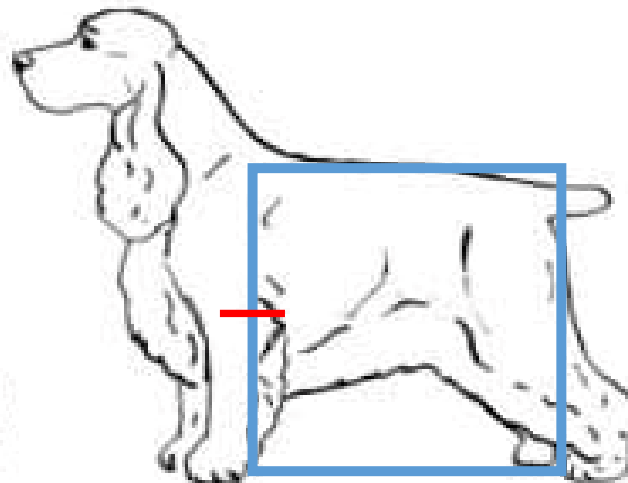
Proportion

"Compactly built and short-coupled, with height at withers slightly greater than the distance from withers to set-on of tail."

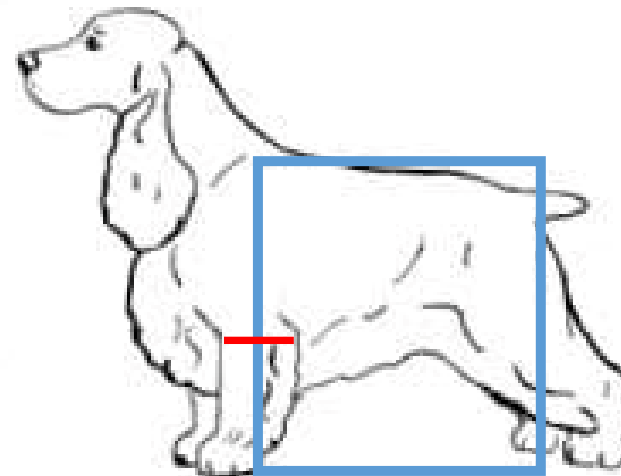
Correct Proportions



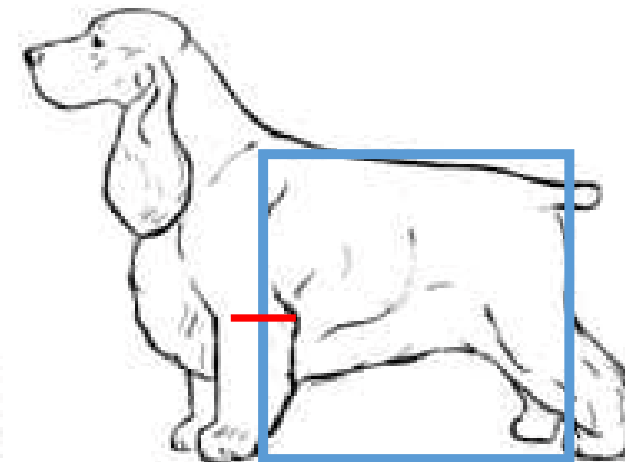
Back too short, legs too long



Long back



Short legs



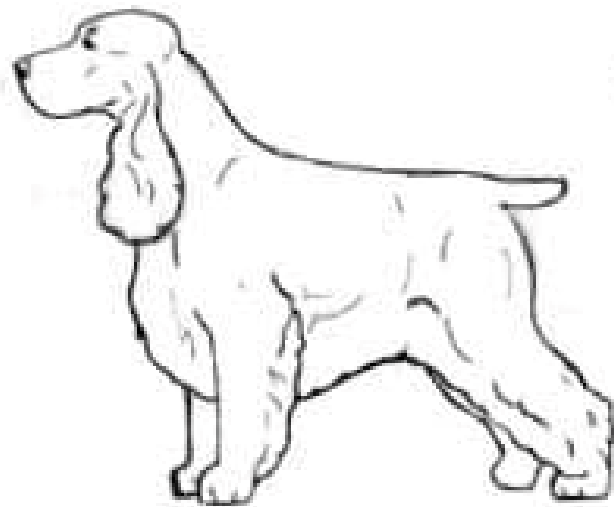
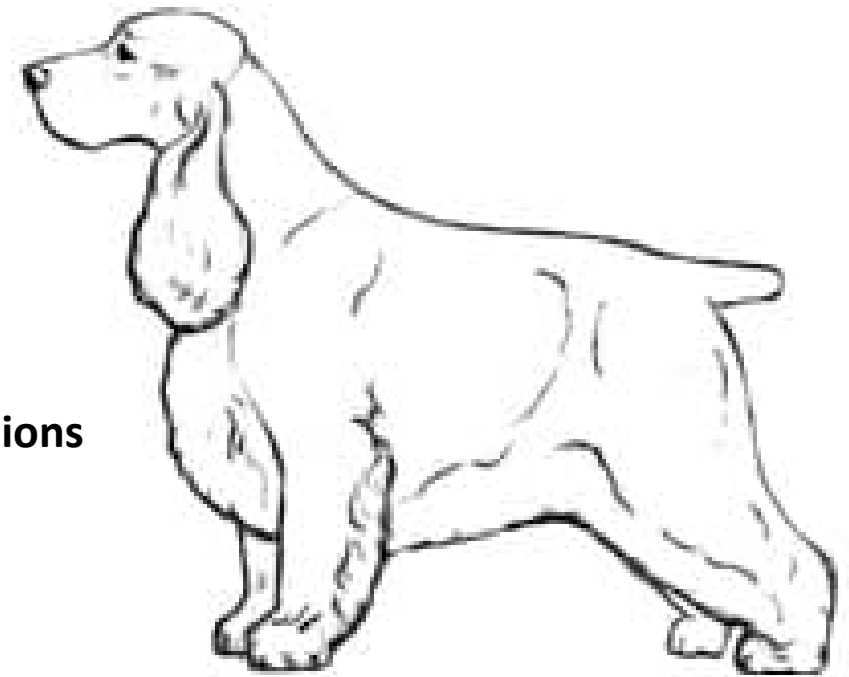
Long back, short legs

Leg length is in balance with the body, the elbow is midpoint between the withers and the ground.
Check to ensure markings on a parti color aren't fooling your eyes, especially as to where the elbow is located.

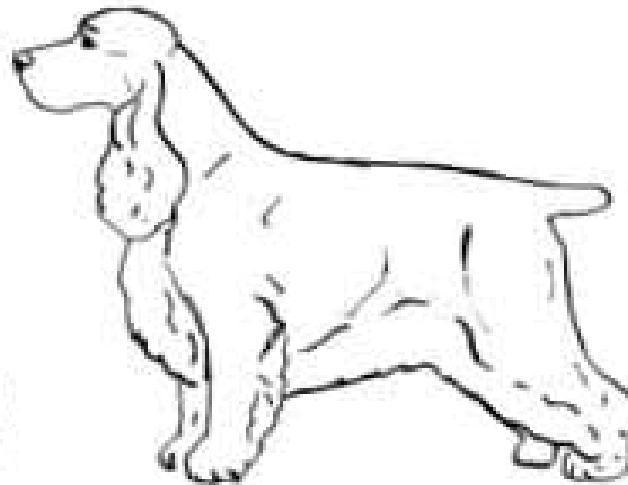
Proportion

Compact and cobby, the overall outline of slightly off square should come only from the required forechest, correctly constructed front and rounded, muscular buttocks behind the tailset.

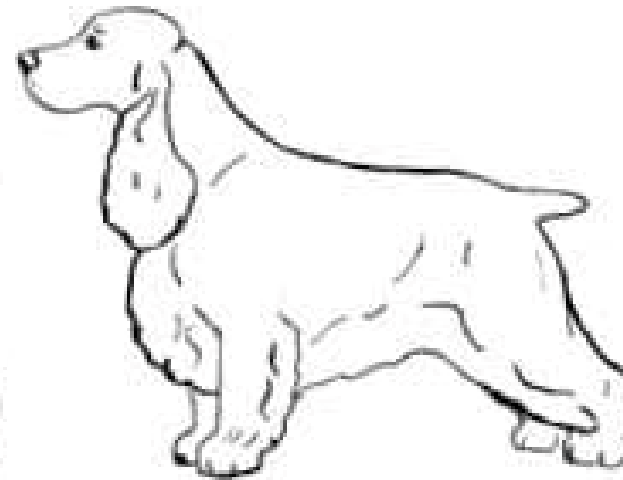
Correct Proportions



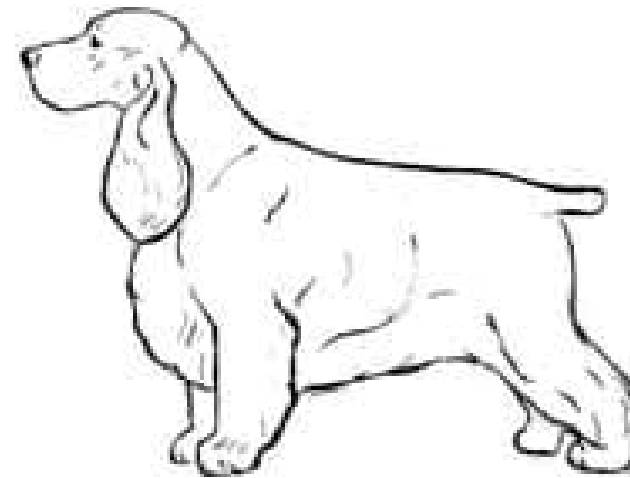
Back too short, legs too long



Long back



Short legs



Long back, short legs

Judges should be aware that a dog that appears to have correct proportions but which upon examination possesses a short rib cage and a long loin, is incorrectly constructed.

Size and Substance

- Remember that Cockers were developed to push into the thick cover, not to jump over it as Springers or Setters would.
- They have to be built like weightlifters; strong, yet small enough to get under and into that cover.
- They need to possess that structure to support the necessary muscle in order to perform the work for which they were bred.



Size

- Height for males is 16 to 17 inches, and 15 to 16 inches for females.
- The most desirable weights: males, 28 to 34 pounds; females, 26 to 32 pounds.

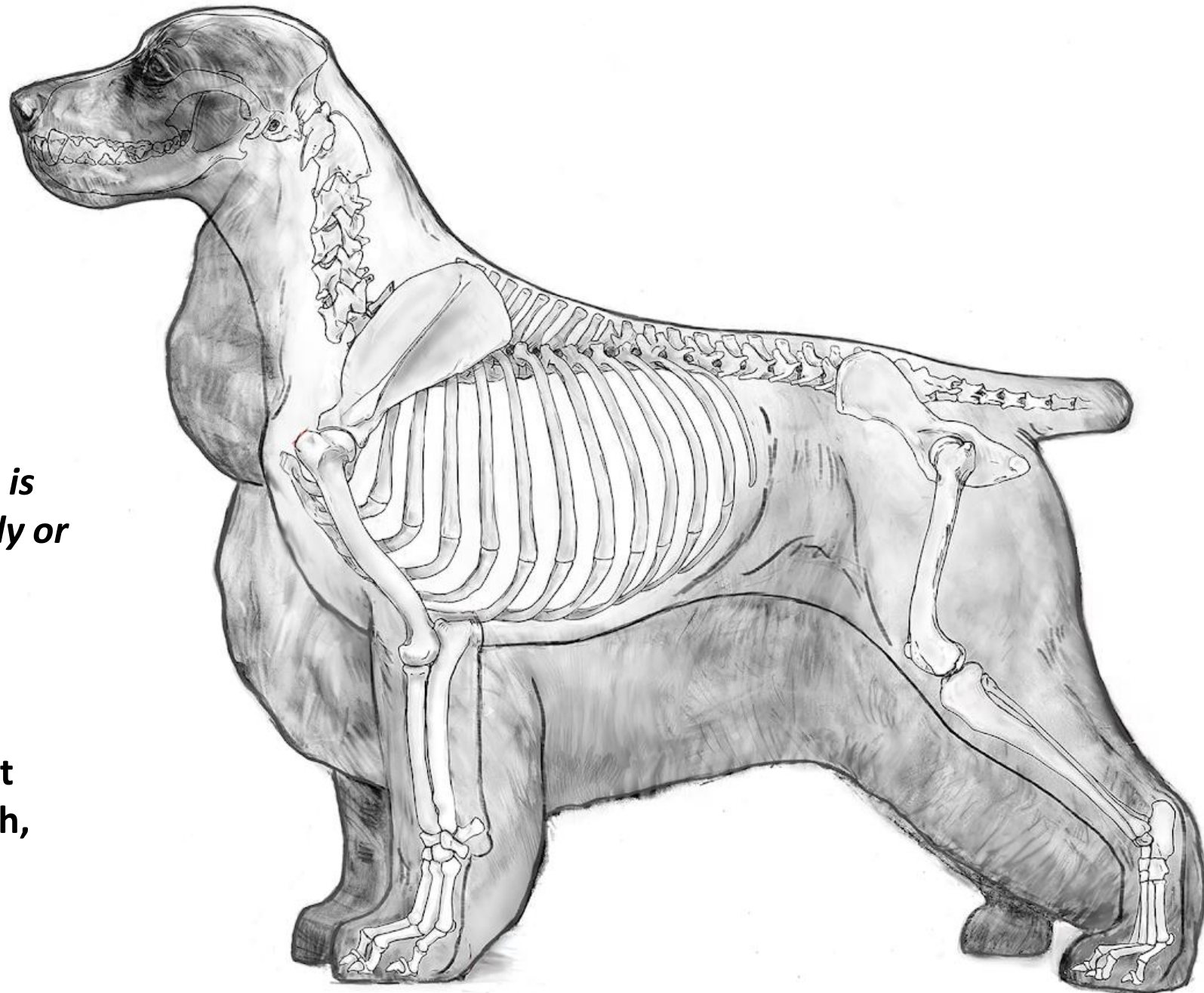


The breed does not have a tendency to become too big or too small and there have been dogs of outstanding breed type at both ends of the size spectrum. As long as the dog exhibits correct substance for size, dogs at the top and bottom of the standard should be considered equally, both male and female.

Substantial

A lot of dog in a small space

- Solidly built.
- *“As much bone and substance as is possible without becoming cloddy or coarse.”*
- Surprisingly heavy for his size.
- There should be no question that the dog has the required strength, frame, and muscling to work in dense cover carrying relatively heavy game.



Substance should be apparent even in a six-month-old puppy

- Please note when judging that the bone, forechest, rib spring, and a muscular rear should be very evident, even in the puppy classes.
- A well-made puppy of any color should not be considered “dumpy”. A racy, narrow, fine-boned puppy will never mature into a correctly made adult.



Substance should be apparent even in a six-month-old puppy



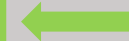
Correct

Good substance,
width and depth
of body, apparent
forechest with
good fill.



Correct

Good spring of rib,
showing correct
muscling and
width of
hindquarters.



Incorrect

Lacking substance
and width of body
with insufficient
forechest and fill.



Incorrect

lacking rib spring
with insufficient
width of
hindquarters.



“The face of a duchess and the bottom of a cook.”



It's a common descriptor among breeders, and quite apropos. That sweet, endearing head and expression, yet all the width and substance they require. The breed has beauty and is still utilitarian.

Head and Expression

The head and particularly the kind, endearing expression are the appeal of the breed.

The soft eyes draw you in. You instinctively know that this is a breed that exudes a willingness to please and is game for anything involving human companionship.



The head and expression are the appeal of the breed, however **the English Cocker Spaniel is NOT a head breed**. The proper head is just one part of a correctly made bird dog. The body gets the dog to the bird and then the head does its job. There are many details that comprise a functional head as you will see in this presentation.

Please remember that a good head is useless unless the body can get the dog to the bird. When judging, prioritize by body make and shape, and then factor in heads. A beautiful, correct head is totally useless if attached to a long, narrow dog with a straight front.





Expression *"Soft, melting, yet dignified, alert, and intelligent."*

The head is strong, yet free from coarseness, softly contoured, without sharp angles. Taken as a whole, the parts combine to produce the expression distinctive of the breed.

Correct Eye Shape and Expression



Eyes:

- Medium in size
- Full and slightly oval
- Set wide apart with tight lids





There is a slight lift to the top eyelid which gives the English Cocker an alert expression.

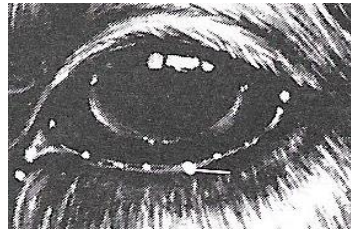
Correct eye shape



medium in size, full and slightly oval



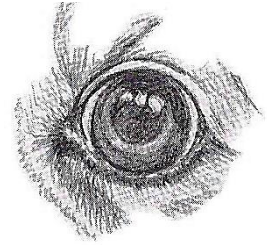
Incorrect, almond-shaped



squinty, harsh expression



Incorrect, round



a startled expression



Correct Head and Expression



Note:

- Large, wide-open nostrils
- Plush muzzle, strong under jaw
- Wide set eyes with moderate, grooved stop
- Arched and slightly flattened skull shape
- Ears are set on low, below the eye

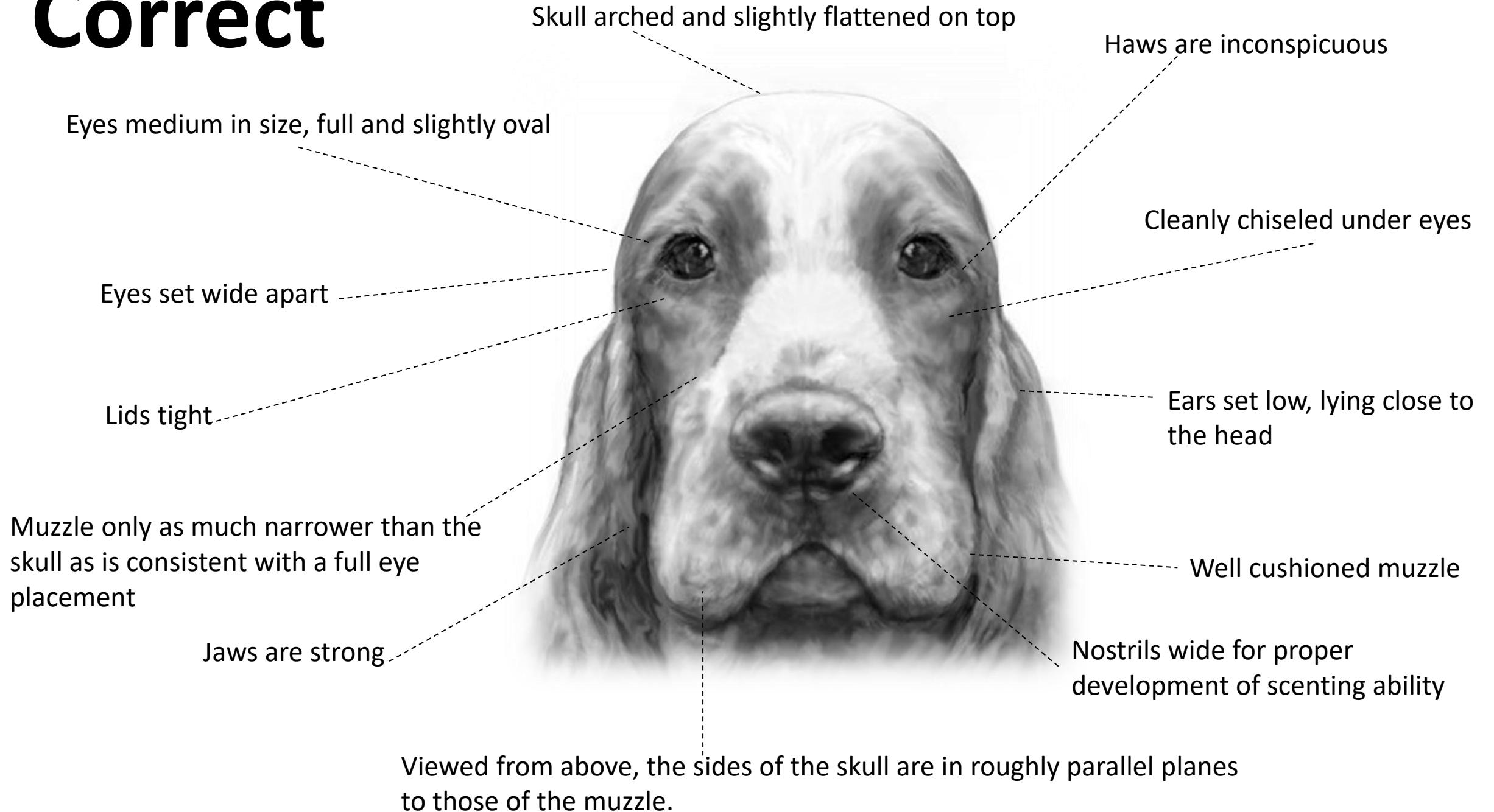
Incorrect Head and Expression



Note:

- Small, almond-shaped, light eyes
- High ear-set
- Cheeky with a narrow muzzle
- A harsh, untypical head and expression

Correct

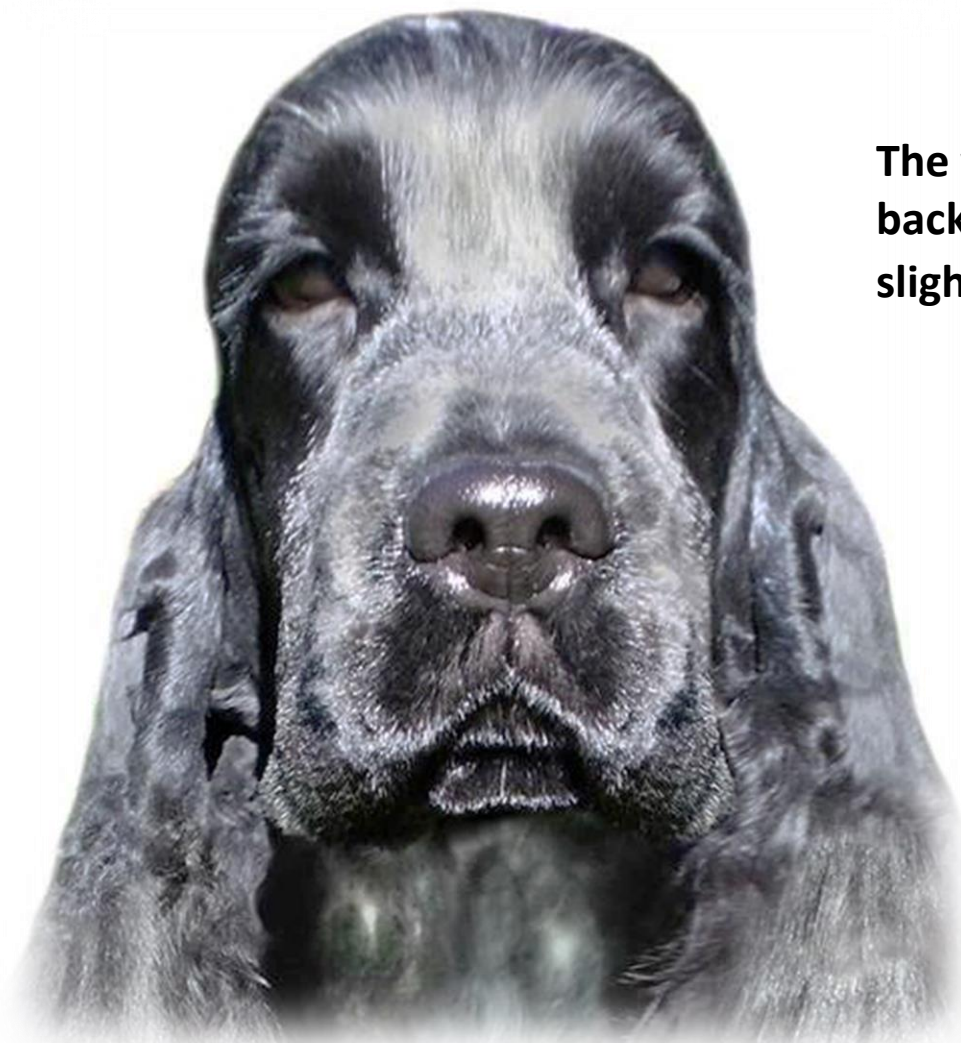


Viewed from ABOVE and the FRONT :

“Viewed from above, the sides of the skull are in planes roughly parallel to those of the muzzle.”



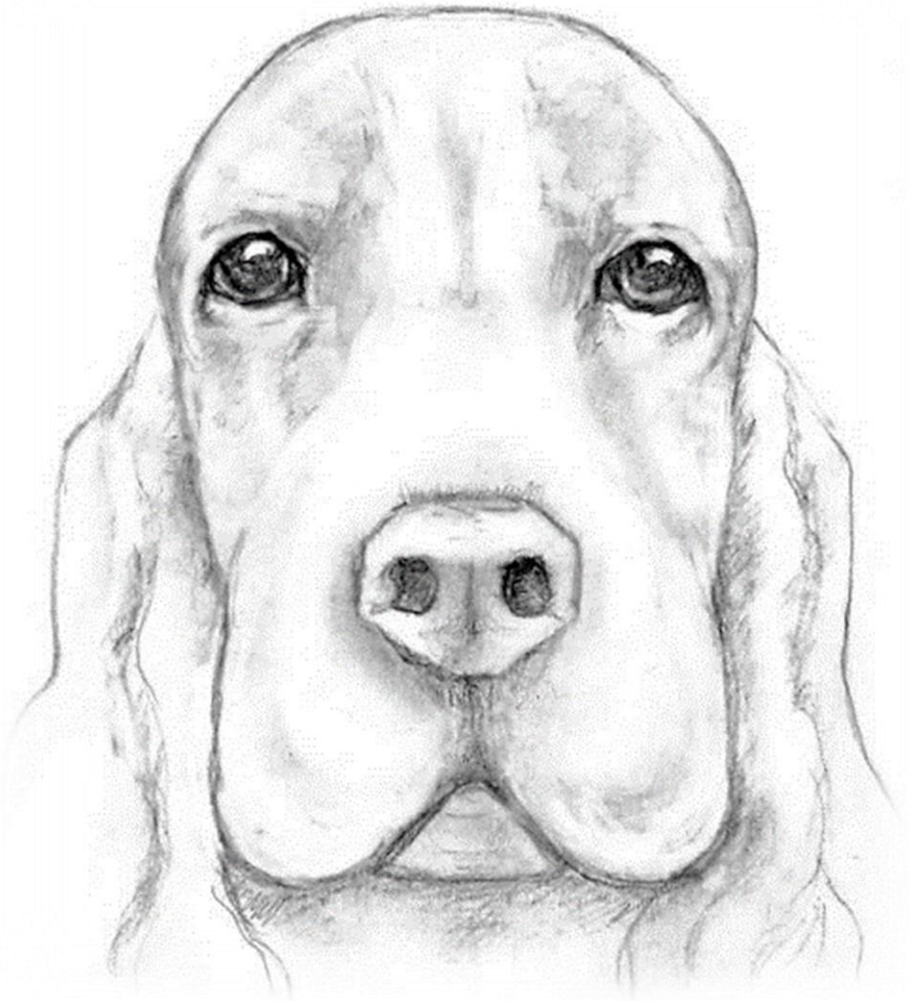
The very top of the back-skull is only slightly flattened.



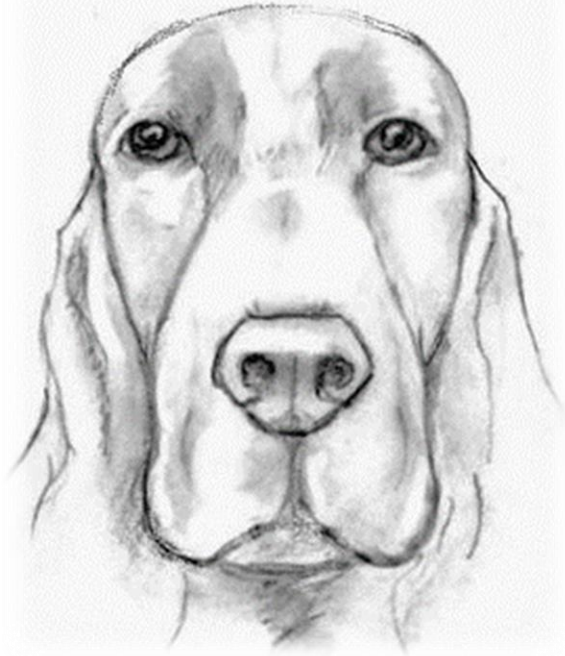
- The back-skull should not be coarse or wide, but in balance with the muzzle.
- The sides of the back-skull are elevated and arched, to allow good jaw muscle attachment which aids in carrying heavy game.

Skull From the Front

Common Faults



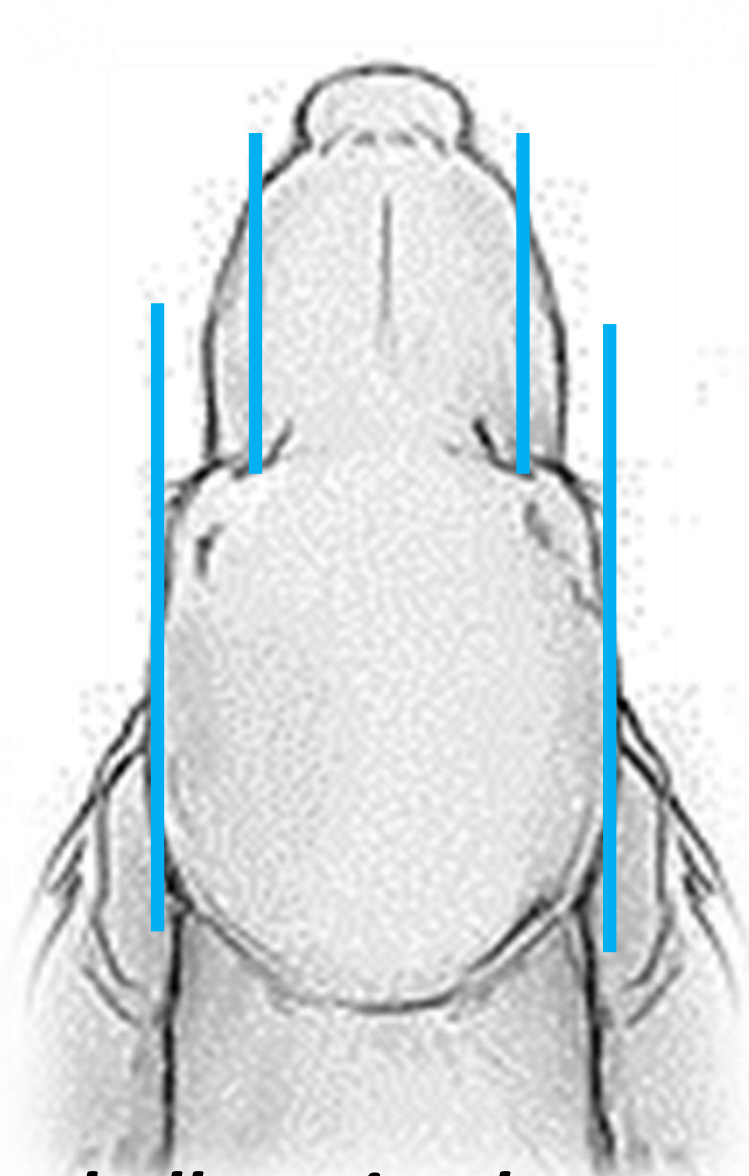
Correct and well-balanced skull that is arched and slightly flattened.



Flat, angular, lacking the softly contoured shape and appears harsh.

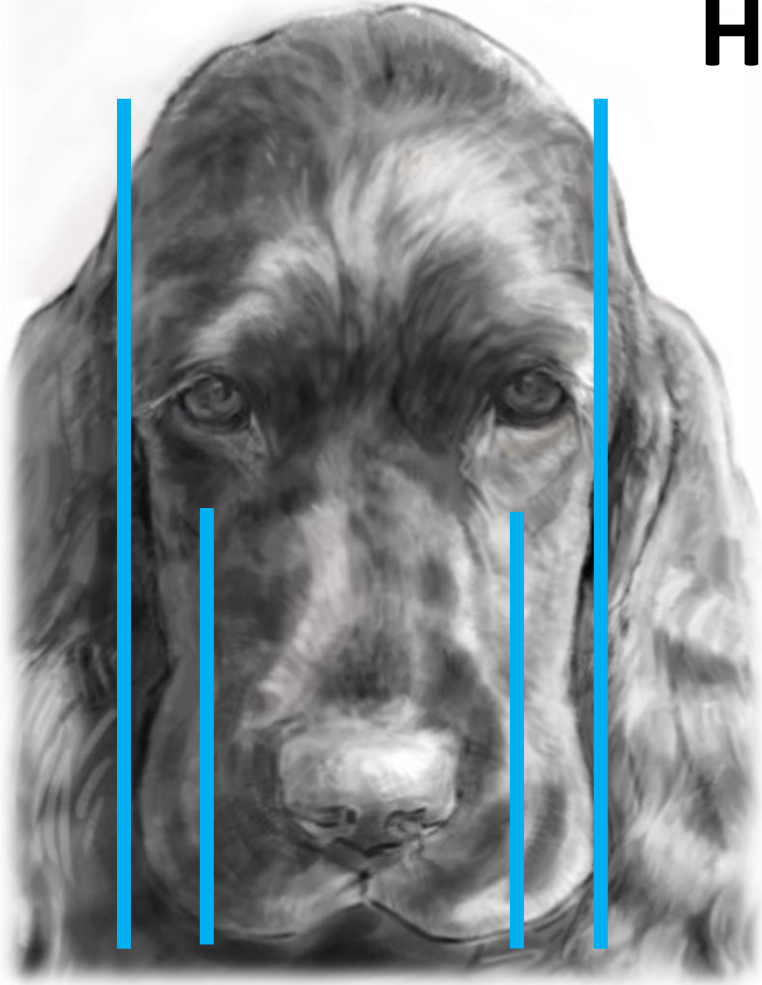


Domed, overly arched and missing the slightly flattened top.



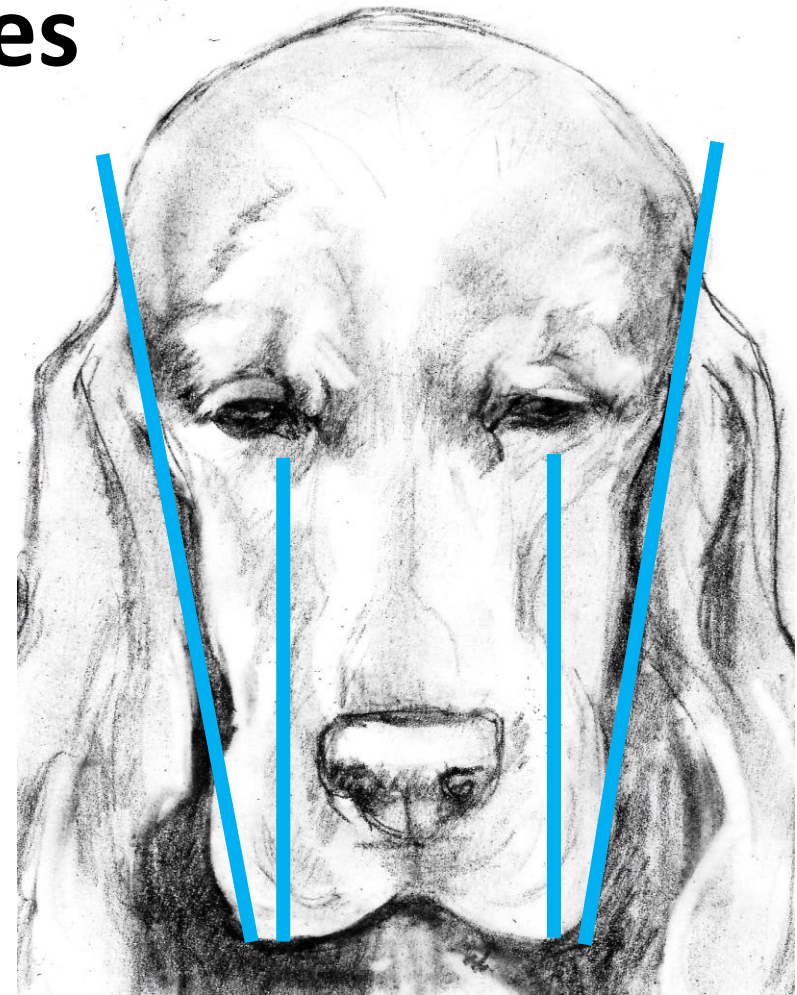
“Viewed from above, the sides of the skull are in planes roughly parallel to those of the muzzle.”

Head Planes



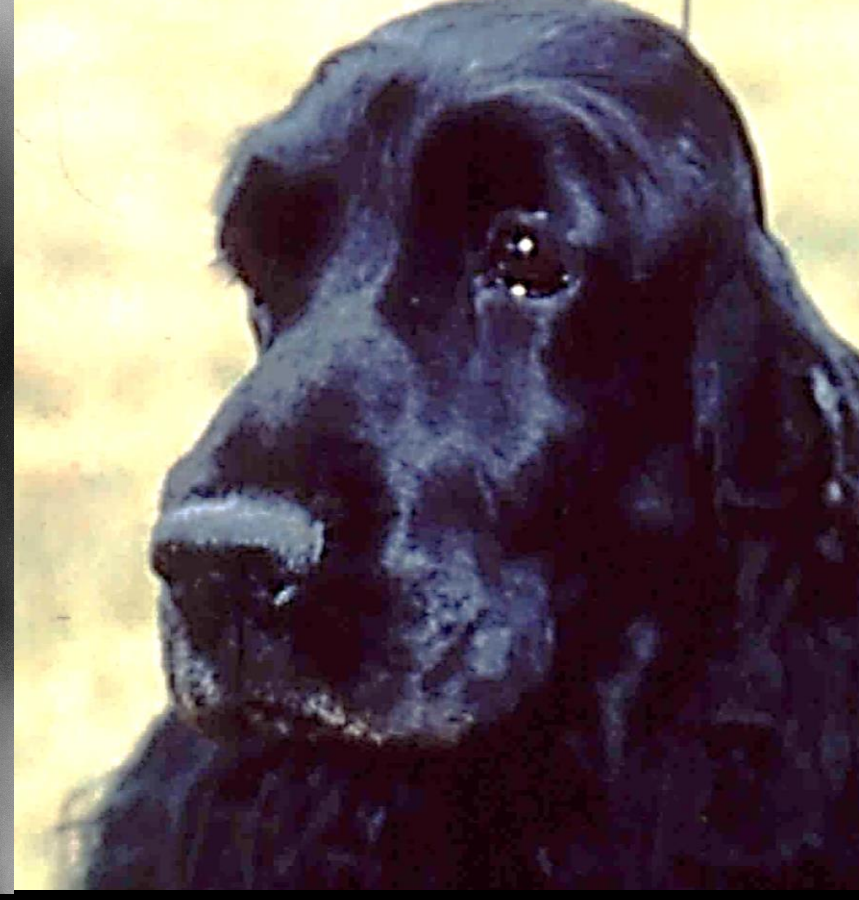
Correct:

Here the back-skull and the muzzle are in balance. The side planes of the back-skull are roughly parallel to the side planes of the muzzle when viewed from above.



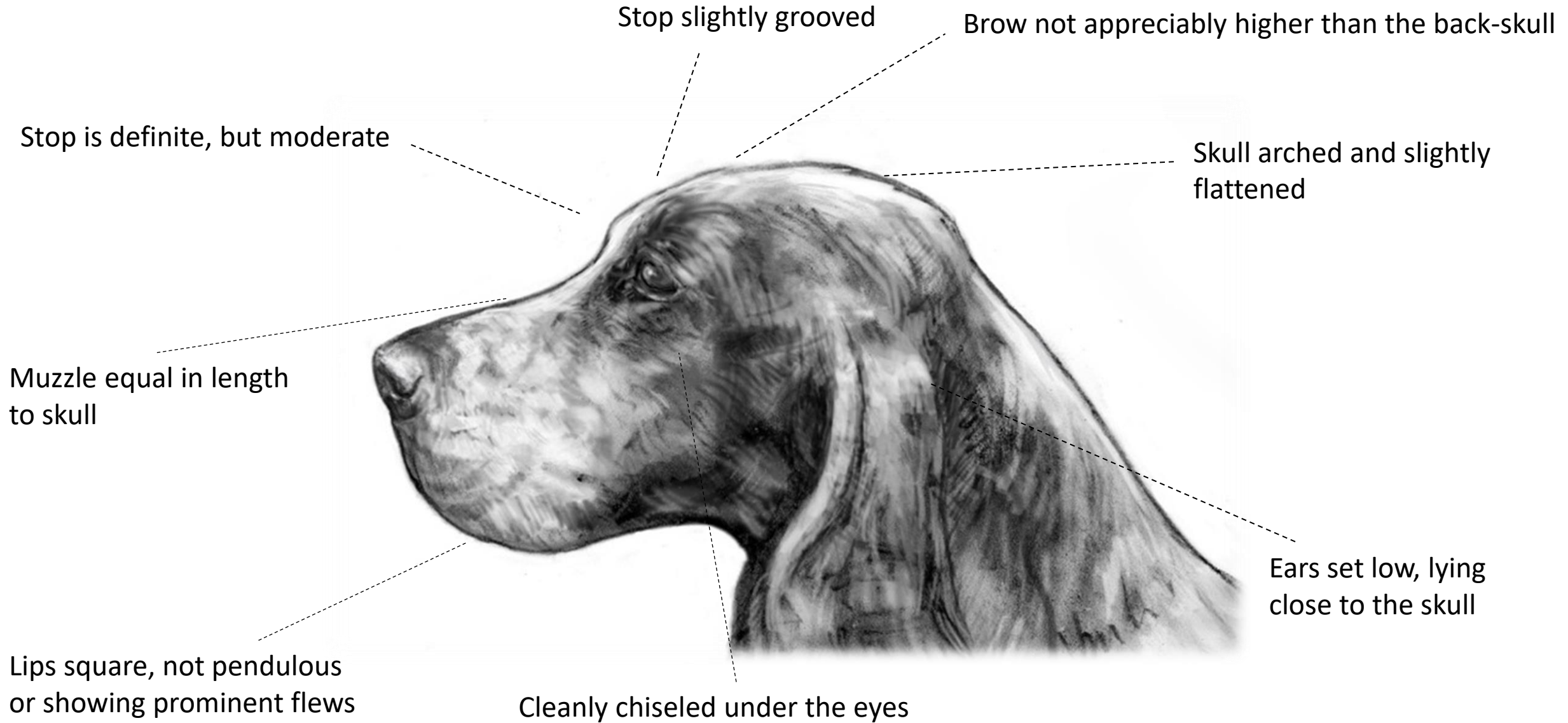
Incorrect:

This drawing shows a dog with a coarse back-skull. The side planes of the back-skull are not parallel with the side planes of the muzzle when viewed from above.



The grooved stop and chiseling under the eyes are essential details and distinctive of the breed.

Correct



In Profile

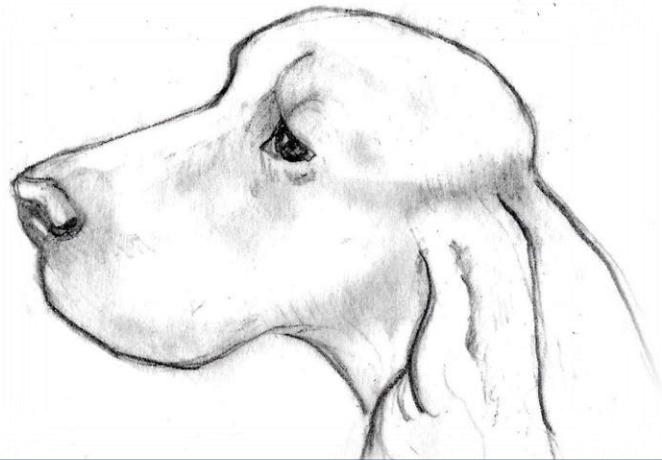


A well-balanced head with a definite, yet moderate stop.

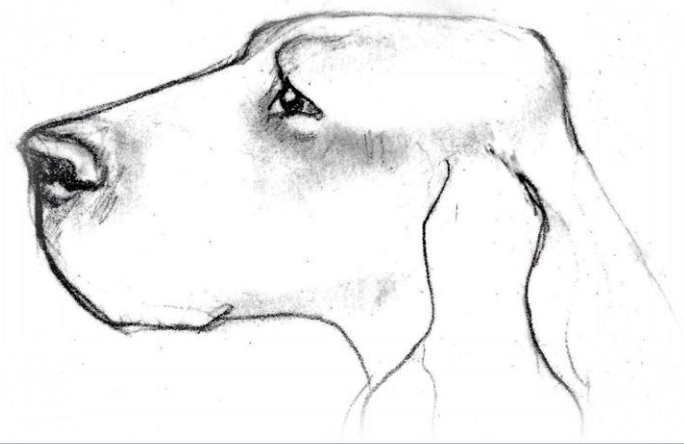
Common Faults



Skull too deep, stop too pronounced, skull flat.



Back-skull falls off too sharply, prominent frontal bone.

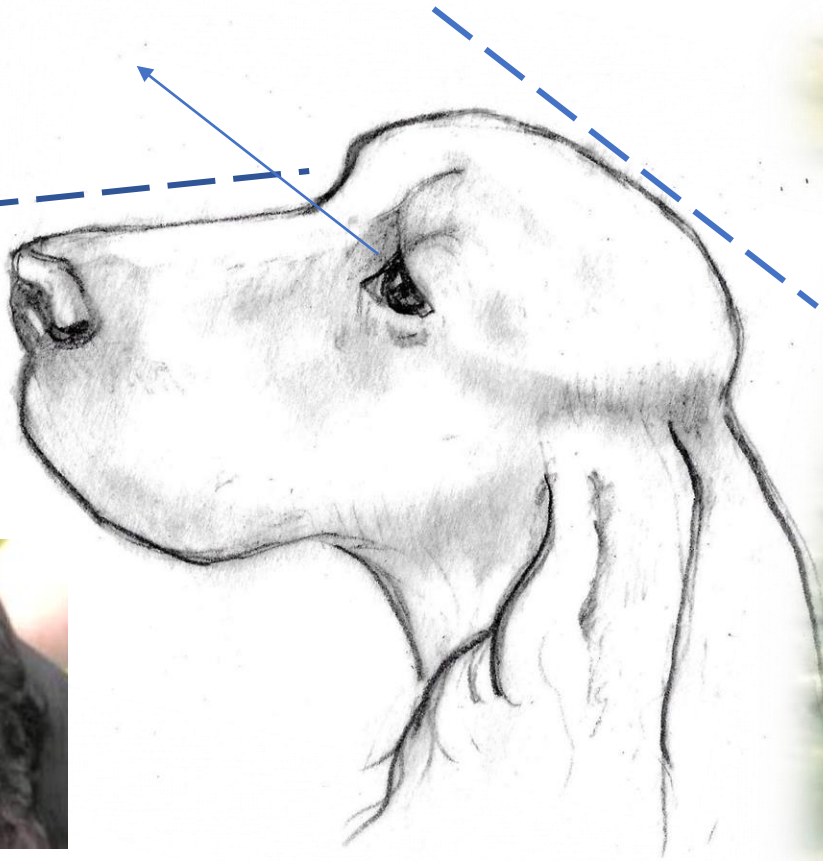


Lacking stop, flat skull with small eyes.

“Viewed in profile, the brow appears not appreciably higher than the back-skull.”

While English Cockers do not have parallel head planes when viewed from the side, downfaced dogs are incorrect.

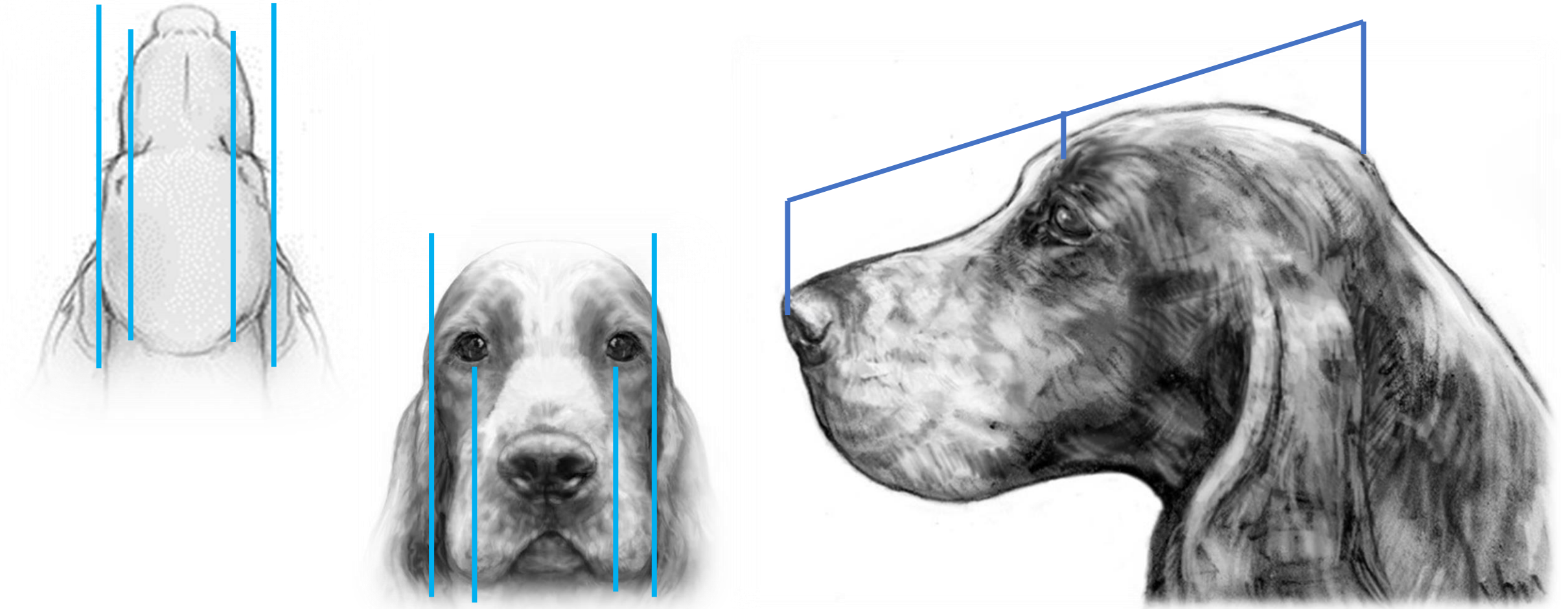
“Downfaced” –
excessively divergent
head planes.



The English Cocker, being a Jack-of-all-trades hunting companion, is required to retrieve game from water. Therefore, he must be able to carry the game and not be looking up into the sun keeping his nostrils clear of water.

Form follows function.

“Muzzle - Equal in length to skull”



“only as much narrower than the skull as is consistent with a full eye placement.”

Eye Color is dark brown, except in livers and liver parti colors, where it will be hazel, but the darker the hazel the better.



Haws (second eyelids) are inconspicuous and can be pigmented, unpigmented, both or one of each.

Having light haws does not mean they have loose eyelids.



Two light haws are inconspicuous on dog with tight eyelids.



**The dogs on the right all have loose, droopy and baggy eyelids.
This is a detriment in the field, as the eyes will collect debris.**



Pigment



“color black, except in livers and parti-colors of that shade where they will be brown; reds and parti-colors of that shade may be brown, but black is preferred.”

***“Bite - Scissors. A level bite is not preferred.
Overshot or undershot to be severely penalized.”***



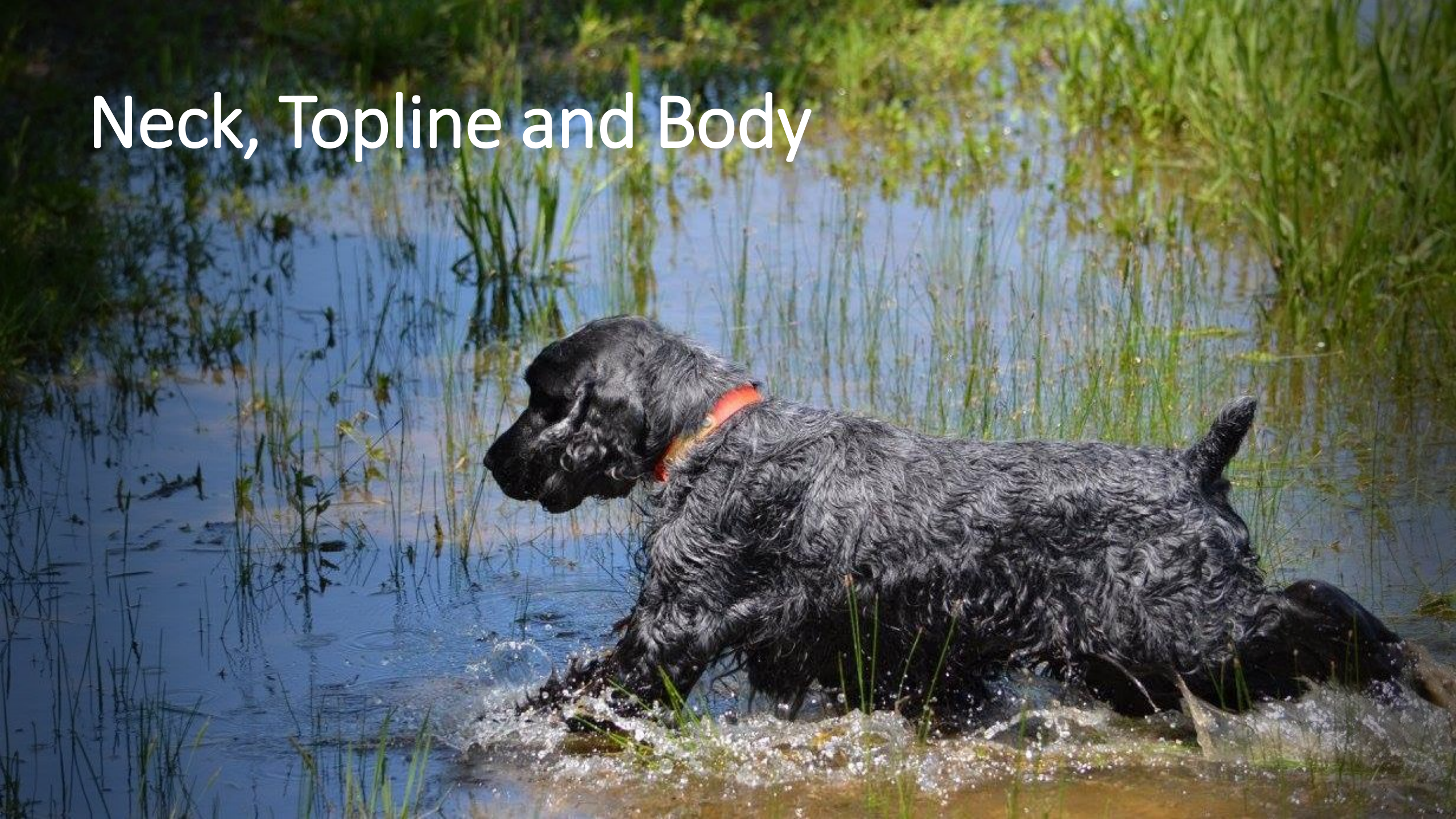
The teeth are of good size and the nostrils wide open for scenting.

**English Cockers have large teeth for the size of dog, essential for carrying heavy game.
They are meant to do heavy lifting!**

Please remember that a good head is useless unless the body can get the dog to the bird. When judging, prioritize by body make and shape, and then factor in heads. A beautiful, correct head is totally useless if attached to a long, narrow dog with a straight front.



Neck, Topline and Body



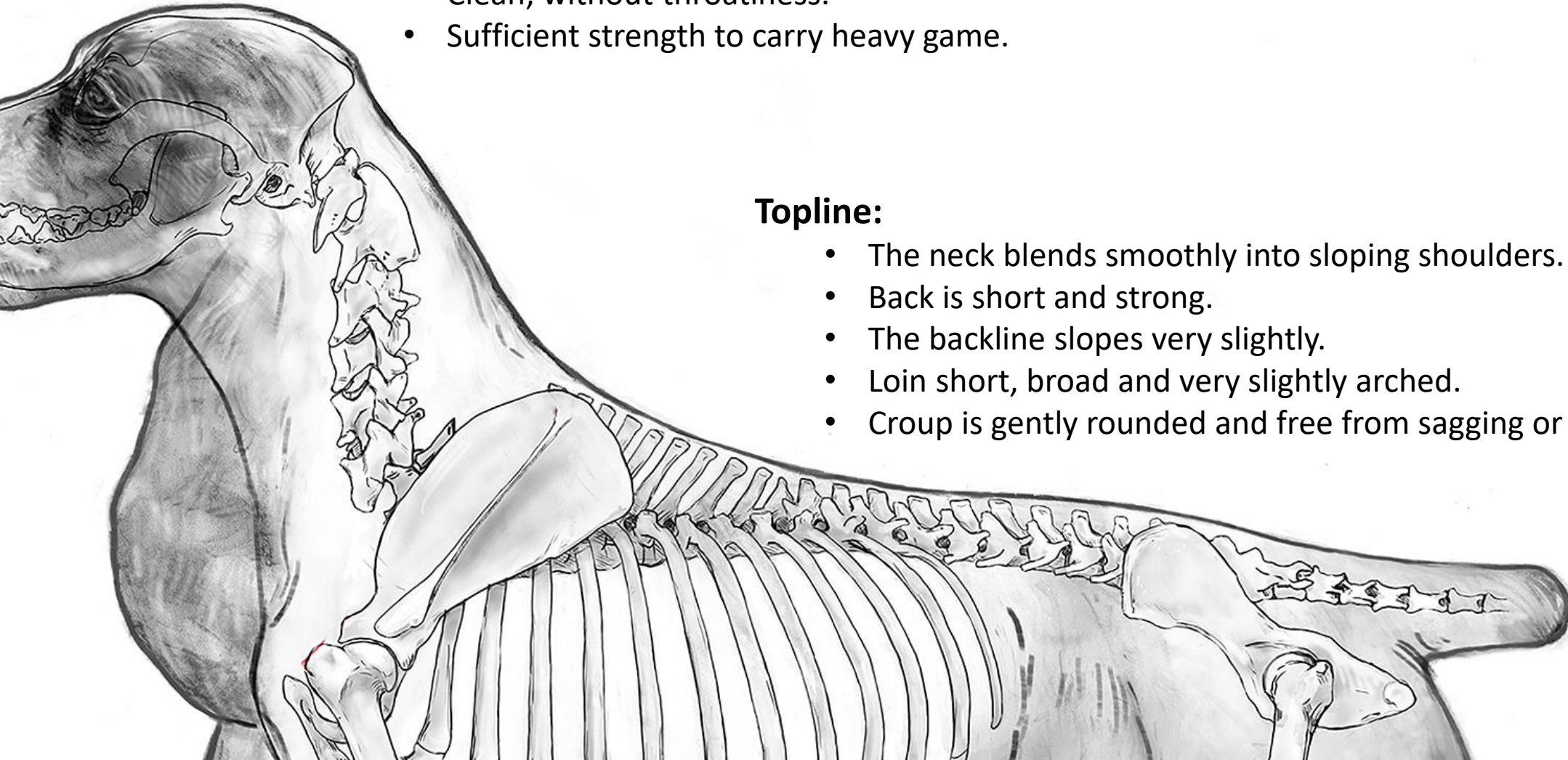
Neck and Topline

Neck:

- Moderate in length and in balance with the length and height of the dog.
- Graceful and muscular, arched toward the head.
- Clean, without throatiness.
- Sufficient strength to carry heavy game.

Topline:

- The neck blends smoothly into sloping shoulders.
- Back is short and strong.
- The backline slopes very slightly.
- Loin short, broad and very slightly arched.
- Croup is gently rounded and free from sagging or rumpiness.



Five Essentials of Correct Body Type

- A protective forechest – with a correctly constructed front
- Thick bone
- A well-sprung ribcage that is deep and carried well back
- A **SHORT**, broad loin
- A wide, muscular rear



To hunt efficiently in the type of terrain they were developed to work in, the English Cocker **MUST** have all of these elements.

Forechest

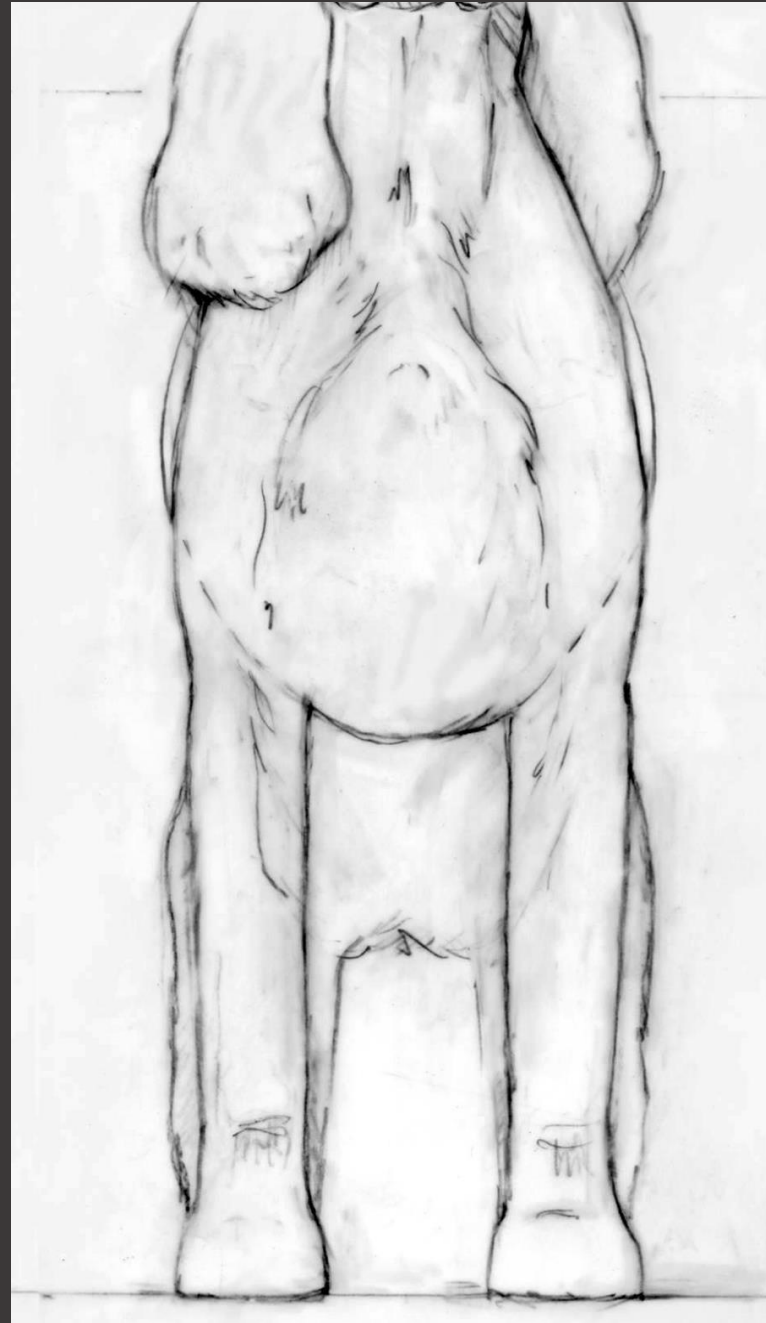
The forechest will only be present if the dog has the correct forehand assembly.

Chest:

- Deep
- Not too wide as to interfere with action of forelegs
- Should not be narrow or pinched

Forechest:

- Well developed with protective padding
- Prosternum projecting moderately beyond shoulder points
- Brisket reaches at least to the elbow

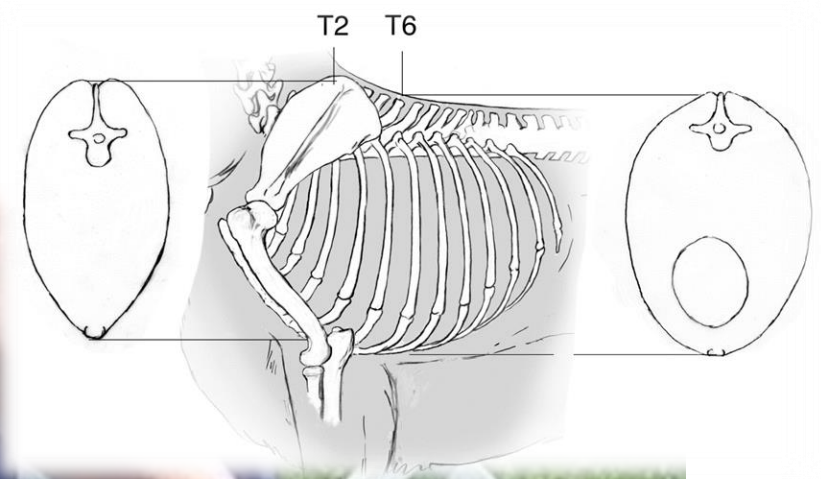


A Well-Sprung Rib Cage

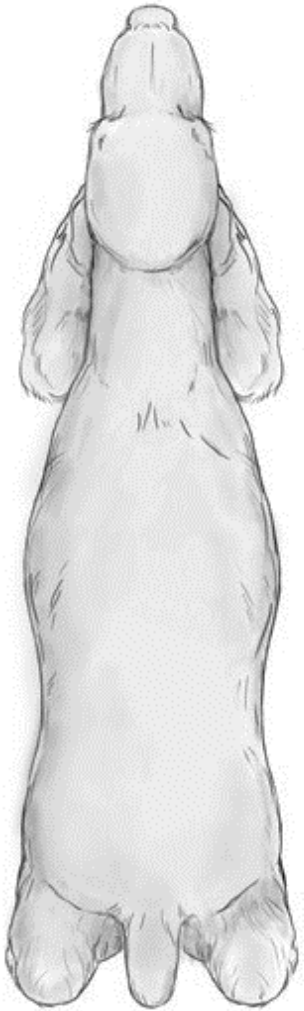
- The rib cage must be deep, at least to the elbow.
- Rib spring is carried well back towards the dog's rear.
- Ribs are heart shaped, not round or barreled.

A well sprung, heart shaped rib cage does not interfere with efficient movement in a deep chested breed.

The dog must have good spring of rib in order to house heart and lungs of sufficient capacity. The rib needs to extend downward to at least the dog's elbow. A shallower rib cage crimps space for heart and lung expansion.



Well sprung ribs and a short, broad loin.



No spring of rib and a long, narrow loin.



An English Cocker lacking in substance that is long, narrow, refined, shelly, racy, and fine-boned, is “settery” in appearance, is atypical of the breed, and should not be rewarded.

A Short, Broad Loin.

“Compact and well-knit, giving the impression of strength without heaviness.”



This breed should have a short, broad loin. There is a slight rise over the loin as a result of muscling. Ribs should be felt and not seen; a cocker is not fat if you can feel ribs.

When judging you should know that English Cockers have a supple, pliable and thick skin for protection from the cover and elements they hunt in.

Tail – Docked or Undocked



- Carried horizontally, off a gently rounded croup.
- Should be wagging, showing the merry nature of the breed.



The natural tail is thick at the root (consistent with the required generous amount of bone), tapering to the end, and ideally not reaching below the hock joint.



Tail – Docked or Undocked

- Carried horizontally, off a gently rounded croup.
- Should be wagging, showing the merry nature of the breed.

The tail is an extension of the topline, carried horizontally. You may see some dogs carry their tails a little higher due to excitement. However, it should never be pegged (often a sign of a poorly constructed hip and rear), nor carried too low (either due to a poor tailset or shyness).

The tails are historically docked, not for the aesthetics, but for the wellbeing of the dog. Because of the incessant wagging and the proximity of the dog to the underbrush, a long tail can be injured in the field.



Correct



Pegged



Low



Although developed primarily as a land Spaniel, the make and shape, and particularly the breadth of the dog, which enable him to push through thick cover, also help him be more buoyant in the water.

Five Essentials of Correct Body Type

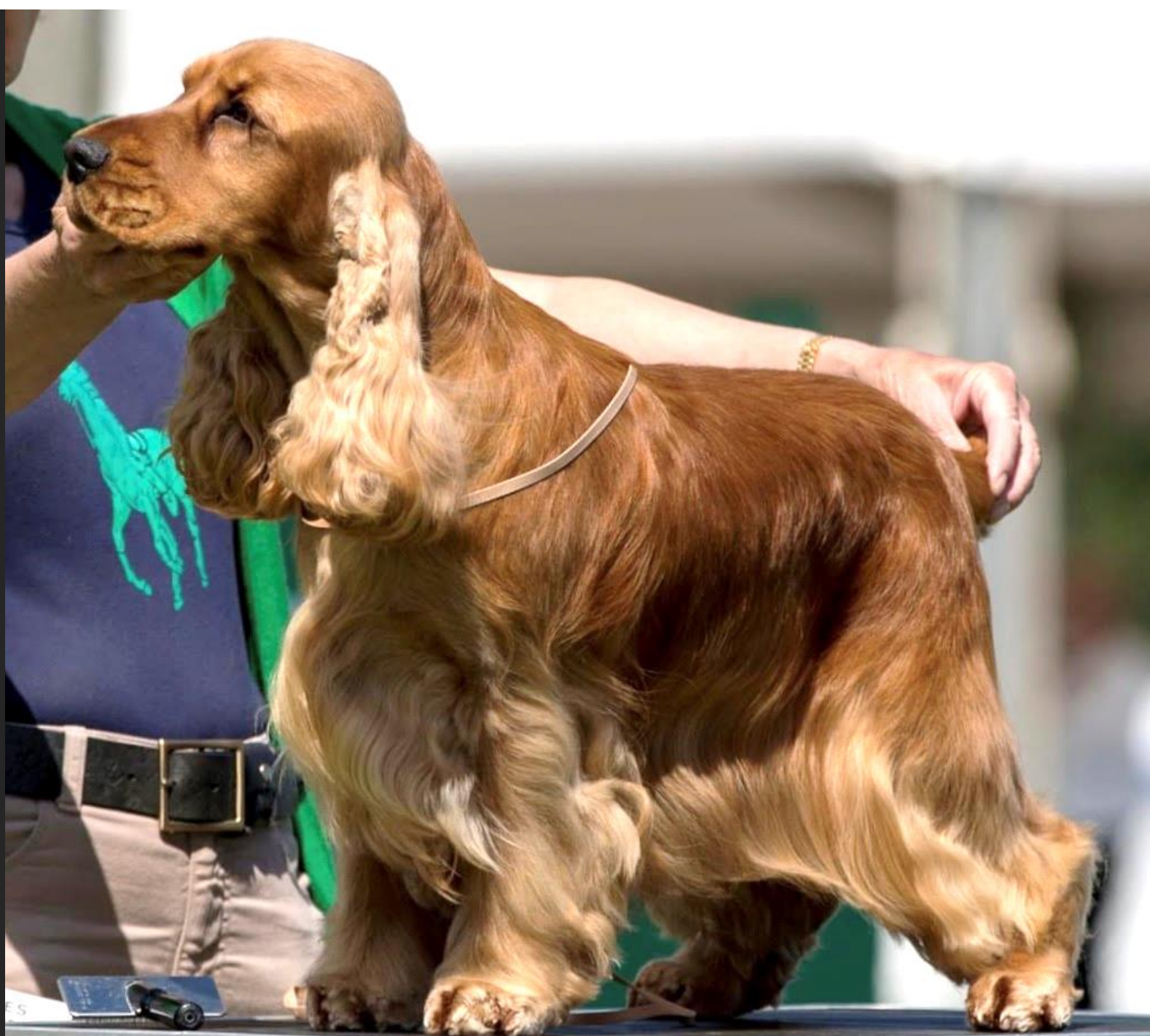
- A protective forechest – with a correctly constructed front
- Thick bone
- A well-sprung ribcage that is deep and carried well back
- A **SHORT**, broad loin
- A wide, muscular rear



To hunt efficiently in the type of terrain they were developed to work in, the English Cocker **MUST** have all of these elements.

Forequarters

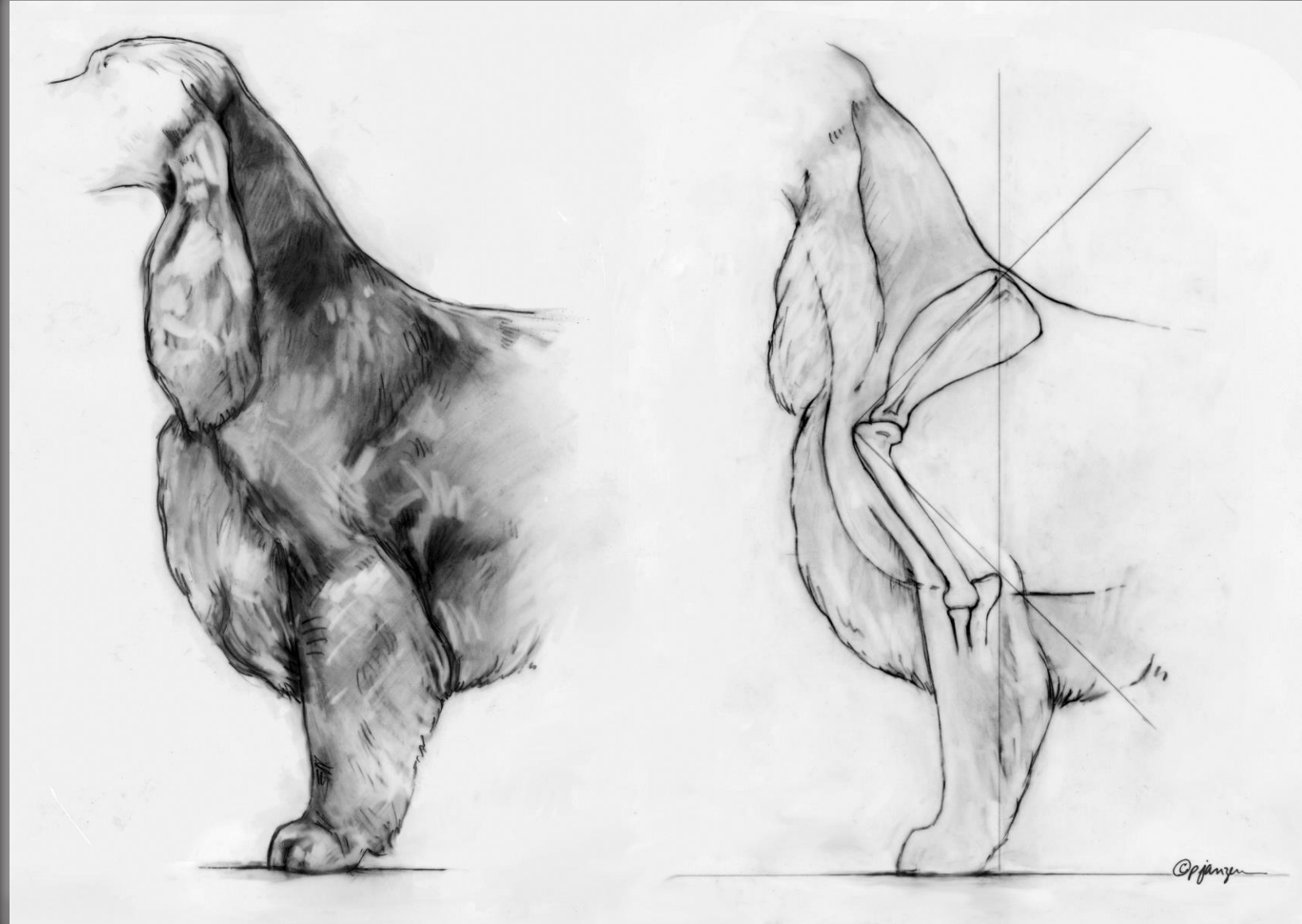
**A correctly made front
is an integral part of
breed type.**



Forequarters

The English Cocker is moderately angulated.

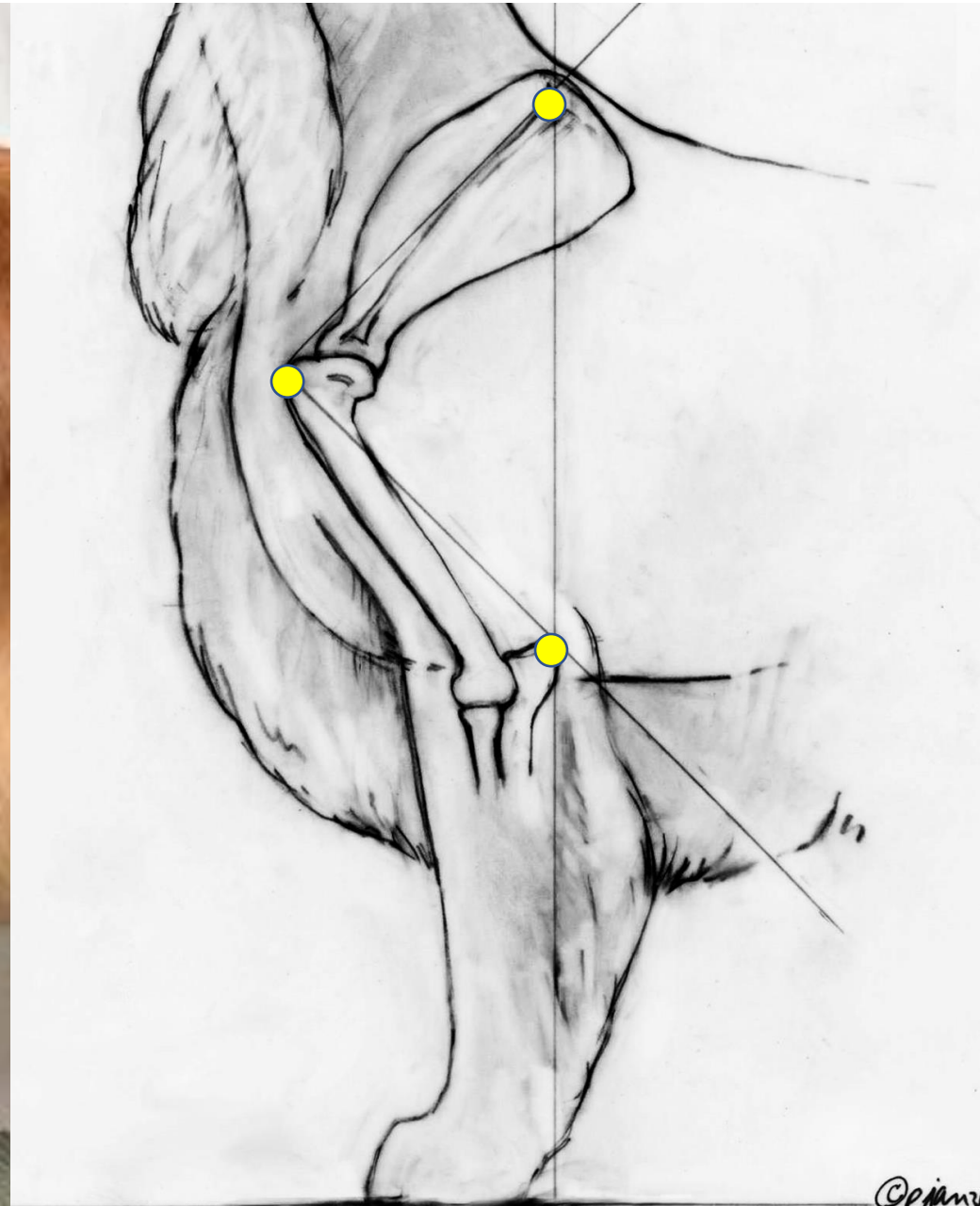
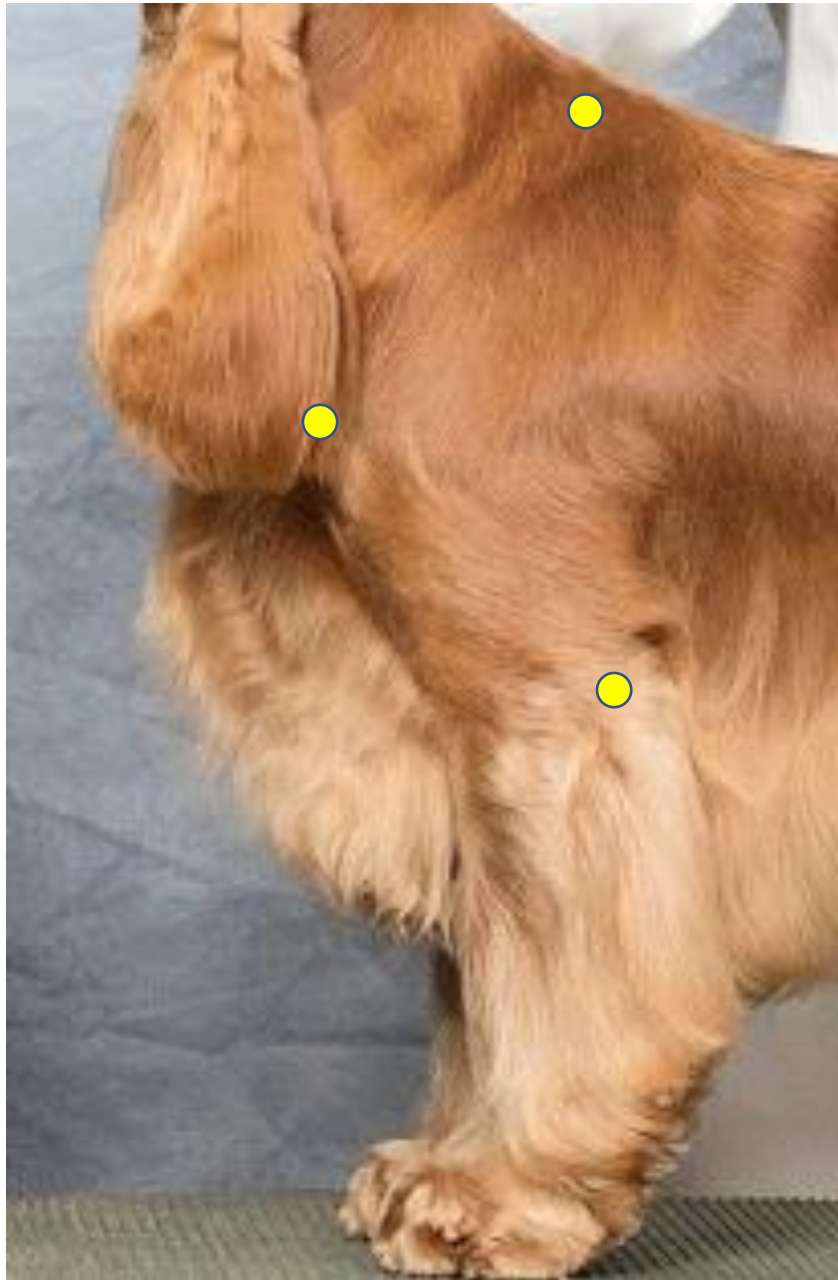
- The withers must be well laid back and located directly above the elbow, in order to allow the neck full range of motion.
- The blade lies flat and is smoothly fitting.
- Most importantly, there is equal length and return of upper arm, placing the front legs well under the dog for support, especially necessary when carrying the additional weight of heavy game.
- Elbows set close to the body.



Correct Front Assembly

The English Cocker's front legs must be well placed underneath the dog to support his substantial body and maintain balance while carrying game.

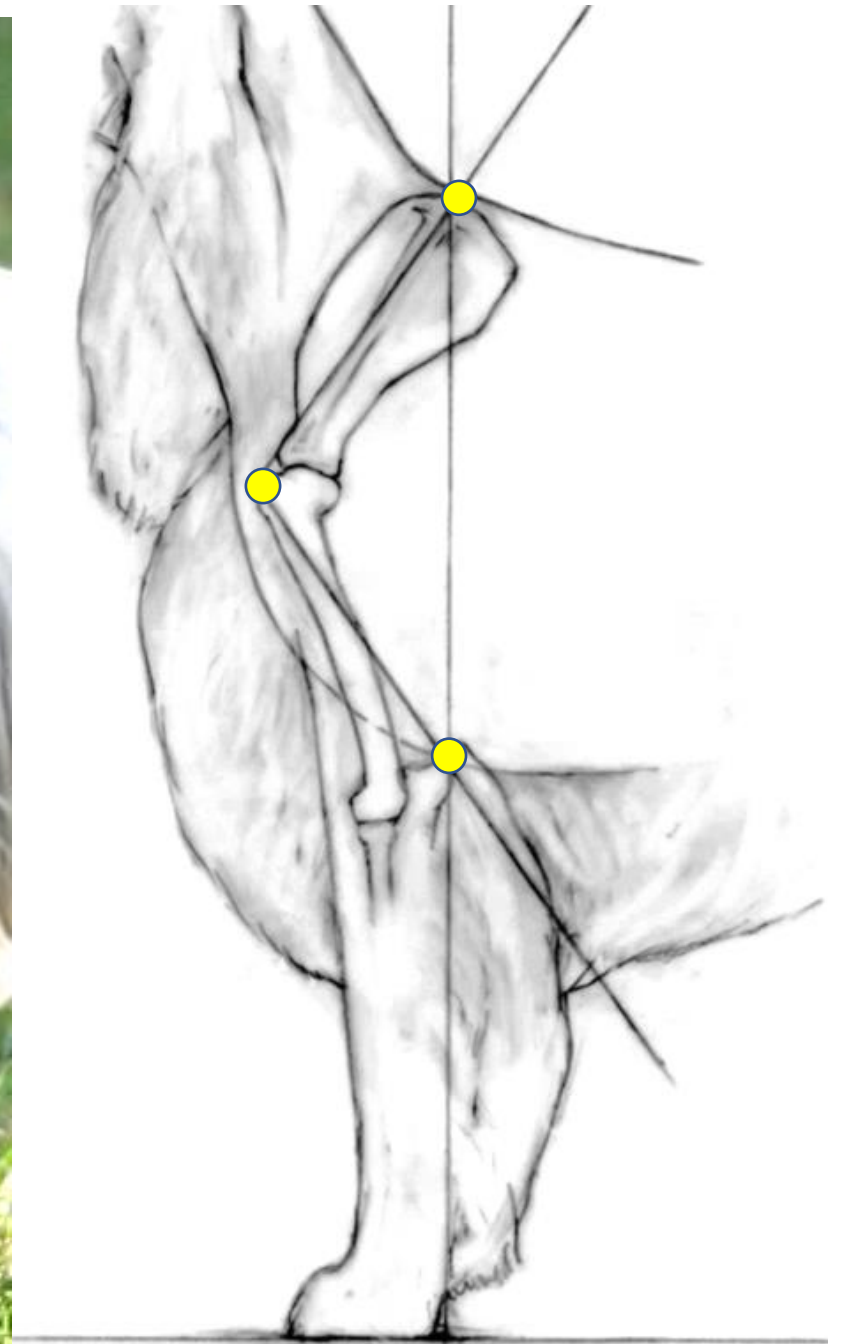
- Shoulders well laid back with withers directly above the elbow.
- Equal length and return of upper arm.
- Front legs placed underneath the dog.



Incorrect Front Assembly

Straight Front

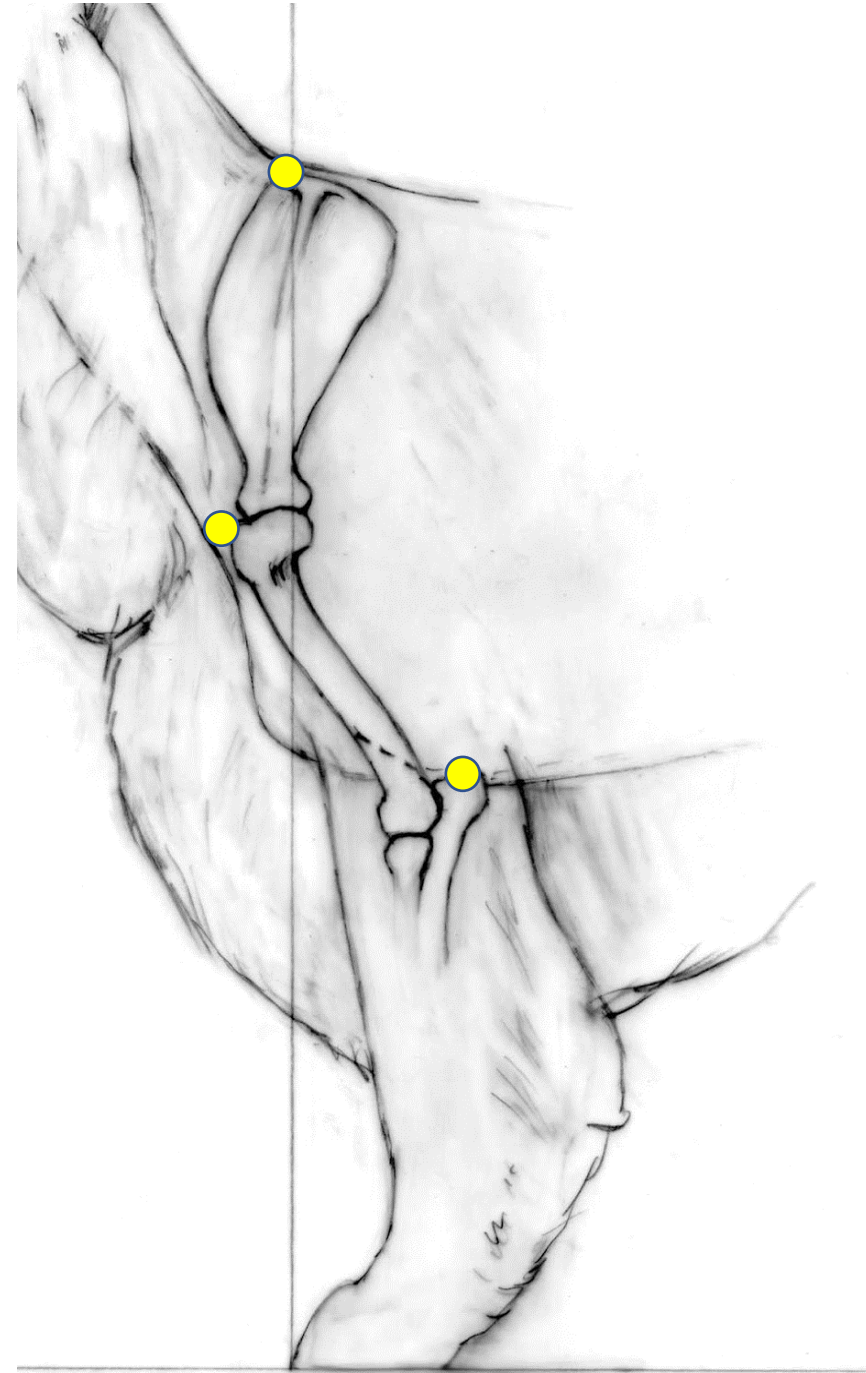
- Upright shoulder blades.
- Upright upper arm.
- Lacking forechest.
- Not supportive of body weight.

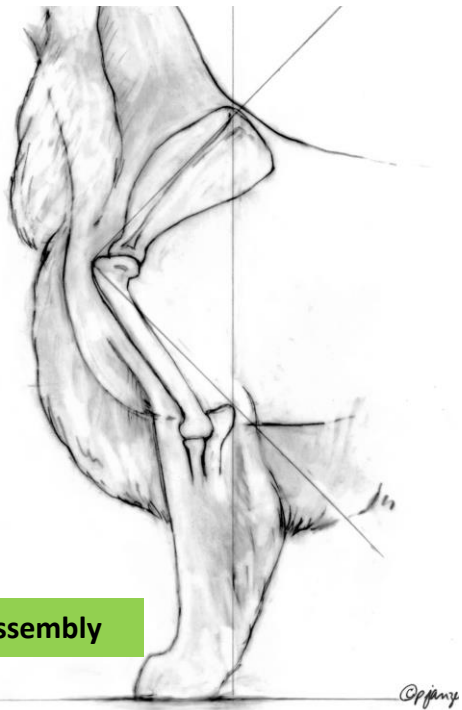


Incorrect Front Assembly

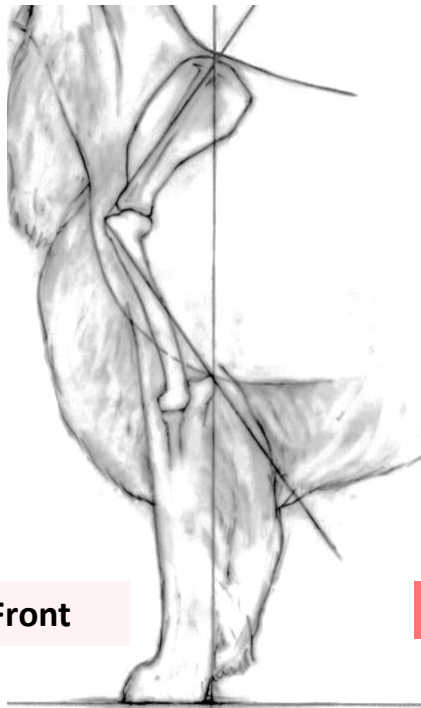
Tipped Front

- Upright shoulder blades.
- Withers forward of elbow.
- Restricted neck range of motion. Won't be able to carry a dangling bird without interfering with front legs.
- The dog will move as if it's falling forward.

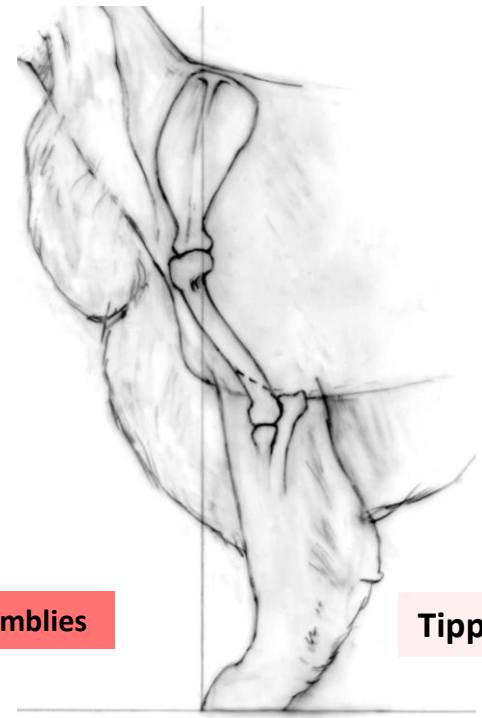




Correct Front Assembly



Straight Front



Incorrect Front Assemblies

Tipped Front

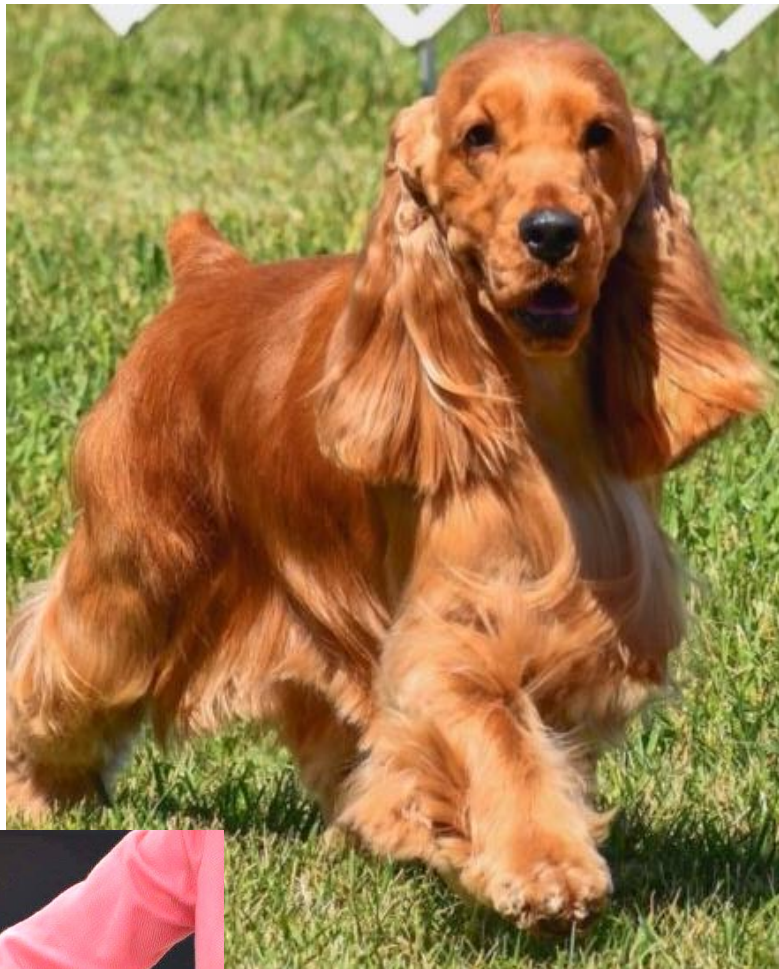


Thick Bone.

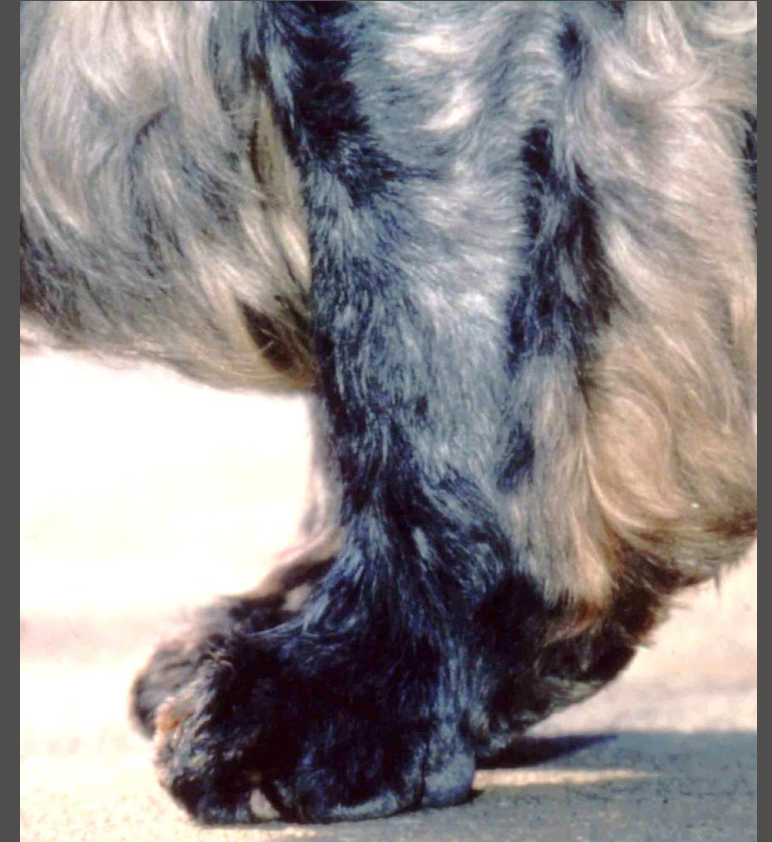
The amount of bone is in balance with the substantial body.

“Bone nearly uniform in size from elbow to heel.”

It is important to feel the bone while examining the dogs in order to make sure it is ample and substantial. Don't be fooled by a lot of hair meant to achieve the look of correct bone on a dog that is lacking.



Thick Bone and Correct Feet



Feet are firm, round and catlike, the toes arched and tight with thick pads. The pasterns are nearly straight with some flexibility.

If you can not clearly see the foot because of excess hair, it is important to feel beneath the hair to make sure the foot is correct, tight, and has thick pads.

Every component of a correctly constructed front is of extreme importance to the English Cocker, who must be stronger for his size than any other gun dog.

The front bears more weight than the back half of the animal, (even more when the dog carries game) therefore it must be correctly constructed in order to be strong and functional.

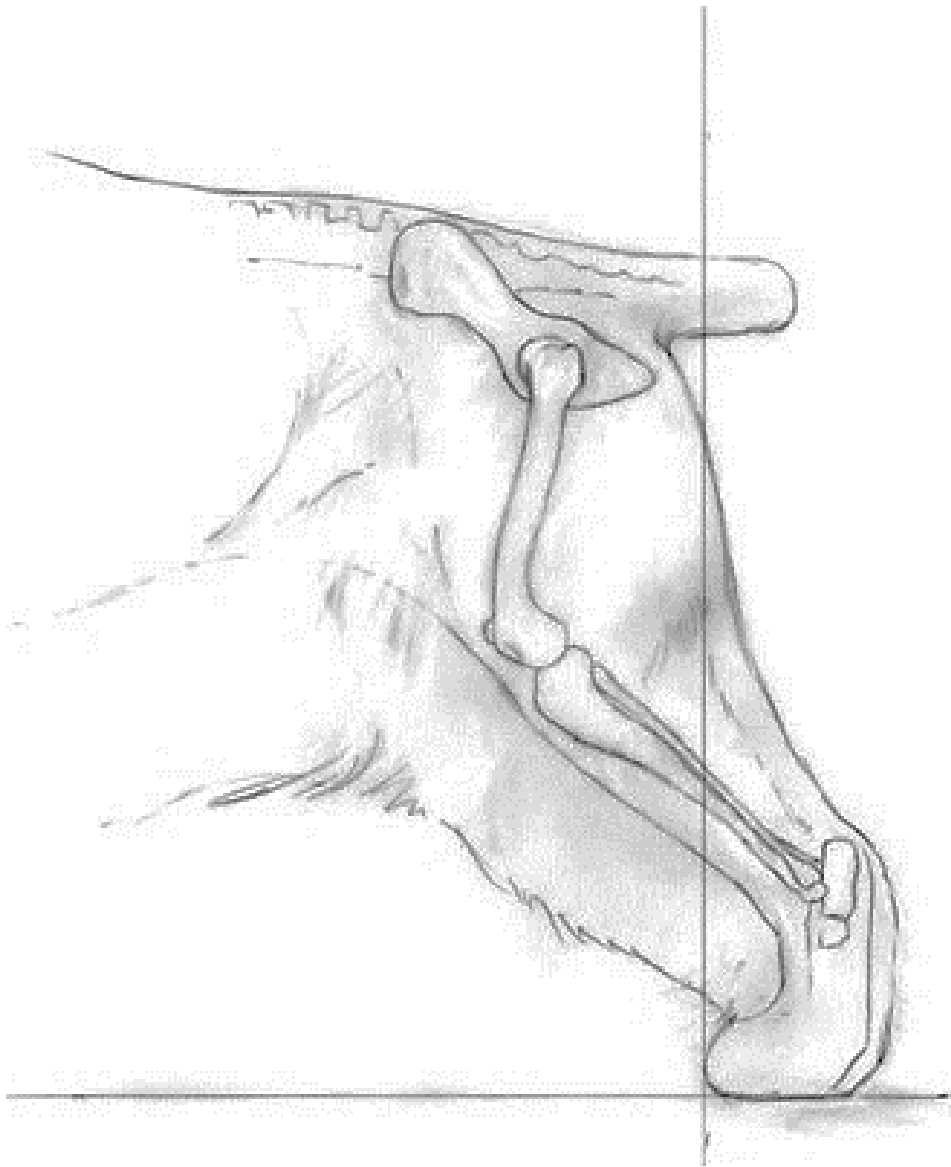




Hindquarters

Equally important for function is a broad, muscular rear.

Hindquarters



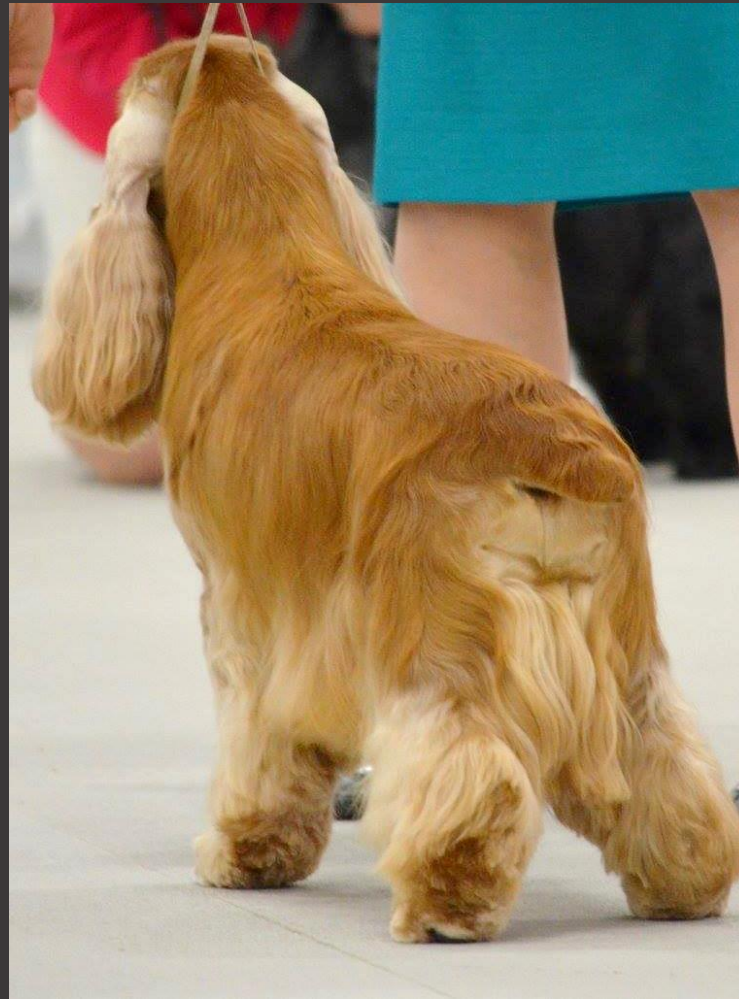
“Angulation moderate and, most importantly, in balance with that of the forequarters.”

Hips relatively broad and well rounded. Upper thighs broad, thick and muscular, providing plenty of propelling power.

Second thighs well muscled and approximately equal in length to the upper. Stifle strong and well bent. Hock joint to pad short.”

A line dropped from the point of the buttock should land immediately in front of the rear toes.





There is significant muscling on both the outside AND the inside of the rear legs, continuing down through the second thigh. The second thigh and upper thigh are of equal length.

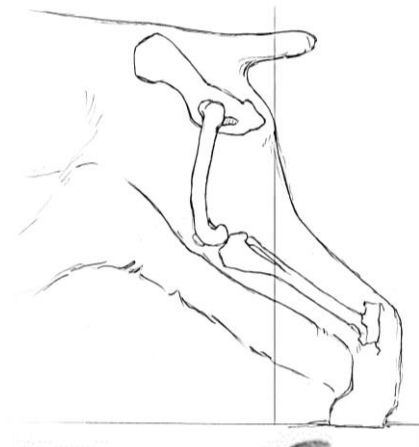
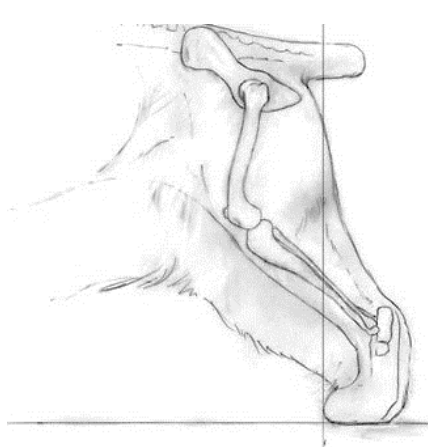
Hocks are by necessity short, for powerful pushing through cover.

Please note that even from this angle, the correct, round, broad, “cockery” body is evident.

Correct:

- Moderately angled, in balance with front
- Femur and tibia are approximately equal in length
- Stifle strong and well bent
- Supporting weight
- Muscling inside and outside of the thighs
- Hock joint to pad is short

Correct



Incorrect:

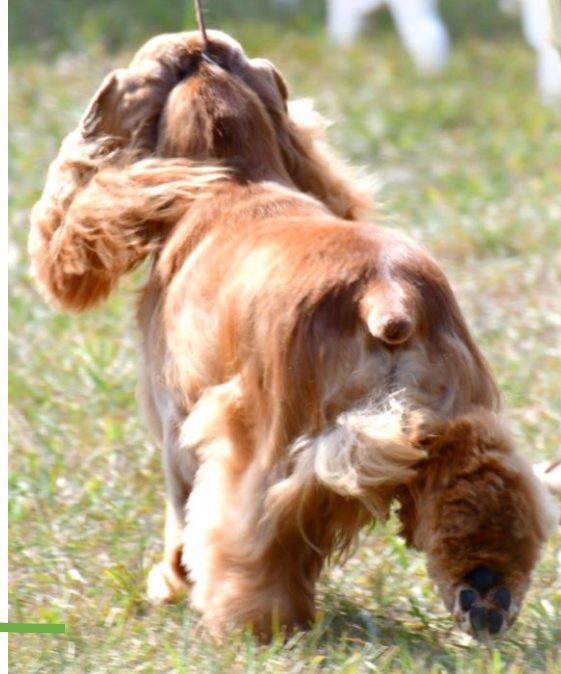
- Over angulated, not in balance with front
- Tibia is longer than the femur, placing the rear feet too far behind the body
- Lacking muscling over hips and thighs
- Not supporting weight
- Hock joint to pad is long

Incorrect

Correct:

- Well rounded, broad
- Powerful and strong
- Thick muscling inside and outside of upper and lower thighs
- Rear pastern is short

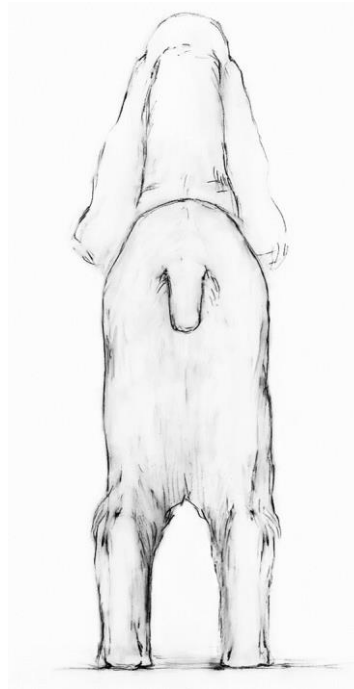
Correct



Incorrect:

- Narrow, angular
- Appearing weak
- Lacking muscling inside and outside of the thighs
- Rear pastern is longer

Incorrect

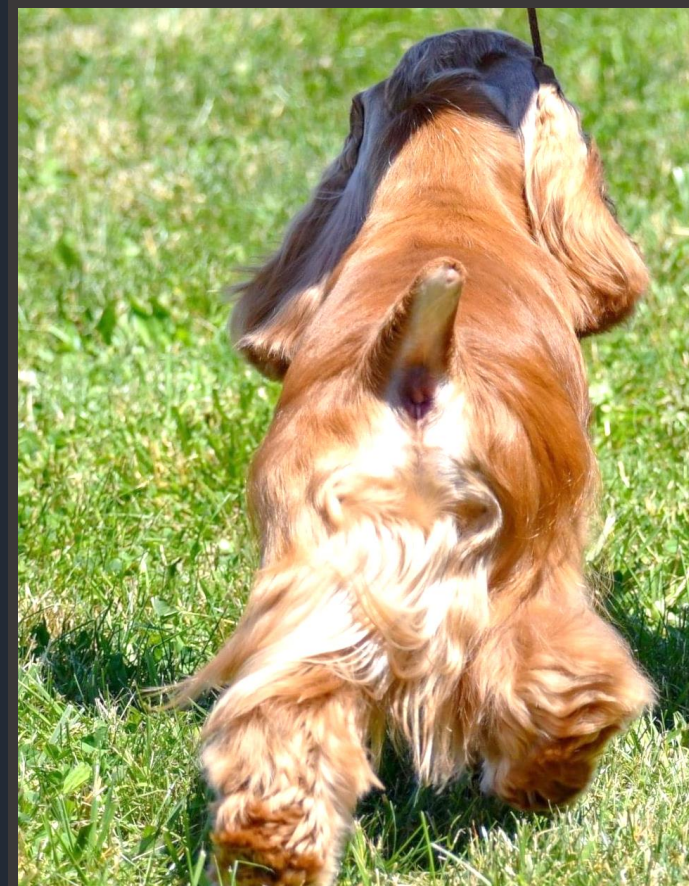




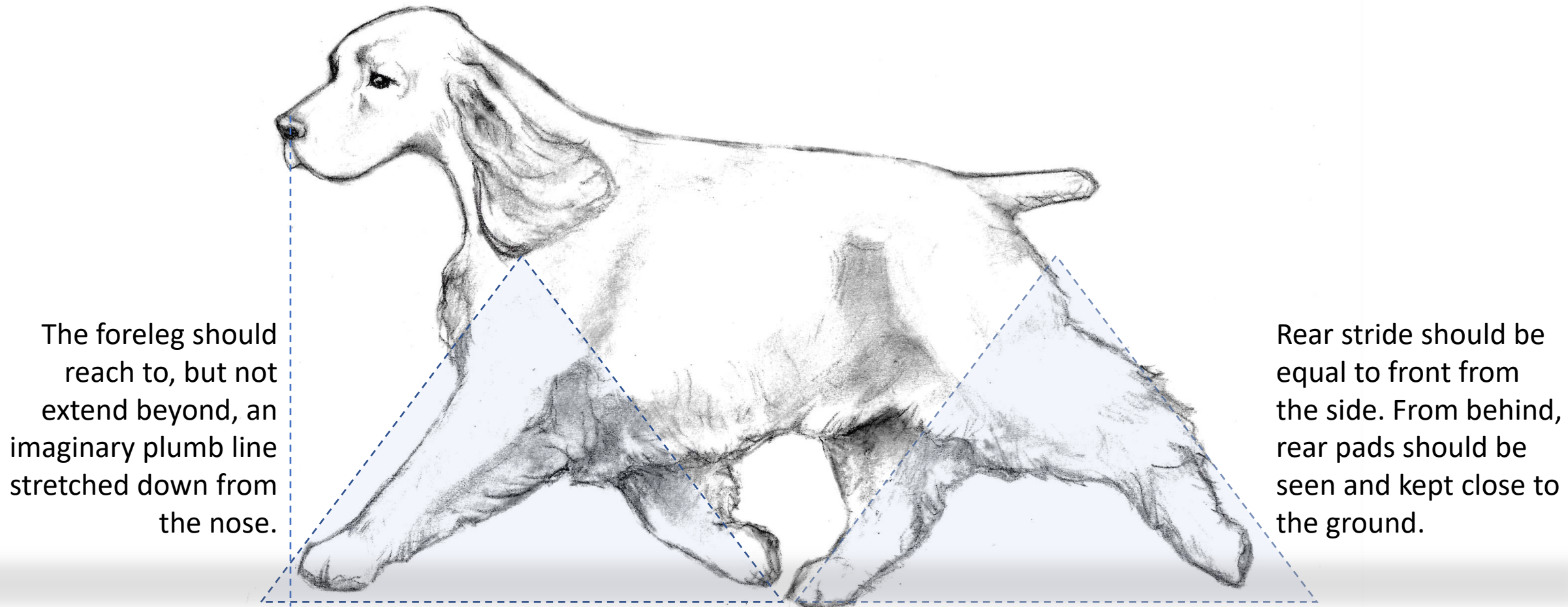
When correctly constructed, the rear assembly of the English Cocker is most efficient for pushing and powering through the dense cover the breed was developed to hunt in.

Gait

“His gait is accordingly characterized more by drive and the appearance of power than by great speed.”



“He covers ground effortlessly and with extension both in front and in rear, appropriate to his angulation.”



**His motion is deliberate and efficient with no extra lift or extension.
Feet should be kept close to the ground.**

The same outline moving as standing



- Topline, croup, tail carriage, and neck and head carriage remain constant.
- Correct body make and shape with correct reach and drive is a result of balanced angulation fore and aft.

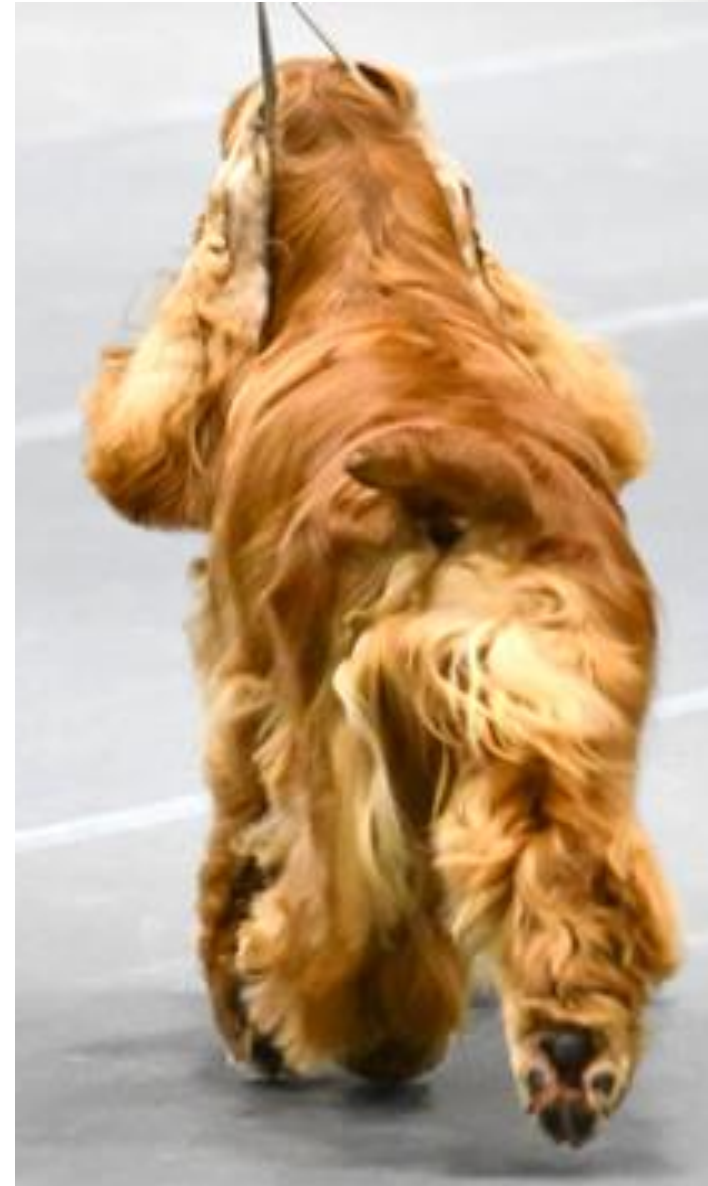
The same outline moving as standing



- Topline, croup, tail carriage, and neck and head carriage remain constant.
- Correct body make and shape with correct reach and drive is a result of balanced angulation fore and aft.



The dog will move with width between the legs appropriate to his build.



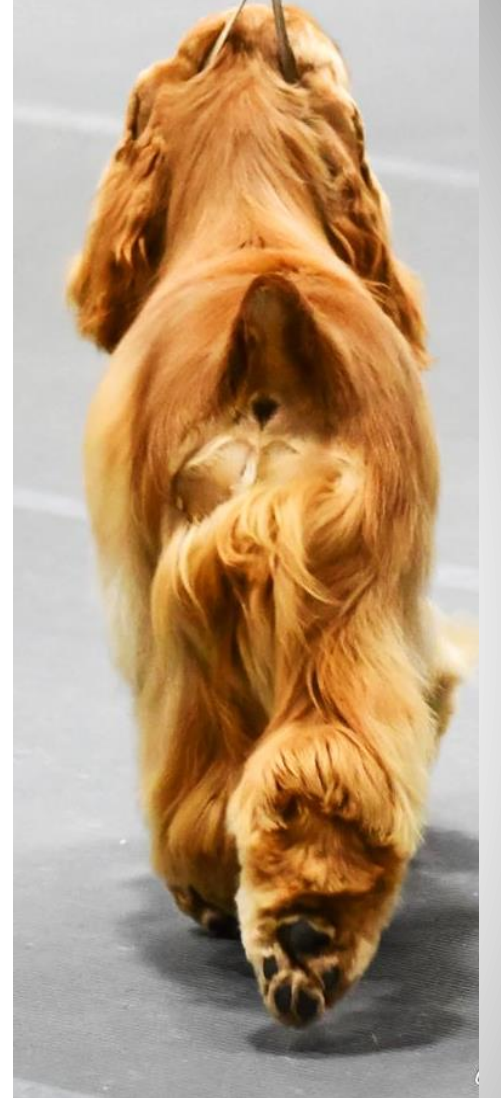
Because of his roundness and considerable width, a correctly made English Cocker cannot single track.

Correct



Incorrect

Correct



Incorrect



“He is alive with energy; his gait is powerful and frictionless, capable both of covering ground effortlessly and penetrating dense cover to flush and retrieve game.”

Coat

Silky in Texture

An often overlooked essential of breed type, the correct coat on a cocker works as a protective shield from the weather and unforgiving terrain.

- Coat should be “*silky, flat or slightly wavy*”, with a topcoat jacket of longer, protective guard hairs and enough undercoat to keep them warm.
- The feathering follows the contours of the body and there should not be excessive trimming and sculpting.
- A correct coat will self-strip in the field, allowing the dog to work while avoiding mishap.
- A cottony coat will collect debris and sometimes hang up a dog in the field.



Color



Colors various. This breed has a variety of acceptable colors, with or without tan points.

- No color is more preferred than any other.
- Solid markings on parti-colors should preferably be broken on the body and more or less evenly distributed.
- White feet on a solid are undesirable; a little white on the throat is acceptable.
- Liver roan, solid liver, blue roan, solid black, black and white, orange roan, orange and white, solid red, all the colors with tan points.
- Tan markings should be clearly defined and of a rich shade.



Here are some of the colors and patterns you will find in the breed.

When judging this breed, please keep in mind that color patterns occurring in breeds outside the Sporting group, such as brindle or sable, etc., are not described in the English Cocker Spaniel Breed Standard as they are neither parti-color (ticked, roaned, or open marked, with or without tan points) nor solid color (with or without tan points). The full Directive on color is available on our website.

Markings can cause optical Illusions



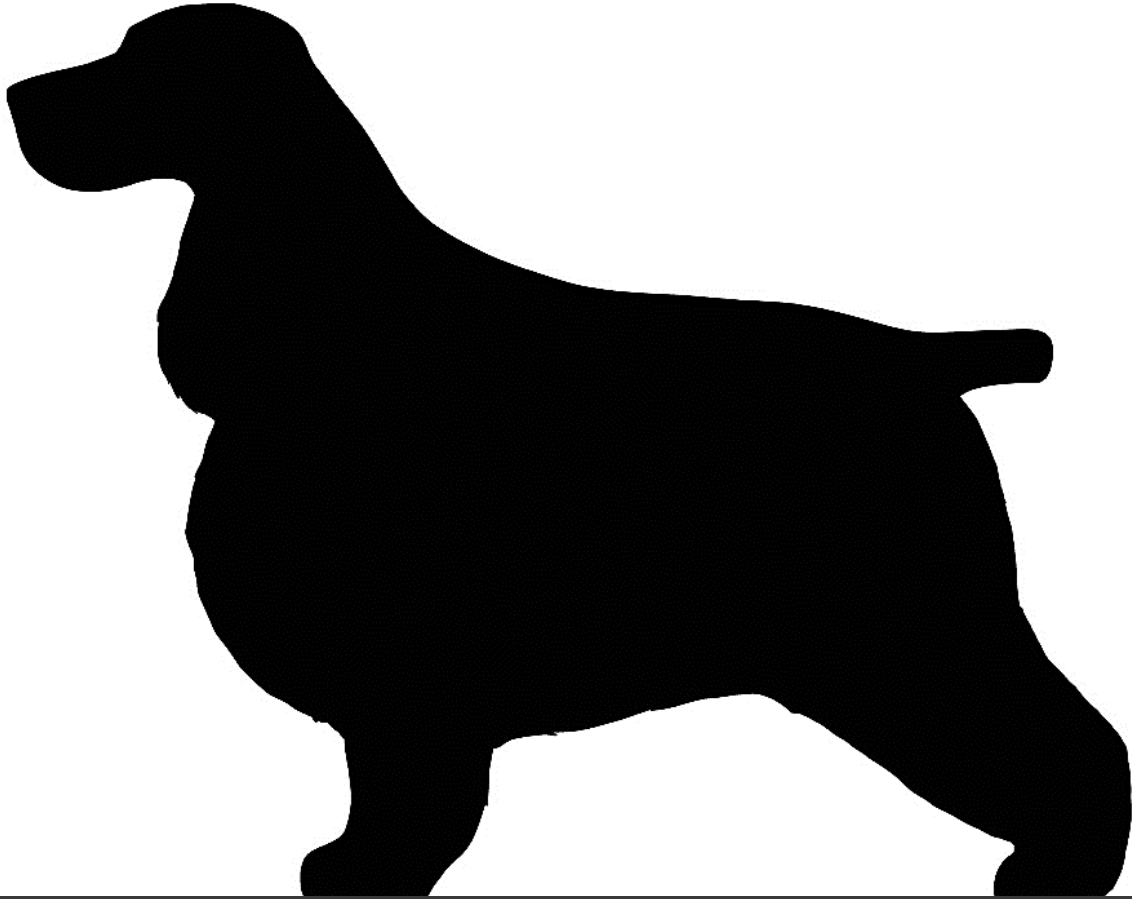
Slipped masks, lots of spots, no spots at all, white spots on blue dogs, etc., all are acceptable. You will need to educate your eye to see around and through different markings. A black leg, front or rear, can elongate a dog. Spots on the topline can cause the eye to see dips and rises not really there. Tan markings on legs coming or going can throw your eye off as well and make a sound dog look like he is moving incorrectly.



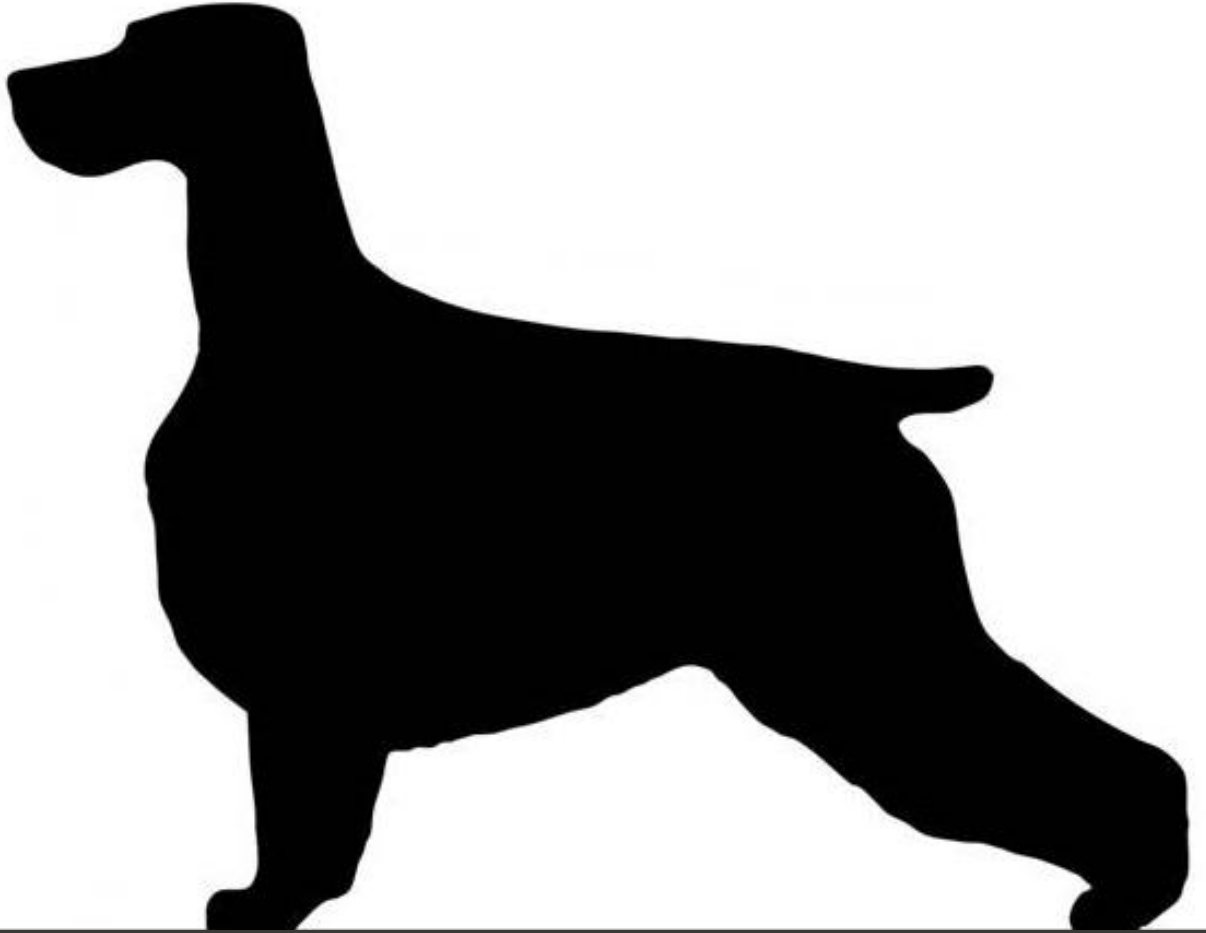
Double Check

What you think you are seeing may not really be there, or it is there and you are just not seeing it? Take a minute to look at the off side of any dog whose markings bother you. You may find yourself seeing a totally re-proportioned dog.

Recognizing Breed Type



Cocker Type



Setter Type

Recognizing Breed Type



Cocker Type



Setter Type

Recognizing Breed Type

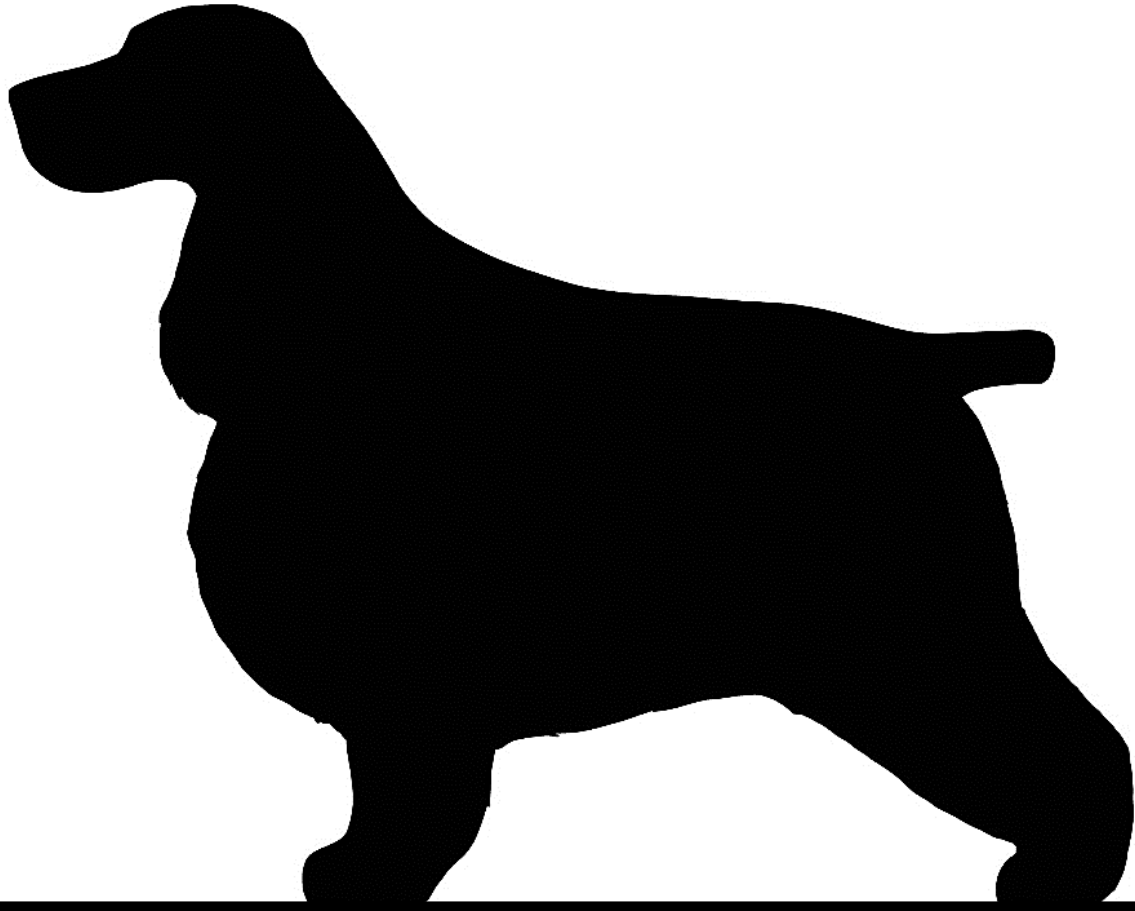


Cocker Type

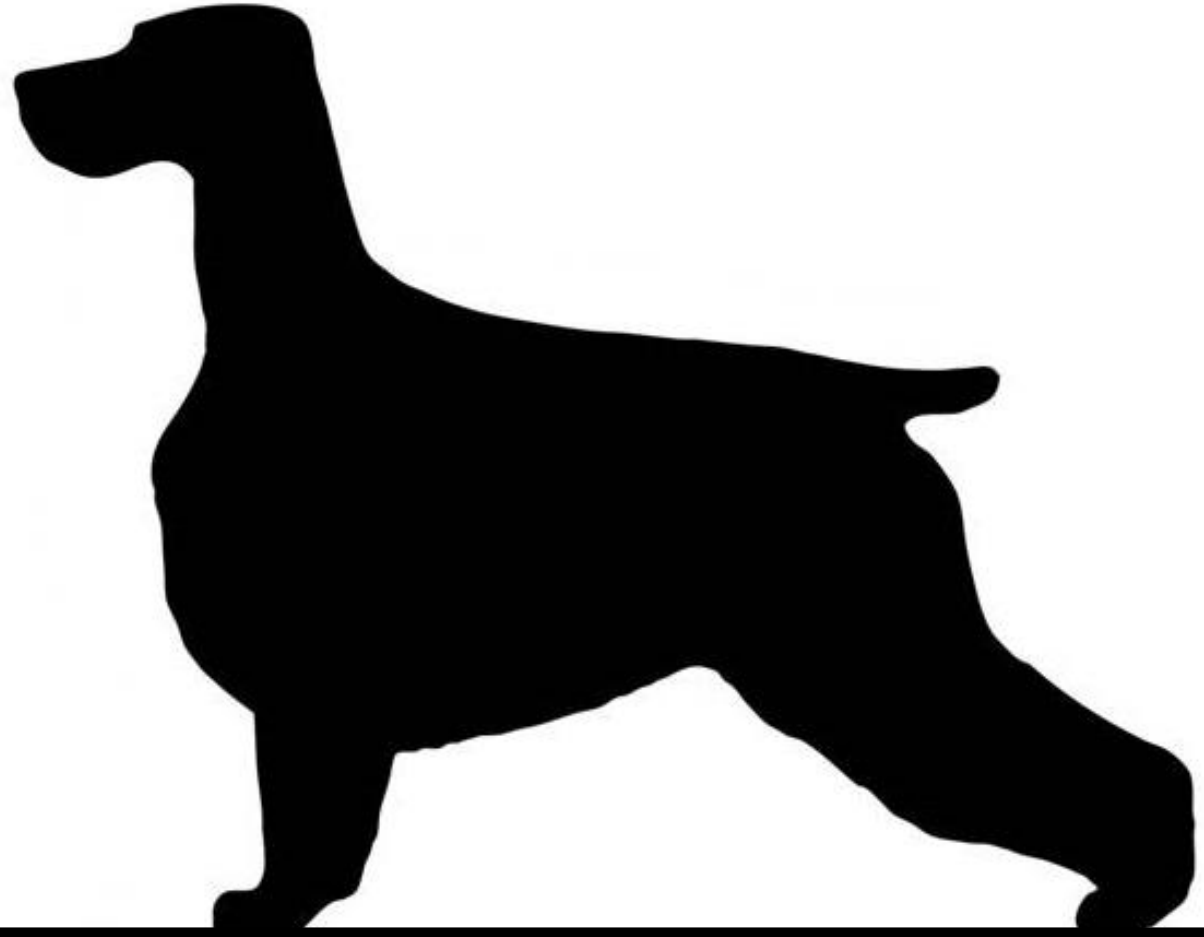


Setter Type

The English Cocker is, above all, a dog of moderation rather than extremes; exaggeration of any characteristic will upset the balance of a compact, one-piece dog.



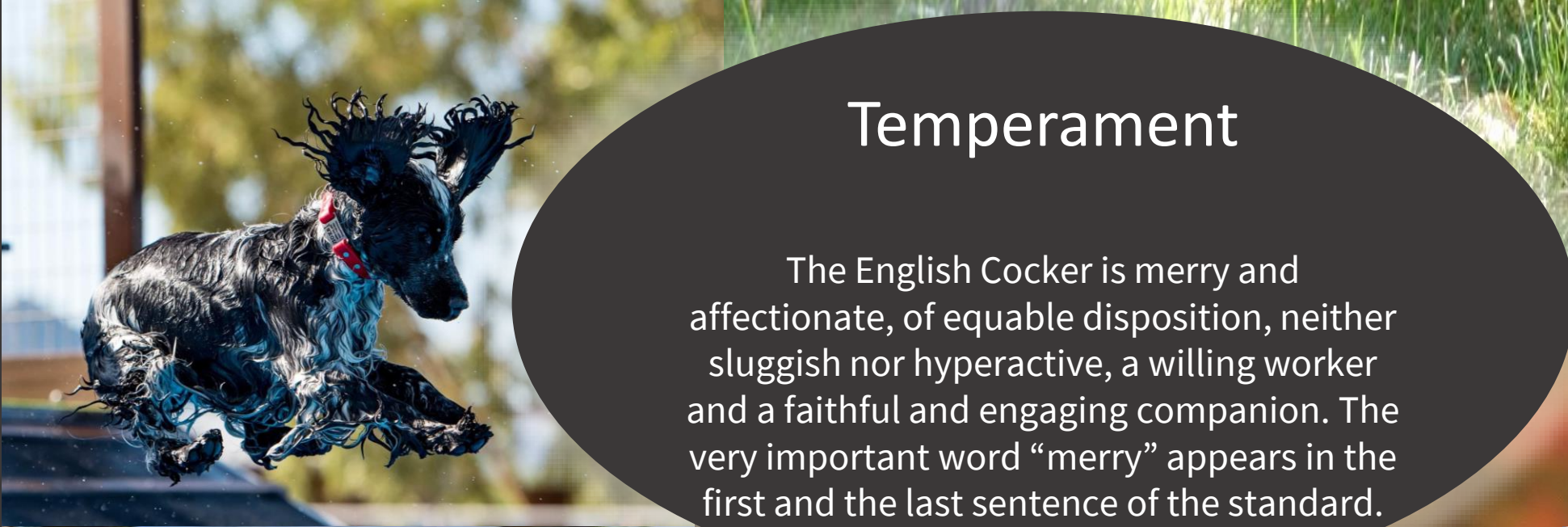
Cocker Type



Setter Type

Temperament

The English Cocker is merry and affectionate, of equable disposition, neither sluggish nor hyperactive, a willing worker and a faithful and engaging companion. The very important word “merry” appears in the first and the last sentence of the standard.







Breed Specific Tips for Judging English Cockers Spaniels



This breed MUST be viewed from above to confirm that the well-sprung ribcage is the widest part of the dog.



Observe the individual from above on the table and look at the class as a whole from above, on the ground.

This is a table breed. The initial and any subsequent exams must be on a table.



Examining Heads



Head planes from above and straight on, roughly parallel.

Feel for the grooved stop.



Feel for thick bone and correct, tight, well-padded feet.



The short, broad loin.

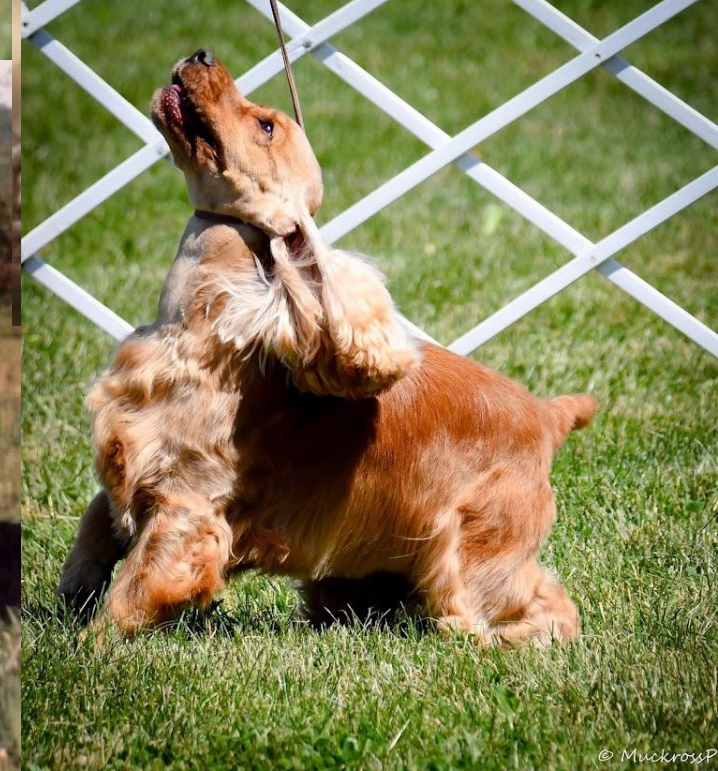


The deep chest reaches at least to the elbow.

Broad, Muscular Thighs



Check for significant muscling on both the outside AND the inside of the rear legs, continuing down through the second thigh.





ECSCA Judges’ Directives

A DIRECTIVE ON JUDGING FROM THE JUDGES’ EDUCATION COMMITTEE

When judging the English Cocker Spaniel, it is important to remember the original purpose of the breed, which is to hunt in very dense cover. It must be understood that the English Cocker pushes through the cover and does not leap over it like the larger Springer or Setter. To function efficiently in this type of terrain and in this manner, the correct “cockery” dog must have well sprung ribs that are deep and carried well back, a short, broad back, a well-developed forechest, generous bone, a short, broad loin, and broad and muscular hindquarters. He is a compact, broad, and very powerfully built dog for his size.

The English Cocker must be viewed from above to confirm that the well-sprung ribcage is the widest part of the dog, with an ample chest and a broad, “hammy” rear to support the body. An English Cocker lacking in substance that is long, narrow, refined, shelly, racy, and/or fine-boned, is “settery” in appearance, is atypical of the breed, and should not be rewarded.

By Breed Education Committee

BUSTLING MOVEMENT AS IT APPLIES TO THE ENGLISH COCKER SPANIEL

“Bustling” is not included in the U.S. standard because it has been misinterpreted in the English standard. The English standard was written back in the day when standards were written by dog people for dog people, with many concepts mutually understood and assumed.

The first three paragraphs of the English standard are titled: “General Appearance”, “Characteristics”, and “Temperament”. It is under “Characteristics”, and only there, that the word “bustling” appears, and it reads: “Merry nature with ever-wagging tail shows a typical bustling movement, particularly when following scent, fearless of heavy cover.” The pursuit of game birds was the reason for the breed’s development and existence, and the above is a description of its hunting demeanor.

The English standard then goes on to describe the physical appearance of the breed in detail, beginning with “Head and Skull”. Ten paragraphs later is “Gait/Movement”, which states: “True through action with great drive, covering ground well.” That is pretty straight forward with no mention of “bustling”. When hunting, the English Cocker does indeed present a bustling movement, with a madly wagging tail, he busily darts here and there in a very active pursuit of bird scent In the show ring, his movement is evaluated as above in the English standard and as follows in the U.S. standard: “The English Cocker is capable of hunting in dense cover and in upland terrain. His gait is accordingly characterized more by drive and the appearance of power than by great speed. He covers ground effortlessly and with extension both in front and in rear, appropriate to his angulation. In the ring, he carries his head proudly and is able to keep much the same top line while in action as when standing for examination. Going and coming, he moves in a straight line without crabbing or rolling, and with width between both front and rear legs appropriate to his build and gait.”

The writers of the U.S. standard were wise to not include a hunting demeanor in the breed’s description, as the concept of “bustling” continues to occur occasionally in the wrong sense. It has been used for decades to forgive poor movement, steep croups, high rears, and incorrect tail sets.

ECS COLORS

The Breed Education Committee and breeder-judges of English Cocker Spaniels have noticed an increase in the number of questions regarding acceptable color and markings. In order to provide information on color and markings in accordance with the Breed Standard, this clarification was drafted by the Committee.

The English Cocker Spaniel standard states under Color – “Various.”; then goes on to list the acceptable colors and markings in the breed.

The AKC guidelines (1994, amended 2006) for writing breed standards states: “In breeds where multiple colors or color combinations are acceptable, but not all colors are permitted, the complete list of all acceptable colors and color combinations must be included in the standard. In such cases, any color or color combinations not mentioned are unacceptable, and judges are to pass judgment on this basis.”

Please keep in mind when judging this breed, that color patterns occurring in breeds outside the Sporting group, such as brindle or sable, etc., are not described in the English Cocker Spaniel Breed Standard as they are neither parti-color (ticked, roaned, or open marked, with or without tan points) nor solid color (with or without tan points).

Issued by the E.C.S.C.A. Breed Education Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc.

Issue Date: October 12, 2010



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Created by the ECSCA Breed Education Committee

Illustrations by Patricia Janzen and Genelle Joseph

Please visit our ECSCA Breed Website to find all of our educational materials as
well as a list of
approved mentors and presenters:
Follow the links to the Judges' Education page.

<https://englishcocker.org/judges-education/>

The ECSCA Breed Education Committee extends our appreciation to everyone
who has shared their photographs for this presentation,
particularly Muckross Photography.