

Guidelines to Judging the Israel Canaan Dog

*Written by Myrna Shibolet
At the request of the Israel Kennel Club*

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Introduction

The Israel Canaan Dog is a unique breed, and therefore one that holds a position of great importance to cynology. The Canaan Dog is considered to be a primitive breed. As such it is very close in type and behavior to the original dog, the ancestor of all of our dogs of today. It is one of the very few breeds existing today that is purely natural, a reflection of development based on the necessities of survival, rather than being the result of selective breeding to produce a dog that was suitable for a particular task or environment.

This breed existed solely as a free-living pariah until the end of the 1930s. A good number of animals were added to the gene pool from the pariah population through the 1980s. Nowadays, we rarely have the good fortune of being able to find a wild born dog that we can add to the breeding population. The breed is, today, very much as it has been through its thousands of years of history, and it is important to preserve these characteristics, existing in so few modern breeds, for the future. We are looking for a survivor, a sound and hardy animal that is capable of surviving in the very harsh environment of its natural home.

The Canaan Dog developed in a relatively limited area, which is defined as present day Israel. Although dogs of similar type can be found more widely spread in the middle east, there is growing variation the further we get from this specific area, and we find dogs that are obviously related but of a somewhat different type in surrounding countries such as Syria, Turkey, and Egypt.

Let's consider the definition of a pariah dog. The pariah is the general term for a large and widely distributed group of semi-wild or feral dogs found across southern Asia and Europe as well as throughout Africa, and which also includes the dingo of Australia. There is even a feral dog that has recently been recognized as a breed in the United States, and which is very similar to the other pariahs, the Carolina Dog. Pariah dogs from locations that are geographically very distant from one another can still be very similar in type, to the point where they could be mistaken as being of the same "breed" – this is very logical when we consider that these dogs are the closest existing relatives to the historical "original dog", and that their appearance is the result of adaptation and the necessities of survival. The variation from type to type of pariah is not sharp, but a gradual change in response to changing geographical and climatic conditions, and similar but varying types may exist, "overlapping" so to speak, in the same area. Overall, the pariahs tend to be of medium size, very powerful for their size, often tawny or reddish in color, though some are black and spotted. The coat is usually of medium length, harsh, thick and weather resistant. Pariahs commonly have prick ears that tend to be carried somewhat obliquely rather than standing perfectly straight.

Pariahs have been known for thousands of years and were thought of as mongrels – once-domestic dogs and their descendents that had taken to the wild. Current scientific opinion tends to think that they represent an original strain of wild dog that has not yet become totally domesticated. The constant characteristics that have maintained themselves over millennia argue against these animals simply being mongrels fleeing civilization. They seem to be originally wild animals that have achieved and maintained, through generations, a semi domesticated, more or less symbiotic relationship with man, and that behaviorally may occupy the full range between absolute wildness and full domestication. Furthermore, any animal, regardless of its place at birth within this range, can adapt itself to a changing environment, either towards wildness or domestication. It is not uncommon for "wild" pariahs that have been "tamed" to later be indistinguishable in behavior from those that were born to domestication, while instances are also known of domestic pariahs returning to the wild and doing very well there.

Certainly as far as the Canaan Dog is concerned, this is all true. The Canaan has proven to be highly adaptable to a wide range of environments and living conditions from wild and semi wild Bedouin dogs to pampered city apartment pets. But the Canaan is no man's slave but rather his partner and reserves the right to choose the terms of the relationship.

Carolina Dogs: Breed of pariah found in the southern United States (South Carolina)



Indian Pariahs: Local pariahs photographed in India. The photo on the left was taken in Jaipur, the one on the right was taken in Haridwar in 2000.



The dingo, the pariah of Australia



Pariahs photographed in Egypt (Sakkara, 1988)



Bedouin Canaan Dogs, Tel Arad 2001



Bedouin Canaan, near Massada, 1987



Wild born Canaan registered by Prof. Menzel in late 1960's



Son of Bedouin Canaan



FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE

No. 273 d

Standard of the Israel Canaan Dog

28 Nov. 1985

General Appearance: A medium sized, well-balanced, strong and square dog resembling the wild dog type. Strong distinction between the sexes.

The overall first impression we should get of the Canaan Dog is of a dog that is totally natural and as close as possible to the original ancestor of our modern dogs. It is a medium sized, medium boned, square, compact, and very well balanced dog, agile and muscular, that looks as if it could cover ground all day without tiring. Nothing about the Canaan should be exaggerated; everything must be in balance and harmony and give the appearance of pure functionality.

Let's consider function. The Canaan, or any pariah for that matter, lives on the fringes of civilization, usually in areas where means of survival are scarce. These dogs have to be capable of living on the bare minimum – and they usually are fit and healthy and in quite good physical condition despite this. These dogs are capable of hunting for themselves, usually small game such as hares, mice, lizards, and such, though they have been known to bring down full-grown gazelles as well. They are scavengers, able to silently and stealthily penetrate the perimeters of Bedouin camps or settlements to steal or scrounge in the garbage dumps. They can live with a bare minimum of water, sometimes drinking only once every few days. They also have to be capable of coping with natural enemies, which means the ability to either effectively flee danger or to be able to stand and fight if necessary.

Anything that interferes with this functionality is undesirable. A dog that is too heavy in structure will require too much food and water for the conditions, and will not be as effective a hunter and scavenger or in fleeing his natural enemies, which may include man. Heavier types of pariah, as are found in Turkey and Syria, are less suitable to the desert environment. On the other hand, a dog that is too fine and light boned will find it more difficult to compete with the other small predators and scavengers. The Canaan in nature and in his task as a Bedouin guard dog has to be capable of standing up to jackals, wolves, and even hyenas – and this does mean standing up to them to them to protect his flock. The Canaan has also proven himself capable of taking down an adult gazelle. These things would be impossible if he is too small and fine. Structure that is exaggerated in any way – including characteristics such as excessive length of body and overangulation – will also make him less effective, less able to maneuver, and less suited to the terrain. The wrong coat type will seriously damage his ability to withstand the climatic extremes of his natural environment.

Strong distinction between the sexes is desired as in most breeds. This is also related to functionality as it helps a dog that is highly territorial to identify at a distance an animal that is a potential mate rather than an enemy or intruder into his territory.

Head: Well proportioned, blunt wedge shape of medium length, appearing broader due to low set ears. Skull somewhat flattened. Some width allowed in powerful male heads. Stop shallow but defined. Muzzle sturdy, of moderate length and breadth. Jaws should be strong. Lips tight. Nose black.

The head shape of the Canaan is very typical of the pariah type and is also very similar to the head shape of many of the Spitz breeds that are considered to be close to the original type of dog.

From the front, the head is a perfect blunt wedge shape, fairly broad between the ears and tapering evenly to the end of the full muzzle. There should be no flaring at the cheeks or narrowing at the

muzzle, the tapering should be continuous and the end of the muzzle should be blunt and rounded, not sharp and pointed. There should be no appearance of elongation.

The width of the head between the ears, the length of the skull from occiput to stop, and the length of the muzzle from the stop to the end of the nose are approximately equal.

There should be no appearance of elongation. The standard does not call for an elongated wedge, but for a blunt medium length wedge shape. One of the most common head faults is an overly elongated head, caused by too little width between the ears and too much length of skull and muzzle. This results in a head resembling the sight hound heads, with the often-accompanying fault of snipiness in muzzle or weak underjaw.

From the side, the head consists of two parallel lines of skull and top line of muzzle, divided by an apparent but not exaggerated stop. The stop should be a harmonious part of the head, and not too deep or square. The topskull is not totally flat, but slightly rounded, although it is so slight as not to be very apparent without touching the skull and feeling the structure. The line of the underjaw is approximately parallel to the top line of the muzzle. The jaw must be full and powerful, never receding or weak. This is a dog that must be capable of hunting for himself and of defending himself and his herds from predators, and must appear powerful enough to do so.

The head must always be in proportion to the body, not too heavy or too fine. There should be a clear difference between the head of a dog and a bitch. A dog's head is powerful and masculine, and a bitch's head is more feminine and refined, though it should not appear weak or lacking in strength.

The standard allows only the black-pigmented nose. This is a survival factor for an animal that spends a good portion of its life exposed to the strong desert sun. Noses lacking pigment have been found to result in health problems in other breeds in the harsh climate, as well as to other animals such as horses that have light facial and nose pigment.

There is, however, a factor that (for lack of better terminology) has been called the "snow nose" (as it is referred to in northern breeds). The nose leather of these dogs is black in the summer when the sunlight is strongest, but made fade to a dusty or pinkish shade in the winter when the sun is not as strong, or when the dog is kept out of the sun. This nose color is acceptable, as it does provide the proper protection from the sun, but it is not desirable. Highest preference is to a nose that is permanently black.

Liver, pink, or parti-colored nose pigmentation is unacceptable.

Ears: Erect, relatively short and broad, slightly rounded at the tip and set low.

The Canaan's ears, as are those of all the pariah dogs, and of all the wild canines as well, must be pricked. The prick ear is the most effective at catching sounds, and the great mobility of the ear is a highly effective tool for identifying the direction from which the sound comes. This characteristic is extremely important as a survival factor.

The ears of the Canaan are not set high on the skull, standing erect and pointed upwards, like the German Shepherd or Siberian Husky. They are set a bit wider on the skull, the inside edge of the ear being approximately even with the inside corner of the eye but, although strongly pricked, they are oblique in carriage.

The Canaan ear is triangular with the height being a bit longer than the width, and they are slightly rounded at the tips. The ear should be in proportion to the head, and therefore should not be too large or too long.

Any form of drop or button ear, or semi-prick ears, is totally unacceptable.

Eyes: Dark brown, slightly slanted, almond shaped. Dark rims essential.

The keen yet appealing expression of the Canaan is one of his most essential and distinguishing characteristics, and a major factor in achieving this expression is the eye shape and color. The Canaan has what has been called a “sloe eyed” Oriental look, created by the very dark almond shaped slightly slanting eyes emphasized by the black “eye liner” around them. The result is an alert, intelligent, and at the same time sweet expression which is expressive of the character of the breed.

Eyes that are too light will have a hard and staring expression, like that of a bird of prey, rather than the soft and sweet expression desired. Even a medium brown eye can appear to be too light, especially if the dog is black or with a black mask. The criterion for judging the correctness of the eye color should be the effect it has on the expression as a whole. Yellow eyes do occur occasionally and are unquestionably incorrect; this is often connected with undesirable coat colors as well. Pale or liver eye rims greatly detract from the desired expression as well, and are definitely not desirable.

Round eyes result in an expression that lacks the intelligent and alert look that are so expressive of the breed’s character, tending to create a “stupid” or staring look. Small or piggy eyes create a “mean” expression. The eye must be almond shaped and properly set in the head, and never round or prominent or too small.

Mouth: Full dentition with scissors or plier bite.

The plier or level bite, which was the preferred bite in the original standard of the breed, is also a bite commonly found in wild canines such as wolves, jackals and foxes. This sort of bite is efficient for self-grooming, for removing thorns and stickers from the coat, for freeing oneself from parasites, and so on. However, over the years that the Canaan has been selectively bred for the show ring, selection has been made for the bite more commonly seen in the show ring, the scissors bite. As this bite does not really interfere with functionality, it is totally acceptable. Both scissors and level bites should be equally acceptable.

Missing teeth is not a common problem in the Canaan, although it is not very rare for one or two premolars to be missing, or in an older dog, to be worn down to the point where they can not be seen or felt. One or two missing premolars should not be seriously penalized; this will not interfere with the effectiveness of the bite. However, a number of missing teeth is definitely undesirable and should be penalized.

Overshot or undershot bites are definitely not permissible, as well as other bite abnormalities.

Neck: Muscular, of medium length

The neck must be in proportion to the rest of the dog. It should be of sufficient length to give the dog an athletic, well balanced and elegant appearance, but should not be as long as the neck of a sight hound, for instance. There should never be an impression of heaviness or stockiness, nor of weediness and insufficient strength. The neck must be powerful and well muscled; keep in mind that a strong and muscular neck is an essential tool to a dog that must hunt, catch prey, and carry it back to his den. Canaans, especially males, often have very thick protective hair on the neck, which may make it appear more massive than it actually is. Even so, the neck should never appear too heavy.

The ear set of many prick eared breeds is high on the skull and the ears are carried straight up. This ear set is incorrect for the Canaan, and is not common in other wild dogs and pariahs.



The earset that is typical of the pariah dogs, and of the Canaan is wider set and standing obliquely, as seen in the following breeds:



Carolina Dog (wild born)



Australian Dingo



Egypt Pariah



Indian Pariah



Canaan Dog — one of the early dogs introduced as breeding stock by Prof. Menzel



First Israel Ch. Canaan bred by Prof. Menzel



Wild-born Bedouin Canaan, 2001



One of today's top International winning Canaan Dogs



Excellent masculine head and expression



Excellent feminine head and expression



Ears too wide set. Head a bit too chiseled under the eyes



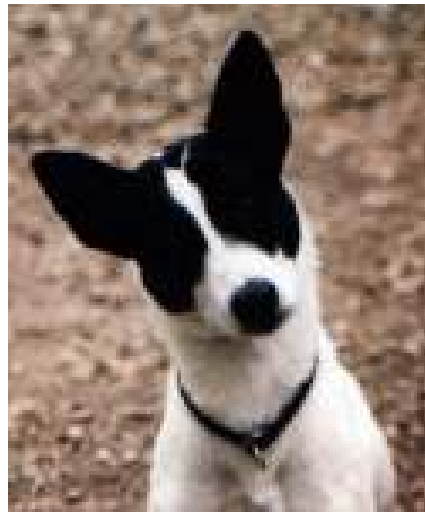
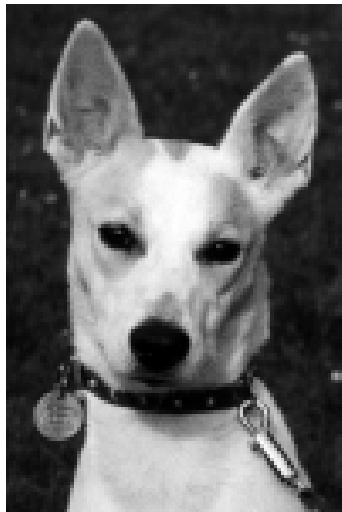
Ears too high set. Well shaped feminine head



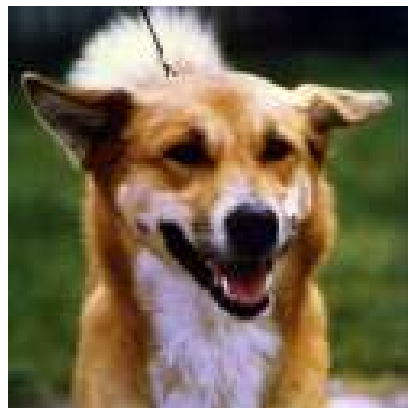
Excellent and well proportioned masculine head



Head too heavy, muzzle too square, soft lips, cheeks too pronounced



Overly refined heads, very fine in the muzzle, too chiseled under the eyes, ears rather large in proportion to head



Ears too wide set and not sufficiently erect



Ears too large and not strongly erect



Excellent male head and expression



Excellent female head and expression



Excellent male head and expression



Feminine, well shaped head



Excellent male head



Strong female head, still feminine



Head too elongated



Insufficient stop



“Snow nose” – undesirable but accepted – this type of pigmentation becomes completely black when the dog is out in the sun.



Very poor nose pigment – this type of nose never becomes completely dark, usually stays as pictured here



Eyes too light – resulting in incorrect expression



Eyes too round – also result in incorrect expression



Body: Square, withers well developed, back level, loins muscular, chest deep and of moderate breadth, ribs well sprung. Belly well tucked up. Moderate angulation. Balance is essential.

The Canaan, like many of the related Spitz breeds and pariahs, is a square built dog. Square means that his height and length are equal – if we were to draw a box of equal length sides, taking the measurement of the height or length of the body as the length of the sides, the body of the Canaan would fit neatly inside. A square dog is considered to be a moderate dog, with every part in proportion and balance to the other parts. Nothing is exaggerated. The square build is efficient for a dog that lives in nature, providing the possibility of quick and efficient movement, endurance, agility, flexibility, and the ability to turn “on a dime”.

The back is completely level and short, providing a powerful link between the slightly prominent withers and the muscular loins and croup. A back that is too long will tend to be soft and weak; this will be apparent both when the dog is standing and when the dog is moving. In movement, the back is totally steady and level – as the old timers used to say, “if a glass of water was set on his back while he was moving, he wouldn’t spill a drop.”

The Canaan is a muscular dog, and should not be soft. The muscles are not as prominent as in some breeds, but they should be well developed and obvious to the touch. A Canaan should always appear fit, never soft or flabby.

The chest should be sufficiently deep and broad. Depth of chest is to the elbow. The ribs should have good width, but should not be barrel shaped. Too much width of chest interferes with efficient usage of the shoulder blades and upper arms and interferes with proper front movement; too narrow chest will also cause incorrect movement and incorrect positioning of shoulder. Forechest should be well developed. Narrowness is also highly undesirable.

An elongated body will result in an incorrect elongated, loping stride or choppy, disunited movement – the dog will look as if it is two separate pieces “stuck” together, rather than one compact, efficient, and well balanced unit.

Angulation in the Canaan is moderate, as is true in other square built dogs, and again the key is balance. Overangulation appears very attractive and flashy in the dog that is standing still, but results in poor movement, overreaching, and lack of flexibility and agility, and interferes with proper balance. Underangulation prevents sufficient reach.

The tuck up is quite pronounced, especially in young dogs. A young dog may appear relatively leggy until the chest finishes to develop, and may seem to lack in body substance. It is important to remember that the Canaan is a breed that develops very slowly, and isn’t fully mature until between three and four years of age. They come into their real prime and full maturity at about four, especially the males.

These are examples of Canaans of excellent body type – correct length of neck; strong, level, short topline; correct angulation; excellent depth of chest; muscular, athletic, balanced bodies



Forequarters: *The shoulder should be oblique and muscular, elbows close to the body. Forelegs perfectly straight.*

The oblique shoulder set is important in that it allows sufficient width of body for good development of chest and well sprung ribs. Elbows should be close to the body, neither tied in nor loose, both when the dog is standing and when he is moving – correct front angulation is essential to correct movement. Forelegs should not be bowed nor turn in or out, but should be completely straight with well-shaped feet pointing forward.

Hindquarters: *Powerful, well bent stifles. Hocks well let down. Strong buttocks, lightly feathered.*

The hind angulation must be in balance with the front angulation in order that the dog will be able to move correctly and efficiently, without wasted energy. The angulation is moderate but in proportion. Strength and muscular development are essential.

Feet: *Strong, round and catlike with hard pads.*

The terrain that is the Canaan's natural environment is very harsh. It consists of extremely hard and very rocky ground, hills and wadis that have a great deal of loose, sharp rock lying around, and vegetation that is often tough, thorny, very thick, and close to the ground. The ground and rocks can also be very hot in the summer when it has been exposed to hours of sun. The Canaan must have feet that can stand up to these conditions without being damaged and will allow him to keep moving and functioning for many hours a day. The most efficient foot for functioning in these conditions is a tight catfoot with well-arched toes, and very strong and tough pads that are impervious to the rocks, thorns and heat of the ground, and that are suitable for running and climbing. Some desert breeds of dog have longer or hare feet, but these are dogs that run on the sand or the flat for the most part; for the rocky environment of the Canaans, elongated feet are not functional. Weak feet, soft pads, open toes, flat feet, and hare feet are serious faults.

Tail: *Set high, thick brush carried curled over the back.*

A tail that is set correctly as the finish of a short and strong topline will also be carried correctly, curled well over the back. A correct tail indicates both correct structure and strong temperament. The correctly carried tail is carried curled over the back and should come past the topline; in some cases, the tail even forms close to a double curl. Although the "curl and a half" is not ideal, it is preferable to a loose tail or sickle tail that doesn't reach the topline and is carried like a hound or trailing like a husky. The curl may come over on the top of the back, or the lower part may come over a bit on one side of the flanks.

Incorrect tail carriage is caused by the tail being too low set. The base of the tail should be set high on the croup with no dip from the topline to the tail. A low set tail is often connected with an overly long back, or overangulated hindquarters.

The tail is not merely an appendage set on as an afterthought. It is an integral part of the dog's body constructions; an incorrect tail indicates other structural faults as well.

The tail carriage is also indicative of the dog's character. A dog that carries his tail down and tucked is insecure and fearful, and these points should be considered when judging the dog. The Canaan is a dog that is suspicious by nature and is not a dog that usually enjoys the crowds and commotion of the show ring, and can not be expected to carry his tail high at all times, but when moving we do prefer to see his tail carried over his back.

The tail must be well coated – as described, a "thick brush". The hair on the tail should not be overly long, but thick as on the rest of the body. Lack of coat on the tail is undesirable – the tail is used in the desert to cover the nose when the dog curls up to sleep in the cold weather, and the thick coat helps to keep the nose and air warm.



Good front



Too wide in front



Excellent angulation front and rear



*Front and rear angulation very straight.
Roached topline*



Good straight rear



*Standing a trifle wide in a natural stand,
but good straight rear*



Body too long



Poor topline – soft back, high over loin



Short legs, soft topline



Very poor topline – weak and roached

Coat: *Outer coat dense, harsh and straight, of short to medium length, undercoat close and profuse.*

The correct Canaan coat is of great importance. The coat provides protection from the extremes of the climate, which can range from extremely hot to extremely cold, even, at some times of the year, within the same twenty four hour period. People have a tendency to imagine that the Middle East is a desert, with a burning sun shining down on unlimited sand. This is not at all accurate. Israel is a harsh and extremely arid region (though close to the coast the climate can be quite humid), and there is a great range of temperatures. In the day the temperature can be over 40 degrees C at some times of the year, and at night it can be below freezing. There are times of the year with sudden and heavy rains, and in some areas, even snow. The Canaan's coat has to protect him from all of these extremes of climate, as well as protecting him from the prickly vegetation and thorn bushes so prevalent in the area, from parasites such as fleas and ticks, and from the attacks of other dogs or animals.

Therefore, the Canaan has a double coat, the type of coat found in most of the wild and semi-wild canines. This coat is also typical of many of the other Spitz breeds. The outer coat is of rather harsh and very strong hair of medium length, that stands out a bit from the body. This characteristic helps it to serve to catch thorns and stickers before they penetrate to the skin, to shed rain and damp, and to provide some aeration to the skin for cooling during the hot days. A very short coat will not provide these functions. The undercoat, which is extremely thick and wooly, provides insulation from the cold, the heat, and the rain, and little can penetrate it, including parasites, thorns, or the teeth of other animals. This undercoat is shed twice a year and then quickly grows back. Lack of undercoat is a very serious fault – this is a characteristic that is definitely anti-survival. It should be noted that the breeds of dog that suffer the most from the heat and the sun in hot climates are those with very short coats and no undercoats (Boxer, pinscher), and not dogs with heavy and thick coats.

One sometimes sees Canaans, even with the Bedouin, with a longer coat, somewhat similar to that of a Belgian Sheepdog in length. Although the coat may be of good harsh texture, this length of coat is undesirable. Longer coats than this also sometimes occur, and they are usually very soft or silky in texture – these coats are highly undesirable, as their texture provides the dog with very poor protection.

Feathering on the buttocks, the ruff on the neck, and the plume on the tail are usually a bit longer than the rest of the coat, but should not be too long or of a soft texture.

Color: *Sand to red brown, white, black or spotted, with or without mask. If masked, mask must be symmetrical. Black mask permitted on all colors. White markings are permitted on all colors. Boston Terrier patterns are common. Grey, brindle, black and tan or tricolor are unacceptable. Desert colors – sand, gold, red, cream – are most typical of the breed.*

There is a very wide range of acceptable colors and patterns in the Canaan. Some colors seem to be more typical of certain parts of the country from which those dogs originated – black and black and white are more typical to the rocky and forested north, while the pale sand colors, creams, golds, and reds are more typical to the southern wilderness and desert areas.

As a wide range of colors is accepted, it is easier to list those that are not acceptable. The colors that are most definitely not typical to the Canaan are brindle (as in a boxer, for example) and liver. These are colors that we have never seen among wild born populations and have not had in pure bred litters born in Israel. These would be considered as indications of possible mixed ancestry should they occur. Liver presents another problem as well, as the liver color is connected with self colored nose and eye rims and yellow eyes – anti survival factors for a dog spending a great deal of time exposed to the brutal middle eastern sun.

Black and tan (as in a Doberman, for example) and tricolor (as in a beagle – large clear patches of

brown, black and white, or more commonly, black saddle fading into tan sides, legs, neck, as in a German Shepherd, with additional white trim) do occur in the Canaan. These are recessive characteristics that sometimes appear, but this color is undesirable. Prof. Menzel felt that these colors were not typical or distinctive and that they gave the Canaan a “mixed breed” appearance. Dogs of these colors are not acceptable for show, and preferably should not be bred from, as they will pass the color on.

What appears to be gray, or gray patches, may also occur in the Canaan, but this is usually the result of mixed black and white hairs giving a gray impression. True gray, as in a Weimaraner, is a totally unacceptable color.

A Canaan with a correct basic color of the cream to red shades may sometimes have a black overlay. This is usually very obvious in young puppies, and disappears with time as they mature and grow their adult coats. At times, however, some black overlay remains, leaving the color looking “muddy”. This is not considered tricolor, but is not desirable.

The Canaan may have a mask, either black or white, on any color. The mask is not essential, but if there is a mask, it should be symmetrical. An asymmetrical mask can be most unattractive and interfere with the correct expression.

Various color patterns are common – solid with white trim (feet, chest, white on neck and tail, blaze); Boston Terrier patterns are not uncommon and are quite attractive. Spotted dogs can have anything from minimum spots to large spots covering a good deal of the body, or a good deal of ticking over the whole body. All of these patterns are completely acceptable.



Coat too long



Perfect coat type



Black and white spotted



Red and white spotted



Cream



Boston Terrier pattern



Black and tan – undesirable



“Muddy” red with black overlay - undesirable



Excellent tail set and carriage, example of true red color. A strong clear red like this is not a very common color.



Tail too loosely curled and too much to the side



Tail not sufficiently over the back



This "sickle tail" is insufficiently curled. The liver color is not allowed.



Black saddle – not desirable. Good tail set and carriage.

Weight and size: Height 50-60 cm., males may be considerably larger than females. Weight 18-25 kg.

We are dealing here with a dog of medium size and weight, and medium build. Again, balance and correct proportions are essential. Males may be noticeably larger and stronger than females, but with both males and females, our aim is towards the middle of the range described and not to the extremes. The Canaan should not appear to be a large or heavy dog, but neither is he small and overly refined. This is a medium sized but powerful appearing dog that obviously appears capable of surviving in difficult conditions and defending himself and his property.

Gait: Quick, light and energetic trot. Should demonstrate marked agility and stamina. Correct movement is essential.

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the Canaan is his effortless, ground-covering trot. Contrary to many other breeds, where it is difficult to find “good movers”, with the Canaans it has been rare to find a dog that didn’t move well. Correct movement is, of course, a result of correct structure, and in the Canaan, correct functional movement has been essential to his survival.

The typical Canaan gait is a short, quick, light and agile trot, moving towards single tracking as the speed increases. His movement should always appear powerful, agile, and effortless, with good reach and drive, and perfect balance between front and hind movement. His topline should remain completely steady and level when moving. There should never be an impression of heaviness, sluggishness, or effort. The Canaan does not move in a long loping stride; his gait is short and quick and he looks able to change directions instantly, to leap effortlessly over or on any obstacles in his path, and to keep going for hours without tiring.

A long bodied dog will be lacking in the effortlessly and smooth movement, often appearing to be disunited with front and hind legs moving out of synch with each other. Lack of correct balance in angulation may cause gait faults such as pacing or overreaching. From the front and the rear, the movement of legs is parallel and straight forward, moving in under the center of gravity of the dog as the speed increases. Crossing, paddling, loose elbows, cowhocks, narrow movement are highly undesirable.

Correct gait is essential to this breed, and all faults resulting in poor movement should be penalized.



Excellent, free movement from the front



Excellent movement from the side



This bitch, with very moderate angulation, is “side winding” while moving and her topline shows a rise over the croup.



At a fully extended run, this dog shows the typical power and grace of correct Canaan movement, and excellent reach and drive with a strong level topline.

Character: Alert, quick to react, distrustful of strangers, strongly defensive but not naturally aggressive. Vigilant not only against man but other animals as well. Extraordinarily devoted and amenable to training.

It is essential to have a basic understanding of the character of the Canaan. The Canaan is not a dog that is outgoing and friendly to everyone and willing and happy to be approached and petted by all. The Canaan has survived because of his highly developed suspiciousness and his ability to react instantly to anything that may be considered danger. This often results in the Canaan being a reluctant show dog – he does not like being outside of his own territory, especially in places with large numbers of other dogs and strange people, and he doesn't care to be handled by strangers. Intelligent and trainable, he will learn to put up with this, but he doesn't usually enjoy it. The may result in him being reluctant to put his tail up in the show ring, and to him at times backing away when approached by a strange judge. He may also show a startle reaction at unusual or sudden noises, movements or occurrences. If given a moment to look over the situation, and to take a look at the human approaching him, the well socialized and well trained Canaan will settle and behave with dignity, honoring his human master with his agreement to put up with all of this nonsense if his master really wants him to. It is important for the judge to understand that this type of behavior is not indicative of a shy dog or a dog of bad character, but is rather the true nature of the Canaan.

However, the Canaan is not an aggressive dog by nature and certainly not when he is outside of his own territory. He should never show any signs of aggression to humans that approach him in the ring in a normal manner, and should be willing to allow himself to be touched. He also should never display uncontrolled aggressiveness to other dogs. This type of behavior is definitely undesirable.

Faults: All deviations from the standard of the breed. All faults in body structure which constitute a deviation from the norm of a well built dog; anything that would detract from his potential for survival as a desert animal.

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