

SPANIEL (ENGLISH SPRINGER)

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

Flushing dog, Retriever.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. For interest, from Wikipedia: The English Springer Spaniel]:

The English physician, John Caius, described the Spaniel in his book the *Treatise of Englishe Dogs* (1576). His book was the first work to describe the various British breeds by function. By 1801, Sydenham Edwards explained, in the *Cynographia Britannica*, that the land Spaniel should be split into two kinds: springing: the Hawking Spaniel, and cocking: the Cocker Spaniel. At this point, both Cocker Spaniels and Springer Spaniels were born in the same litters. The smaller Cockers were used to hunt woodcock, while their larger littermates, the Springer Spaniels, would "spring" - or flush - the gamebird into the air, where a trained falcon or hawk would bring it to the handler. In 1902, a combination of the physical standard from the Spaniel Club of England and the ability standard from the Sporting Spaniel Society led to the English Springer Spaniel breed being officially recognised by the English Kennel Club, and by the American Kennel Club in 1910.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Symmetrically built, compact, strong, merry, active. Highest on leg and raciest in build of all British land Spaniels.

CHARACTERISTICS

Breed is of ancient and pure origins, oldest of sporting Gundogs; original purpose was finding and springing game for net, falcon, or Greyhound. Now used to find, flush, and retrieve game for gun.

TEMPERAMENT

Friendly, happy disposition, biddable. Timidity or aggression unacceptable.

HEAD & SKULL

Skull of medium length, fairly broad, slightly rounded, rising from foreface, making a brow or stop, divided by fluting between eyes, dying away along forehead towards occipital bone, which should not be prominent. Cheeks flat. Foreface of proportionate length to skull, fairly broad and deep, well-chiselled below eyes, fairly deep and square in flow. Nostrils well-developed.

Eyes:

Medium size, almond-shaped, not prominent nor sunken, well set in (not showing haw), alert, kind expression. Dark hazel. Light eyes undesirable.

Ears:

Lobular, good length and width, fairly close to head, set in line with eye. Nicely feathered.

Mouth:

Jaws strong, with a perfect, regular, and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

NECK

Good length, strong, and muscular, free from throatiness, slightly arched, tapering towards head.

FOREQUARTERS

Forelegs straight and well-boned. Shoulders sloping and well laid back. Elbows set well to body. Strong flexible pasterns.

BODY

Strong, neither too long nor too short. Chest deep, well-developed. Well-sprung ribs. Loin muscular, strong, with slight arch, and well-coupled.

HINDQUARTERS

Hind legs well let down. Stifles and hocks moderately bent. Thighs broad, muscular, well-developed. Coarse hocks undesirable.

FEET

Tight, compact, well-rounded, with strong, full pads.

TAIL

Previously customarily docked.

Docked: Set low, never carried above level of back. Well-feathered with lively action.

Undocked: Set low, never carried above level of back. Well-feathered with lively action. In balance with the rest of the dog.

[*refer note below]

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Strictly his own. Forelegs swing straight forward from shoulder, throwing feet well forward in an easy, free manner. Hocks driving well under body, following in line with forelegs. At slow movement may have a pacing stride typical of this breed.

COAT

Close, straight, and weather resisting, never coarse. Moderate feathering on ears, forelegs, body, and hindquarters.

COLOUR

- Liver and white
- Black and white

* Either of these colours with tan markings.

* Any other colour or combination of colours unacceptable.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Approximate height: 51cm (approx. 20").

***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.*

*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.

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.

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When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:

FCI Standard No. 125: ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL

FCI Classification: Group 8 – Retrievers, Flushing Dogs, Water Dogs

Section 2 – Flushing Dogs

With working trial.