



Illustrated Breed Standard

Portuguese Water Dog



This booklet has been prepared by the Portuguese Water Dog Club of America's Illustrated Breed Standard Committee and approved by the club's membership. Its purpose is to provide a better understanding of the breed as described in the official Breed Standard and to assist in the recognition and evaluation of those characteristics which are essential for proper breed type.

Individuals may differ in their interpretation of the finer points of the breed but basic structure must remain true to the Breed Standard. In no way does this publication constitute any changes to the official AKC Breed Standard – it is a visual guide and a verbal interpretation of the dog described in the official document.

This Illustrated Breed Standard is formatted so that the official AKC Breed Standard appears on the left side of the page with white type on a black background. Sketches of the dog described in the official Standard as well as a realistic interpretation appear on the right side of the page in italicized wording.

It is our hope that this Illustrated Breed Standard will serve as an educational tool for breeders, judges, exhibitors and anyone interested in this breed. We must remain dedicated to preserving and protecting the Portuguese Water Dog in its original form, for its unique function and for its secure future.

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GENERAL APPEARANCE

Known for centuries along Portugal's coast, this seafaring breed was prized by fishermen for a spirited, yet obedient nature, and a robust, medium build that allowed for a full day's work in and out of the water.

The Portuguese Water Dog is a swimmer and diver of exceptional ability and stamina, who aided his master at sea by retrieving broken nets, herding schools of fish, and carrying messages between boats and to shore. He is a loyal companion and alert guard. This highly intelligent utilitarian breed is distinguished by two coat types, either curly or wavy; an impressive head of considerable breadth and well proportioned mass; a ruggedly built, well-knit body; and a powerful, thickly based tail, carried gallantly or used purposefully as a rudder.

The Portuguese Water Dog provides an indelible impression of strength, spirit and soundness.

Portuguese Water Dog Club of America, Inc.

Illustrated Breed Standard



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SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Size

Height at the withers:

males: 20 – 23 inches; the ideal is 22 inches

females: 17 – 21 inches; the ideal is 19 inches

Weight: males 42 – 60 pounds

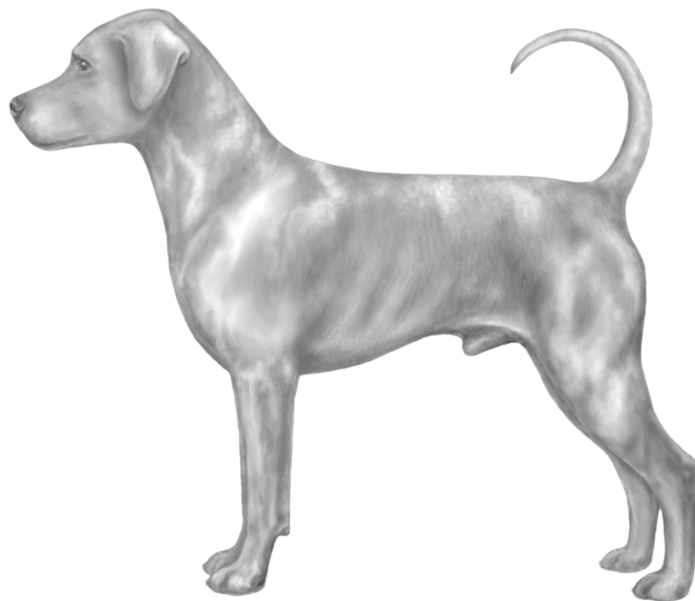
females 35 – 50 pounds

Proportion

Off-square; slightly longer than tall
when measured from prosternum to
rearmost point of the buttocks,
and from withers to ground.

Substance

Strong substantial bone; well-developed,
neither refined nor coarse and
a solidly built, muscular body.



While the Standard allows for a wide range in size and weight, the ideal size reinforces the idea of moderation and a medium-sized dog.

Substance can only be evaluated during a hands-on evaluation. A correct dog should feel powerful with well developed muscling. He is robust and handsome but never elegant in appearance. In order to perform the tasks for which he was bred, the ideal Portuguese Water Dog is of medium size, slightly longer than tall, substantially boned and well muscled. These combined features of size, proportion and substance contribute significantly to proper balance and correct breed type.

Size

Height at the withers:
males: 20 – 23 inches
ideal is 22 inches

females: 17 – 21 inches
ideal is 19 inches

Weight:
males 42 – 60 pounds
females 35 – 50 pounds



20 inches

Male



23 inches



17 inches

Female



21 inches

HEAD

An essential characteristic; distinctively large, well-proportioned and with exceptional breadth of topskull.

EXPRESSION

Steady, penetrating and attentive.

EYES

Medium in size, set well apart and a bit obliquely. Roundish and neither prominent nor sunken. Black or various shades of brown in color. Darker eyes are preferred. Eye rims fully pigmented with black edges in black, black and white or white dogs; brown edges in brown dogs. Haws are dark and not apparent.

EARS

Set well above the line of the eye. Leather is heart-shaped and thin. Except for a small opening at the back, ears are held nicely against the head. Tips should not reach below the lower jaw.



The head of the Portuguese Water Dog is one of the keys to correct type. Use of the hands is imperative in evaluating the head. It feels substantial, broad, strong and has more bone than expected. The look and feel of the head should be impressive, with the skull being slightly longer than the muzzle.

The expression of the Portuguese Water Dog indicates intelligence, strength and good nature. A steady, penetrating stare is considered desirable and reflects the confidence of this working dog.

The eyes are roundish — not round— and are set wide enough apart to allow for a good range of vision.

SKULL

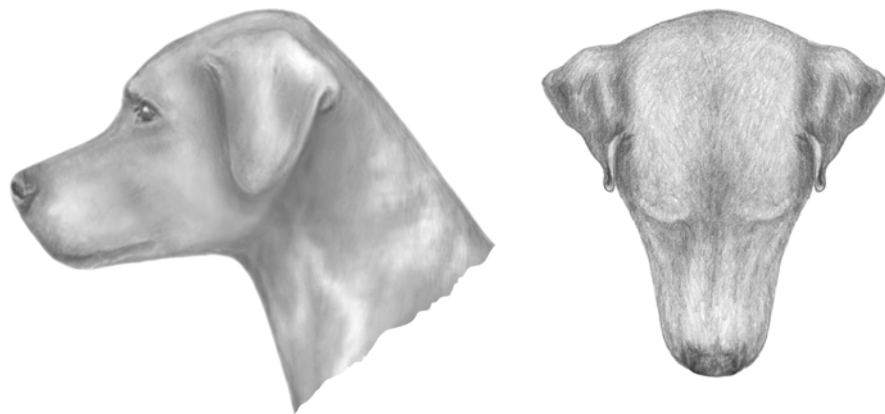
In profile, it is slightly longer than the muzzle, its curvature more accentuated at the back than the front. When viewed head-on, the top of the skull is very broad and appears domed, with a slight depression in the middle. The forehead is prominent, and has a central furrow, extending two-thirds of the distance from stop to occiput. The occiput is well-defined.

STOP

Well defined.

MUZZLE

Substantial; wider at base than at nose.



A desirable skull is quite large with more breadth, muscling and bone than would be expected for a dog of its size. The impression should be that the top of the skull is slightly domed when viewed from the front. This slightly domed shape is created by bone structure and muscling which fills in the area between the frontal bones and the well defined occiput. A hands-on examination will reveal the central furrow and the strong frontal bones of the prominent forehead.

During a hands-on examination of the muzzle and forehead, the stop should be so well-defined that the hand or thumb noticeably shifts upward when almost level with the eyes.

The muzzle should be broad, strong and level with a well developed underjaw. It should meet the skull with a well defined stop and must be substantial to be capable of the work the breed is bred to do, such as dragging heavy nets and equipment in the water. The area under the eyes should have good fill.

JAWS

Strong and neither over nor undershot.

NOSE

Broad, well flared nostrils. Fully pigmented; black in dogs with black, black and white, or white coats; various tones of brown in dogs with brown coats.

LIPS

Thick, especially in front; no flew. Lips and mucous membranes of the roof of the mouth, under tongue, and gums are quite black, or well ticked with black in dogs with black, black and white, or white coats; various tones of brown in dogs with brown coats.

BITE

Scissor or level.

TEETH

Not visible when mouth is closed.
Canines strongly developed.

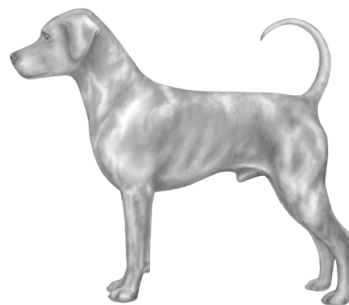


Strong upper and lower jaws with strong teeth are exceptionally important to enable Portuguese Water Dogs to perform their work.

Lips should fit close to the jaw and never be pendulous or exhibit any sign of a flew. Proper pigmentation is very important.

NECK

Straight, short, round, and held high.
Strongly muscled. No dewlap.



Correct neck



Incorrect — neck too short

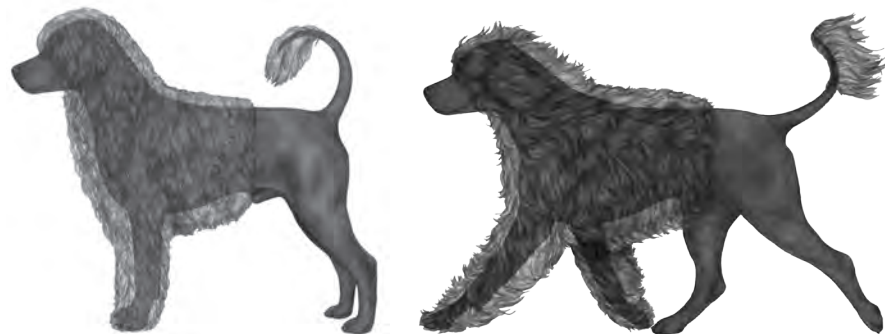


Incorrect — neck too long

The Portuguese Water Dog was bred to grab, hold and pull heavy nets through the water and on shore, as well as to dive off fishing boats to retrieve gear in rough seas. To perform these tasks, the breed requires a straight, relatively short, well muscled neck that allows for ease in turning while swimming. “Holding the neck high” does not imply a swan or ewe-neck as either would hinder the dog’s function in the water.

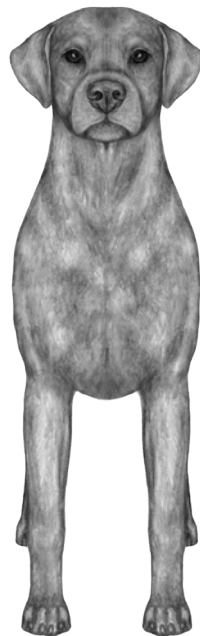
TOPLINE

Level and firm.



BODY

Chest is broad and deep, reaching down to the elbow. Ribs are long and well-sprung to provide optimum lung capacity. Abdomen well held up in a graceful line. Back is broad and well muscled. Loin is short and meets the croup smoothly. Croup is well formed and only slightly inclined with hip bones hardly apparent.



*Wavy coat,
lion clip*



*Curly coat,
lion clip*

Correct body structure can only be evaluated during a hands-on evaluation.

A strong swimming dog requires optimum lung capacity and a broad, deep chest. The broad, deep chest with well-sprung ribs reaching to the line of the elbow allows for this. The well held up abdomen enhances the athletic structure of the dog. The well muscled back and short loin give the strength needed for this working water dog. The body should receive most of its length from its ribcage, which extends back to a strong, short loin.

TAIL

Not docked; thick at the base and tapering; set on slightly below the line of the back; should not reach below the hock. When the dog is attentive the tail is held in a ring, the front of which should not reach forward of the loin. The tail is of great help when swimming and diving.



Correct tail set



Correct tail set

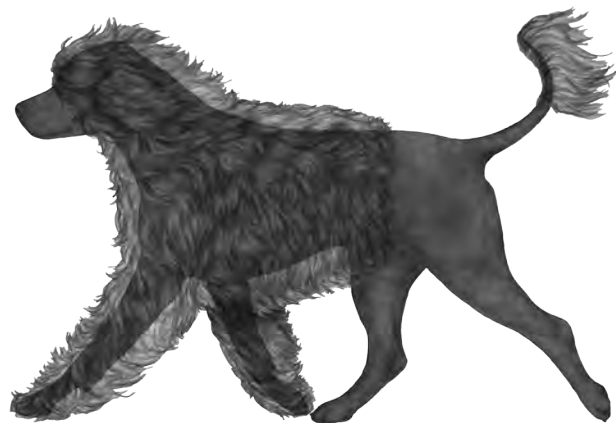


Incorrect: tail set too high



Incorrect: tail set too low

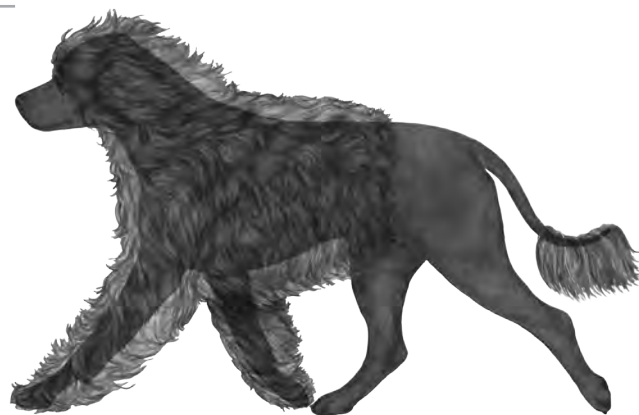
Another of the keys to correct type, the tail provides balance for the dog and serves as a rudder when swimming. It is set on slightly below the topline with a thick base and provides strength and maneuverability both in and out of the water. When moving on land, the tail should be carried above the level of the top line. The effect of the tail on the working ability of the dog should be given major consideration.



Acceptable tail carriage



Acceptable tail carriage



Incorrect: tail carried below topline

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders are well inclined and very strongly muscled. Upper arms are strong. *Forelegs* are strong and straight with long, well muscled forearms. Carpus is heavy-boned, wider in front than at the side.



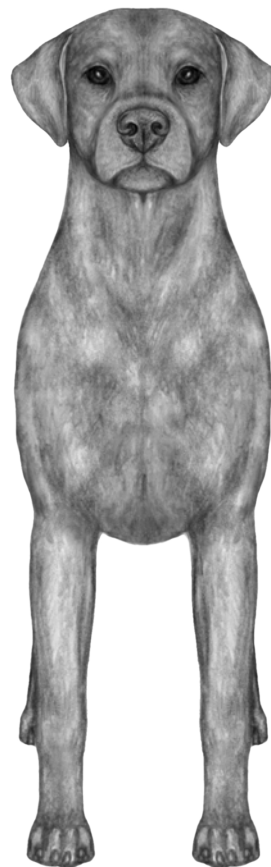
Shoulders & Upper Arms

The shoulder blade should be well laid back. When moving, the angle of the shoulder blade and upper arm should extend just enough to give the necessary reach to perform his task. A hands-on examination of the forequarters is very important in this breed as the coat is dense, long, or frequently sculpted, masking both faulty and correct structure. Properly angled shoulders with well developed muscles show the correct Portuguese Water Dog who is athletic and must have great endurance as he was bred for a full day's work in and out of the water.

FOREQUARTERS (continued)

Pasterns are long and strong. Dewclaws may be removed. Feet are round and rather flat. Toes neither knuckled up nor too long.

Webbing between the toes is of soft skin, well covered with hair, and reaches the toe tips. Central pad is very thick, others normal. Nails held up slightly off the ground. Black, brown, white and striped nails are allowed.



Forelegs

Forelegs have strong, substantial bone without being coarse. The forelegs are straight when viewed from the front and gives the impression of stability and strength. From the side, the pasterns have sufficient slope to assure flexibility when covering ground or swimming.

HINDQUARTERS

Powerful; well balanced with front assembly.

Legs, viewed from the rear, are parallel to each other, straight and very strongly muscled in upper and lower thighs. Buttocks are well developed. Tendons and hocks are strong. Metatarsus long, no dewclaws. Feet similar in all respects to forefeet.



Both the musculature and well inclined angles of the hindquarters should complement that of the forequarters and shoulder — giving the impression of a well-balanced athlete. The rear legs have strong, substantial bone and well- developed muscling without being coarse.

COAT

A profuse, thickly planted coat of strong, healthy hair, covering the whole body, evenly, except where the forearm meets the brisket and in the groin area, where it is thinner. No undercoat, mane or ruff. There are two varieties of coat:

Curly

Compact, cylindrical curls, somewhat lusterless. The hair on the ears is sometimes wavy.

Wavy

Falling gently in waves, not curls, and with a slight sheen.

NO PREFERENCE WILL BE GIVEN TO COAT TYPE, EITHER CURLY OR WAVY



Wavy coat, lion clip

Curly coat, lion clip

Curly coats appear to have more of a matte finish than the slight sheen found on the wavy coats. The degree of curl and wave varies greatly.

CLIP

Two clips are acceptable

Lion Clip

As soon as the coat grows long, the middle part and hindquarters, as well as the muzzle are clipped. The hair at the end of the tail is left at full length.

Retriever Clip

In order to give a natural appearance and a smooth unbroken line, the entire coat is scissored or clipped to follow the outline of the dog, leaving a short blanket of coat no longer than one inch in length. The hair at the end of the tail is left at full length.



Curly coat, retriever clip

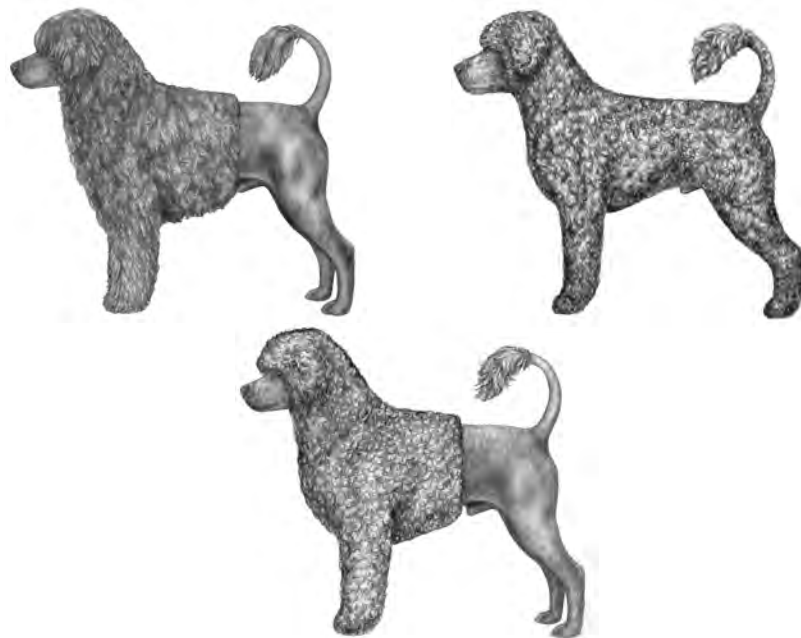


Wavy coat, retriever clip

The practice of LION clipping was born of utility, for practical, functional reasons. This working dog was clipped to facilitate movement in the water while hair was left on the fore-body to protect the heart and lungs from frigid waters. The flag on the tail adds to the tail's function as a rudder when swimming and diving.

Once or twice a year fishermen in Portugal gave their dogs a needed short all over clip. It was their practical and rudimentary way of maintaining coats which had become matted and too unkempt for the work the dogs were required to do. This clip (RETRIEVER) is neater and more modernized today yet should not be sophisticated nor stylized.

NO DISCRIMINATION WILL BE MADE AGAINST
THE CORRECT PRESENTATION OF A DOG IN
EITHER LION CLIP OR RETRIEVER CLIP.



A correct Portuguese Water Dog in either a Lion or Retriever clip radiates “an indelible impression of strength, spirit, and soundness.” Subtle variances in either clip are allowable and widely exist, although they should not serve to distract from the overall look of this rugged dog. In the hands of an inexperienced groomer, the very best of dogs can look improper. Likewise, a skillful groomer can give a poor specimen the look of superiority. Overly sophisticated and stylized grooming is discouraged as it is not consistent with the working nature and history of this breed.

COLOR

Black, white, and various tones of brown; also combinations of black or brown with white. A white coat does not imply albinism provided nose, mouth, and eyelids are black. In animals with black, white, or black and white coats, the skin is decidedly bluish.

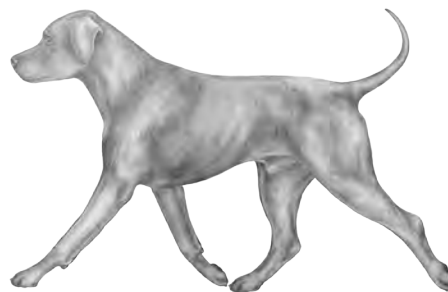
Color in the Portuguese Water Dog can be sorted simply into three categories: black, brown and white.

Black dogs can range from the very deepest black to a light gray. Brown dogs can be so dark they can be mistaken for black or can be so light as to appear tan. Some black and some brown dogs may have a reddish hue to their coats. White dogs may have various intensities of white to their coats. Both black and brown coats may contain white hairs mixed in. Any amount of white is acceptable in black or brown coats. Ticking, the presence of small black or brown pigmented flecks on a white background, is often seen.

Black and Tan, Brindle, Tri Colored, Sable coat colors and Albinos are not acceptable.

GAIT

Short, lively steps when walking. The trot is a forward striding, well balanced movement.



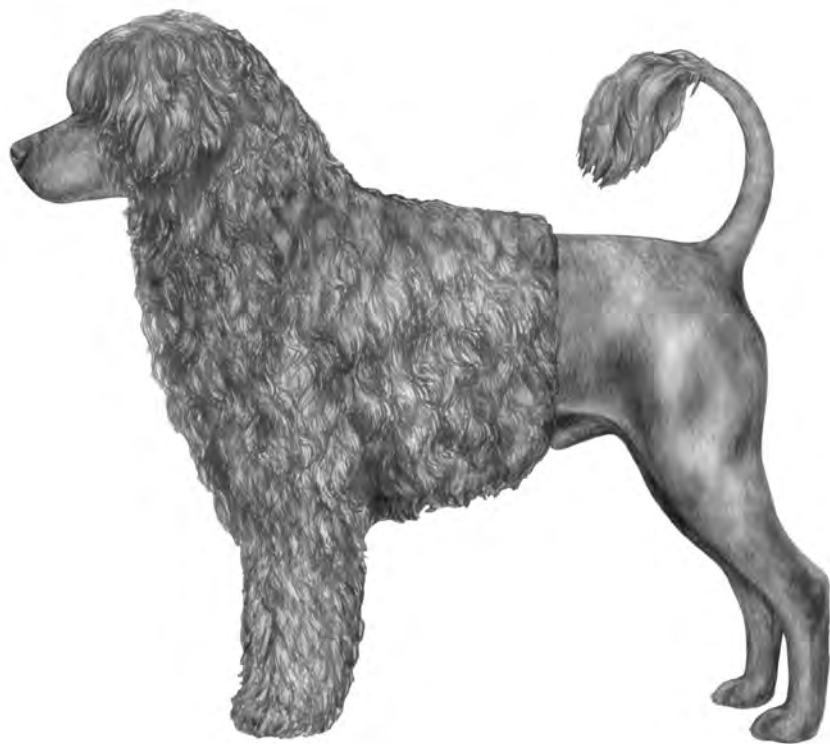
A Portuguese Water Dog's movement is balanced, surefooted and powerful. The motion is effortless, fluid and effective, without exaggerated reach and drive. The forequarters and hindquarters are functionally coordinated while the back remains level. The trot should be light, yet show strength and endurance. The legs tend to converge toward the centerline as speed increases.

TEMPERAMENT

An animal of spirited disposition, self-willed, brave, and very resistant to fatigue. A dog of exceptional intelligence and a loyal companion, it obeys its master with facility and apparent pleasure. It is obedient with those who look after it or with those for whom it works.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

The Portuguese Water Dog is spirited yet obedient, robust, and of unexaggerated, functional conformation; sure, substantially boned and muscled, and able to do a full day's work in and out of the water.



Faults: Any deviation from the described ideal is a fault. However, those inherent characteristics that are imperative for the maintenance of proper type, and therefore cannot be overlooked, are listed as Major Faults

MAJOR FAULTS

1. *Temperament*: Shy, vicious or unsound behavior
2. *Head*: Unimpressive; small in overall size; narrow in topkull; snipey in muzzle
3. *Substance*: Light or refined in bone; lacking muscle
4. *Coat*: Sparse; naturally short, close-lying hair, partially or overall; wispy or wiry in texture; brittle; double-coated
5. *Tail*: Other than as described; extremely low set; heavy or droopy in action
6. *Pigmentation*: Any deviation from described pigmentation; other than black or various tones of brown eye color; pink or partial pigmentation in nose, lips, eyes or eye rims
7. *Bite*: Overshot or undershot jaw

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