

The Leonberger

AN ILLUSTRATED BREED STANDARD

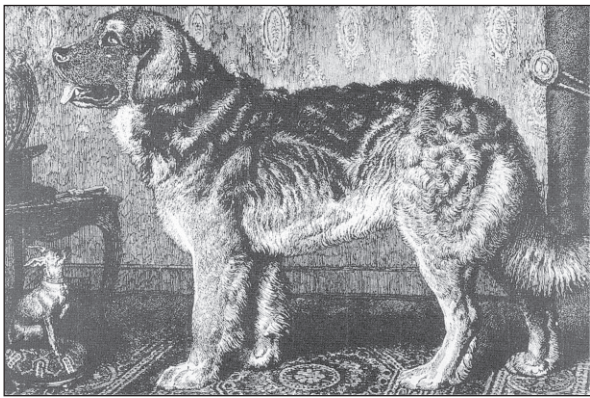
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Illustrated Breed Standard Committee:

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History of the Leonberger Breed

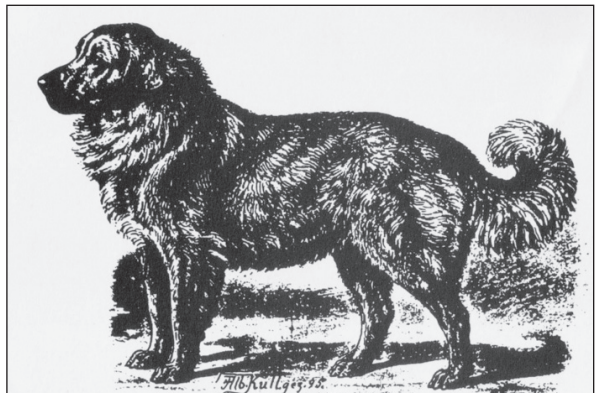
The early history of the Leonberger breed revolved around Heinrich Essig (1809-1889) a successful businessman, politician, alderman and prominent citizen of Leonberg, a town outside of Stuttgart, in southern Germany. He bought, bred and sold many dogs over a span of 50 years. At Essig's death in 1889, his nephew began to breed Leonbergers that were con-

sistently representative of the tawny colored, black masked dogs that characterize the breed today. From 1887 to 1902 Leonbergers participated at Westminster and other dog shows in the U.S., were listed in the AKC Stud book and became very popular with German artists, who used the dogs as models for their work. During this time large breed dogs were all the rage and Leonbergers caught the attention of royalty and celebrities worldwide.

In 1891 the first Leonberger club was formed. Albert Kull, an early club president, was also an artist with an eye for detail. He wrote the first breed standard, forming the foundation for all subsequent Leonberger standards. Kull's work did much to establish the credibility of the breed, helping the Leonberger to flourish.

The current German Leonberger Club was formed in 1948. Under the guidance of then club president, Robert Beutelsbacher, the first modern day standard and breeding regulations were written. In 1975 the German Club brought all the Leonberger breed clubs from the major European nations together and founded the International Union of Leonberger Clubs. The Leonberger Club of America was founded in 1985 to protect and promote the breed in North America and joined the International Leonberger Union in 2008. Now 18 national clubs worldwide meet in Leonberg annually to discuss the health and future of the breed.

Leonbergers are well known and popular dogs throughout Europe, with Standards and breeding governed by national clubs under the auspices of the F.C.I. Under the guidance of the Leonberger Union, the F.C.I. standard was the standard used by the Leonberger Club of America from its inception in 1985. Since 2003, Leonbergers have participated in AKC FSS events. The standard contained in this book was approved by the AKC Board of Directors in October 2009 and is the official American Kennel Club standard for the Leonberger dog. It has been written following AKC guidelines, while maintaining the breed's true-to-type look as defined in its land of origin.



The Official AKC Breed Standard for the Leonberger

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The actual Standard appears printed through out this book in this type style.

This type denotes added clarifying explanations or the highlighting of specific details of the Standard.



Breeders and judges strive to produce and award **high quality dogs**. Genetic health also needs to be considered in order for the breed to truly thrive. We challenge all judges and breeders to pursue visible goals as well as the harder, invisible goal of sound, genetic health.

The Illustrated Standard Committee would like to acknowledge and thank the much appreciated contributions to this book by the following people: Cyd Erich, Agi Hejji, Ann Rogers, Ginny Bartholomay, Maria Nelson, Susan Grosslight, Waltraut Zieher, Guido Perosino and photographs from many American and European Leonberger fanciers.

General Appearance

The Leonberger is a calm, non-aggressive, large, muscular, working dog with a proud head carriage. He is distinguished by his balanced build, black mask, and double coat. Adult males, in particular, are powerful and strong and carry a lion-like mane on the neck and chest. A dog or bitch is easily discernable as such. For its size, the Leonberger is light on its feet and graceful in motion. Because natural appearance is essential to breed type, the Leonberger is to be shown with no trimming, sculpting or other alterations of the coat.

True to his original purpose as a family, farm and draft dog, today's Leonberger excels as a multi-purpose working dog; the most important task being a reliable family companion. The Leonberger is vigilant, obedient and quietly confident in all situations. He exudes good-natured watchfulness, depicting intelligence and vigor.





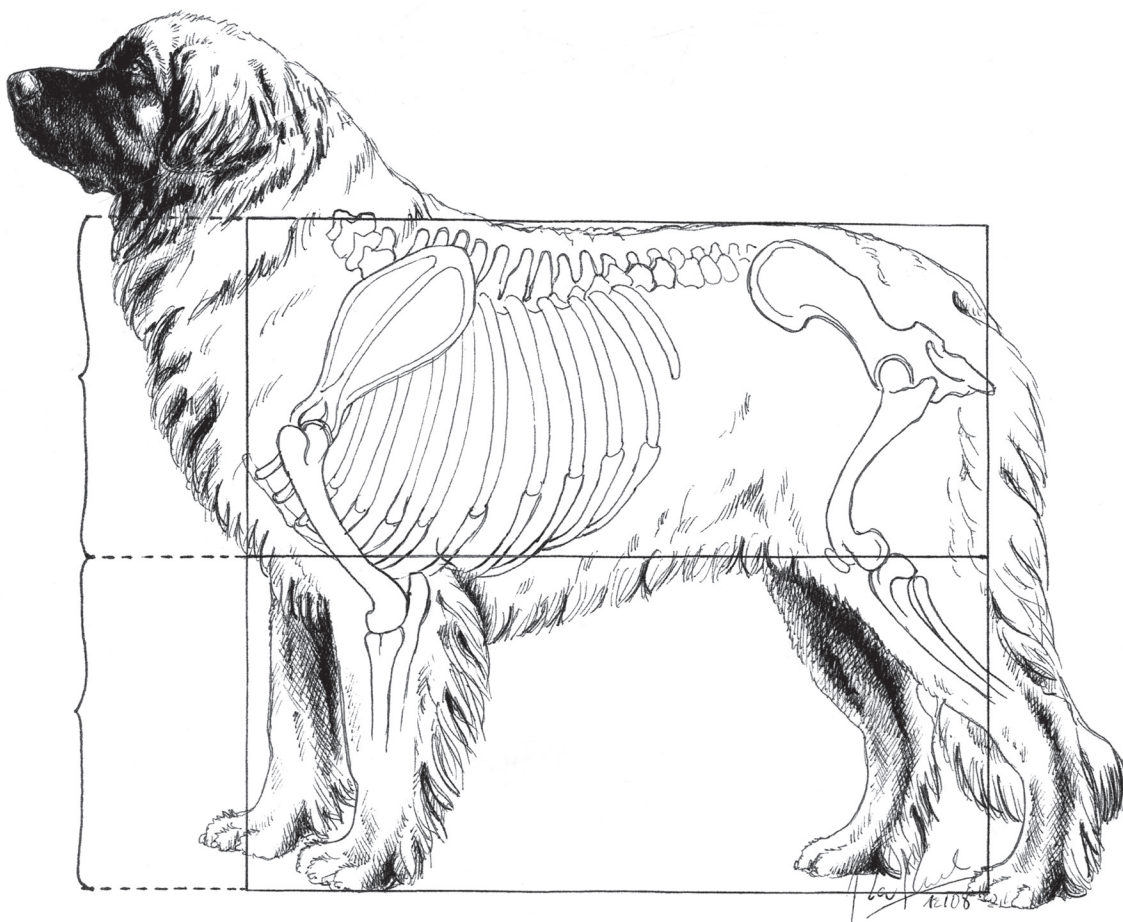
Adult Male



Adult Female

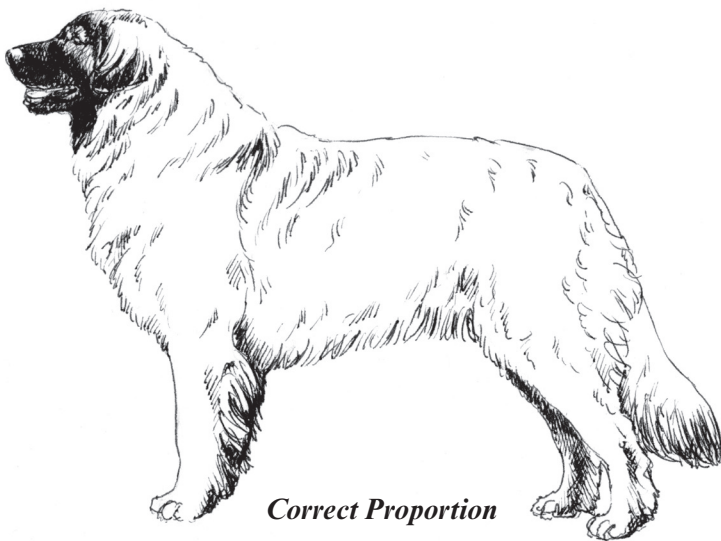


Size, Proportion, Substance



Size: A mature (18 months) male, when measured at the withers, is 28 to 31.5 inches in height at the highest point of the shoulder blades (30 inches preferred). The mature (18 months) female is 25.5 inches to 29.5 inches (27.5 inches preferred). Weight is in proportion to the overall size and structure. When proportion, substance, and balance are present, a slight variation above standard is tolerated.

Proportion: Height is measured at the withers; body length is measured from point of shoulder to point of buttocks. Desired proportion of height at withers to length of body is 9 to 10. The depth of chest is ideally 50 percent of the height at withers; brisket reaches to elbow. The angulation of front and rear quarters is in balance. Overall balance and proportion are equally as important as size.

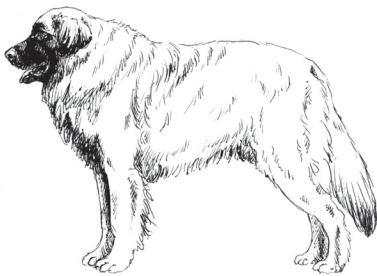


Correct Proportion

An easy way to check on proportion/substance: Evaluate if the dog's body can "fit" upside down and reversed into the empty space under its body. If it can, the dog is most likely balanced. If it can't, it will be too stocky, lack body, or be too short or too long on the leg.

Strong musculature counts as it takes more than bones to hold up big dogs.

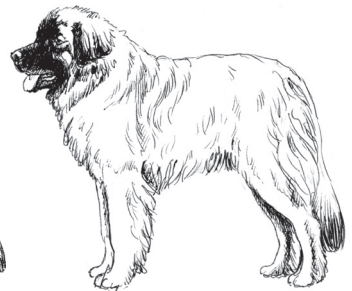
Substance: Bone is medium to heavy and in proportion to size of body with sufficient muscle to support frame.



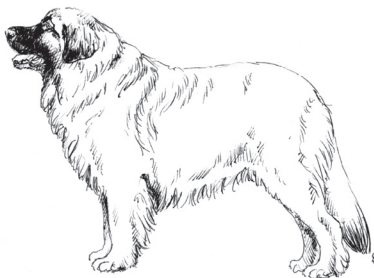
Neck Too Short



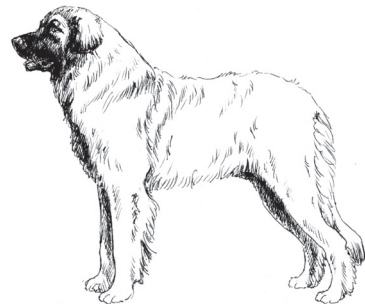
Long Body



Short Body Square Dog



Low on Leg



Too High on Leg

Head

The head, in its entirety, is deeper than it is broad, rectangular shaped. The length of muzzle to length of back skull is approximately equal, with no wrinkles, and cheeks are only slightly developed. Males have a strong masculine head while female heads express femininity.

The head is rectangular with the muzzle and skull each forming their own proportionate rectangles. It is not cheeky, square, triangular or snipey. The head size is in proportion to the dog, about the same length as the neck.

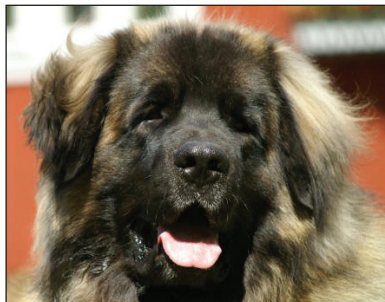
As with everything else about a Leonberger, the head is moderate!



**Disqualification:
Complete Lack of
Mask.**

A soft, sweet expression is a hallmark of the breed. Yellow eyes suggest a “bird of prey” appearance and are not acceptable.

Examples of Good Masks and Expression



Expression/Mask: A good-natured, soft, and intelligent expression is required. Face is covered with a full black mask that extends from the nose up to and over the eyes. A lesser mask is acceptable, but not desirable.



Broken Mask

*Mask Just
Up to Eyes*

*Good Mask with
Light, Round Eyes*

Older, Graying

Eyes: Dark brown is preferred over light brown. Eyes are medium size, oval to almond shaped, neither deep-set nor protruding, neither too close together nor too wide apart. Eyelids are close fitting, not showing any haw.



Set Too Close



Set Too Wide



Too Big and Round



Ectropion

Entropion

Ears: When alert, ears are level with top of skull and set slightly forward. Ears are of medium size, triangular, fleshy, hanging flat and close to the head. Tip of ears are level with corners of the mouth.



Too Small, Short



Too Low Set



Too Large, Long



Set Too High



Open, Not Laying Flat

The heads of adolescent dogs are immature with underdeveloped stops and skulls and should not be penalized for this in the show ring.



Male Head



Skull: As seen from the front and in profile, backskull is slightly arched. Skull is slightly longer than wide and the width of back skull is only slightly broader than it is at the eyes.

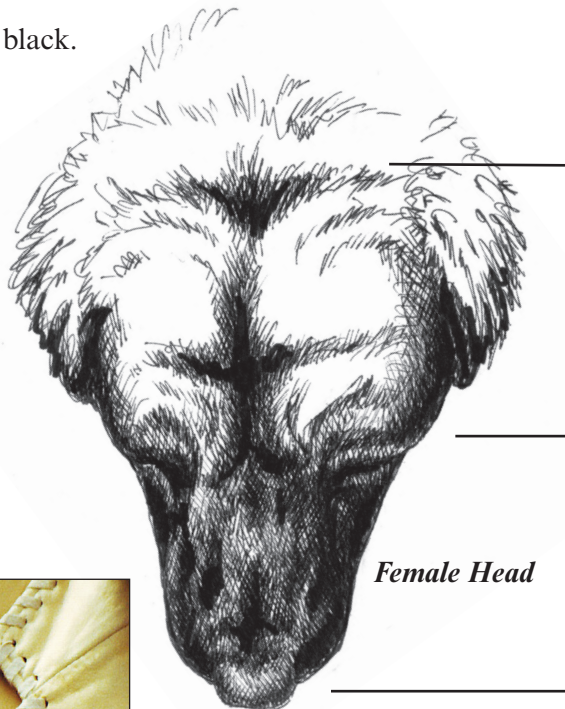
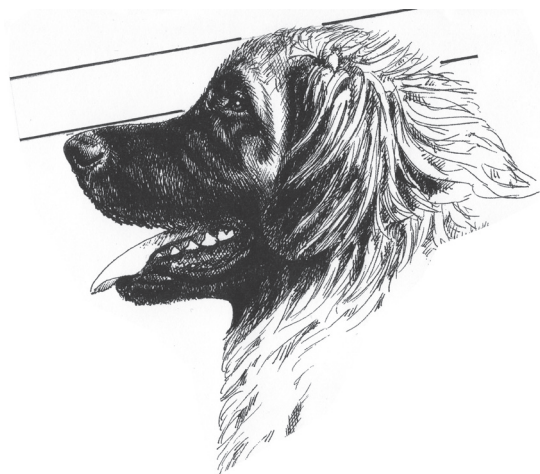
Stop: Clearly recognizable and moderately defined.



Muzzle: Rather long, never running to a point, nasal bridge of even breadth, can be slightly arched (Roman nose) or level; never dipped. The jaw remains broad and strong between the canines.

Planes: As seen from the side, the planes of muzzle and skull are parallel. Planes rather close as defined by the moderate stop.

Nose: Large with clearly outlined nostrils, always black.





Tight Flews

Lips: Tight, outer lips are black in color, with corners of lips closed and dry. Some de-pigmentation due to aging is acceptable.

Serious Fault: Drooling or wet mouth.

Dry mouths are a distinguishing feature of the breed.

Leonbergers do not drool!

No towels necessary!



Loose - Open Flews

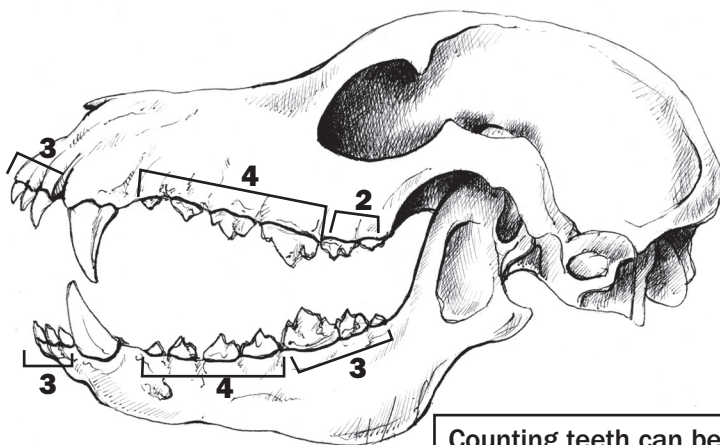
Teeth

20 Upper

22 Lower

Disqualification:

**Any missing teeth
other than M3's.**



Counting teeth can be daunting.
Make it simple by counting from
the side in bunches.

Complete dentition of 42 teeth (20 upper, 22 lower), strong, correctly placed, meeting in a correct scissors bite, lower incisors touching inside of upper incisors. Missing M3s are permissible. A level bite is tolerated. Dropped lower incisors, in an otherwise normal bite, are not indicative of a skeletal malocclusion and are considered only a minor deviation.



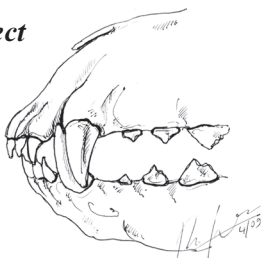
Under-Shot Bite

Incorrect



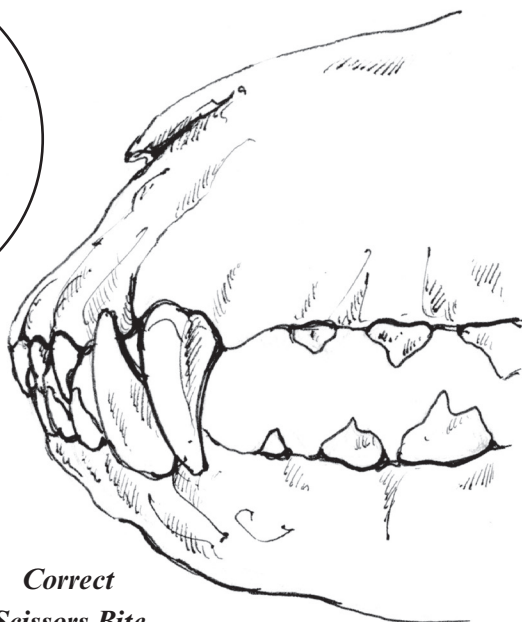
Level Bite

Tolerated



Over-Shot Bite

Incorrect



***Correct
Scissors Bite***

Neck, Topline, Body

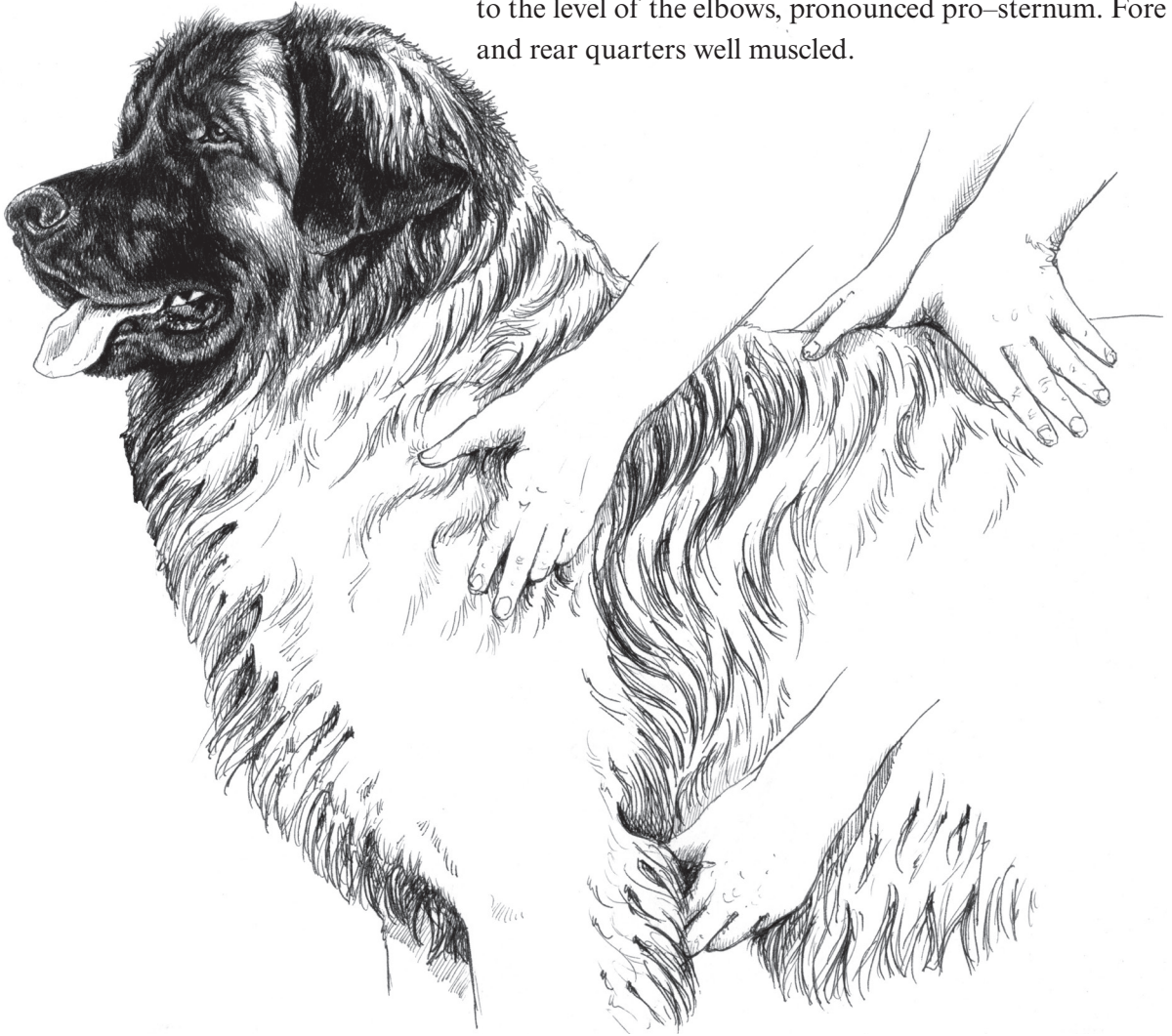
Neck: Muscular, well set on shoulders, of sufficient length to allow for proud head carriage; blends smoothly into withers. No dewlap.



Topline: Withers set above a firm level back that flows smoothly into a gently sloping croup. Rump not higher than withers.



Body: Chest is broad, roomy, and deep, reaching at least to the level of the elbows, pronounced pro–sternum. Fore and rear quarters well muscled.



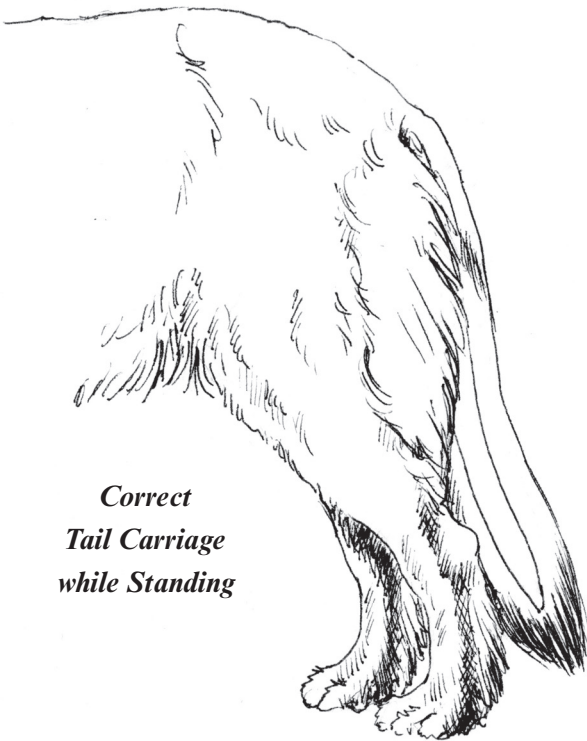
Ribs: Well–sprung, oval.

Underline: Only slightly tucked up.

Loin: Broad, compact, strong, well muscled.

Croup: Broad, relatively long, gently sloped, flowing smoothly into root of tail.

Tail: While standing relaxed, tail hangs straight down with the last vertebrae reaching to or below the hock.



*Correct
Tail Carriage
while Standing*



*Correct
but with Hook*



*Correct
but Short*

Serious Fault!
High tail carriage with tail carried over back due to short, level croup.



Tail Tucked



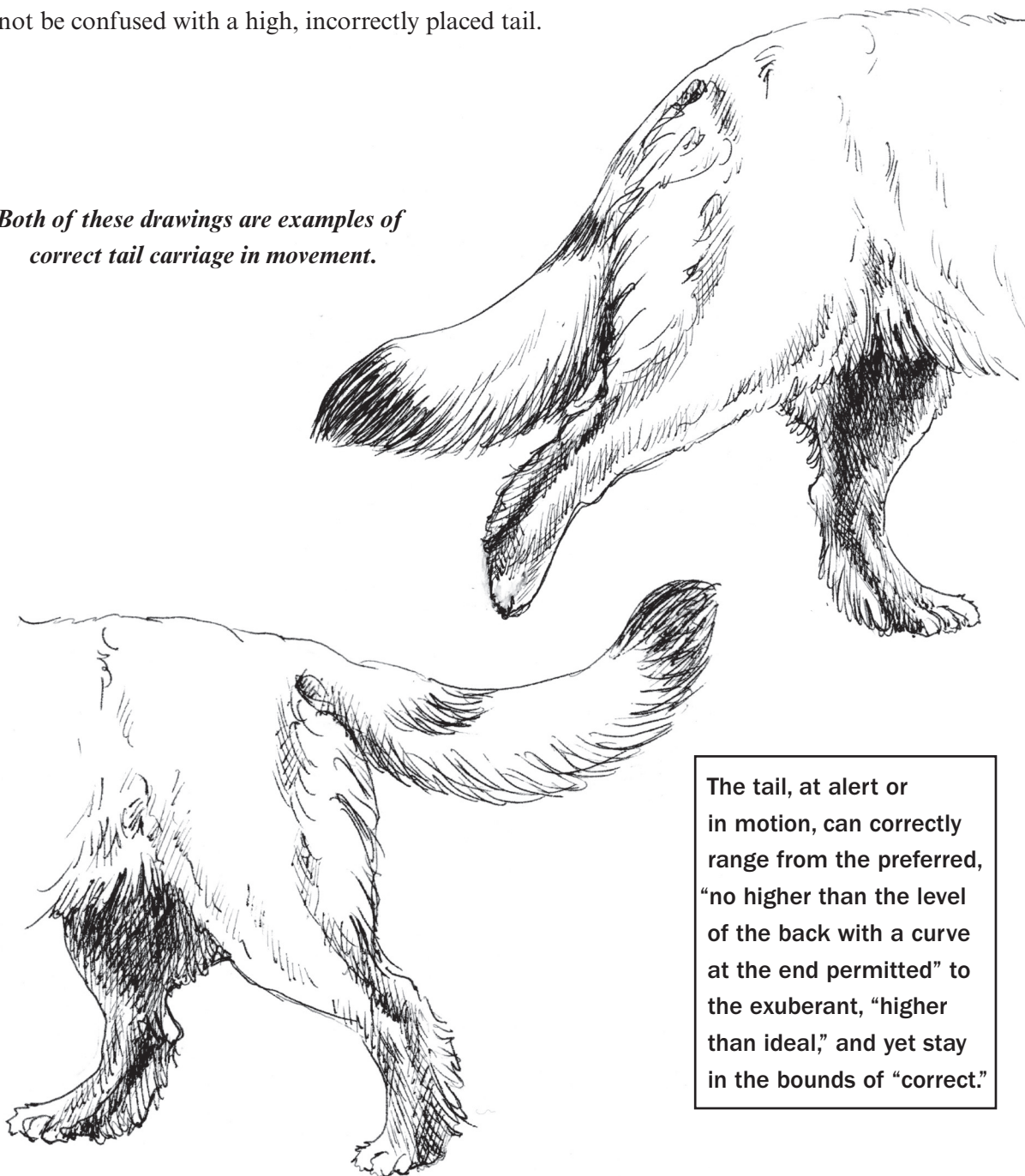
Too High - Rolled



Too High

Tail in Movement: In movement, tail is ideally carried no higher than the level of the back, with a curve up at the end permitted. An exuberant tail carriage, though higher than ideal, should not be confused with a high, incorrectly placed tail.

Both of these drawings are examples of correct tail carriage in movement.



The tail, at alert or in motion, can correctly range from the preferred, “no higher than the level of the back with a curve at the end permitted” to the exuberant, “higher than ideal,” and yet stay in the bounds of “correct.”

Forequarters

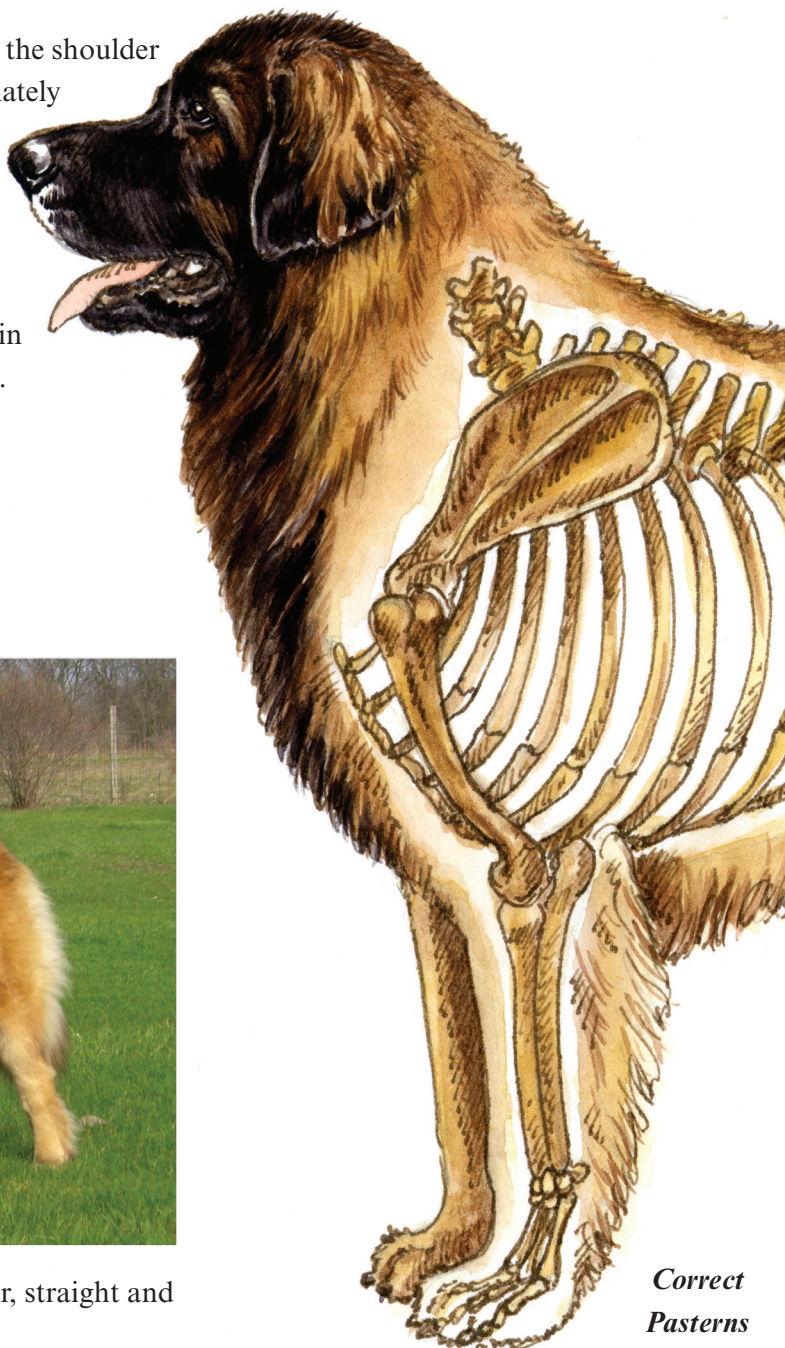
Shoulder Angulation:

Well laid-back and well muscled; the shoulder meets the upper arm at approximately a right angle allowing for excellent reach. Shoulder and upper arm rather long and about equal in length.

Elbows: Close to body, neither in nor out when standing or gaiting.



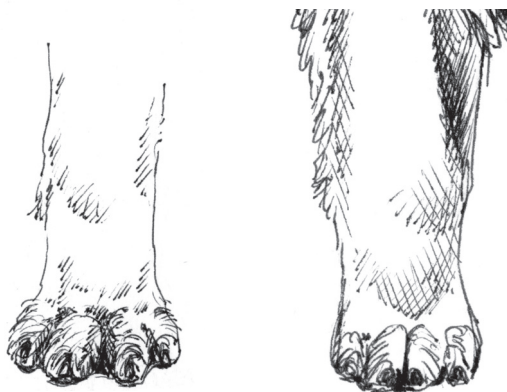
Forelegs: Well-boned, muscular, straight and parallel to each other.



*Correct
Pasterns*

Pasterns: Strong, firm and straight when viewed from front, slightly sloping when viewed from side.

Dewclaws: Usually present.



*Splayed
Foot*

*Correct
Tight "Cat Foot"*



*Weak / Soft
Pasterns*



*Steep
Pasterns*

Feet: Turn neither in nor out, rounded, tight, toes well arched (cat foot), pads always black.



Toes Out



*Close /
Narrow*



*Out at Elbows
Toes In*



Correct Pasterns

Hindquarters



*Correct Stifle
and Hock Bend*

*Correct Rear —
Standing*

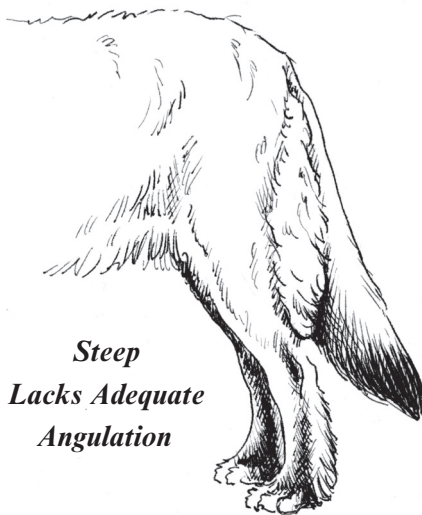


Well-developed muscles are a must for correct gaiting!

Angulation: In balance with forequarters. The rear assembly is powerful, muscular and well-boned.

Legs: Viewed from the rear, the legs are straight and parallel, with stifles and paws turned neither in nor out, placed widely enough apart to match a properly built body.

Thighs: Upper and lower of equal length, slanting and strongly muscled.



*Steep
Lacks Adequate
Angulation*



Weak Hocks

Stifles: Angle clearly defined.

Hocks: Strong of bone, distinctly angled between lower thigh and rear pastern; well let down.

Dewclaws: Rear dewclaws may be present.

Feet: Turned neither in nor out, but may be slightly elongated compared to forefeet. Toes arched; pads always black.

Incorrect Rear Structure



Cow Hocked



Barrel Hocked



Too Narrow

Coat

Leonbergers have a medium to long, water resistant, double coat on the body and short fine hair on the muzzle and front of limbs. Outer coat is medium–soft to coarse and lies flat. It is straight, with some generalized wave permitted. Mature males carry a mane, which extends over neck and chest. The undercoat is soft and dense, although it may be less so in summer months or warmer climates. In spite of the double coat, the outline of the body is always recognizable.

Leonbergers have distinct feathering on backside of forelegs and ample feathering on breeches and some ear feathering. Tail is very well furnished. Females are less likely to carry a coat as long as males and this disparity must not be a consideration when judged against the male.

Natural appearance of the coat is essential to breed type. Therefore, except for neatening of the feet, Leonbergers are to be presented naturally, with no alteration of the coat, to include sculpting, trimming of whiskers, or any other alterations whatsoever.



No ribbon shall be awarded to a dog whose coat appears to be altered, and judges are to err on the side of withholding ribbons if there is any doubt.

Fault! Parted or curly coat.



Ideally, the Leonberger dog has a straight outer coat as shown in many of these photos, with some generalized wave being permitted. ***It is important that the outline of the dog is visible despite the outer and under coat that it “wears”***

Strong waviness is often seen in adolescent dogs that have yet to grow their mature coats. As working dogs, Leonbergers should not become coiffed puffballs! They are best appreciated in their natural state. This is vitally important for the show ring.

Color

Coat colors are lion–yellow, golden to red and red–brown, also sand colored (cream, pale yellow) and all combinations thereof, always with a black mask. All colors may have black tips (some with long black tips) on the outer coat. All coat colors are accompanied by a lighter colored undercoat and feathering which blends well with the dominant body color. A small, unobtrusive stripe or white patch on the chest and some white hairs on toes is tolerated.



Dark Gold - Black Tips



Lion Yellow



Red - Brown



Sand

Disqualifying Colors



Black and Tan



Brown



Too Much White



Silver - Gray



The long black tips of the outer guard hairs can give the impression of a black dog. Push the outer coat back and check to see if the black tips of the outer guard hairs cover a lighter undercoat. If so, this is acceptable.

Disqualification:

- Any coat color other than those listed
- White hair on chest that exceeds 5 inches in width; white extending beyond toes.



*Correct Movement
Coming and Going*

Correct movement is essential for an athletic, multi-purpose dog.

The Leonberger has a ground-covering, even and balanced gait. The stride is powerful, easy, free and elastic, with good reach and strong drive giving the impression of effortless power. In motion, the Leonberger maintains a level topline.

Viewed from the front and from behind, forelegs and hind legs travel straight. As the dog's speed increases, the legs tend to converge toward the centerline.



Essential to sound movement is the balance of correct front and rear assemblies and anatomically correct overall structure.



Pacing



Correct Movement



Cow Hocked



Too Close Weaving



Too Close Weaving



Loose Elbows Toes In



Paddling Toes Out

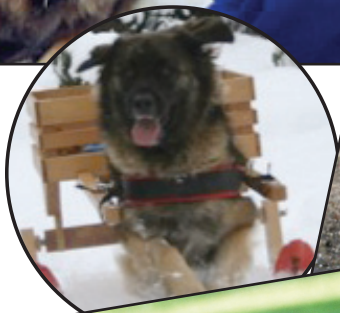
Temperament

The gentle character and even temperament of the Leonberger is of utmost importance for fulfilling their role as a family companion. The Leonberger is self-assured and calm, with a steady, playful demeanor. He is willing to please and possesses a good capacity for learning. The Leonberger exhibits a marked friendliness towards children and is at ease in all situations, never showing fear, shyness or aggression.

Quarrelsomeness or hostility towards people or dogs in normal situations, or an unwarranted show of timidity or nervousness, is not in keeping with Leonberger character and shall be penalized to the extent that it is effectively eliminated from competition.



One hundred years ago, Joseph Oberthur said in the book, "Le Chien", "Whatever his origin may be, this majestic dog... is an excellent protector, very gentle with children and people... and is never grumpy or aggressive. His size is more than sufficient to enforce respect." The Leonberger, first and foremost, is a confident, agreeable family dog!





Faults

Any deviation from these specifications is a fault. In determining whether a fault is minor, serious, or major, these two factors should be used as a guide:

- 1. **Deviation:** The extent to which it deviates from the standard; and
- 2. **Impact:** The extent to which such deviation would actually affect the Leonberger’s ability to fulfill its role as a family companion, its working ability or phenotype.

Disqualification

- **Mask:** Complete lack of mask
- **Teeth:** Any missing teeth other than M3s.
- **Color:** Any coat color other than those listed. White hair on chest exceeding 5 inches in width, white extending beyond toes.

Desired Characteristics

Dark brown eye color
Tight eyelids
Scissor/level bite
Lips closed and dry
Lip pigment mostly black
Medium to heavy bone
Level top line
Rear assembly clearly angulated
Temperament-sound!
Natural coat

Deviation/Impact Of Faults

Lacking brown tones
Entropion or ectropion
Overshot/undershot, wry
Wet or drooling
Mostly pink
Bone not in proportion to size
Rear high or weak topline
Lacking clear angulation
Aggressive or shy behavior
Coat alterations of any kind
(Neatening of the feet permitted)

Leonberger Characteristics

GENERAL APPEARANCE: Large, muscular, elegant, working dog with a balanced build. A dog or bitch is easily discernible as such.

HEAD: Rectangular shaped with slightly arched crown, muzzle and skull are rectangular and planes parallel; defined by a moderate stop. Face is covered with a black mask that extends to and over the eyes.

EYES: Dark brown, medium in size, almond to oval-shaped.

BITE: Scissor preferred, level accepted.

EARS: Medium sized, triangular, fleshy, hanging flat, reaching corners of mouth.

NECK: Muscular, of sufficient length to allow for proud head carriage.

FOREQUARTERS: Well laid back, forelegs straight, well-boned.

FEET: Front feet rounded, tight, toes well arched. Rear feet may be slightly elongated.

COAT: Medium long, double coat, straight preferred, slight wave permitted. Body outline is recognizable. Mature males carry a mane. Distinctive feathering on ears, front legs and breeches.

HEIGHT: Males 28 to 31.5 inches Females 25.5 to 29.5 inches. Weight in proportion to size.

TEMPERAMENT: Gentle, self-assured, calm; a reliable family companion.

EXPRESSION: Good-natured, soft and intelligent.

BODY: Broad, deep chest reaching elbows with well-sprung, oval rib cage. Withers lie above the firm, level back that flows into gently sloping croup. Underline only slightly tucked up.

TAIL: Sufficient length to reach hock. Bushy. Carried straight down when relaxed. When gaiting, carried preferably no higher than level of the back.

HINDQUARTERS: Muscular, clearly angulated, parallel, well-boned.

GAIT: Powerful and balanced, light on its feet and graceful in motion.



COLOR: Lion yellow, golden to red and red-brown, sand-colored. All colors may have black tips.

As type includes coat, **no alterations to coat** are allowed. Neatening of toes permitted.

5 Major Characteristics of Leonberger Type Defined

1. **General Presence** — Alert, calm and confident yet with quite lively temperament, with good size and appropriate dimorphic features.
2. **Outline** — Despite double coat, a balanced, correct outline is clearly visible with good balance of body to legs and strong bone.
3. **Head** — Overall wide, yet still rectangular head shape with parallel planes, a moderate stop, black mask, with a sweet expression
4. **Coat** — Straight/slight wave, double, correct color, not altered (sculpted) and feathering on breeches and mane appreciated.
5. **Movement** — Even, powerful, free and elastic.

The Leonberger Club of America



The AKC Official Parent Club
for the Leonberger Breed in the USA

www.LeonbergerClubofAmerica.com

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