

ABRUZZES AND MAREMMA SHEPHERD DOG

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 01/03/2026

ORIGIN

Italy.

UTILISATION

Shepherd dog used mainly for the protection of flocks and guarding of properties.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

This ancient breed of dogs that guards flocks comes from shepherd dogs actually still used in the Abruzzes, where the breeding of sheep is still thriving even in these days, and sheepdogs that existed yesteryear in the region of the Tuscan Maremma and in that of Latium. Especially since 1860, the seasonal moving of livestock from one region to another has favoured the development of a natural crossing of those two primitive breeds.

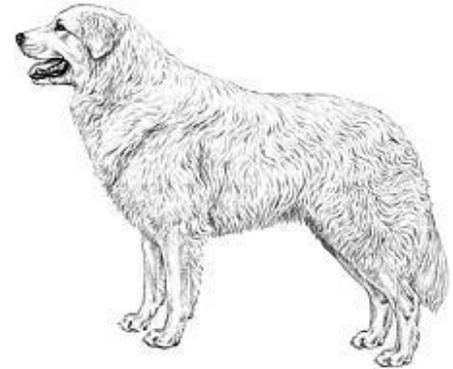


Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Abruzzes and Maremma Shepherd Dog is a big dog, strongly built of a rustic appearance, at the same time majestic is really typical. On the whole, his shape, of average proportions, is that of a heavy dog, whose body is longer than the height at the withers. It is balanced as much in size (heterometry = normal proportions between the size and different parts of the body) as to the profiles (alloidism = concordance between the profiles of the head and the body).

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS

- The length of the head reaches 4:10 of the height at the withers; muzzle slightly shorter than the length of the skull.
- The body length is more, by 1:18, than the height at the withers.
- Depth of thorax is slightly less than half the height at the withers.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

The principal function as a guard and defence dog of flocks and property in general, asserts the manner in which he accomplishes these tasks, with perception and also with devotion to his master and all his entourage.

HEAD

On the whole, the head is large and flat, of conical shape; reminiscent of a polar bear.

Cranial Region:

Skull: Of great width with lateral sides slightly bulging. In profile also convex. The upper longitudinal axes of the skull and muzzle are slightly divergent, which makes the profile of the head slightly convex. The superciliary arches are moderately marked. The medio-frontal furrow line is slightly marked. The occipital crest is only just visible.

Stop: The fronto-nasal depression [*ed. frontal furrow*] only just accentuated and the fronto-nasal angle [*ed. stop*] is always very open.

Facial Region:

Nose: Rather big, in line with the muzzle, with large well-opened nostrils, moist and cool, coloured black. In profile, must not protrude beyond the front margin of the lips.

Muzzle: The length is a little less than that of the skull; depth is half of the length; lateral sides are slightly converging, decreasing towards the front, but still keeping a blunt surface as seen from the front. The region under the eyes is slightly chiselled.

Lips: Seen from the front, the upper lips, at their junction point, determined by their lower edge, is a semi-circle of very short radius. Slightly developed, they barely cover the teeth of the jaw, and, therefore, the corner of the lip is only slightly accentuated. Consequently, the lower lateral profile is only defined by the lips in its fore part, in its rear part it is defined by the lower jaw and the corner of the lip. The rims of the lips are black.

Jaws and teeth: Strong jaws, normally developed, with incisors set straight, well-aligned, of good size and complete in number. Teeth white and strong, scissor bite. **Cheeks:** Moderately visible.

Eyes:

Not large in relation to the size of the dog; the iris is of an ochre colour or chestnut brown. The eye, in lateral position, is neither deep-set nor protruding. Lively and attentive expression. Eyelid opening is almond-shaped, with black eye-rims.

Ears:

Set very high over the zygomatic arches, they are natural, hanging, but very mobile. Triangular shape (V), their extremities form a narrow point, never rounded; they are small in relation to the size of the dog. For a medium-sized dog their length must not go beyond 12cm. The ear attachment is of medium width.

NECK

Upper profile moderately arched. The neck is always shorter than the head. Neck is thick and very strongly muscled and always without dewlap; covered with long and dense hair forming a collar, particularly obvious in males.

BODY

Solidly constructed.

Topline: Straight from withers to rump, where it becomes somewhat sloping.

Withers: Slightly above the topline; wide because of the distance separating the shoulder blades.

Back: Straight in profile, length reaches to about 32% of the height at the withers.

Loin: Merging perfectly with the topline and with a slightly curved profile; well-developed muscles and width.

Croup: Broad, strong, and well-muscled. The inclination from the hip to the tail set is of 20°, increasing to 30° and more, hence the rump is sloping.

Chest: Ample, descending to level of elbows, deep, and well-rounded at mid-height. Decreases progressively downwards while retaining a good width in the sternal region. Its depth must reach half the height at the withers. The ribs are well-sprung and oblique with ample lung space and good width; the last false ribs are long, oblique, and well-opened.

Underline and belly: The sternum is long and the sternal line rises slightly towards the belly.

TAIL

Low-set due to the sloping rump; in a normal stand, reaching below the level of the hock. Hanging when dog is stationary; carried level with backline with a rather strongly hooked extremity when the dog is in action. Well-furnished with dense hairs without fringes.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: Straight limbs seen from the front and in profile; forequarters well-balanced in relation to the body, and the various parts of the forequarters are well-proportioned between them.

Shoulder: Long, oblique, with powerful muscles. Must be really free in movement. In length measures about one-quarter of the height at the withers. Its obliqueness below the horizontal is 50°–60°.

Upper arm: Set close to the body in its upper two-thirds, with powerful muscles. The obliqueness below the horizontal varies between 55° and 60°; its length measures about the 30% of the height at the withers. Its position is more or less parallel with the median plane of the body. The scapulo-humeral angle varies between 105° and 120°.

Elbow: Normally close to the chest, covered with soft, loose skin. Parallel to the median plane of the body. Point of elbow must be on an imaginary vertical line from the rear angle of the shoulder blade. The humero-radial angle [ed.elbow joint] varies between 145° and 150°.

Forearm: Straight and vertical; heavily boned. The length slightly supersedes the length of the upper arm.

Carpus (wrist): In extension of the vertical line of the forearm. Strong, clean, smooth and of good thickness; the pisiform bone is clearly protruding.

Metacarpus (pastern): The length neither too short nor too high. Lean with a minimum of subcutaneous tissue. Seen in profile is slightly oblique towards the front.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: Seen as a whole: limbs are straight when seen from behind and in profile. In proportion to the body and with the various parts harmoniously connected.

Upper thigh: Long, slightly oblique; broad, with protruding muscles, and the rear edge slightly convex. The coxo-femoral (hip bone) angle is about 100°.

Stifle (knee): Firm, well-placed in the vertical axis. The femoro-tibial angle [*ed. angle of stifle*] not excessively angulated.

Lower thigh: The length is a little less than the thigh. Obliqueness below the horizontal is about 60°. Strong bone, muscles lean, and the groove in the leg well-marked.

Hock joint: Quite thick and broad. The angle varies between 140° and 150°.

Metatarsus (rear pastern): Strong, lean, and broad, neither too long nor too short. The presence of dewclaws is tolerated.

FEET

Forefeet: Large, of roundish shape, well-closed toes, covered with short, thick hair, nails preferably black, but brownish tolerated.

Hind feet: Large, not as roundish in shape as forefeet, well-closed toes, covered with short, thick hair, nails preferably black, but brown is tolerated.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Walk and extended trot.

SKIN

Tight in all parts of the body; rather thick. Black pigmentation of the third eyelids as well as the pads.

COAT

Very well furnished. Hair long, rather harsh to the touch, close to straight horse-hair. Flat-lying on the body; a slight wave is tolerated. The hair forms an important collar around the neck, and fringes of limited length on the edge of the hindquarters, but the hair is short on the muzzle, on the skull, the ears, and front of the limbs. On the body, the length of the hair reaches 8cm. The undercoat is only abundant in the winter.

COLOUR

- Solid white.

* Shades of ivory, pale orange, or lemon is tolerated but only in certain limits.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Males: 67cm – 73.5cm (approx. 26½" – 29").

Females: 62cm – 70cm (approx. 24½" – 27½").

Weight:

Males: 40kg – 52kg.

Females: 35kg – 45kg.

N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog, and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

- Repeated pacing.

Severe faults:

- Convergent cranio-facial axes [*ed. head planes*].
- Tail rolled over the back.
- Constant pacing.
- Size over or under the standard limits.

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.
- Nose completely non-pigmented.
- Muzzle definitely convex or concave.

- Eyelids moderate or bilateral non-pigmented. Wall eye. Cross-eyed.
- Undershot mouth.
- Tailless or short tail, whether congenital or docked.
- Curly coat.
- Colour that is a solid isabella or ivory or have well-defined patches of isabella or ivory colour. Black shadings.

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**FCI Standard No 201: CANE DA PASTORE MAREMMANO ABRUZZESE
(MAREMMA AND THE ABRUZZES SHEEPDOG)**

FCI Classification: Group 1 – Sheepdogs & Cattle dogs (except Swiss Cattle dogs)
Section 1. Sheepdogs
Without Working Trial