

OLD ENGLISH SHEEPDOG

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 has an effective date of 01/01/2026

ORIGIN

Great Britain.

UTILISATION

Sheepdog.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. from FCI Breed Standard No. 57]:

Though the Old English Sheepdog's registry is listed as Britain, its actual ancestry is thought to be from the European Shepherd Dogs of the Owtcharka and Bergamasco types bred to sheepdogs of Britain. It is now regarded as a native British breed, often called the Bobtail. Strong, compact, profusely coated; his coat is a distinctive feature and is weather-resistant. Basically a country dog, intelligent and friendly; he has a particularly resonant bark sufficient to frighten off any intruder.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Strong, square-looking dog with great symmetry and overall soundness. Absolutely free from legginess, profusely coated all over. A thick-set muscular, able-bodied dog with a most intelligent expression. The natural outline should not be artificially changed by scissoring or clipping.

CHARACTERISTICS

Of great stamina, exhibiting a gently rising topline, and a pear-shaped body when viewed from above. The gait has a typical roll when ambling or walking. Bark has a distinctive toned quality.

TEMPERAMENT

A biddable dog of even disposition. Bold, faithful and trustworthy, with no suggestion of nervousness or unprovoked aggression.

HEAD & SKULL

In proportion to the size of the body. Skull capacious, rather square. Well-arched above eyes, stop well-defined. Muzzle strong, square, and truncated, measuring approximately half of the total head length. Nose large and black. Nostrils wide.

Eyes:

Set well apart. Dark or wall eyes. Two blue eyes acceptable. Light eyes undesirable. Pigmentation on the eye-rim is preferred.

Ears:

Small and carried flat to side of head.

Mouth:

Teeth strong, large, and evenly placed. Scissor bite – jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Pincer tolerated.

NECK

Fairly long, strong, arched gracefully.

FOREQUARTERS

Forelegs perfectly straight, with plenty of bone, holding body well from ground. Elbows fitting close to brisket. Shoulders should be well laid back, being narrower at the point of withers than at the point of shoulder. Loaded shoulders undesirable. Dog standing lower at withers than loin.

BODY

Rather short, and compact, with well-sprung ribs, and deep, capacious brisket.

HINDQUARTERS

Loin very sturdy, broad, and gently arched, quarters well-covered, round, and muscular, the second thigh is long and well-developed, the stifle well-turned but not exaggerated, and the hocks set low. When viewed from behind, the rear pasterns should be parallel, with the feet turning neither in nor out.

FEET

Small, round and tight, toes well-arched, pads thick and hard.

TAIL

Previously customarily docked or natural bobtail.

Docked: Customarily completely docked.

Undocked: Natural carriage. Well-feathered with abundant, hard-textured coat.

[*refer note below]

GAIT / MOVEMENT

When walking, exhibits a bear-like roll from the rear. When trotting, shows effortless extension and strong driving rear action, with legs moving straight along line of travel. Very elastic at the gallop. At slow speeds, some dogs may tend to pace. When moving, the head carriage may adopt a naturally lower position.

COAT

Of good harsh texture, not straight, but shaggy and free from curl. Undercoat of waterproof pile. Head and skull well-covered with hair, ears moderately coated, neck well-coated, forelegs well-coated all round, hindquarters more heavily coated than rest of body. Quality, texture, and profusion to be considered above length and profusion.

COLOUR

- Any shade of grey, grizzle, or blue.
- * Body and hindquarters of solid colour with or without white socks.
- * White patches in the solid area highly undesirable.
- * Head, neck, forequarters and under belly to be white with or without markings.
- * Any shade of brown undesirable.
- * Any other colour or combination of colours unacceptable.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Males: 61cm (approx. 24") and upwards;

Females: 56cm (approx. 22") and upwards.

Type and symmetry of greatest importance, and on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.

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.

***Regardless of the provisions of the current KUSA-adopted standard, docked or formerly docked breeds may be shown at all FCI- and KUSA-licensed shows in South Africa, whether their tails are docked or natural. Under no circumstances are Judges permitted to discriminate against exhibits on the grounds of docked or natural tails, and equal consideration for awards must be given to either.**

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.



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When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:

FCI Standard No 16: OLD ENGLISH SHEEPDOG

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

Section 1. Sheepdogs

Without Working Trial.