

BERGAMASCO SHEPHERD DOG

A Breed Standard is the guideline that describes the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed, and ensures that the breed is fit for function, with soundness essential. Breeders and Judges should, at all times, be mindful of features that could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare, or soundness of this breed.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 01/02/2021

ORIGIN

Italy.

UTILISATION

Shepherd dog used to drive and guard herds.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Bergamasco is an ancient breed of a herding dog, widespread across the Italian Alpine and pre-Alpine regions; a particularly large number of the breed could be found in the valleys of the Bergamo region where sheep breeding was carried out on a large scale. The dog was essential in aiding shepherds driving herds during the seasonal movement between the pastures of the Alpine regions and plains of the Po Valley. A painting by a famous artist depicting the breed in the 16th century provides evidence of the ancient origins. The first dogs were registered with the Italian Stud Book in 1891.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Bergamasco Shepherd Dog is a medium-sized dog of rustic appearance, with an abundant coat covering all parts of the body; powerfully constructed but very well proportioned. Conformation is that of a dog of medium proportions (mesomorphic); the body is square in outline, with well-balanced proportions in relation to size and the profiles of the head and body.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS

- The length of the body from the point of the scapulo-humeral joint [*ed. point of shoulder*] to point of buttocks is equal to the height at the withers (i.e. square).
- The length of the head is four-tenths of the height at the withers.
- The depth of chest must be 50% of the height at the withers.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

The function of the Bergamasco Shepherd Dog is to drive and guard herds and livestock in general, a task for which the breed expresses consummate behaviour thanks to its vigilance, concentration, and harmonious build. The capacity for learning and determination, combined with moderation and patience, make the dog an excellent guard and companion, suited to various functions. Known to establish a close relationship with man. The breed must never be aggressive or fearful, although a slight natural diffidence is mentioned as a somewhat typical characteristic of some sheepdogs.

HEAD

Head shape, with parallel planes, is proportionate in relation to the body. The head is covered with abundant hair, making it appear large. The length of the muzzle equals that of the skull. The skin must not be thick but tight without wrinkles.

Cranial Region:

Skull: Medium-sized with top of skull tending towards flat; the upper longitudinal planes of the skull and the muzzle are parallel. The width must be less than half the total length of the head. The frontal region is well-developed lengthwise and widthwise. The superciliary arches are well-defined. The median frontal furrow (metopic suture) is marked; the occipital crest is well-defined and pronounced.

Stop: The stop is evenly sloping, but accentuated due to the marked bones of the nose and forehead, the frontal protuberances and the superciliary arches.

Facial Region:

Nose: In line with the muzzle with curved upper profile, wide-open nostrils, moist, fresh, and large. Viewed in profile it must not appear protruding. The colour of the nose leather is black.

Muzzle: Tapers progressively towards the nose with lateral surfaces converging slightly so that the muzzle itself is not pointed but truncated, hence the front face of the muzzle is rather flat. Its length is the same as that of the skull. Measured at the middle, the width is approximately half of the muzzle's length. The depth of the muzzle must not be less than half of the muzzle's length. The upper profile of the muzzle is straight, and the lower jaw (not the lip) defines the lower part of the muzzle. Due to this conformation, the lip commissure is not pendulous. The commissure of the lip joins up with an imaginary vertical line drawn down from the outer corner of the eye. The lower profile of the jaw is almost straight.

Lips: Thin and divided under the nose forming a long arc one-third of a circle; they are slightly developed, hence only just covering the teeth. The lip-rims are well-pigmented.

Jaws and teeth: Upper and lower jaws well-developed; the lower jaw broad. Teeth are white, complete in number and well-developed; incisors in regular alignment. Scissor bite.

Cheeks: Not very prominent.

Eyes:

Rather large; neither bulging nor sunken, iris of a darker or lighter shade of chestnut colour depending on the colour of the coat. They are set forward looking; expression is soft, serene and attentive. The shape of the rim of the eyelid is slightly oval, and the angle of the eyelid towards the horizontal is only slightly oblique. The eyelids fit tightly over the eye, with black-pigmented rims; eyelashes are particularly long so that they can lift the hair falling from the forehead over the eyes.

Ears:

Semi-drop ears set high, i.e. the last two-thirds of the ear leather is pendant. When the dog is alert, the ear lifts slightly at the base. Triangular shape. Length is between 11cm and 13cm, width 6.5cm to 8cm. The base is wide, extending at the back to the point where the head sets into the neck, while frontally reaching to the middle of the skull. The tip is slightly rounded.

NECK

Upper profile is slightly convex. The neck is slightly shorter than the head. The skin is never loose, consequently always without dewlap. Hair must be thick.

BODY

Topline: Straight topline.

Withers: Prominent and long, well-defined.

Back: Straight, well-muscled and of good width.

Loin: Slightly convex, firmly joining the back and the croup. Loin decidedly shorter than the back (measured from the loin to the withers). The width of the loin is nearly the same as its length; muscles of the whole region are well-developed.

Croup: Broad, strong, well-muscled and slanting, with an inclination of approximately 30° below the horizontal.

Chest: Must be broad and deep, reaching to the elbows.

Underline and belly: The lower profile of the belly is only slightly tucked up. The hollowness in the flanks is minimal.

TAIL

Set on the lower-third of the croup, thick and strong at the root, it gradually tapers towards the tip. Covered with slightly wavy goat-like hair. Length of tail often reaches the hock when the dog is standing; preferably it should be shorter. At rest the tail is carried sabre-fashion i.e. pendant in the top two-thirds, with the end third slightly curved. In action the dog waves his tail flag-like laterally.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: Legs are straight when viewed from the front and side and well-proportioned in relation to the size of the dog.

Shoulder: Strong and massive. Long and set obliquely. Muscles must always be well-developed.

Upper arm: Well-muscled, strong in bone, and well-angulated. The angle formed by the scapula and upper arm (scapulo-humeral) ranges between 105° and 125°.

Elbow: Set on a plane parallel to the median plane of the body. The point of the elbow is located on an imaginary vertical line lowered from the back end of the scapula. The humero-radial angle (between upper arm and forearm) ranges from 150° to 155°. The hair hanging down from the elbows should be abundant, long, and thick, tending to flocks.

Forearm: Straight; at least as long as the upper arm. Well-developed muscles and bone.

Carpus (wrist): In a straight line extending from the forearm; mobile and lean with the pisiform bone clearly protruding.

Metacarpus (pastern): Lean and mobile. Seen from the front, must be placed on the same vertical plane as the forearm. Viewed in profile has a slight inclination from the back to the front.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: Hindquarters in proportion to the size of the dog. Straight limbs seen from behind.

Upper thigh: Long, broad, well-muscled, with a slightly convex rear profile. The coxo-femoral angle (between pelvis and upper thigh) ranges between 100° and 105°.

Stifle (knee): Perfectly in line with the limb, neither turned in nor out.

Lower thigh: Strong bone, lean muscles with marked leg groove. Inclination below the horizontal is about 55°.

Hock joint: The external surface is very broad. Joint well-angulated.

Metatarsus (rear pastern): Broad, perpendicular to the ground.

FEET

Oval-shaped, arched, with tight toes. Strong nails, curved, and well-pigmented and of dark colour, hard pads.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Free with long steps. The preferred gait is a rather extended trot, maintained for quite long periods. Due to his conformation, the dog can easily go into an ordinary gallop, which can be maintained for a relatively long period of time.

SKIN

Tight and fine all over the body, especially on the ears and forequarters. Neck without dewlap and head without wrinkles. Colour of the lip and eye-rims must be black.

COAT

Hair very abundant and very long; varies depending on the region of the body. Rather harsh (similar to goat hair), with wavy flocks on the front part of the body, while from the middle of the chest region to the rear it is woolly and forms broad strands of varied length depending on the age of the dog. The woolly coat does not moult; it traps the undercoat, which is quite long and soft, forming mats of felted hair, which are very protective. The flocks start from the topline falling down the sides of the body. The hair on the head is less harsh and falls over the face. The hair on the ears is slightly wavy and soft, forming pointed fringes at the tip. The hair on the limbs must be evenly distributed all over with soft flocks on the forelegs and matted flocks on the hind legs. The coat is soft in puppies and the flocks begin to form at 12–15 months. Their length depends on the age, hence young dogs must not be penalised for a coat that has not yet lengthened. In old dogs, too thick and long a coat that hampers normal movement and compromises the dog's welfare should be avoided. The coat should be cared for and kept clean; avoiding, in particular, matted flocks on the beard, muzzle, and ear flaps.

COLOUR

- Solid grey or with grey patches of all possible shades from the softest of grey to a lighter shade of grey on to black.

* Tinges of isabella and light fawn permitted.

* An all-black coat is allowed providing the black is really opaque.

SIZE

Height at the withers:

Males: 60cm (approx. 22½").

Females: 56cm (approx. 22").

Weight: **Males:** 32kg – 38kg.

Females: 26kg – 32kg.

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.

- Lack of sexual dimorphism.

Severe faults:

- Facio-cranial head planes convergent or divergent.
- Nose partially depigmented.
- Eyes with heterochromia of the iris [*ed. different-coloured*], bilateral or monolateral (part of the iris blue), bulging or sunken, oval and slanting eyes.
- More than one missing tooth. (Except for PM1 and M3).
- Tail set too high or low, carried too high over the back, or hanging loosely.
- Coat with no differentiation between woolly and goat-like hair, soft all over, short on the forelegs and on the muzzle, sparse hair on the tail, too thick and long so as to compromise the function of the dog.
- Colour other than permitted in the standard.
- Gait that is ambling or pacing continually.
- Size that is over or under the margins indicated by the standard.

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.
- Lack of type.
- Disproportionate head - small or too large.
- Total de-pigmentation of the nose, lips, or eye-rims.
- Muzzle (foreface) definitely convex (roman nose) or concave.
- Wall-eyed (mono or bilateral total de-pigmented iris). Small eye (microphthalmia), strabismus (cross-eyed).
- Prognathism (undershot bite).
- Enognathism (overshot bite).
- Tailless (anury) or stump tail (brachyury); tail carried rolled over the back.
- White coat colour on more than one-fifth of the total body.

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FCI Standard No 194: CANE DA PASTORE BERGAMASCO (BERGAMASCO SHEPHERD DOG)

FCI Classification: Group 1 – Sheepdogs & Cattle dogs (except Swiss Cattle dogs)

Section 1. Sheepdogs

With Working Trial