THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL

BREED GUIDE





Cover illustration–ideal female head
Back cover illustration–ideal male head

THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL BREED GUIDE

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PRESENTED BY THE

AMERICAN CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL CLUB, INC.

This guide has been prepared by the ACKCSC Judges' Education Committee to aid judges, breeders, and exhibitors in better understanding the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

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THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL
A BRIEF HISTORY

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is an old breed, and yet, it is also a comparatively new one. The familiar face of the Cavalier as we know him is less than 100 years of age.

In William Secord's book *Dog Painting*, the picture painted in 1440, by Antonio Pisano, *The Vision of St. Eustace,* depicts a group of animals including a pair of small spaniels which Secord notes are "no doubt ancestors of our present day King Charles Spaniels." These small Spaniels with their flat heads, high set ears, almond shaped eyes and rather pointed noses are also to be seen in paintings by Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Gainsborough, Stubbs, and others. Often referred to as the Comforter Spaniel, they were very much in favor with the aristocracy during Tudor times when ladies of the court found them very useful not only as companions and confidants but also as hot water bottles and flea catchers.

By the mid 1800's, the breed had been altered to a dog with a domed skull, long low-set ears, a very short muzzle with a laid back nose and undershot jaw and large round eyes. A number of Landseer paintings document the changes and by 1900 the dog bearing the name King Charles had been transformed to what we know as the English Toy Spaniel.

In the mid-1920's, Roswell Eldridge, an American, went to England to try to find the old type "nosey" spaniels. He was very disappointed that he did not find the dog he had seen depicted in old paintings. For five years he offered a prize of 25 pounds at Crufts to the person who presented the dog and bitch "as shown in the picture of King Charles II's time, long face, no stop, flat skull, not inclined to be domed and with the spot in the center of the skull." In 1927, a dog named Ann's Son was the winner of the 25-pound prize and in 1928, a Standard was drawn up using Ann's son as the model.

The revival of the breed did not go so far as to return the small eyes and snipey muzzle, opting instead for a softer gentler look. Purists would have us believe that long nosed throwbacks from English Toy Spaniels were the only dogs used in the recreation of the breed. Breed lore suggests, however, that various Cocker breeds, Papillons and perhaps even the Welsh Springer were used to recapture the desired traits.

World War II interrupted the development of the breed when travel to the very few stud dogs available was near to impossible. This led to some very intense inbreeding by some breeders which we might frown on today but which defined type in this emerging breed at that time.

The first Cavaliers were sent to America in 1952, and in 1954 a club was formed. Soon after, they sought AKC recognition, but because of their small numbers they were relegated to the Miscellaneous class, where they remained for 17 years. However, in 1993, the American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club was formed, and on January 1, 1996 the Cavalier became the 140th AKC recognized breed.



George Stubbs, 1776

THE CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL
BREED STANDARD
With Discussion Notes

The official Standard for the breed as adopted by the American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club and approved by the American Kennel Club is in **bold** type.



GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is an active, graceful, well-balanced toy spaniel, very gay and free in action; fearless and sporting in character, yet at the same time gentle and affectionate. It is this typical gay temperament, combined with true elegance and royal appearance, which are of paramount importance in the breed. *Natural appearance with no trimming, sculpting or artificial alteration* is essential to breed type.



The first impression of the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel should be that of a graceful, well-balanced toy spaniel which has the fearless, sporting character of its larger cousins, yet at the same time is royal in appearance with a typical gay temperament. The natural, *moderately long*, silky coat should always be untrimmed.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Size – Height 12 to 13 inches at the withers; weight proportionate to height, between 13 and 18 lbs. A small well-balanced dog within these weights is desirable but these are ideal heights and weights and slight variations are permissible.

The measurement from withers to elbow is approximately the same as from elbow to ground. They should appear neither short legged or up on leg. Much leniency is given in weight with 13 – 18 pounds being ideal. Please note that there is a GREAT difference in size perception within these weight and height recommendations. The Standard allows variations in height and weight in order that correct type should prevail over adherence to precise measurements. Bone is moderate. Weedy and coarse specimens are to be equally penalized.

Proportion – The body approaches squareness, yet if measured from point of shoulder to point of buttock, is slightly longer than the height at the withers. The height from the withers to elbow is approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the ground.



Correct Proportions

A well balanced dog that appears square but is slightly longer than tall. The breed should never appear long and low nor should they be up on leg. Long backs/short legs are becoming common faults in the breed.

Substance – Bone moderate in proportion to size. Weedy and coarse specimens are to be equally penalized.



Correct – moderate bone

HEAD

Proportionate to size of dog, appearing neither too large nor too small for the body.

Correct head type is an essential element of the breed. Correct head type is necessary to distinguish Cavaliers from their cousins, English Toy Spaniels. English Toys with their globular heads, short noses and deep stops are the antithesis of the Cavalier Standard and on no account should the two breeds approach similarity in head type. Gentleness and softness of expression must be the key to all the head properties.



Top: L—R: English Toy, Cavalier
Bottom: Brittany

“Correct head type is an essential element of the breed”





MALES









FEMALES





"No head would be correct without the soft, melting expression"

Expression – The sweet, gentle, melting expression is an important breed characteristic.

Soft, sweet, gentle and trusting. No head would be correct without the soft melting expression. This expression is the result of the flat appearing skull and the frontal placement of the large round eyes with slight padding underneath, framed by high-set ears.



Correct head, ear set, eyes, and muzzle



Correct male head



Correct female head

Eyes – large, round, but not prominent and set well apart; color a warm very dark brown; giving a lustrous, limpid look. Rims dark. There should be cushioning under the eyes, which contributes to the soft expression. *Faults* – small, almond shaped, prominent or light eyes; white surrounding ring.



Correct eye

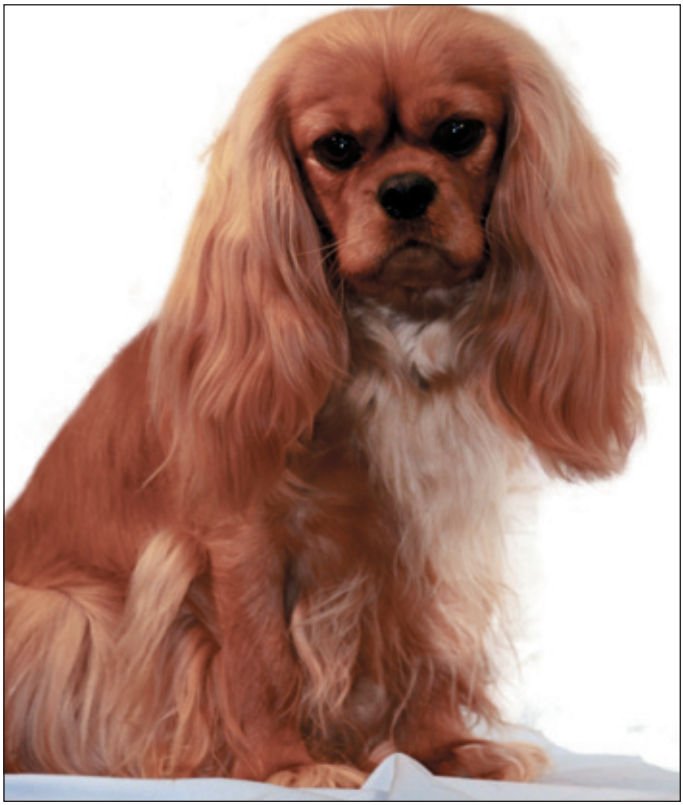


White ring around light eye

The most important feature of the head and, arguably, of the breed, is the eye. Cavalier eyes should be large, round and very dark brown, spaced well apart and looking directly forward. All of the trust and gentleness of the Cavalier's soul is communicated through its lustrous, limpid eyes. A slight cushioning and/or padding ('fill') under the eyes contributes immeasurably to the softness and correctness of expression.







Any of the following eye faults will detract from the correct sweet expression: prominent, protruding or bulging eyes; small or almond shaped eyes; eyes too light or with a prominent white ring showing around them; obliquely set eyes or those set too far apart. Correct eyes mirror the "soul" of the Cavalier and are an essential breed characteristic, easily lost if overlooked by breeders or judges. Light eyes are one of the hardest faults to breed out so should be significantly penalized.

Ears – Set high, but not close, on top of the head. Leather long with plenty of feathering and wide enough so that when the dog is alert, the ears fan slightly forward to frame the face.



Ears are set high but not close together; leathers are long, wide and well feathered with long silky hair. Cavaliers use their ears ***when alert***, the cartilage stiffening to bring the ear up and slightly forward. This forms a straight line with the top of the skull and brings the leathers forward so that the feathering frames the face. When the Cavalier is at ease and not alert, the topskull may appear slightly rounded. Ears set too high will give a startled look; set too low will give a notably rounded skull. Black and Tans and Tri Colors will usually have more feathering than Rubies and Blenheims – though not longer feathers.

Once the soft melting expression; the large, round expressive eyes; the balanced unexaggerated head and the proper silky ears are seen in one package, correct type becomes apparent and no amount of flash or showmanship should persuade you to look elsewhere.

The watchword in heads is moderation. A deep stop, high forehead and drooping lips make for a very fancy head, though totally incorrect and lacking in softness.



Ears at ease



Ears when alert

Skull – slightly rounded but without dome or peak; it should appear flat because of the high placement of the ears. Stop is moderate, neither filled nor deep.



Correct skull, muzzle, stop and ear set

The skull needs to be broad enough to accommodate the wide-set eye placement. It is slightly rounded but appears flat because of the high placement of the ears. A pronounced curve with low-set ears is undesirable. However, a puppy may have a pronounced occiput which would give the required width when the head "breaks."

The head is broken up by a moderate stop neither deep nor filled; midway between the shallow stop of the English Cocker and the deep stop of the English Toy Spaniel. Any exaggeration of head properties, i.e.; stop too deep, too much forehead or lip, or excess padding on the cheeks will change the correct melting expression to one that is hard or coarse, the whole head looking heavy and overdone. Too little in the same areas will create a snipey or foxy headpiece as will a lack of cushioning beneath the eye.

Muzzle – Full muzzle, slightly tapered. Length from base of stop to tip of nose about 1-½ inches. Face well filled below the eyes. Any tendency toward snipiness undesirable. Nose pigment uniformly black without flesh marks and nostrils well developed.





The muzzle is approximately 1 ½ inches long (about two fingers width), and this was recently changed from "at least" 1 ½ inches, which tells us we want enough muzzle to distinguish Cavaliers from English Toy Spaniels. The muzzle tapers gradually to give a clean finish to the face without lippiness or houndiness. A good bit of underjaw is important in preventing snipeyness or a face that seems to fall away underneath, although underjaw is not mentioned in the Standard. The really classic heads have a certain amount of chiseling and molding that is not the same as cushioning. This cushioning detail also isn't mentioned in the Standard but is readily seen on the best heads, and also accompanies "fill" under the eye—all contributing to soft expression. The length of muzzle depends slightly on the size of the dog, but it should be in balance with the width of the skull between the ears.

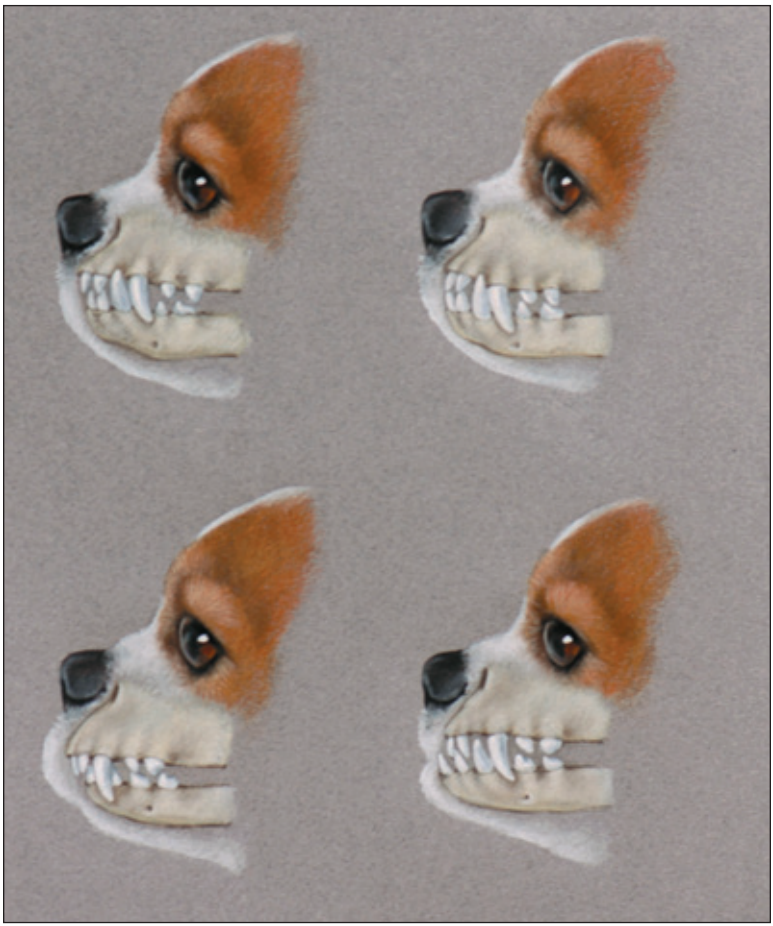
Nostrils should be black in all coat colors. Some may go off with the weather and bitches may be affected by their season but dense black pigment is highly desirable. Flesh color marks may sometimes be seen in young dogs. The young dog with a small flesh mark will usually have year 'round black nostrils when it fills in. Older dogs should be faulted, but not to the extent of putting up an inferior specimen over an otherwise good one.

Lips are well developed but not pendulous, giving a clean finish. *Faults* – sharp or pointed muzzle.

Lips are preferably black. Although the face is rather plush with well-developed lips, the tapering from eye to nose keeps the lip line clean and pretty without being pendulous or houndy.

Bite – A perfect, regular and complete scissors bite is preferred, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square into the jaws.
***Faults* – undershot bite, weak or crooked teeth, crooked jaws.**

A scissors bite is preferred. Teeth should be strong. A level or slightly undershot bite in a young dog could be overlooked as many bites correct by 18 – 24 months. A correct head shape with an imperfect bite, that looks right in profile, is preferred to a snipey head with a perfect bite.



L-R and Top to Bottom: Scissor, Level, Overshot, Undershot

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

Neck – Fairly long, without throatiness, well enough muscled to form a slight arch at the crest. Set smoothly into nicely sloping shoulders to give an elegant look.



Correct neck, topline, body

The perfect neck has a slight muscular arch at the crest and is of sufficient length to allow the head to be carried proudly but never thrown back. The neck makes a graceful transition into well laid-back shoulders. The under neckline should be clean with no throatiness or dewlap.

Topline – level both when moving and standing.



Level topline moving or standing
Upper—inappropriate “Gay” tail

Body – Short-coupled with ribs well sprung but not barreled. Chest moderately deep, extending to elbows, allowing ample heart room. Slightly less body at the flank than at the last rib, but with no tucked-up appearance.



Moderately deep chest, reaching the elbows with a slight "swell" of forechest that adds about a half inch, excluding coat, to the outline. The rib cage is well sprung but not barreled and is comparatively long for a toy dog, with the forechest to the last rib being about two thirds of the dog; the remainder is comprised of the loin and hindquarters. Looking down on the dog there is a slight "waist" between the last rib and the flank but with no tucked appearance from the side.

Cavaliers are short coupled which refers to the length between the last rib and the hip. If they are too long in loin they will not have a squarish appearance (although they are slightly longer than they are tall).

Tail – Well set-on, carried happily but never much above the level of the back, and in constant characteristic motion when the dog is in action. Docking is optional. If docked, no more than one third to be removed.



Correct tail in motion



Correct tail at rest

Tail carriage between the two o'clock and four o'clock position is within the acceptable range with three o'clock being the ideal.

In motion, or when wagging, tails are carried happily but not much above the level of the back. Males in particular will posture at one another flagging their tails up, but once settled and on the move they generally drop them back to their natural carriage.

There is a slight rounding over the rump. This is an almost imperceptible plumpness of the hindquarters that adds to the spaniel appeal and is a good broad base to support a wagging tail. It is not a low tail-set nor a steep or sloping croup, but a slight, gentle rounding at the area of the tail set, which does not come absolutely dead off the spine.

The length of tail should balance with the body. Docking (not more than one-third) is allowed but almost never done any more. Cavaliers are inclined to wag their tails, never more so than when in motion. This is a breed trait and an excellent barometer of the correct, gay temperament. The tail is feathered, with long, silky coat. While tail wagging is desirable to indicate a happy dog, judges must not penalize a lovely specimen who is not *constantly* wagging yet appears to be enjoying his day.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders well laid back. *Forelegs* straight and well under the dog with elbows close to the sides. *Pasterns* strong and feet compact with well-cushioned pads. Dewclaws may be removed.



Correct & balanced angulation front and rear

The shoulders should be well laid back. Straight shoulders often accompany a short appearing neck and can cause an inefficient and very undesirable hackney action. Withers should be fairly prominent and have sufficient space between shoulder blades to allow for freedom of movement.



Correct shoulder angulation Upright shoulder

Forelegs should be straight when viewed from the front with feet turning neither in nor out, elbows close to the side, and placed so as to give width to the chest for good heart and lung room. Moderate bone should be is in balance with the body. Pasterns should be strong.



Left—Toeing out Middle—Correct front Right—Wide front

Cavaliers stand on compact feet with well-cushioned pads. Nails and pads can be any color. The long hair on the feet (slippers) is a feature of the breed and should never be trimmed. Dogs who are kept on gravel or hard surface will wear the slippers down during normal activity but it will still be obvious that they have not been trimmed into neat, tight little feet. It is permitted to remove excess hair on the underside of the foot between the pads.

HINDQUARTERS

The hindquarters construction should come down from a broad pelvis, moderately muscled; stifles well turned out and hocks well let down. The hind legs when viewed from the rear should parallel each other from hock to heel. *Faults* – Cow or sickle hocks.

Hindquarters should come down from a good broad pelvis, very slightly sloped to give an attractive tail carriage.



Left—Cow hocked Middle—Correct Right—Bowed hocks

COAT

Of moderate length, silky, free from curl. Slight wave permissible. Feathering on ears, chest, legs and tail should be long, and the feathering on the feet is a feature of the breed. No trimming of the dog is permitted. *Specimens where the coat has been altered by trimming, clipping, or by artificial means shall be so severely penalized as to effectively eliminate from competition.* Hair growing between the pads on the underside of the feet may be trimmed.



Mature male



Mature female

Hair on the face and skull is naturally short, graduating to a *moderate* length on the neck, back and body. Feathering on the ears, chest, legs and tail should be longer. Most coats do not develop until about 18 months old. The coat is single, soft, silky and free from curl or cottony character, although a slight wave is permissible. With undesirable curly coats, the texture is often coarse, and with too dense coats, the hair is often short with less feathering.

Keep in mind that the only trimming that is permitted is the hair growing between the pads of the underside of the foot. The Standard states that the trimmed dog is to be so severely penalized as to virtually eliminate it from competition. Judges are expected to respect and enforce this section of the Standard. This means NO whisker or feet trimming, NO thinning out the neck or cleaning out the throat area, NO sculpting of shoulders or hindquarters, underlines, or ears.

Cavaliers should be turned out for the ring clean, brushed and shining. Back coats can be coaxed flat with toweling and proper drying but NOT with thinning shears and stones. A few stray tendrils of lovely coat here and there are part of the natural soft look of the breed.

COLOR

***Blenheim* – Rich chestnut markings well broken up on a clear pearly white ground. The ears must be chestnut and the color evenly spaced on the head surrounding both eyes, with a white blaze between the eyes and ears, in the center of which may be the lozenge or "Blenheim spot." The lozenge is a unique and desirable, though not essential, characteristic of the Blenheim. *Tricolor* – Jet-black markings well broken up on a clear pearly white ground. The ears must be black and the color evenly spaced on the head and surrounding both eyes, with a white blaze between the eyes. Rich tan markings over the eyes, on the cheeks, inside ears and on the under side of the tail. *Ruby* – Whole colored rich red. *Black and Tan* – Jet-black with rich, bright tan markings over eyes, on cheeks, inside ears, on chest, legs and underside of tail.**

Faults **– Heavy ticking on Blenheims or Tricolors, white markings on Rubies or Black and Tans.**

The Cavalier is presented in four distinct colors. The broken colors are Blenheim and Tricolor; the whole colors are Ruby and Black and Tan. There is no color preference. All colors should be rich and glossy with markings as neat and attractive as possible.

In particolors, head markings may not be perfectly even and symmetrical. Although even markings are preferable, uneven markings should not distract you from an otherwise correct head. The so-called "Blenheim spot" or lozenge on the top of the head of Blenheims is a unique feature, but not a necessary one. It might only make a difference if judging two theoretically equal dogs, one with the spot and one without. While a clean muzzle is ideal, a few freckles are rather common in the breed. They are not objectionable so long as they do not affect the expression. Body markings can be broken in endless varieties and still be correct. Heavily and lightly marked dogs may still fit the Standard. The chestnut color of the Blenheim is a rich, reddish color; never liver, sandy blond or orange. Liver is a warning sign of loss of pigment.

In whole colors, the Ruby should be a very rich red. Often the longer feathering of the Ruby is acceptably paler in coloring than the body. Ruby puppies usually deepen in color as they mature. The black color of the Black and Tan should be jet black and should not have a rusty or brownish cast to it; and the tan markings should ideally be a rich red, not sooty or grayish.

GAIT

Free moving and elegant in action with good reach in front and sound, driving rear action. When viewed from the side, the movement exhibits a good length of stride, and viewed from front and rear it is straight and true, resulting from straight-boned fronts and properly made and muscled hindquarters.



The Cavalier is free moving and elegant in action and should exhibit good reach and drive, covering the ground while maintaining a firm, level topline. Moving away, the hocks should be straight and true. Cavaliers do not single track at the trot, although there may be some slight tendency to converge as speed increases. Coming at you the front legs should also be straight and true; they should not be out at the elbows or exhibit paddling. In profile the balance of the dog should be obvious, making an elegant picture from nose to end of tail in one flowing movement, with proud head carriage and good arch of neck, making good use of the hindquarters. There should be no hackney action in front – a common fault in Cavaliers with short upper arms or lacking in balance.

The appropriate gait for the show ring is on a loose lead and not too fast, but with enough spirit to convey the correct gay temperament. This is clearly indicated by a tail which is in constant characteristic motion when gaiting.

TEMPERAMENT

Gay, friendly, non-aggressive with no tendency toward nervousness or shyness. ***Bad temper, shyness and meanness are not to be tolerated and are to be so severely penalized as to effectively remove the specimen from competition.***



The Standard descriptive words on temperament are: gay, friendly, non-aggressive, active, graceful, fearless, sporting, gentle and affectionate. The word "fearless" is not meant to suggest the fearlessness of a warrior, but that of an innocent who cannot imagine any harm coming to it, thereby inspired to confidence and trustfulness.

Cavaliers are a joy to judge, as they most always seem to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. An approaching judge is likely to find little front feet dancing up his pant leg or have a hand licked or sniffed if offered. This should not be dismissed as amateur handling; it is a trait that breeders treasure and encourage.

Nervousness, meanness and shyness are not to be tolerated and should be met with the same weighty penalty as the trimmed dog, i.e., virtually eliminated from competition. Shyness does not refer to puppies or novice dogs who have yet to get their bearings, but rather to obvious mistrust and fearfulness. Sweet gentle temperament is the hallmark of the breed. As long as "their people" are nearby with a pat and a kind word, Cavaliers are perennially happy little dogs.

Cavalier fanciers only ask that judges be as gentle with the breed as the breed itself is, and that they reward naturally presented dogs that fit the Standard.

RING PRESENTATION



In the ring, the Cavalier is to be handled naturally and with a minimum of fuss. They are normally shown on loose or semi-loose leads and are allowed to self-stack while free baiting with their handlers standing. As the breed has become more popular and more people are new to the breed, we see handlers on their knees hand stacking their dogs. This is ***totally unacceptable*** and judges should instruct exhibitors who make this mistake to stand while showing their Cavaliers. Nothing equals the picture of a Cavalier standing on its own, slowly wagging its tail. This is also the best time for judges to check expression.

Don't expect Cavaliers to stand like statues in the ring. It is not in their nature to do so. They are alert, curious and interested in what is going on around them and should not be penalized for fidgeting.

Tail holding is never practiced in the Cavalier ring, not even for pictures. The outline is quickly spoiled if the tail is held out setter-style as it gives a rather alien look to the breed.

Cavaliers are not to be raced around the ring. They are to be shown at a moderate trot. Faster is not better in the Cavalier ring. Let this be known to your exhibitors before they begin gaiting their dogs.

Cavaliers should be impeccably turned out for the ring—cleaned, brushed, and shining. As stated earlier, this is a naturally presented breed, totally free from any trimming or cosmetic alteration. This means NO TRIMMING of whiskers or feet, NO THINNING of the neck of throat area, NO SCULPTING of shoulders, hindquarters, ears, or underlines. This is part of breed type, and the American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club implores all judges to respect and enforce this part of the Standard.

As a rule, Cavalier exhibitors know all of these things and will respect a judge who has taken the time to learn and enforce these correct procedures in the ring.



There you have it—the annotated and illustrated Standard as presented by the ACKCSC Judges' Education Committee. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions. You can find us via the American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel website at www.ackcsc.org

American Cavalier King Charles Spaniel Club
Judges' Education Committee
Official AKC Breed Standard approved 1995

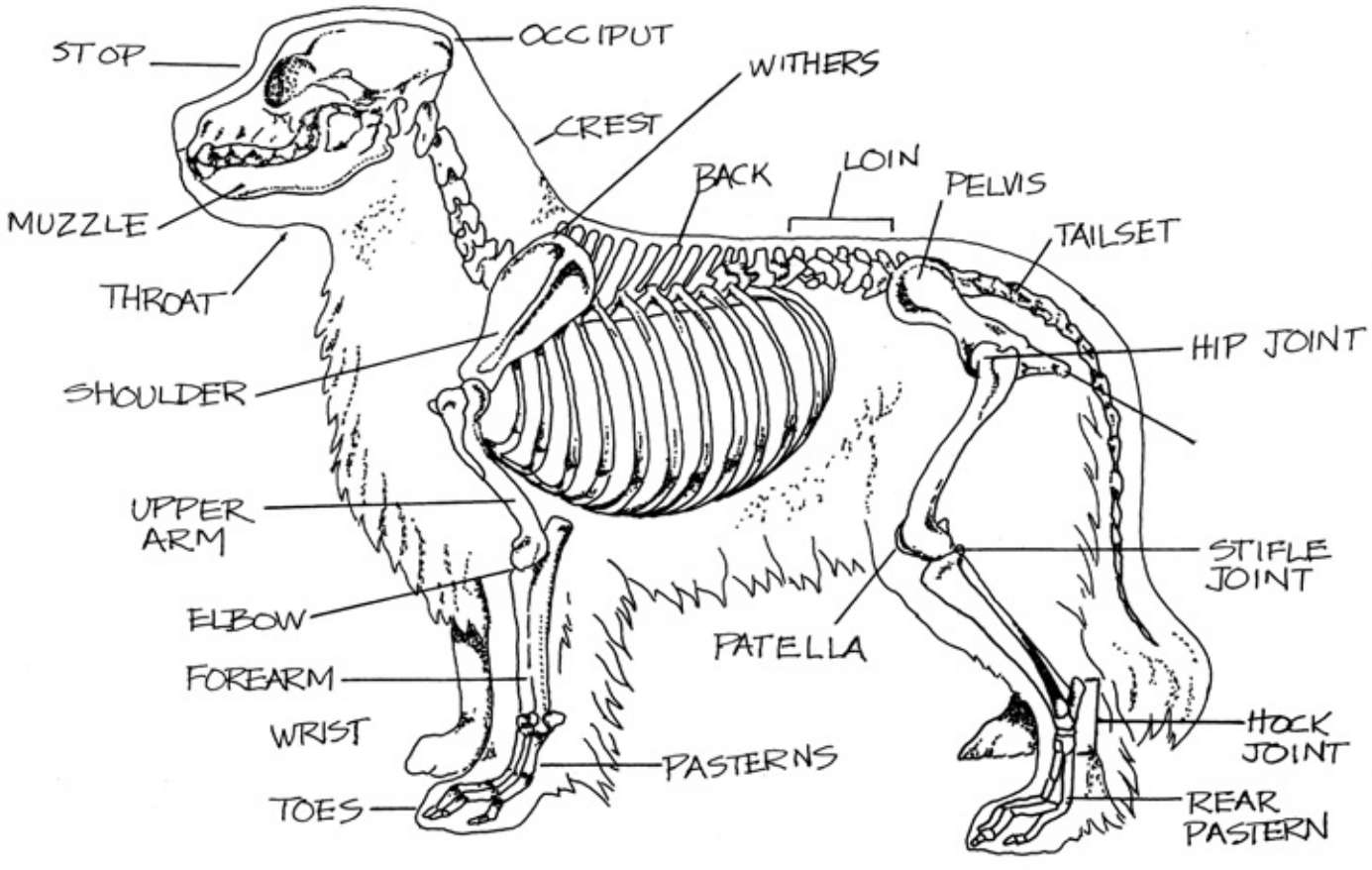
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STOP
OCCIPUT
WITHERS
CREST
BACK
LOIN
PELVIS
TAILSET
MUZZLE
THROAT
SHOULDER
HIP JOINT
UPPER ARM
STIFLE JOINT
ELBOW
PATELLA
FOREARM
WRIST
HOCK JOINT
PASTERNS
TOES
REAR PASTERN

