



## Official Standard of the Belgian Sheepdog

**General Appearance:** The first impression of the Belgian Sheepdog is that of a well balanced, square dog, elegant in appearance, with an exceedingly proud carriage of the head and neck. He is a strong, agile, well muscled animal, alert and full of life. His whole conformation gives the impression of depth and solidity without bulkiness. The male dog is usually somewhat more impressive and grand than his female counterpart. The bitch should have a distinctly feminine look. 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. The extent to which it deviates from the standard. 2. The extent to which such deviation would actually affect the working ability of the dog.

**Size, Proportion, Substance:** Males should be 24 to 26 inches in height and females 22 to 24 inches, measured at the withers. Males under 22½ or over 27½ inches in height and females under 20½ or over 25½ inches in height shall be disqualified. The length, measured from point of breastbone to point of rump, should equal the height. Bitches may be slightly longer. Bone structure should be moderately heavy in proportion to his height so that he is well balanced throughout and neither spindly or leggy nor cumbersome and bulky. The Belgian Sheepdog should stand squarely on all fours. Side view - The topline, front legs, and back legs should closely approximate a square.

**Head:** Clean-cut and strong, overall size should be in proportion to the body. *Expression* indicates alertness, attention, readiness for activity. Gaze should be intelligent and questioning. *Eyes* brown, preferably dark brown. Medium size, slightly almond shaped, not protruding. *Ears* triangular in shape, stiff, erect, and in proportion to the head in size. Base of the ear should not come below the center of the eye. Ears hanging (as on a hound) shall disqualify. *Skull* - Top flattened rather than rounded. The width approximately the same, but not wider than the length. Stop moderate. *Muzzle* moderately pointed, avoiding any tendency to snipiness, and approximately equal in length to that of the top skull. The jaws should be strong and powerful. Nose black without spots or discolored areas. The lips should be tight and black, with no pink showing on the outside. Teeth - A full complement of strong, white teeth, evenly set. Should not be overshot or undershot. Should have either an even *bite* or a scissors bite.

**Neck, Topline, Body:** *Neck* round and rather outstretched, tapered from head to body, well muscled, with tight skin. *Topline* - The withers are slightly higher and slope into the back, which must be level, straight, and firm from withers to hip joints. Chest not broad, but deep. The lowest point should reach the elbow, forming a smooth ascendant curve to the abdomen. Abdomen - Moderate development. Neither tucked up nor paunchy. The loin section, viewed from above, is relatively short, broad and strong, but blending smoothly into the back. The croup is medium long, sloping gradually. *Tail* strong at the base, bone to reach hock. At rest the dog holds it low, the tip bent back level with the hock. When in action he raises it and gives it a curl, which is strongest toward the tip, without forming a hook. Cropped or stump tail shall disqualify.

**Forequarters:** Shoulder long and oblique, laid flat against the body, forming a sharp angle (approximately 90 degrees) with the upper arm. Legs straight, strong and parallel to each other. Bone oval rather than round. Development (length and substance) should be well proportioned to the size of the dog. Pastern medium length, strong, and very slightly sloped. Feet round (cat footed), toes curved close together, well padded. Nails strong and black, except that they may be white to match white toe tips.



**Hindquarters:** Legs - Length and substance well proportioned to the size of the dog. Bone oval rather than round. Legs are parallel to each other. Thighs broad and heavily muscled. The upper and lower thigh bones approximately parallel the shoulder blade and upper arm respectively, forming a relatively sharp angle at stifle joint. The angle at the hock is relatively sharp, although the Belgian Sheepdog does not have extreme angulation. Metatarsus medium length, strong and slightly sloped. Dewclaws, if any, should be removed. Feet slightly elongated. Toes curved close together, well padded. Nails strong and black, except that they may be white to match white toe tips.

**Coat:** The guard hairs of the coat must be long, well fitting, straight and abundant. They should not be silky or wiry. The texture should be a medium harshness. The undercoat should be extremely dense, commensurate, however, with climatic conditions. The Belgian Sheepdog is particularly adaptable to extremes of temperature or climate. The hair is shorter on the head, outside of the ears, and lower part of the legs. The opening of the ear is protected by tufts of hair.

**Ornamentation** - Especially long and abundant hair, like a collarette, around the neck; fringe of long hair down the back of the forearm; especially long and abundant hair trimming the hindquarters, the breeches; long, heavy and abundant hair on the tail.

**Color:** Black. May be completely black, or may be black with white, limited as follows: Small to moderate patch or strip on forechest. Between pads of feet. On tips of hind toes. On chin and muzzle (frost may be white or gray). On tips of front toes - allowable, but a fault.

Disqualification - Any color other than black, except for white in specified areas. Reddening due to climatic conditions in an otherwise correct coat should not be grounds for disqualification.

**Gait:** Motion should be smooth, free and easy, seemingly never tiring, exhibiting facility of movement rather than a hard driving action. He tends to single track on a fast gait; the legs, both front and rear, converging toward the center line of gravity of the dog. The backline should remain firm and level, parallel to the line of motion, with no crabbing. He shows a marked tendency to move in a circle rather than a straight line.

**Temperament:** The Belgian Sheepdog should reflect the qualities of intelligence, courage, alertness and devotion to master. To his inherent aptitude as a guardian of flocks should be added protectiveness of the person and property of his master. He should be watchful, attentive, and always in motion when not under command. In his relationship with humans, he should be observant and vigilant with strangers, but not apprehensive. He should not show fear or shyness. He should not show viciousness by unwarranted or unprovoked attack. With those he knows well, he is most affectionate and friendly, zealous of their attention, and very possessive. Viciousness is a disqualification.

**Disqualifications:** *Males under 22½ or over 27½ inches in height and females under 20½ or over 25½ inches in height. Ears hanging (as on a hound). Cropped or stump tail. Any color other than black.*

*Viciousness.*

**Approved December 11, 1990**  
**Effective January 30, 1991**