

SAINT BERNARD STANDARD

Presentation at St. Bernard Seminar in 1977 BY: Joan F. Bowen

THE STANDARD

Forward

Hayes Blake Hoyt talks about type in the Visualization of the Standards and her comments on type are of importance to every serious student of any dog standard.

Originally, the dog who was capable of doing the job he was bred to do was the right "type" of dog. When dog show first started, judges had to decide which dog looked most suited to perform its appointed work. Then written descriptions evolved to help owners, breeders and judges determine which dog most conformed to its breed description or standard...which one was the correct "type."

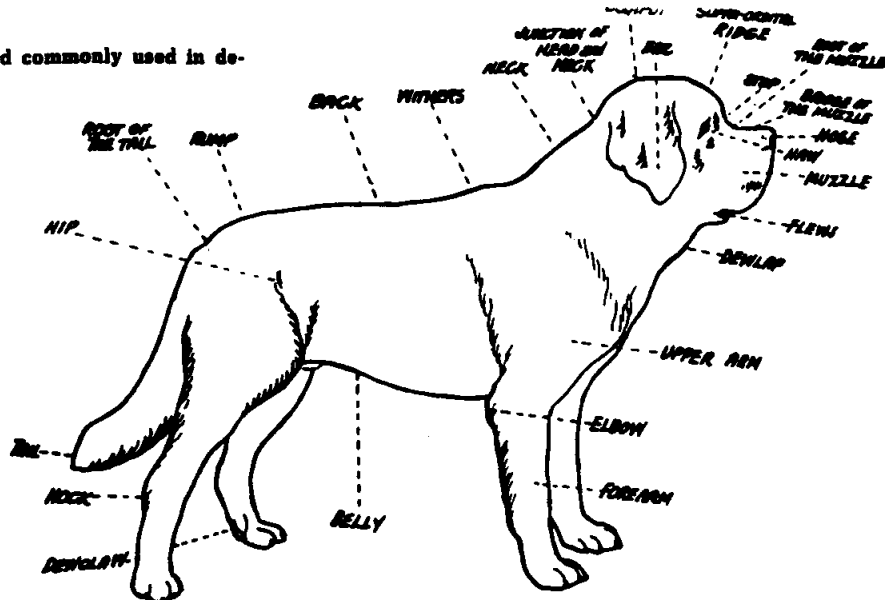
Ms. Hoyt continues: "One can love and admire a short-backed, glossy, thin-coated, muscled up, broad-skulled mongrel with a good disposition and a fine, true way of moving on long straight legs; nevertheless, such a dog could not herd sheep through long months of bitter weather, or go to ground after a badger, or win a race chasing a real or mechanical bunny. This beautifully sound dog is unsuited for any particular job and so it lacks type, as we define it here."

..."The opposite of no type is often called 'excessive type' or 'overdone' and means that some or several attributes of the breed standard have been first overemphasized, then later overdeveloped by breeders...Caricature is a form of mockery, and when a breed's history has been tossed aside as unimportant, there is no longer that impersonal criterion toward which to breed...Even their appearance is a travesty on dogdom!

"Therefore, a dog most typical of its breed is not exaggerated...for true type, because it is functional, is always completely balanced."

If you remember nothing else from this discussion today, please always remember that.

This sketch presents the anatomical parts of the Saint Bernard commonly used in descriptions and criticisms of standard points.



DEFINITIONS:

Brisket -Forepart of body below chest between forelegs, often referred to in indicating depth or shallowness.

Dewlap -Loose skin under the throat

Haw -Third eyelid inside eye corner

Hock -Joint between second thigh and metatarsal

Occiput -Upper, back point of skull

Pasterns -Bones forming joint between radius and ulna; and metacarpals between forearm and top of foot.

Stifle -This is the joint formed by the lower end of the femur, the patella and the upper end of the tibia. The principal movements of the stifle joint as a whole are flexion & extension.

Withers -Peak of first dorsal vertebrae; highest point of body just behind the neck.

A -The Short-Haired Saint Bernard Dog

1. **GENERAL:** Powerful, proportionately tall figure, strong and muscular in every part, with powerful head and most intelligent expression. In dogs with a dark mask the expression appears more stern, but never ill-natured.

How would you describe the Saint Bernard in one paragraph?

RELATIVE TERMS:

Dry neck -Skin taut

Wet neck -Loose & superfluous skin

Loose Haws -Haws hanging loose exposing a great deal of red

Hocks well-let down -When distance from hock joint to ground is short (hocks close to ground).

Down-in-pasterns -When weak or faulty joint, tendons or muscles cause pronounced angulation at pastern and let foot down.

RELATED TERMS:

Leggy -Legs too long for the rest of the dog, producing too much daylight under it and not covering enough ground.

The above paragraph is the most important paragraph in the entire standard...it describes a dog who could serve mankind for centuries, saving lives under the most difficult conditions and hazardous terrain of the Swiss Alps.

This dog had to be very powerful and strong to navigate the steep mountainside and to withstand the extreme weather.

He had to be proportionately tall --balanced, so that all parts functioned well together and tall enough that his underside was not collecting ice and snow as he plowed through the drifts.

Powerful head ---- Large, heavy ears turned down to hear every sound and not dissipate heat; large broad nose to pick up the scent; large, strong jaw capable of grasping.

Intelligent expression - After the Saint Bernard found a person lost in the Alps, he was to save him, not eat him....so a Saint Bernard who attacks people is simply not tolerable! The dog had to be smart enough to learn his duties and perform them. I fear if we were to give intelligence tests in the show ring, we would quickly have a lot of drop outs.

It is not easy to sum up the Saint Bernard's personality, appearance and humanitarian background, but naturally I had to give it a try:

"The Saint Bernard possesses a nobility evidenced by no other breed. Bred to serve mankind, he was built for strength and endurance and is the most massive of all dogs. He has great size, and a proportionately tall, powerful, well-formed body. He is intelligent gentle and loyal, eager to serve, and friendly, but never shy or timid. Viciousness is intolerable. His general appearance must always convey a combination of massiveness, nobility and gentleness. He is, indeed, a Saint among dogs."

Daylight under the dog -An expression referring to the height from ground to brisket when compared to the distance between front and rear supports of the body.

Cloddy -Low, thick-set, comparatively heavy

Cobby Short-bodied, compact

Close-coupled - Short, from last rib to hip bones

Common -Lacking elegance, not typey; coarse.

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2. HEAD: Like the whole body, very powerful and imposing. The massive skull is wide, slightly arched and the sides slope in a gentle curve into the very strongly developed, high cheek bones. Occiput only moderately developed.

The supra-orbital ridge is very strongly developed and forms nearly a right angle with the horizontal axis of the head.

Deeply imbedded between the eyes and starting at the root of the muzzle, a furrow runs over the whole skull. It is strongly marked in the first half, gradually disappearing toward the base of the occiput. The lines at the sides of the head diverge considerably from the outer corner of the eyes toward the back of the head.

The skin of the forehead, above the eyes, forms rather noticeable wrinkle, more or less pronounced, which converge toward the furrow. Especially when the dog is in action, the wrinkle are more visible without in the least giving the impression of morosity. Too strongly developed wrinkles are not desired.

The slope from the skull to the muzzle is sudden and rather steep.

The muzzle is short, does not taper, and the vertical depth at the root of the muzzle must be greater than the length of the muzzle.

The bridge of the muzzle is not arched, but straight; in some dogs, occasionally, slightly broken.

A rather wide, well-marked, shallow furrow runs from the root of the muzzle over the entire bridge of the muzzle to the nose.

The flews of the upper jaw are strongly developed, not sharply out, but turning in a beautiful curve into the lower edge, and slightly overhanging.

The flews of the lower jaw must not be deeply pendant.

Heads are definitely the hallmark of any specific breed.

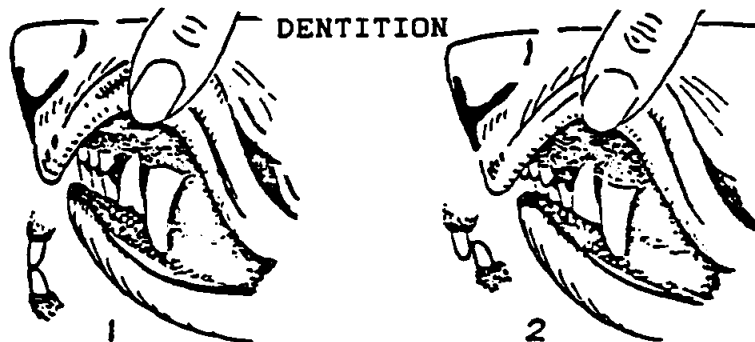
RELATED TERMS:

Snipy-face -A slender, tapering face, lacking fill in before the eyes and bone formation above the teeth of the upper jaw.

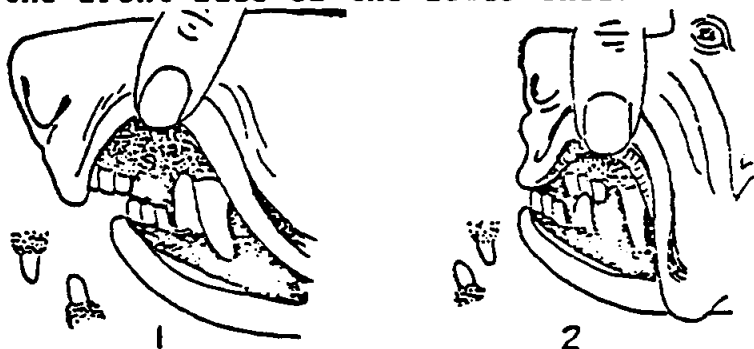
The Standard goes into a great deal of detail to describe the head, not only to stress the importance of a good head but also because this is singularly the most difficult feature to describe. But don't forget that first sentence...."Head, like the whole body, very powerful and imposing." Here again the writers of the Standard were emphasizing the need for balance and strength. A large, beautiful head on a scrawny, faulty body is as much a fault as a strong body with a small, narrow head. Either dog is at odds with the Standard. The good Saint Bernard is the picture of strength and symmetry in both head and body!

Bite: -the teeth should be sound and strong and should meet in either a scissors or an even bite: the scissors bite being preferable. The undershot bite although sometimes found with good specimens is not desirable. The overshot bite is a fault.

A black roof of the mouth is desirable.



Level and Scissors Bite. 1) Level Bite with the incisors striking edge to edge. 2) Scissors bite with the upper incisors striking just along the front face of the lower ones.



OVERSHOT AND UNDERSHOT 1) An overshot jaw with the top incisors extended out beyond the lower ones. 2) An undershot jaw with the lower incisors extending beyond the upper. As these are tearing teeth either of these jaw conditions is a fault where the dog's work would require such effort. In the Bulldog and some other breeds, tearing has not been required and they have sacrificed it to get the advantage of moving the power of the molars forward in the lower jaws as compared to the upper.

3. The nose (Schwamm) is very substantial, broad, with wide open nostrils, and, like the lips, always black.

4. The ears are of medium size, rather high set, with very strongly developed burr (Muschel) at the base. They stand slightly away from the head at the base, then drop with a sharp bend to the side and cling to the head without a turn. The flap is tender and forms a rounded triangle, slightly elongated toward the point, the front edge lying firmly to the head whereas the back edge may stand somewhat away from the head, especially when the dog is at attention. Lightly set ears, which at the base immediately cling to the head, give it an oval and too little marked exterior, whereas a strongly developed base gives the skull a squarer, broader and much more impressive appearance.

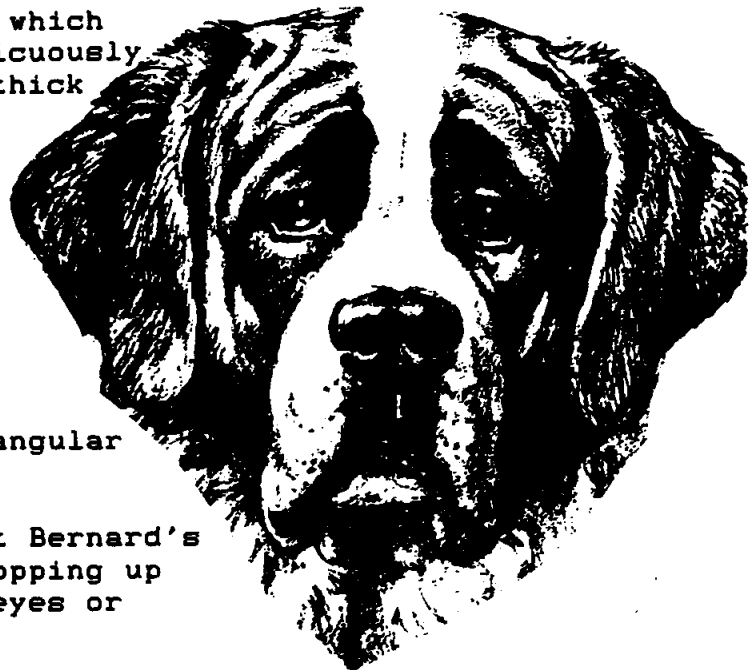
Think of your scent hounds....Beagle, Bloodhound, Basset....all have substantial, broad noses...."the better to smell you with, my dear."

Also, the scent faculty is related somewhat to length of leather in the ear. Dogs working by scent alone, if they had prick ears, could be distracted from their work by hearing unrelated sounds.

The Saint, working in the cold, also needs an ear that minimizes loss of heat.

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5. The eyes are set more to the front than the sides, are of medium size, dark brown, with intelligent, friendly expression, set moderately deep. The lower eyelids, as a rule, do not close completely and, if that is the case, form an angular wrinkle toward the inner corner of the eye. Eyelids which are too deeply pendant and show conspicuously the lachrymal glands, or a very red, thick haw, and eyes that are too light, are objectionable.



Correct Saint Bernard eyes have a triangular shape to them.

If you start paying attention to Saint Bernard's you'll see some distressing faults cropping up such as round eyes, or almond shaped eyes or eyes that are set too far apart.

Also, Saints have a hereditary problem called entropion which causes the eyelids to turn in with the eyelash irritating the eye and causing inflammation and swelling of the eye. Whenever I see this, I advise the owner to have his dog's eyes checked by a veterinarian to determine why the eye is irritated. Entropion can be corrected by surgery, but the dog cannot be shown and should not be bred.

Eyes are a very important factor in a dog having an "Intelligent expression" and need careful attention in breeding and judging.

6. The neck is set high, very strong and in action is carried erect, otherwise horizontally or slightly downward. The junction of head and neck is distinctly marked by an indentation. The nape is very muscular and rounded at the sides which makes the neck appear rather short. The dewlap of throat and neck is well pronounced: too strong development, however, is not desirable.

RELATED TERMS:

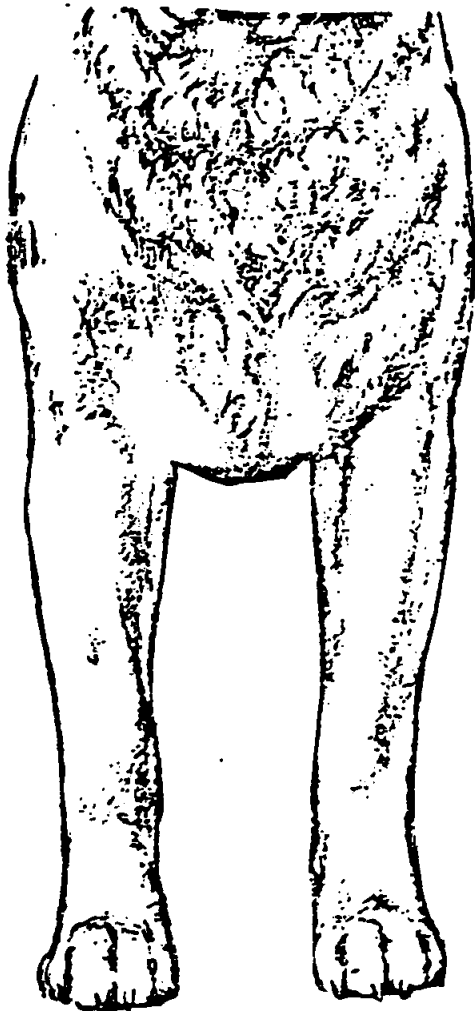
Bull Neck - A neck heavy and short by comparison with other parts of the dog; a fault in some breeds, necessary to the type in others.

In "The Dog In Action", McDowell Lyons writes: "Dogs which work trail scent require a neck and head length which, combined, permit nose and mouth to reach the ground without forcing the dog into a stooped position. The shorter neck contributes to endurance."

Ewe Neck - A concave top line of neck resembling the neck of the eye or camel.

7. The shoulders are sloping and broad, very muscular and powerful. The withers are strongly pronounced.

8. The chest is very well arched, moderately deep, not reaching below the elbows.



RELATED TERMS:

Fiddle Front -A combination of out at the elbows, pasterns close together and turned out feet; usually with curved forearm.

Laid-Back Shoulder -A shoulder blade inclined backward from the joint to the top at an efficient angle for the dog's work or activity, 45 deg being the most efficient angle.

Loaded Shoulders -Shoulder blades under which the muscle, particularly those supporting the top half, have been developed so that the top of the blade is pushed outward from the body and cannot occupy its natural position.

Oblique Shoulders -Shoulder blades sloping back at an efficient angle for the action and work of the dog, 45 degrees being the most efficient.

Again, from The Dog in Action:

The shoulder has 5 jobs:

- 1) First, it must support weight
- 2) It must absorb concussion both from momentum of the gait and from jump.
- 3) It must propel on the turns
- 4) There is lateral displacement to be offset.
- 5) It must aid in or maintain the level of the center of gravity.

You can measure the reach of a dog's front legs by the angle of his shoulder.

Out-at-the shoulders -blade set that places the joints too wide apart for efficient movement or balance; the opposite of in-shoulders.

Straight Shoulders
-Shoulder blades not laid back to an efficient working angle with the ground.

Remember - You cannot put drive behind unless the front can take care of it without having a disorganized mechanism.

9. BACK: Very broad, perfectly straight as far as the haunches, from there gently sloping to the rump, and merging imperceptibly into the root of the tail.

10. HINDQUARTERS: Well developed. Legs very muscular.

11. BELLY: Distinctly set off from the powerful loin section, only little drawn up.

RELATED TERMS:

Sway-back -A concave curve of any part or all of the back line.

Wheel-back -Any excessive convex curve of the back line.

Roach-back -Excessive convex curve of the back line from the 8th rib to and sometimes over the croup; may show only as an excess in the loin section.

Tuck-up -Belly tucked up under the loin; small waisted.

Goose-rump -A croup that is steeper than prescribed by the pattern of the breed in question; any exceptionally steep croup, usually sloping more than 30 degrees to the ground.

Herring Gut -An upsweep to the bottom profile line of the thorax from between or near the front legs to the abdomen or loin section which reduces the depth of the thorax and takes away heart room.

Shelly -Narrow body, little spring to the ribs.

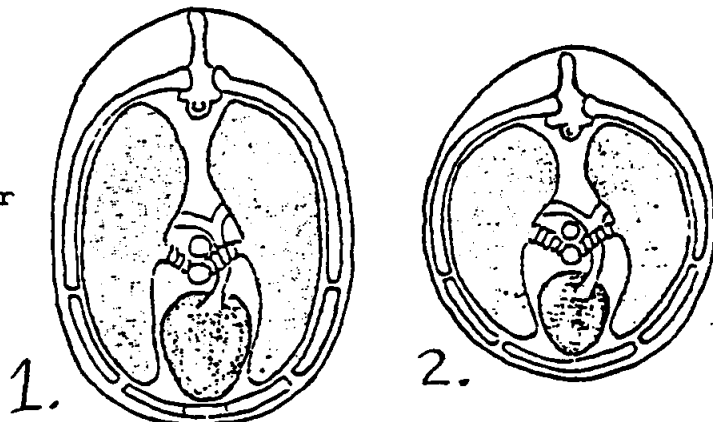
Flat-sided - Said of a dog whose ribs are relatively flat in their midsection; particularly from the fifth rib back.

Slab-sided -Flat ribs with too little spring from spinal column.

Barrel ribs -Ribs that follow a circular line of relatively the same degree from spinal column to juncture with brisket.

(For more on "ribs", see page 236 of The Dog In Action.)

Heart and lung room is secured more by depth of body than width, so again the long, flat but well sprung rib gets a call over the round rib. A comparison between the sketches 1 and 2 shows what would have happened to the flat-ribbed dog's heart and lung room had nature given him barrel ribs even though they are as "well sprung."



12. The tail starting broad and powerful directly from the rump is long, very heavy, ending in a powerful tip. In repose it hangs straight down, turning gently upward in the lower third only, which is not to be considered a fault. In a great many specimens the tail is carried with the end slightly bent and therefore hangs down in the shape of an f. In action all dogs carry the tail more or less turned upward. However it may not be carried too erect or by any means rolled over the back. A slight curling of the tip is sooner admissable.

"The Dog In Action" -"The tail is also a barometer to the set of the pelvis and the value of the muscles attached to the pelvis and croup. Furthermore a normal tail or any part of it will tell us several important things about the dog in front of that tail.

RELATED TERMS:

Gay Tail -A tail carried above the back line and flying flag like.

Ring Tail -A tail curled over the back.

Sabre Tail-A tail carried low in semi-circle; example, German Shepherd.

Sickle-Tail - A tail carried high in a semi-circle.

"Examine a normal tail and you will find that the vertebrae are progressive in size but that the members taper from one juncture to the next and that each one observed will give you a good idea as to what to expect of the next closest one.The base of the vertebrae of the tail will tell you volumes about the spina column. One or two bones taken at random from any animal will enable you to construct a full skeleton of a normal specimen.

"Many old-timers picked their dogs by the size of the tail at its base. 'A dog is no better than his tail,' has been said often. Another old time comment was, 'A dog thinks with his tail.' Certainly its carriage and action indicates the dog's mental attitude."

"Two muscles activate the top side of the tail and one the bottom. If the tail is curled, 'sickle,' or 'squirrled' continuously when this is not characteristic, it is not that the top muscles have become tense but that the one bottom has lost or did not have sufficient tension. The tail that takes a corkscrew turn has normal tension on only of the lateralis muscles on top."

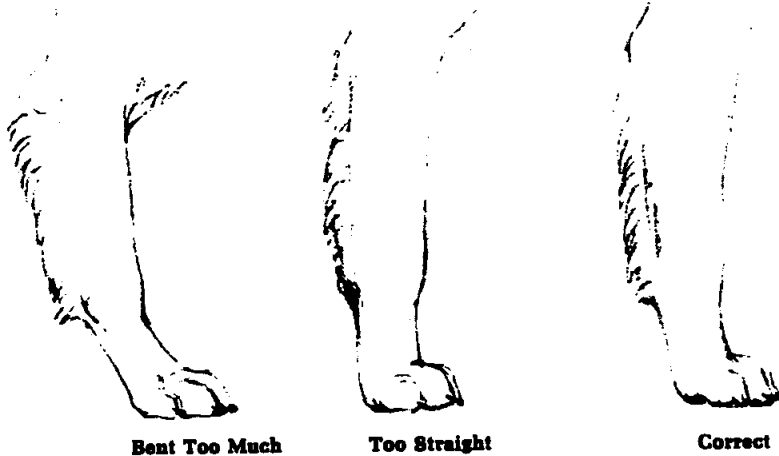
"These lateralis muscles are the continuation of muscles which start at the back of the rib structure and play an important part in tensing the loins. The wry or twisted tail indicates that one of the lateralis muscles is weak. Unless these conditions have become characteristic over generations, it is safe to conclude that muscles which are not functioning correctly at their terminals are not doing any better along the spinal column."

"Even as the dog begins with his head, he ends with his tail and by it many a story is told for it expresses health, mental attitude and what may be expected in the rest of the spinal column. Beware of any type tail that is not normally characteristic of the specific breed."

13. FOREARM: Very powerful and extraordinarily muscular.

FORELEGS: Straight, strong

THE FRONT LEGS



RELATED TERMS:

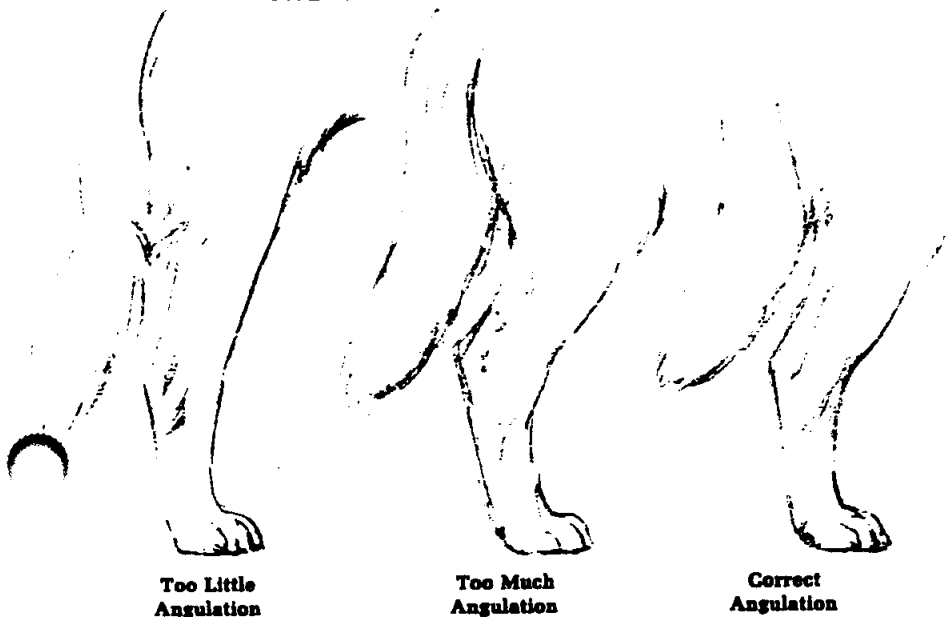
Down-In-Pasterns
-Showing an angle forward or to the side which is abnormal; sometimes faulty bone assembly but usually due to weakness of the supporting tendons and muscles.

Staight Pasterns
-Pasterns with little or no slope to the bone between the joint and the foot.

Knuckling over
Bend forward or vibration of the pastern joint from the vertical line of support in the front leg; characteristic of straight pasterns and pronounced in physical weakness or old age.

15. HINDLEGS: Hocks of moderate angulation. Dewclaws are not desired; if present they must not obstruct the gait.

THE HIND LEGS

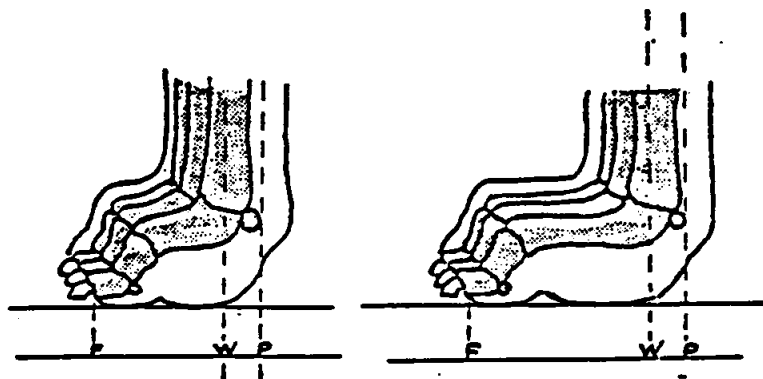


Hocks-Well-Let Down -A term which is synonymous with hocks close to the ground; this produces a relatively short distance between the hock joint and the ground, a short cannon bone, which reduces the leverage tax on the Achilles tendon and lessens fatigue.

Hocky -faulty hocks.

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16. FEET: Broad, with strong toes, moderately closed, and with rather high knuckles. The so-called dewclaws which sometimes occur on the inside of the hindlegs are imperfectly developed toes. They are of no use to the dog and are not to be taken into consideration in judging. They may be removed by surgery.



The Cat-foot, as shown in the first sketch, has a short third digital bone, which shortens the distance between F and P and requires less power to lift W, therefore it is less fatiguing. The Hare-foot, shown in the sketch, has a long third digital bone which makes for a longer leverage and more speed but is more fatiguing. Both of these feet should be compact with the second digital bone standing between 45 and 60 degrees to the ground line, the nearer the perpendicular, the better.

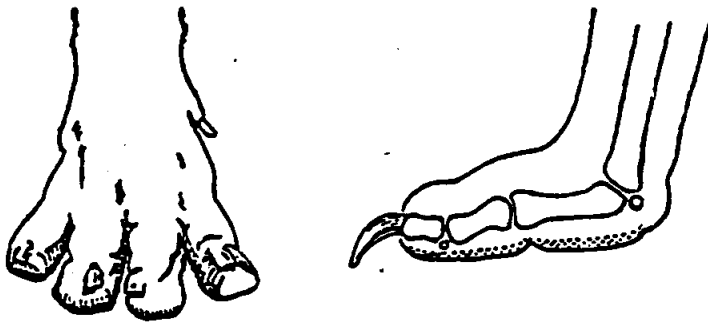
RELATED TERMS:

Cat-Foot -a deep, round, compact foot which is characterized by a short third digit bringing toes nearer the base or heel pad, resembling a cat's paw.

Hare-Foot-A deep, compact, oval or elongated foot, characterized by a long third digit which extend the toes out from the heel pad to give greater leverage. It is not to be confused with a broken down cat foot. A typical specimen is found on the rabbit or hare, hence its name.

Pigeon-toed -Feet, not necessarily the legs, inclined inward toward one another and placed at an angle to the line of progress.

Slew Feet-The feet, not necessarily the legs, turn outward from the center line; sometimes termed "east and west".



Splay-Foot-A foot with toes spread wide apart; usually with flat toes and no arch.

SPLAY FEET, as shown in first sketch, have toes spread, often with daylight between them; they lack compactness and strength and are more subject to injury afield. PAPER FEET, as shown in the second sketch, have thin soles or pads. Because the heel pad is thin and is not elevating the third digital bone, the whole foot usually breaks down. DEW CLAWS, the fifth toe as shown in the first sketch, are called for by some standards and usually appear on the front legs if not the back. They are subject to injury afield and are removed from newborn pups by many breeders.

17. The coat is very dense, shorthaired (stockhaarig), lying smooth, tough, without feeling rough to the touch. The thighs are slightly bushy. The tail at the root has longer and denser hair which gradually becomes shorter toward the tip. The tail appears bushy, not forming a flag.

18. COLOR: White with red or red with white, the red in its various shades; brindle patches with white markings. The colors red and brown-yellow are of entirely equal value. Necessary markings are: white chest, feet and tip of tail, nose band, collar or spot on the nape; the latter and blaze are very desirable. Never of one color or without white. Faulty are all other colors except the favorite dark shadings on the head (mask) and ears. One distinguishes between mantle dogs and splash-coated dogs.

Regarding Markings, as stated in Reference 4- "The white breast, collar, feet, and tip of tail are highly valued by the monks because they represent the vestments peculiar to their Order."

19. The height at the shoulder of the dog ought to be 70 centimeters (27.56 inches) minimum, of the bitch, 65 centimeters (25.59 inches). Female animals, thruout, are of a more delicate and finer build.

20. Considered as faults are all deviations from the standard, as for instance a sway-back and a disproportionately long back, hocks too much bent, straight hindquarters, upward growing hair in spaces between the toes, out at the elbows, cowhocks and weak pasterns.

B. THE LONG-HAIRED SAINT BERNARD DOG

The long-haired variety completely resembles the short-haired variety except for the coat which is not short-haired (stockhaarig) but of medium length, plain to the wavy, never rolled or curly and not shaggy either. Usually, on the back, especially in the region of the haunches to the rump, the hair is more wavy, a condition, by the way, that is slightly indicated in the short-haired dogs.

The tail is bushy with dense hair of moderate length. Rolled or curly hair on the tail is not desirable. A tail with parted hair, or a flag tail, is faulty. Face and ears are covered with short and soft hair; longer, silky hair at the base of the ears is permissible. Forelegs only slightly feathered, thighs very bushy.