



## Official Standard of the Bergamasco Sheepdog

**General Appearance:** The Bergamasco Sheepdog is a muscular, heavy-boned herding dog with a large head and a thick tail that hangs down to the hock and curves slightly upward at the end. The entire dog is covered with an abundant coat that forms mats. The Bergamasco Sheepdog is compact in profile but is just slightly longer than tall.

The Bergamasco Sheepdog's characteristic feature is its unique coat, made up of three types of hair. The coat forms flocks (strands of hair weaved together creating flat layers of felted hair) or loose mats, which cover the dog's body and legs, and protect the dog from weather and predators. The hair on the head is typically long and hangs over the eyes.

**Size, Proportion, Substance:** Dogs stand 23½ inches and bitches 22 inches, measured at the withers. One inch taller or shorter than the ideal is acceptable. Males weigh between 70 and 84 pounds. Females weigh between 57 and 71 pounds. The Bergamasco Sheepdog is a muscular, heavy-boned herding dog with plenty of substance. The Bergamasco Sheepdog is very slightly longer than tall, with the length of body measured from point of shoulder to point of buttocks about 5 to 6 percent longer than the height measured at the withers. Disqualification - Height under 22½ inches and over 24½ inches in a male; under 21 inches and over 23 inches in a female.

**Head:** The *head* is long, more or less, proportionate to the size of the dog, with the skull and muzzle of equal length, parallel to one another, and joined at a pronounced stop. The skin on the head is tight with no wrinkles. **Eyes** - The eyes are large, oval, and set just slightly obliquely. Eye color is brown, with the darkness of the color varying with the color of the coat. The eye rims are tight-fitting and black. The expression is attentive and calm. Disqualifications - Any lack of pigmentation of the eye rims; one (or two) full blue eye. **Ears** - The ears are soft and thin and hang down on either side of the face. The ears are set on high. At its widest point, the ear is from 2½ to 3 inches wide. Ear length does not exceed half the length of the head, and shorter is preferred. The top two-thirds of the ear is triangular in shape, with slightly rounded tips. When the dog is alert, the ears prick up at the base, with the top two-thirds semi-drooping. Viewed from the side, the ears appear to be an extension of the curve of the back of the neck. The ears are covered with soft, slightly wavy hair, forming fringes at the tip. **Skull** - The skull is slightly domed between the ears and rounded at the forehead. The skull is about as wide as it is long, and features a prominent occiput and a marked median furrow. **Muzzle** - The depth and width of the muzzle, measured at midpoint, are each about half the length of the muzzle. The muzzle is blunt, tapering only slightly toward the nose. The muzzle is parallel to the skull. **Nose** - The nose is large and black, with big, well-opened nostrils. In profile, the nose is on the same line as the top of the muzzle and does not extend beyond the forepart of the muzzle. Disqualification - Dudley nose. **Lips** - The lips are tight and of black pigment. The inner corner of the mouth reaches back to a vertical line drawn down from the outside corner of the eye. **Bite and Teeth** - The jaw is wide with a full complement of strong, evenly spaced, white teeth meeting in a scissors bite. The line of the incisors is straight and perpendicular to the outside lines of the jaw. Disqualifications - Overshot, with a space greater than ¼ inch between the outer surface of the lower incisors and the inner surface of the upper incisors, or undershot.

**Neck, Topline, Body:** **Neck** - The neck is strong, slightly arched, and, measured from the nape to the forward edge of the withers, should be about 20 percent shorter than the length of the head. There is no dewlap. The hair on the neck forms a thick collar. **Body and Topline** - The line of the



back inclines very slightly downward from prominent withers to a strong, broad back. The loin is well-muscled and broad. The croup is slightly sloping, about 35 degrees downward from the horizontal. Chest and Ribs - The ribs are well-sprung and let down to the elbows. The depth of the rib cage is equal to half the dog's height at the withers. Tuck-up - Tuck-up is nearly absent. **Tail** - The tail is natural and is uncut, thick at the base, and tapering to the tip. When the dog is in repose, the tail just reaches to the hock, with the bottom third of the tail forming a hook. When the dog is in action, the tail is raised in a curve with the crook raised above the level of the back.

**Forequarters:** Shoulders - The shoulders are massive and strong. The shoulder blade is moderately laid back, about 60 degrees from the horizontal. The shoulder blades should be tightly knit. Upper Arm - The upper arm is just slightly longer than the shoulder blade. The angle formed by humerus and shoulder blade is about 115 degrees. Forelegs - The vertical forearm is about the same length as the upper arm and is placed so that the point of the elbow is on a vertical line failing from the tops of the shoulder blade. The elbows are neither close to the body nor out. The wrist follows the vertical line of the forearm and is very mobile. The pasterns are straight when viewed from the front, and slightly sloping when viewed from the side (10 percent from vertical). Feet - The front feet are oval, with toes well knit and arched. The feet are well feathered with hair, including between the toes. Dewclaws may be removed. Pads - The pads of the feet are thick and dark with a tight skin. Nails - The toenails are strong and black.

**Hindquarters:** Pelvis slopes at 35 degrees from horizontal. Upper Thigh - The upper thigh is long, wide, and well muscled. The upper thigh slopes downward and forward at a 95 degree angle from the pelvis. Lower Thigh - The lower thigh is as long as the upper, with strong bone and lean muscles. It slopes downward and backward, forming an angle of about 105 to 110 degrees at the stifle (femur-tibia). There is a well-defined furrow between the tendon and the bone above the hock. Hocks - The distance from the point of hock to the ground is no less than 25 percent of the height at the withers. Viewed from behind, the rear pasterns should be vertical and parallel to one another. Viewed from the side, the rear pasterns are vertical and placed so that the hocks just slightly extend past a vertical line dropped from the point of buttock. The angle of the hock joint (tibio-tarsal) is about 130 to 135 degrees. Feet - Rear feet are the same as forefeet except slightly smaller. Rear dewclaws are removed.

**Coat:** The Bergamasco Sheepdog coat is made up of three types of hair: Undercoat, "goat hair," and outer coat. The undercoat is short, dense, and of fine texture. It is oily to the touch and forms a waterproof layer against the skin. The "goat hair" is long, straight, and rough in texture. The outer coat is woolly and somewhat finer in texture than the "goat hair." The "goat hair" and outer coat are not distributed evenly over the dog and it is this pattern of distribution that is responsible for the formation of the characteristic flocks (strands of hair weaved together creating flat layers of felted hair). Each flock of hair ranges in width anywhere from inch and half to three inches wide. The coat from the withers down to the midpoint of the body is mostly "goat hair" which forms a smooth saddle in that region. On the back of the body and the legs, the woolly outer coat is abundant and mingles with the reduced quantity of "goat hair" in that region to form the flocks. The flocks are larger at the base than the end, flat, irregular in shape, and may sometimes open in a fan-shape. The hair on the legs also hangs in flocks rather than feathering. The flocks are never combed out. The hair on the head is mostly "goat hair" but is somewhat less rough in texture and hangs over the eyes.



**Color:** Solid gray or gradations of gray (including merle) up to and including solid black, provided it is not shiny or lustrous. Color also includes shadings only of isabella and fawn at the lower part of floes (as a result of discoloration of old hair, not as a base color), Solid white is not allowed but white markings are acceptable if they cover no more than one-fifth of the body. Disqualification - White on more than one-fifth of the total area of the body.

**Gait:** Because a herding dog is required to be in constant motion while the flock is being driven, correct, efficient movement is essential. The natural and preferred gait for the Bergamasco Sheepdog to achieve a calm and balance movement while preserving energy is a free, extended, elastic (slow) trot, with both front and rear feet remaining close to the ground. Pasterns are supple and flex freely. When moving, the dog's head moves forward so that the head is nearly even with the backline.

**Temperament:** The Bergamasco Sheepdog is a vigilant guard, with a strong protective instinct. It is naturally stubborn and will persevere with a task until done. The Bergamasco Sheepdog is a very intelligent animal, courageous but not aggressive without cause. The Bergamasco Sheepdog's patient, quiet, and eager-to-please nature makes him an excellent companion, but he requires a lot of space.

**Disqualifications:** *Height under 22½ inches and over 24½ inches in a male; under 21 inches and over 23 inches in a female. Any lack of pigmentation of the eye rims. One (or two) full blue eye. Dudley nose. Overshot, with a space greater than 1/8 inch between the outer surface of the lower incisors and the inner surface of the upper incisors, or undershot. White on more than one-fifth of the total area of the body.*

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