

# **ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL ASSOC OF QUEENSLAND INC**

Extended Breed Standard of  
**THE ENGLISH SPRINGER  
SPANIEL**

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## **INTRODUCTORY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH SPRINGER SPANIEL**

Dogs of the Spaniel type have existed for many centuries. The Spaniel is thought to have originated in Spain and was perhaps introduced to ancient Britons by the Roman legions. The Spaniel was known in pre-Christian Britain, and is mentioned by name in an ancient law of Wales as early as 300 AD.

The term “springer” was originally used to describe all land spaniels. The dog was used to spring (flush) or start game, both feathered and fur bearing, for hawks, coursing hounds, nets, and later for the gun.

By the 19th century, Spaniels had begun to be divided into two groups. Dogs weighing up to 25lbs were called Cockers or Cocking Spaniels, and were primarily used for hunting woodcock. The larger dogs, weighing around 45 lbs were called Field Spaniels or English Spaniels. By 1812, a pure strain of English Springer Spaniels was started, however throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Springers and Cockers were bred in the same litter, and classified according to size.

The English Springer was given separate classification in 1902, and the first breed club established in Britain in 1921. Since then the breed has gained much popularity around the world, as a field working dog, and also as a companion and show dog. The field bred style of Springer differs quite significantly to the “show bred”, and is rarely seen in the conformation ring, although major shows in some countries retain “Working Dog” or “Field Bred” classes for these examples.

The diverse appearance of today's show and field bred Springers is due to specialisation, and to the choices breeders make to achieve success in their endeavours. Competitive field trial Springers are the ultimate in athleticism and performance. Competitive conformation Springers are breathtaking examples of breed type, soundness, and symmetry.

## **GENERAL APPEARANCE**

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

The oldest of our Sporting Gundogs, the English Springer is a medium-sized sporting dog. The coat is moderately long, in colour black and white, liver and white or either of these colours with tan markings, and with feathering on his legs, ears, chest and brisket. He is, above all, a well-proportioned dog, free from exaggeration, nicely balanced in every part. Taken as a whole he looks the part of a dog that can go and keep going under difficult hunting conditions. When judging the English Springer it is important to remember that he is indeed a Spaniel of “ancient and pure origin” and not just an overgrown Cocker Spaniel.

Although you may be viewing him in the confines of a show ring, he must look capable of doing the job for which he was bred, the finding, flushing and retrieving of game. “Highest on leg and raciest in build” is a hallmark of the Breed and sets the English Springer apart from the other Land Spaniel Breeds. The term “racy” however is a comparison with the other Land Spaniel breeds – the English Springer is not a racy dog.

The overall appearance of the English Springer is of primary consideration. It is important for the judge to look for correct breed type which includes general appearance, outline, temperament and soundness, especially seen when the dog is in motion.

## TEMPERAMENT

- ***Friendly, happy disposition, biddable. Timidity or aggression highly undesirable.***

This is a friendly, happy, people-orientated Breed. The English Springer may be strong willed at times, but bad temperament has no part of any Spaniel Breed and certainly never in the English Springer.

Excessive timidity, with due allowance for puppies and novice exhibits, is to be penalised.

## HEAD AND 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 flew. Nostrils well developed.***

Viewed from the side, the top line of the skull and muzzle lie in two approximately parallel planes. The muzzle should be neither concave (dish faced) nor roman nosed, but straight. Viewed in profile the head ideally should appear to be the same length as the neck.

The fluting or median furrow divides the head and can perhaps be better felt than seen. This fluting, together with the chiselling below the eyes helps give the head refinement, and contributes to the expression. Without it the head has a very plain, hard appearance. Looking down on the head the muzzle should appear about half the width of the skull. The stop could best be described as moderate and is due to the raised position of the brows rather than deep indentation. From the side it may appear deeper than it is, due to the raised position of the eyebrows.

The muzzle is fairly deep and square in the flew showing strength, but the flews must never be so exaggerated as to give a pendulous appearance.

The nose is fairly large and open as one would expect in a sporting dog. Nose colour is not mentioned in the Standard, but should be black on a black and white, or black, white and tan, and liver on a liver and white or liver, white and tan. The nose should be fully pigmented.

When examining the head of the English Springer remember that colour can sometimes be misleading. A wide white blaze can make a head appear wider than it is, whilst a solid black or liver head, can also be misleading often giving a hard look to the head. On puppies and young adults the occiput, which on a mature dog should be rounded, may still be peaked and will correct as the dog matures. In some lines young stock have an indentation behind the brows called the trumpet which fills in as the head matures.

## EYES

- ***Medium size, almond shaped, not prominent or sunken, well set in (not showing haw), alert kind expression. Dark hazel. Light eyes undesirable.***

The eyes should be neither too full nor too small but of medium size. A mouse-like eye without expression is objectionable, as is a light eye.

The eye should never be round, which gives a foreign expression. The colour of the eye should tone with the coat, dark hazel with the liver and whites, dark brown to almost black for the black and whites. The colour of the eye rims should be the same as nose pigment, black for black and whites, liver for liver and white. The eye will often darken in colour with age. Most offensive is a light bird of prey eye, giving an untypical hard expression.

## **EARS**

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

The ears should be lobular in shape, set close to the head, of good length and width, but not exaggerated.

The ears on the Springer are very mobile and puppies in particular tend to carry them high when alert. The set-on of ear should be on a level with the eye as one looks through the head from the nostrils. Texture of ear should be medium neither too thick nor thin and flyaway. The leather should reach the nose when brought forward.

## **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.***

A scissor bite is required, and a strong under jaw is needed to carry game. Whilst not mentioned in the standard, full dentition is desirable.

Overshot, undershot or wry jaws are serious faults and should be severely penalised.

## **NECK**

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

The neck needs to be of good length to facilitate the dog in his retrieving work and for the same reason strength is applicable. The neck, wide at the shoulder, tends to taper and narrow to the junction with the head.

On the move the ESS carries the head as a slightly raised extension to the topline.

A ewe neck is objectionable.

The neck should smoothly blend into the shoulders without any look of a “right angle”.

A short neck is caused by upright shoulder angulation, as all breeds of dog have the same number of neck vertebrae.

## **FOREQUARTERS**

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

Bone, whilst not coarse, should be in balance with the general sturdiness of the dog and should not taper off, but be carried through right to the foot, and is round in front, and flattish on the sides.

The shoulders should be fairly close together at the withers. This is very important as it allows the shoulder to lie flat and mould smoothly to the contour of the body.

Shoulder angulation should balance with the moderate angulation of the hindquarters. The shoulders (scapulae) should be clean without loading and the upper arm (humerus) should have enough length and layback so that the elbow is placed beneath the withers. An upright shoulder angulation will give a sloping topline which is undesirable in a Springer Spaniel. The neck should blend smoothly into the shoulders.

To move as the Standard requests he must have reasonable angulation in front. He is the highest on leg of all British land spaniels. This is most apparent in puppies who seem to grow their length of leg first.

The short pastern should not be upright, but should be flexible with a little spring to it, to enable the dog to work without concussion to the fore assembly.

## **BODY**

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

The body is strong and proportionate to the length of leg – slightly longer from the point of shoulder to the point of the buttocks, than from the withers to the ground.

The chest is deep, widest just behind the elbows. The well sprung ribs are fairly long and taper in towards the loin.

The coupling is reasonably short, and the arch over the loins is very slight and will be felt rather than seen. The topline slopes very gently from the withers, but the back is practically level. The loin is muscular, short and strong. The croup slopes very gently to the base of the tail. The bottom line must never appear tucked up.

## **HINDQUARTERS**

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

The Springer should be shown in a hard, muscular condition. The amount of hindquarter angulation required by the standard is moderate, but there must be nothing weak or stilted about the hind legs. They should be well developed in muscle displaying strength in movement. The thighs should be broad and muscular with well developed second thigh to give the English Springer his characteristic driving movement.

Above all, the angulation must match with that of the forequarters to give the balance required of this breed.

Viewed from behind the rump is nicely rounded.

Ideally the hock is one third the distance from hip to hock. In movement the hocks drive well in under the body. When standing the rear pastern should be perpendicular to the ground.

## **FEET**

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

The shape of the foot is round with toes well arched and of medium size. The pads should be deep and full as befits a sporting dog required to work rough terrain.

## **TAIL**

- ***Docked: Set low, never carried above level of back. Well feather 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.***

The set on of tail is relatively low, following the slight slope of the croup.

A high set gay tail carried upright or a tail clamped down should be penalised. In a docked specimen usually four tail bones are left, which gives a length of about four inches on an adult specimen. Well feathered means well clothed with hair all round.

Undocked specimens may have the tail furnishing trimmed in a variety of styles to balance with the dog, and all are acceptable.

## 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.***

A most important Breed characteristic.

Balance of front and rear assemblies is a prerequisite to good movement. The two must match in angulation and muscular development if the gait is to be smooth and effortless. His forelegs should swing straight forward from the shoulder, throwing the feet well forward in a free and easy manner not a paddle or chopped Terrier-like stride. His hocks should drive well under the body following in line with his forelegs. Elbows have a free action from the shoulders, and the legs show no tendency to cross or interfere. The topline should remain level in motion, with no tendency to dip, roach or roll.

Viewed from the side, the Springer exhibits a good long forward stride without high stepping or hackney action, and an equally strong rear drive. A hackney action is quite foreign to the breed and wastes energy.

If the angulation is not matched front to rear, the dog will show this by excessive lift of the front legs, and a rear to front mis-match, which results in overstepping or crabbing.

The Springer should have a smooth, easy gait that looks as if he could work all day. At faster speed there is a tendency for the legs to converge towards a centre line of travel, and at a slower speed it is typical for the breed to pace.

## COAT

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

The coat is a double coat, having a dense undercoat. The coat should be straight. A slight wave is acceptable, but not desirable.

The body coat is of medium length, and the ears, chest, legs and belly are furnished with a fringe of feathering of moderate heaviness that would not impede a sporting dog.

The texture of the coat is important and as the standard states, should be weather resisting. Cotton wool, flyaway coats with overdone furnishings are not correct.

It is legitimate to trim about the head, ears, neck and feet, to remove dead undercoat, and to thin and shorten excess feathering as required to enhance a smart functional appearance. The tail may be trimmed, or well fringed with straight or wavy feathering.

Overall the appearance should be natural. Overtrimming, especially of the body coat, or any chopped, barbered or artificial effect should be penalised in the show ring.

Quality of coat should take precedence over quantity of coat.

## COLOUR

- ***Liver and white, black and white, or either of these colours with tan markings.***

There is no rule as to proportion of dark colour, black or liver, to white. Lightly or heavily marked dogs are equally correct and can be equally pleasing to the eye. No preference should be given to either liver or black.

There is no rule as to the amount of ticking. Equally, the total absence of ticking is perfectly acceptable.

There is no hard and fast rule for distribution of tan markings as in the American Cocker standard.

Care should be taken when judging that the solid colour is not creating an optical illusion, such as a marking on the shoulders giving the impression of straightness, or a solid coloured hind leg creating the impression the dog is out at hock.

Off colours such as lemon, red or orange should not be placed.

## **SIZES**

- ***Height: approx 51 cm (20")***

The approximate weight should be around 50 lbs." The dog should be shown in good hard condition, well-muscled up. The Springer should be kept to medium size, neither too small nor too large to do the work for which it is intended. Whilst a Springer should not be the size of a large Cocker, it is worse if they get to the size of Setters, as they were bred to go through undergrowth not over the top. There is very little difference in size between a dog and a bitch. Generally 19-20" for a bitch and 20-21" for a dog are desirable. Puppies tend to look all leg and too tall as they seem to reach their full height at about 7-8 months without having the depth of body or belly feathering to complete the picture.

### *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.***

### **Note**

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.