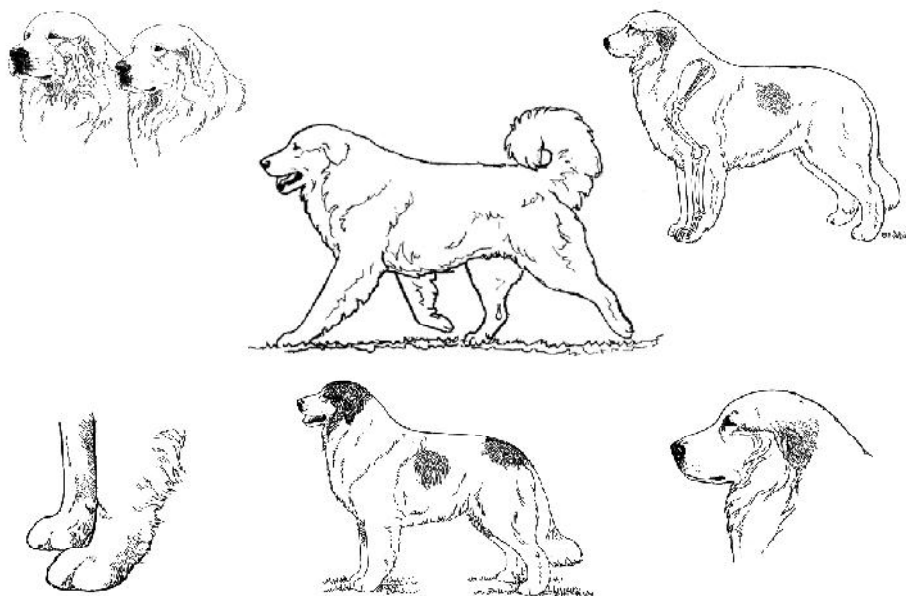


# GREAT PYRENEES CLUB OF AMERICA



## The Great Pyrenees Standard Visualization and Commentary



ILLUSTRATED STANDARD

## Introduction

In 1986, in response to the AKC request to put all Standards into a common format, the members of the Great Pyrenees Club of America elected a committee of nine longtime breeders from across the country to review and recommend clarifications to the existing Standard, which had remained unchanged since its adoption in 1935. The result of three years of work by the committee was an expanded description which remains true to the historic Great Pyrenees. Ninety percent of the voting membership of the Great Pyrenees Club of America voted to adopt the revised Standard and AKC approved it in August, 1990.

The following discussion is provided to help owners, fanciers, breeders and judges better understand and interpret this Standard.

All terminology in the Great Pyrenees Standard and this Standard Commentary is as defined in Harold R. Spira's Canine Terminology, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, NY, 1982. Many of the key terms and their definitions are included in the Glossary.

### Official Standard

In the following commentary the official Great Pyrenees Standard is printed at the beginning of each section on a blue background.

---

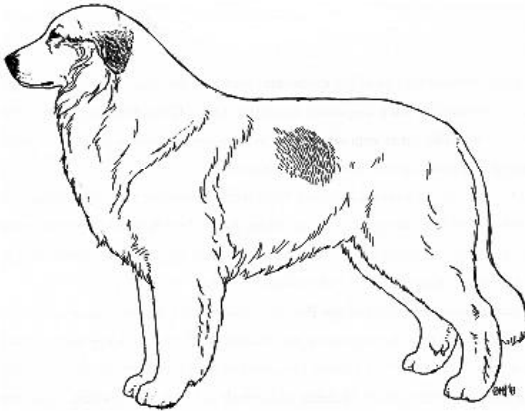
The discussion is printed on a white background.

## **Breed Background**

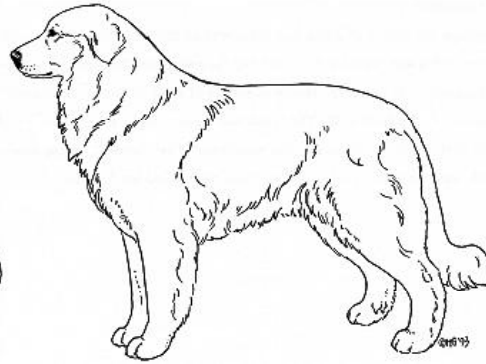
The Great Pyrenees is one of the descendant breeds of the large, primarily white guardian dogs which are believed to have originated in central Asia. These dogs were key components in the lives of the nomadic tribes with whom they lived, generally used to protect the tribe's herds of horses, sheep and goats against predators and thieves.

As the tribes moved westward seeking more fertile pasturage, their dogs came with them. Today, we can almost trace the westward migrations by the breeds that settled into areas along the way: Akbash, Polish Sheepdog or Tatra Mountain Dog (Owczarek Podhalanski), Kuvasz, Komondor, Maremma, Chuvatch and Pomeranian Sheepdog. Eventually these dogs reached the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain. The large white dogs settled into the mountains and became the breed we know today as the Great Pyrenees. For centuries the Great Pyrenees have worked with the shepherds to protect the sheep flocks on the steep mountain slopes, in dense underbrush and high open pasture. They continued to be widely used for this purpose until the late 1800's when the Pyrenees population of large predators was eliminated. Only through the efforts of a few key protectors of the breed did it survive through the early years of the 1900's and World War I. In 1932 the first Great Pyrenees were imported into the U.S.A. for the purpose of breeding. Heavy exporting of some of France's best dogs continued up until the outbreak of World War II. The breed was recognized by the AKC in 1933 at which time the breed's first American Standard was approved. The Standard, based heavily on the French Standard, was revised in 1935 and then stood unchanged for 55 years.

## General Appearance



**Ideal Male**



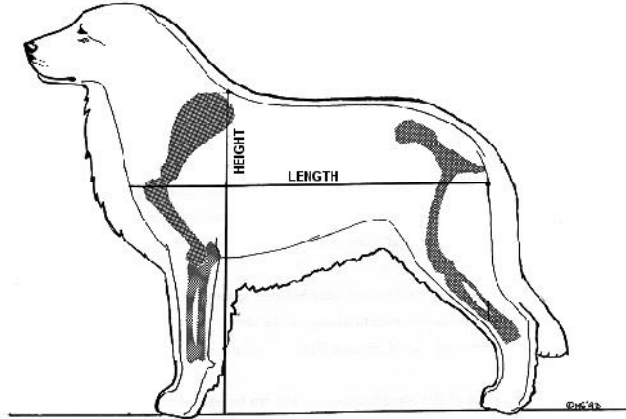
**Ideal Female**

### Official Standard

The Great Pyrenees dog conveys the distinct impression of elegance and unsurpassed beauty combined with great overall size and majesty. He has a white or principally white coat that may contain markings of badger, gray, or varying shades of tan. He possesses a keen intelligence and a kindly, while regal, expression. Exhibiting a unique elegance of bearing and movement, his soundness and coordination show unmistakably the purpose for which he has been bred; the strenuous work of guarding the flocks in all kinds of weather on the steep mountain slopes of the Pyrenees.

When standing back, viewing the Great Pyrenees in profile, the overall impression should be of a large, elegant, long haired, primarily white dog. It is slightly longer than tall, solidly built, and well balanced. In addition to the overall beauty and elegance of the dog, there should be absolutely no question that this is a working dog: physically, mentally and temperamentally capable of its centuries old task of guarding the flocks from predators in all kinds of mountainous terrain and in all kinds of weather. When approaching more closely, what becomes apparent is the regal beauty of the head. Its beauty comes from the soft, smooth transitions, the absence of an apparent stop, the balanced proportions of front and rear skull, and from the unique quiet confidence reflected in the Pyrenean eye. The elegance of this breed is important and can be seen when the dog is static, as well as when it is in motion. This is neither a slight, shelly breed nor a heavy, cumbersome one, for neither extreme could protect the flocks. The correct Great Pyrenees is an agile, effortlessly moving dog of moderation and balance. It possesses sufficient substance, coat and size to combat a wolf or bear, but neither too little nor too much to prevent its successful accomplishment of that task. There is only one type of Great Pyrenees — there should be no difference between show dogs and working livestock guardian dogs.

## Size, Proportion, and Substance



**Correct Overall Proportions and Angulation**

### Official Standard

**Size:** The height at the withers ranges from 27 inches to 32 inches for dogs and from 25 inches to 29 inches for bitches. A 27-inch dog weighs about 100 pounds and a 25-inch bitch weighs about 85 pounds. Weight is in proportion to the overall size and structure.

**Proportion:** The Great Pyrenees is a balanced dog, with the height measured at the withers being somewhat less than the length of the body measured from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh (buttocks). These proportions create a somewhat rectangular dog, slightly longer than it is tall. Front and rear angulation are balanced.

**Substance:** the Great Pyrenees is a dog of medium substance, whose coat deceives those who do not feel the bone and muscle. Commensurate with his size and impression of elegance, there is sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame.

#### **Faults:**

**Size:** Dogs and bitches under minimum size or over maximum size.

**Substance:** Dogs too heavily boned or too lightly boned to be in balance with their frame.

**Size** - The Great Pyrenees appears to be more massive than he really is. Therefore, if you are going to make an accurate assessment of size and substance, it is essential that you use your hands to get underneath the coat. The Great Pyrenees is a large dog. Males should be at least 27 inches tall at the withers and females should be over 25 inches.

While large size is always desirable, it should not be achieved at the expense of soundness or correct type.

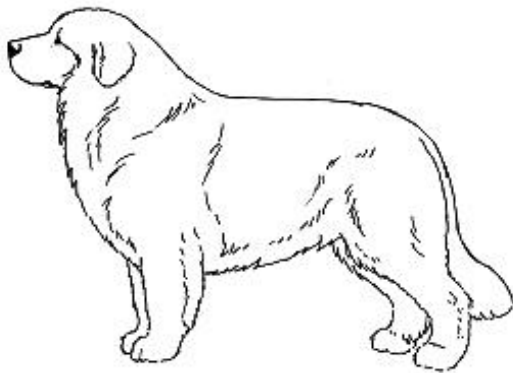
As with the size, the coat misleads the casual observer in terms of actual weight. While the Standard does not specify a range for weight, it is very clear that weight must be in proportion to overall size. Again, the Great Pyrenees is not a heavy, lumbering dog, nor is it light and racy.

**Proportion** - Size and weight are important, but only if the total dog is in balance and presents an image of elegance and moderation.

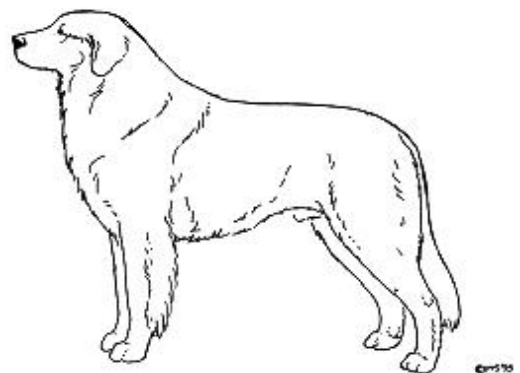
In general, the Great Pyrenees appears to be slightly longer than he is tall. The distance from the withers to the elbow is approximately equal to the distance from the elbow to the ground.

**Substance** - The Standard calls for medium substance. According to Spira, substance is defined as being “used in reference to bone, particularly leg bone.” Maintaining balance with the frame, Great Pyrenees bone is of medium substance as opposed to a Newfoundland which is “well boned” and the “heavy-boned” Masti .

The overall statement that this section of the Standard is making is that the correct Great Pyrenees is a dog which must be in balance — height, weight and bone.

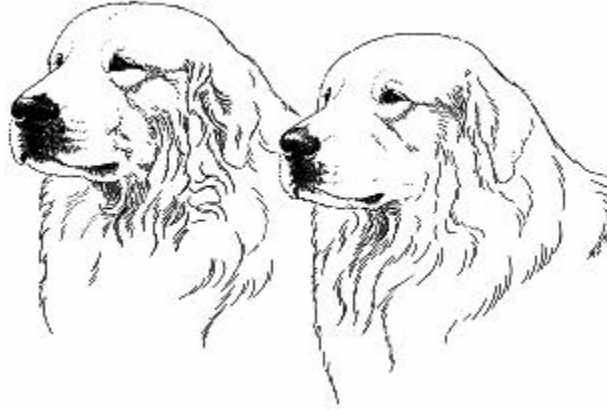


**Incorrect Substance** - Too heavily boned. Overall substance is excessive and out of balance with the frame. The dog is too massive and lacks elegance.



**Incorrect Substance** - Too lightly boned. Substance is too light for the frame, giving the dog a weedy or fragile appearance.

## Head



**Correct Head - Male**

**Correct Head - Female**

### Official Standard

Correct head and expression are essential to the breed. The head is not heavy in proportion to the size of the dog. It is wedge-shaped with a slightly rounded crown.

**Expression:** The expression is elegant, intelligent and contemplative.

**Eyes:** Medium-sized, almond-shaped, set slightly obliquely, rich dark brown. Eyelids are close fitting with black rims.

**Ears:** Small to medium in size, v-shaped with rounded tips, set on at eye level, normally carried low, flat, and close to the head. There is a characteristic meeting of the hair of the upper and lower face which forms a line from the outer corner of the eye to the base of the ear.

**Skull and Muzzle:** The muzzle is approximately equal in length to the back skull. The width and length of the skull are approximately equal. The muzzle blends smoothly with the skull. The cheeks are flat. There is sufficient fill under the eyes. A slight furrow exists between the eyes. There is no apparent stop. The bony eyebrow ridges are only slightly developed. Lips are tight fitting, with the upper lip just covering the lower lip. There is a strong lower jaw. The nose and lips are black.

**Teeth:** A scissor bite is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable. It is not unusual to see dropped (receding) lower central incisor teeth.

#### **Faults:**

- Too heavy head (St. Bernard or Newfoundland-like)
- Too narrow or small skull
- Foxy appearance
- Presence of an apparent stop
- Missing pigmentation on nose, eye rims, or lips
- Eyelids round, triangular, loose, or small
- Overshot, undershot, wry mouth

The head is the key to true Pyrenean expression and it is essential to correct breed type. It is an elegant, molded wedge with smooth, soft transitions; not sharp, abrupt, chiseled angles.



**Correct Eye and Expression**

**Expression** - “Correct Pyrenean eye” gives the dog its unique expression. It is a far-away, almost dreamy look that says, “I have everything under control” -- a very intelligent, regal, relaxed look.

**Incorrect Eye** - Too loose, showing haw. Eyelids must be close fitting.



**Incorrect Eye** - Triangular shape instead of correct almond shape.



**Eyes**- eyes are medium sized, almond in shape, set at a slightly downward (oblique) angle. The dark brown color of the eye contributes significantly to creating true Pyrenees expression.

**Ears** - Of small to medium size and carried low, flat and close to the head, they almost disappear by blending into the fur of the neck and ru .

The beauty and correct expression of the Great Pyrenees head and eye can only be seen when the dog is relaxed with its ears low in their natural position. Therefore, judges are discouraged from whistling at the Great Pyrenees or shaking keys to “make it alert,” as you might with one of the Terrier breeds.



## Skull and Muzzle

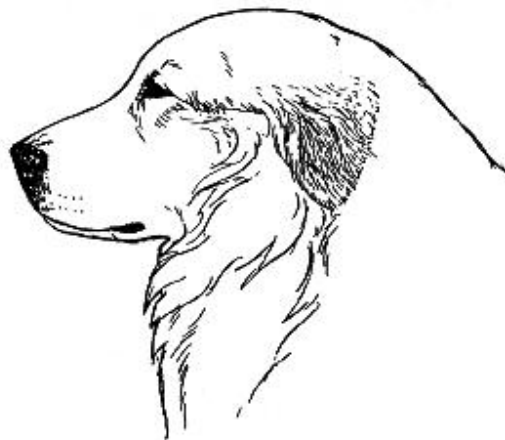
**Correct Skull** - Smooth wedge shape with sufficient fill under the eyes.



**Correct Skull** - Muzzle approximately equal to length of back skull.

As viewed from above, the skull is wedge-shaped. The length of the muzzle should be approximately equal to the length (stop to occiput) and breadth (between the ears) of the backskull. Too short a muzzle tends to give a common appearance and spoils the elegance. A long muzzle, without adequate backskull width and depth, is equally incorrect as it makes the head look narrow and snipecy.

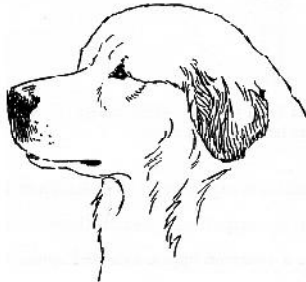
Probably the single phrase in the Standard which causes the most question among newcomers to the breed is, “there is no apparent stop;” yet this key description of the correct skull remains unchanged since the original U.S. Standard of 1933. When viewed in profile, the basic plane of the topskull should not be parallel with the plane of the muzzle. Instead, the muzzle slopes up slightly from tip of the nose to the point at which it joins the top of the backskull. There is, therefore, a point between the eyes where the two planes come together with a minor but not overly apparent change of slope (stop). The change is gradual, soft and smooth. There should be no abrupt, sharp angle caused by the two planes not meeting evenly. The key to understanding this phrase is the word “apparent.” While there is a point of joining, it is so subtle as not to be apparent.



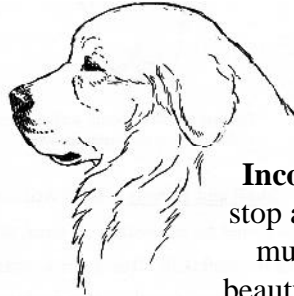
**Correct Skull** - Proper amount of stop; it is there, but subtle and not apparent.

## Skull and Muzzle

**Incorrect Skull -**  
Too much crown.



**Incorrect Skull -** Too much stop and not enough length of muzzle; detracts from the beauty and elegant expression.



In addition to actual stop, the perception of an apparent stop can be caused by two other incorrect head features: (1) too much rear skull above the level of the eye. A Great Pyrenees' head should have a slightly rounded crown; too much rounding and/or too much crown forming a dome gives the impression of a heavy head with an excess of stop; and (2) the over development of the supraorbital ridges or bony protuberances over the eyes. While different from the stop, such eyebrow ridges are equally incorrect and spoil the beauty of correct Pyrenean expression.



**Correct Lip -** Covers lower lip, but not lower jaw.

**Incorrect Lip -** Too long, hangs down over lower jaw.

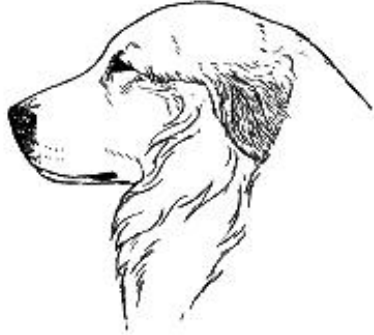


**Incorrect Lip -** Pendulous, too long and loose.

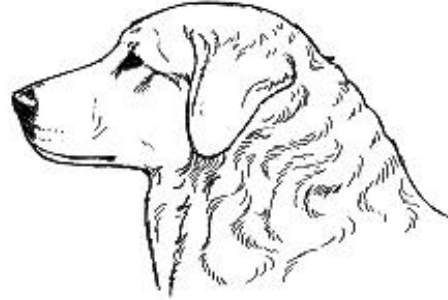


The lips of the Great Pyrenees must be tight. The upper lip does not overlap the lower jaw, but fits snugly just over the lower lip. Pigmentation is important! Lips, nose and eye rims must be unbroken black. It is also desirable for the Great Pyrenees to have a black palate, pads and some black toenails. However, it is not necessary for judges to check for black palate or black toenails while judging in the ring.

## Comparative Profiles



**Great Pyrenees**



**Kuvasz**

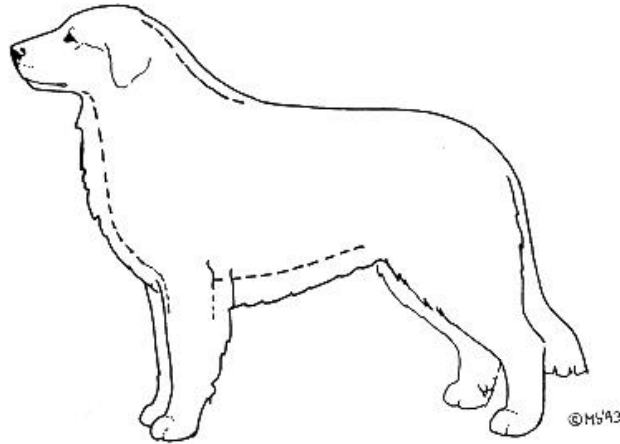


**Newfoundland**



**St. Bernard**

### Neck, Topline, Body



Correct Neck, Topline, and Body

#### Official Standard

**Neck:** Strongly muscled and of medium length, with minimal dewlap.

**Topline:** The backline is level.

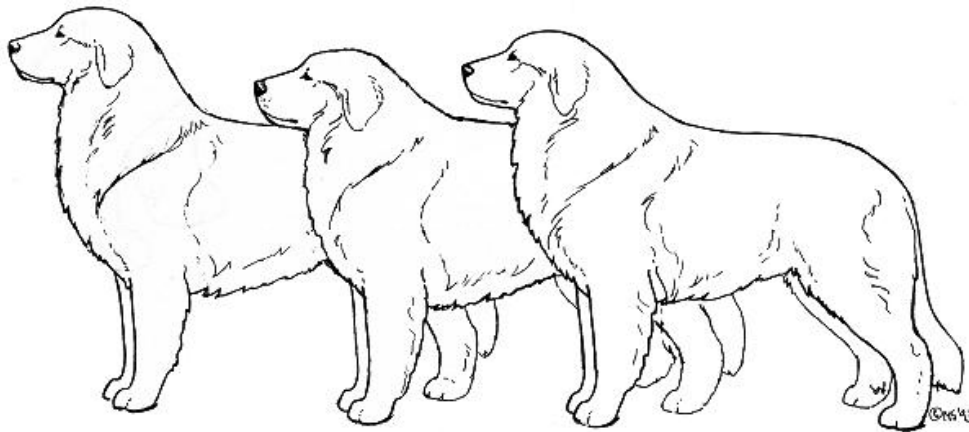
**Body:** The chest is moderately broad. The rib cage is well sprung, oval in shape, and of sufficient depth to reach the elbows. Back and loin are broad and strongly coupled with some tuck-up. The croup is gently sloping, with the tail set on just below the level of the back.

**Tail:** The tailbones are of sufficient length to reach the hock. The tail is well plumed, carried low in repose, and may be carried over the back, “making the wheel,” when aroused. When present, a “shepherd’s crook” at the end of the tail accentuates the plume. When gaiting, the tail may be carried either over the back or low. Both carriages are equally correct.

**Fault:** Barrel ribs.

**Neck** - The neck of the Great Pyrenees must be strongly muscled and of sufficient length to facilitate movement and combat. The neck should contribute to the Great Pyrenees’ proud carriage and elegance. A sturdy, short-necked dog lacks elegance. Too long a neck compromises proper balance.

### Neck, Topline, Body

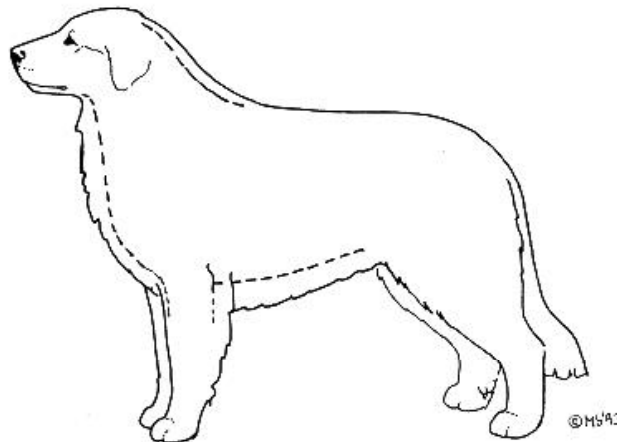


**Incorrect Neck** - Too long and out of balance.

**Incorrect Neck** - Too short and sturdy.

**Correct Neck** - Strongly muscled and of medium length.

**Neck** - The neck of the Great Pyrenees must be strongly muscled and of sufficient length to facilitate movement and combat. The neck should contribute to the Great Pyrenees' proud carriage and elegance. A sturdy, short-necked dog lacks elegance. Too long a neck compromises proper balance.



**Correct Topline and Body** - The longer hair on the neck may give the appearance of a sloping backline, but by using your hands you can accurately identify a level backline.

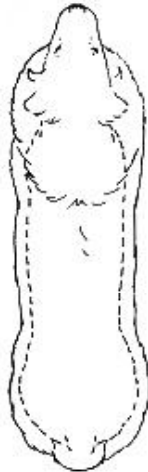
**Topline** - When static and in motion, the backline from withers to croup must be level (parallel to the ground). A strong, straight and level backline is essential for drive and control over front and rear movement.

Show ring presentation of the Great Pyrenees stacked with a sloping backline is not correct and should be discouraged.

### Neck, Topline, Body



**Incorrect Neck** - Too long and out of balance.

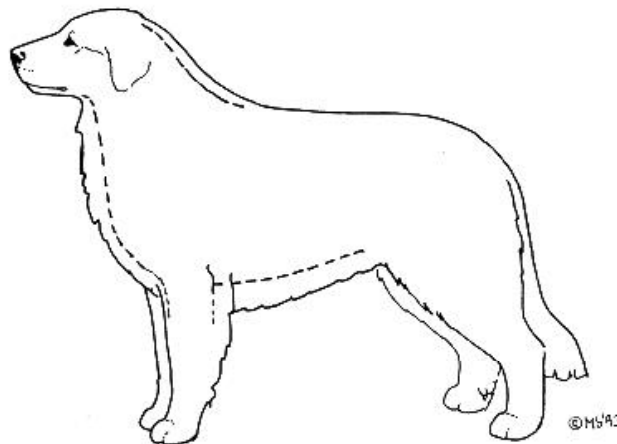


**Incorrect Neck** - Too short and stocky.



**Correct Neck** - Strongly muscled and of medium length.

**Neck** - The neck of the Great Pyrenees must be strongly muscled and of sufficient length to facilitate movement and combat. The neck should contribute to the Great Pyrenees' proud carriage and elegance. A stocky, short-necked dog lacks elegance. Too long a neck compromises proper balance.

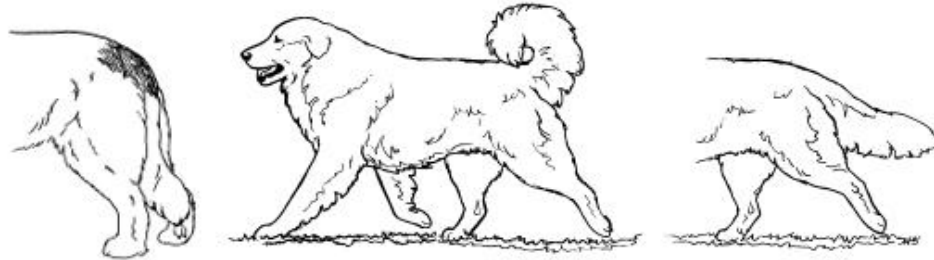


**Correct Topline and Body** - The longer hair on the neck may give the appearance of a sloping backline, but by using your hands you can accurately identify a level backline.

**Topline** - When static and in motion, the backline from withers to croup must be level (parallel to the ground). A strong, straight and level backline is essential for drive and control over front and rear movement.

Show ring presentation of the Great Pyrenees stacked with a sloping backline is not correct and should be discouraged.

## Neck, Topline, Body



**Correct Tail** - Carried low in repose.

**Correct Tail Carriage** - "Making the wheel" when in motion. The tail wheels over the loins, with only the tip touching the back, providing an open arch through which you can see light.

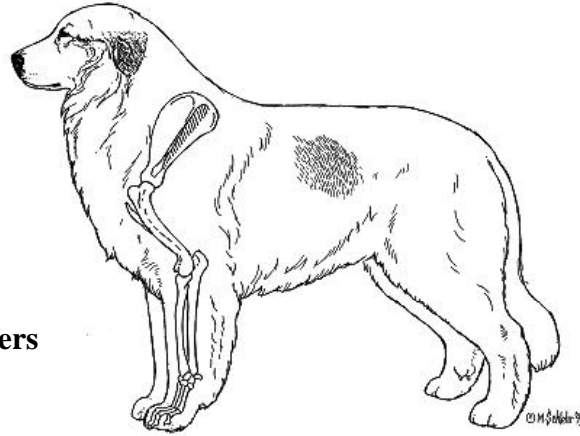
**Correct Tail Carriage** - Carried low when in motion.

**Tail** - Normally, the tail is carried low in repose. It should hang down so that the last bone of the tail reaches at least to the hock. Near the end of the tail it is not unusual nor is it incorrect to find a kink or "shepherd's crook" in which one or two bones angle away from straight tailbone alignment.

When in motion, the tail may be carried either over the back in an open "wheel" or low — both are equally correct. No preference should be given to one over the other. Handlers should be discouraged from lifting the tail into a wheel before moving the dog.

## Forequarters

### Correct Forequarters



### Official Standard

**Shoulders:** The shoulders are well laid back, well muscled, and lie close to the body. The upper arm meets the shoulder blade at approximately a right angle. The upper arm angles backward from the point of the shoulder to the elbow and is never perpendicular to the ground. The length of the shoulder blade and the upper arm are approximately equal. The height from the ground to the elbow appears approximately equal to the height from the elbow to the withers.

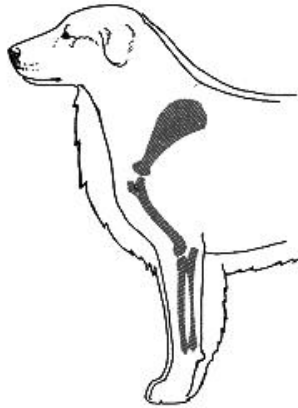
**Forelegs:** The legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. The elbows are close to the body and point directly to the rear when standing and gaiting. The forelegs, when viewed from the side, are located directly under the withers and are straight and vertical to the ground. The elbows, when viewed from the front, are set in a straight line from the point of shoulder to the wrist. Front pasterns are strong and flexible. Each foreleg carries a single dewclaw.

**Front Feet:** Rounded, close-cupped, well padded, toes well arched.

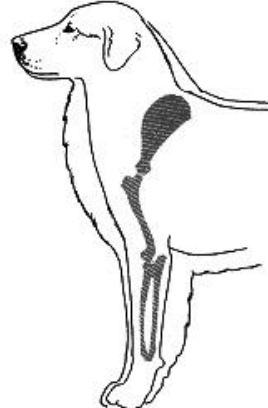
A sound front-end assembly is critical for breed function. Good reach is required for efficient movement on flat and rough terrain. Powerful shoulders and strong, flexible pasterns allow the Great Pyrenees to absorb shock as it easily descends steep slopes.



## Forequarters



**Correct Shoulder**



**Incorrect Shoulder**

**Correct Shoulder** - An imaginary line running from the withers to the point of the shoulder should meet a line drawn from the elbow to the point of the shoulder at an angle which appears to be about 90 degrees.

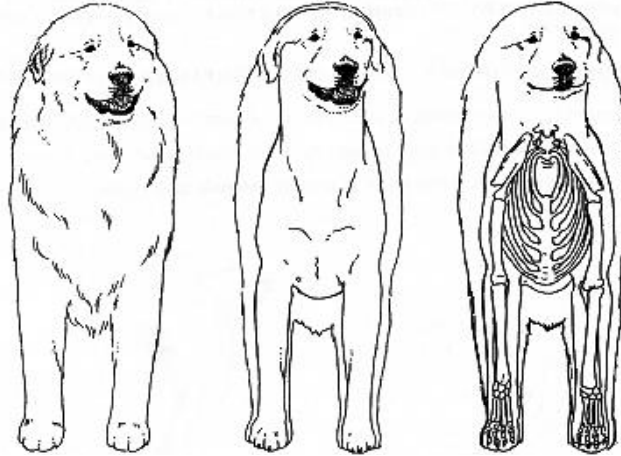
**Incorrect Shoulder** - Straight shoulder; scapula does not have the required lay back (it is too vertical). Joining of upper arm and shoulder blade creates an angle greater than the desired right angle.

**Shoulders** - To achieve proper reach, the Great Pyrenees' shoulder blade (scapula) joins the upper arm (humerus) at an angle which visually approximates 90 degrees. The upper arm angles backward so that the elbow is directly beneath the withers.

The shoulder blades should be fairly close together at the withers (a gap of two finger widths) and lie snugly upon the ribcage. Since the ribs are well sprung from the spine the scapulae slope forward and laterally to the point of the shoulder, allowing for easy movement of the leg assembly.

**Correct Body** - Oval-shaped ribcage with moderately broad chest.

## Forequarters



**Correct Front**

**Correct Body**

**Correct Skeleton**

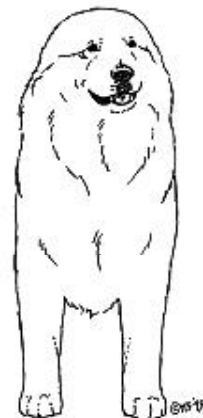
**Forelegs** - From the front, the bones form a parallel pair of straight vertical columns from the point of the shoulder to the foot. The “bone” of the foreleg must be in balance with the “medium substance” of the frame; neither fine and delicate nor heavy and coarse.



**Incorrect Front** - Too narrow.



**Incorrect Front** - Out at the elbows, bowlegged, and toeing in



**Incorrect Front** - Too broad.

Pasterns are strong and flexible, set on at a slight slope to the lower leg bone. Each foreleg has a single dew-claw.

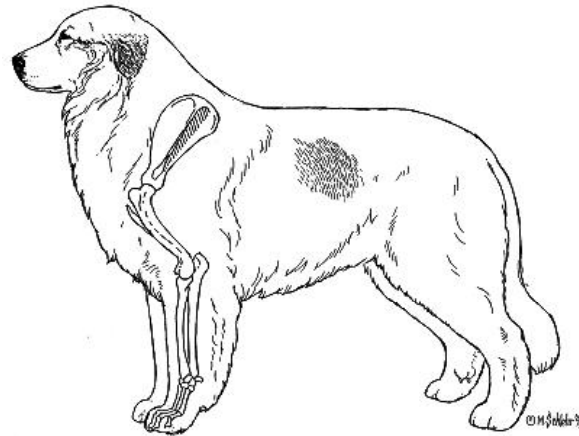
**Front Feet** - Tight, cat-like feet to maximize endurance and minimize injury.

**Note:** Due to the Great Pyrenees' dense coat, all visual observations must be verified by hand examination.

**Correct Front Feet** - Single dewclaw on the inside of the foreleg.



## Hindquarters



**Correct Hindquarters**

### Official Standard

**Hindquarters:** The angulation of the hindquarters is similar in degree to that of the forequarters.

**Thighs:** strongly muscular upper thighs extend from the pelvis at right angles. The upper thigh is the same length as the lower thigh, creating moderate stifle joint angulation when viewed in profile. The rear pastern (metatarsus) is of medium length and perpendicular to the ground as the dog stands naturally. This produces a moderate degree of angulation in the hock joint, when viewed from the side. The hindquarters from the hip to the rear pastern are straight and parallel, as viewed from the rear. The rear legs are of sufficient bone and muscle to provide a balance with the frame. Double dewclaws are located on each rear leg.

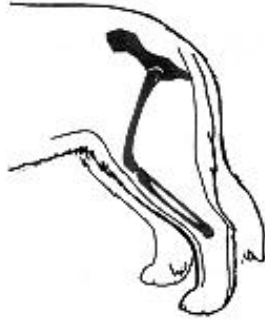
**Rear Feet:** The rear feet have a structural tendency to toe out slightly. This breed characteristic is not to be confused with cowhocks. The rear feet, like the forefeet, are rounded, close-cupped, well padded, with toes well arched.

**Fault:** Absence of double dewclaws on each rear leg.

The key consideration is that the angulation of the hindquarters must be in balance with that of the forequarters. This means that the angles of the joints in the forequarters and the hindquarters should be nearly equal -- the point of the shoulder angle should be similar to the angle at the stifle and the angle at the elbow should be equal to the hock joint angle.

Overangulation in the rear wastes energy and efficiency of movement as the dog must either crab, pace, or create unnecessary extra rear or front (hackney) movement to keep from overrunning his front feet. Too little angulation in the rear limits propulsion required for efficient movement, climbing ability and fighting power.

## Hindquarters



**Correct Front Angulation**



**Incorrect Rear Angulation -**  
Too straight. Stifle lacks re-  
quired moderate angulation. Not  
enough fall o in the pelvis.

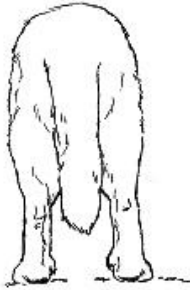


**Incorrect Rear Angulation -**  
Overangulated rear. Excess  
angulation at the meeting of the  
upper and lower thighs (stifle).  
Croup slopes too much due to  
excessive tilt of pelvis.

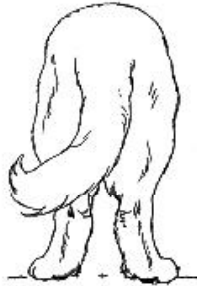
**Thighs** - The croup (formed by the pelvic bones assembly) of the Great Pyrenees slopes gently down from the level backline. The slope of the croup is less than that of the pelvis. The length of the upper and lower thighs should be equal.

This rear assembly carries the lower thigh back to the hock joint where it meets the medium length rear pastern (metatarsus) at a moderate angle. When the Great Pyrenees stands naturally, its rear pastern should be perpendicular to the ground. As viewed from the side, the vertical rear pastern should be to the rear of the body (the front of the rear pastern should be under the rearmost projection of the upper thigh or buttocks) so that the tail hangs straight down between the hock joints while still maintaining a level backline.

## Hindquarters



**Correct Rear** - Note the slight toeing out of the rear feet.



**Incorrect Rear** - Cohocked.



**Correct Rear** - Moving away. \*

**\*Misleadingly, the double dewclaws may give the impression that the dog is moving closely.**

Viewed from the rear, the legs drop in a straight line from hip to rear pastern. It is neither unusual nor incorrect to find a Great Pyrenees whose rear feet toe out. This is a function of the way in which the foot is attached to the leg and is different from the faulty “cowhock” rear where the hock joints twist together breaking the straight flow of bone assembly.



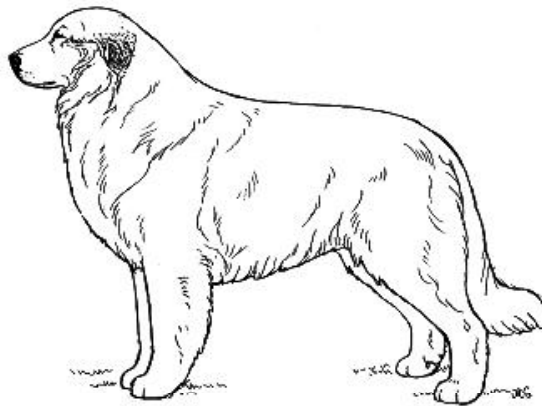
**Correct Rear Feet** - Double dewclaw on the inside of the rear pastern.

Inside each rear leg are located double dewclaws. While these dewclaws do not serve a recognized function today, they are a traditional breed characteristic. When viewing movement going away, it is important to distinguish between (1) the breed’s tendency to toe out as opposed to being cowhocked, and (2) moving close versus an illusion caused by the presence of the rear dewclaws.

## Coat



**Correct Coat** - Facial hair is shorter and meets in a line running from the corner of the eye to the front edge of the ear.



**Correct Coat** - Longer hair provides a ruff, feathering on the legs and a plumed tail.

### Official Standard

**Coat:** The weather-resistant double coat consists of a long, flat, thick, outer coat of coarse hair, straight or slightly undulating, and lying over a dense, fine, woolly undercoat. The coat is more profuse about the neck and shoulders, where it forms a ruff or mane, which is more pronounced in males. Longer hair on the tail forms a plume. There is feathering along the back of the front legs and along the back of the thighs, giving a “pantaloon” effect. The hair on the face and ears is shorter and of finer texture. Correctness of coat is more important than abundance of coat.

#### **Faults:**

Curly coat  
Stand-off coat (Samoyed-type)

## Coat

The coat of the Great Pyrenees consists of two separate layers. A flat, thick, coarse outer coat protects the dog from rain and snow, as well as brambles and underbrush. It is a coat which tends to resist tangling and matting, enabling the dog to work with a minimum of grooming care. This coat should be straight or slightly undulating.

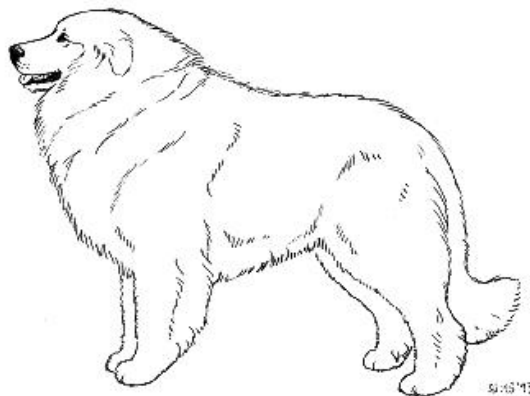
The second coat is the seasonal undercoat grown in the fall to provide warmth. This undercoat is of a different texture. It is made up of a dense growth of fine, woolly textured hair. Typically, this undercoat is shed in the spring. In warmer seasons and/or climates, a less dense coat is acceptable. Females also tend to shed their undercoat after having been in season and after whelping.

One of the breed's points of sexual differentiation is the coat. Adult males tend to grow longer, more profuse coats, with thicker ruffs around the neck and shoulders. Other characteristics of the Pyrenean coat include:

- long straight hairs on the tail forming a thick plume.
- shorter, finer, textured hair on the face and ears, giving the head a soft, smooth appearance. There is a typical "line" running from the outer corner of the eye toward the front base of the ear caused by the meeting of the hairs of the upper and lower face.
- feathering along the back of the front and rear legs creating pantaloons.

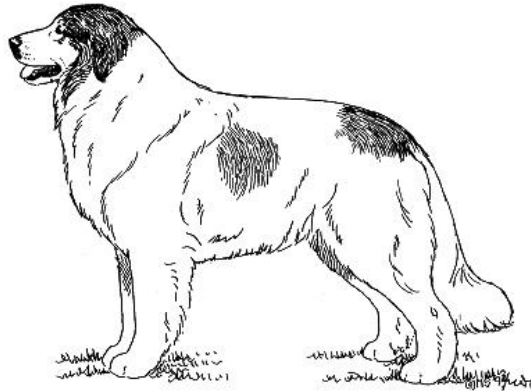
In evaluating coat, the most important concern is ensuring that the overall coat is correct. The outer coat (guard hairs) must be straight or slightly waving at most. A Great Pyrenees' coat should never be curly or stand-off (standing out from the body instead of lying flat against the skin). The amount of coat (long, short, or out of coat) must be a secondary consideration. A single coated dog is to be faulted.

The Great Pyrenees' coat should be presented naturally, with only minor trimming allowed to tidy up the feet and face (removal of whiskers and eyebrows is optional). Exhibitors should not be rewarded for presenting a dog with a scissored or shaped coat.



**Incorrect Coat - A stand-off or Samoyed-type coat.**

## Color



**Correct Coat** - White dog with markings which should not exceed one-third of body.

### Official Standard

**Color:** White or white with markings of gray, badger, reddish brown, or varying shades of tan. Markings of varying size may appear on the ears, head (including a full face mask), tail, and as a few body spots. The undercoat may be white or shaded. All of the above-described colorings and locations are characteristic of the breed, and are equally correct.

**Fault:** Outer coat markings covering more than one-third of the body.

Correct Great Pyrenees color is either all white or white with, most typically, badger, tan, gray, or reddish-brown markings. Spira defines badger as “an admixture of white/grey/brown/black hairs of varying intensity;” also referred to as “blaireau.” Occasionally, you will find individuals with markings that are red. No marking color is considered incorrect. Both marked and unmarked dogs are equally correct and no preference should be given to one over the other.

Litters typically consist of a mixture of marked puppies and all white puppies. Many of the markings on the very young puppies will be extremely dark brown or black, appearing on the head, ears, body and/or base of the tail. Usually, as the puppies grow to the age of 8 - 10 weeks, these dark markings begin to soften, fading to grays and tans. By the age of one year, many of the markings will have faded to highlights, most often visible on the ears. However, some of the dogs will carry pronounced markings throughout their life.

Marked dogs and bitches are felt to be essential to a sound breeding program because they are advantageous to the maintenance of good pigmentation in the breed. Repeated generations of breeding all white to all white can result in weak or missing pigmentation.

Usually, most of the markings are exhibited on the outer coat. However, some dogs also exhibit a marked or shaded undercoat, though most undercoats are white.



## Color



**Correct Color** - Heavily marked head with full mask.



**Correct Color** - Completely white without markings.



**Correct Color** - Typical lighter markings which have faded to only a shading or highlight on the ears.

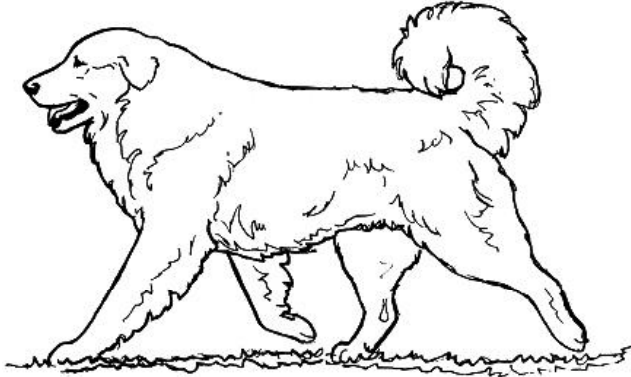
**NOTE:** All three heads are exactly the same. Any appearance of difference is caused by the markings.

Special attention must be employed when evaluating dogs with strong head masks. The mask can sometimes distort the visual perception of the actual shape of the head. Again, it is a good idea to use one's hands to obtain an accurate evaluation.

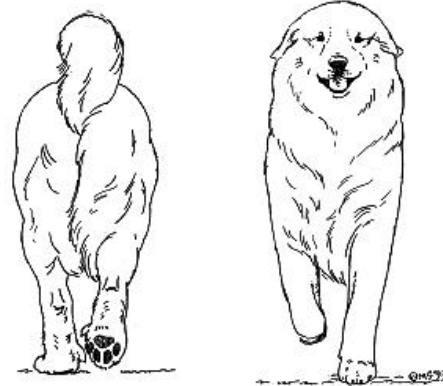
Among all white dogs, there is often a range of natural "whiteness." Their color can go from bright "Clorox" white to cream to a yellow-white. These shades of white are not to be considered as markings.

While no preference is to be given to marked or unmarked coat colorings, it must be remembered that the Great Pyrenees is a principally white dog. Therefore, when markings exceed one-third of the body, they are considered to be excessive.

## Gait



**Correct Gait** - Level backline, good reach, strong drive and elegance.



**Correct Gait** - Single Tracking as speed increases.

## Official Standard

**Gait:** The Great Pyrenees moves smoothly and elegantly, true and straight ahead, exhibiting both power and agility. The stride is well-balanced, with good reach and strong drive. The legs tend to move toward the center line as speed increases. Ease and efficiency of movement are more important than speed.

Sound and efficient movement is critical to a Pyrenees, as it is to all working breeds, particularly those which must be capable of working in the mountains.

The Great Pyrenees is an elegant dog who moves smoothly and efficiently. He must not pound or move ponderously.

The balance of moderate angulation of forequarters and hindquarters, examined when the dog was static, can now be seen working together to produce coordinated reach and drive. A sound shoulder set should allow the Great Pyrenees' extended forefoot to reach forward almost as far as the tip of his nose before coming to earth well in front of his body. The forelegs are lifted only enough to clear the ground without useless high hackney action. In balance with the front, the hindquarters provide solid thrust, with good extension of the stifle and hock joints. The level backline provides efficient transmission of rear thrust through the back to the front of the body without needless sway or bounce.

As the Great Pyrenees increases speed, the legs move toward the centerline; neither the front legs nor the rear legs should move wide. When viewed from the rear, the dewclaws can give the misleading impression that the dog is moving too close.

Care should be taken not to mistake speed and flash for correct Pyrenean movement, which is smooth, powerful, and efficient.

## Temperament

### Official Standard

Character and temperament are of utmost importance. In nature, the Great Pyrenees is confident, gentle, and affectionate. While territorial and protective of his flock or family when necessary, his general demeanor is one of quiet composure, both patient and tolerant. He is strong-willed, independent, and somewhat reserved, yet attentive, fearless, and loyal to his charges both human and animal.

Although the Great Pyrenees may appear reserved in the show ring, any sign of excessive shyness, nervousness, or aggression to humans is unacceptable and must be considered an extremely serious fault.

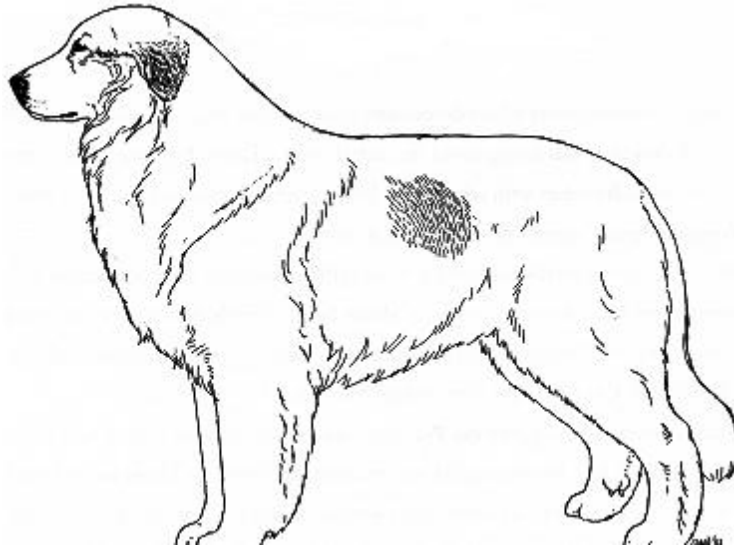
First and foremost, the Great Pyrenees is a guardian, trusted to work independently with a flock or at home, distinguishing between those situations calling for action and those offering no threat. When necessary, he will unhesitatingly risk his own life to protect his charges.

The show ring is not a situation which should intimidate, cower or threaten a Great Pyrenees. Therefore, any outward sign of fear, excessive hesitancy, or nervousness must not be tolerated. Nor can aggression towards a human be accepted. Occasional expressions of adult male dog/male dog aggression are not unusual and should not be considered indicative of an aggressive temperament.

Any suggestion of temperament instability towards a human must be penalized severely.

In the show ring, a Great Pyrenees should appear to be at ease, often slightly aloof, as if almost bored with the proceedings. This is not to say that he is unaware of what is going on. Instead, the Great Pyrenees is perceptive enough to know that the proceedings within the show ring are not a threat and he is therefore at confident ease. It is this quality of confident ease that makes the Great Pyrenees generally unresponsive to attempts to alert him with bait or noises and the dog should not be faulted for such lack of response.

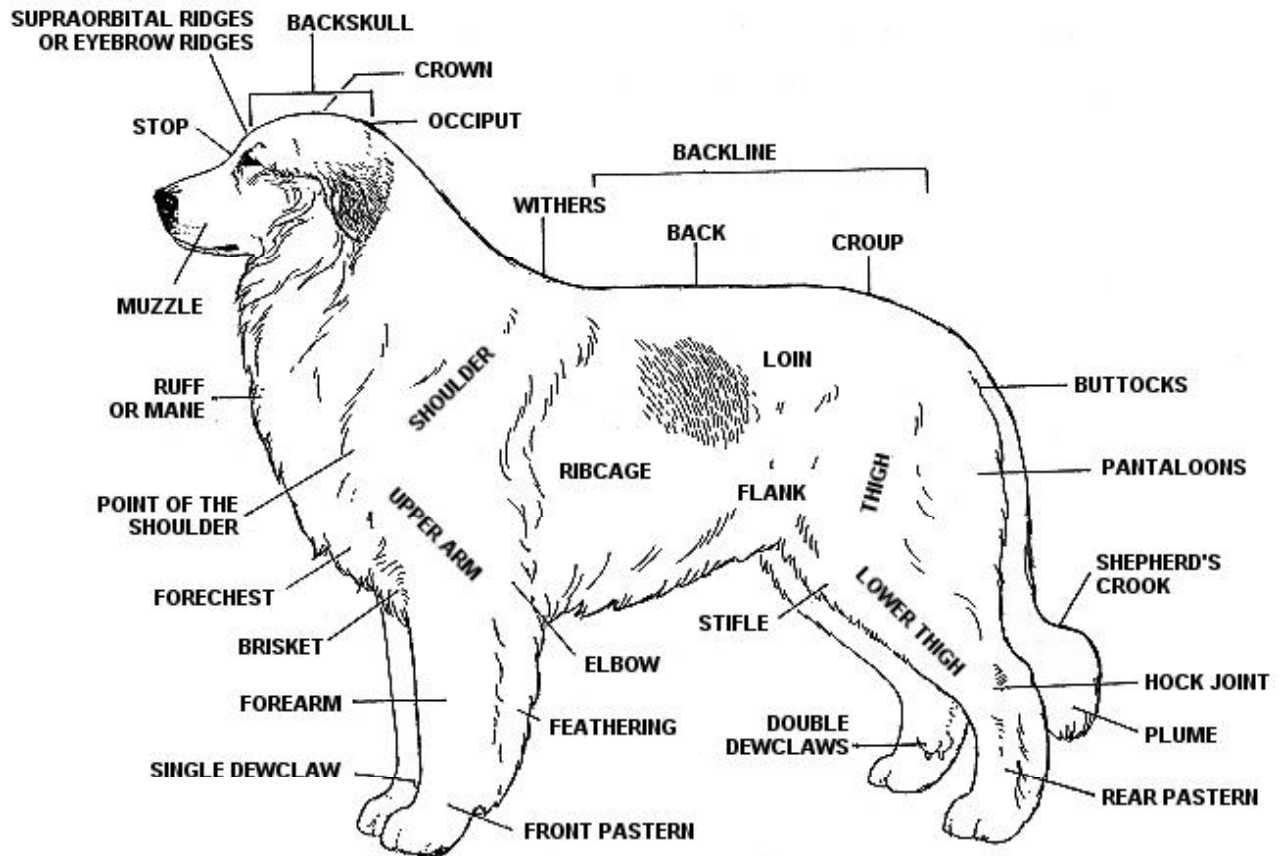
## Judges' Recap



This is not intended as a judging checklist, but rather as a quick recap of some of the keys for a better understanding of the unique nature and qualities of a Great Pyrenees:

- A Great Pyrenees with correct type conveys the overall impression of a large, principally white dog of medium substance, well-balanced front and rear, which exhibits both strength and a unique elegance.
- Particular attention must be paid to correct head conformation, as the smooth, flowing lines of the head with no apparent stop and the eyes with their dreamy expression are crucial to true Pyrenean type.
- Balance of moderate front and rear angulation.
- No preference should be given to tail carriage or coat color.
- Confident temperament is essential.
- Do not whistle or shake keys to try to determine alertness. The dog's response to such actions spoils his beauty and proper expression.
- Due to the Great Pyrenees' dense coat, it is essential that all visual observations be confirmed by hand examination.
- Unique breed characteristics include:
  - The presence of double rear dewclaws.
  - Rear feet which have a structural tendency to toe out.
  - Shepherd's crook at the end of the tail.
  - Rear dewclaws give the appearance that the rear legs may be moving more closely than they really are.
- Several show ring presentations must be discouraged:
  - Scissoring of the coat.
  - Holding the tail up to make it wheel when the dog is moved.
  - When stacked, excessive extension of the rear legs to produce the appearance of a sloping backline.

## Topographical View of the Great Pyrenees



### Glossary

The following terms are an integral part of the Great Pyrenees Standard. As such, an informed interpretation of the Standard and the Standard Visualization and Commentary requires that each of us share a common and accurate definition of the technical terms used.

The American Kennel Club has identified Harold R. Spira's book, *Canine Terminology*, to be the official source of AKC standard terminology definition and standardization. The following definitions are quoted from *Canine Terminology*:

**ARM, UPPER** - The anatomical region between the shoulder and elbow joints, consisting of the humerus and associated muscles.

**BACK** - That portion of the topline commencing from a point just behind the withers and ending at the loins/croup junction.

**BACKLINE** - That portion of the entire topline of a dog, beginning at the rear end of the withers and ending at the tail.

**BACKSKULL** - The skull ... Includes the brain case [backskull] as well as the facial/palatine segment of the foreface [muzzle]. ... The words "backskull" or "topskull" are used ... in reference to the brain case, i.e., the area behind the foreface.

**BRISKET** - Mostly taken as a synonym for breast bone or sternum.

**BUTTOCKS** - The muscular area surrounding the ischiatic tubers of the pelvis. Above, the buttocks merge into the croup, whilst below they blend with the upper thigh region.

**CROOK [SHEPHERD'S]** - Used to describe the terminal swirl in the tail.

**CROUP** - The muscular area above and around the set-on of the tail.

**CROWN** - Dome, topskull ... The roof of the brain case.

**DEWCLAWS, FRONT** - The rather under-developed, degenerate first metacarpal bone and associated phalanges, located on the inner surface of the pastern region.

**DEWCLAWS, REAR** - Wolf's claw, spur ... The rudimentary first metatarsal bone and associated phalanges are located on the innermost surface of the rear pastern.

**DEWLAP** - The loose, pendulous skin, usually arranged in folds, on the chin, throat and neck regions of some breeds, e.g., Bloodhound, Basset Hound.

**ELBOW** - The joint in the forelimb created by the articulation of the humerus (arm) above and the tibia/fibula (forearm) below.

**EYEBROW RIDGES/BROWS** - Superciliary arches or [supraorbital] ridges ... The ridges formed above the eyes by frontal bone contours.

**FEATHERING** - Flag, fringe, fringing, plume. These terms apply variously to longish coat on the ... belly, back of legs and tail.

**FEET, CLOSE-CUPPED** - Round, compact foot with well-arched toes, tightly bunched [cat feet] ... The two center toes being only slightly longer than those on the outside or inside. ... The impression left by such a foot is round, in contrast to oval.

**FLANK** - The fleshy area near the junction of abdominal floor and hindquarters.

**FOREARM** - Lower arm ... That area of the forequarters lying between the elbow above and the wrist below: comprised of ... radius and ulna plus supporting muscles, tendons, etc.

**FOREFACE** - That portion of the skull in front of the brain case [backskull]; also referred to as the muzzle.

**FURROW** - Median line, flute ... longitudinal groove, formed by bone formation and/or muscular development, running along from the center of the skull, i.e., the frontal bone junction, towards the stop [between the eyes].

**HOCK JOINT** - A joint on the hind limb, located between the lower thigh and rear pastern.

**LOIN** - The lumbar area, extending from the end of the ribcage to the start of the pelvis.

**MANE** - Longish, usually fairly coarse hair arising from the ridge of the neck, then falling over to one side.

**MUZZLE** - That portion of the skull in front of the brain case. [Also referred to as foreskull or foreface.]

**NECK** - That section of the body between the head and shoulder region.

**OBLIQUELY PLACED EYES** - Eyes with outer corners situated ... [lower] in the skull than their respective inner ones, i.e., the transverse axes of which run obliquely in relation to the skull's longitudinal axis, are termed "obliquely placed."

**OCCIPUT** - The occipital crest is the ridge formed by the occipital bone at the back of the skull where it joins with the parietal bones on either side. ... The highest and rearmost part of the occipital crest is known as the occiput.

**PANTALOONS/TROUSERS** - Longish hair at the back of both upper and lower thighs.

**PASTERNS** - Metacarpus ... The region between the carpus (wrist) above, and the digits (foot) below [on the front legs].

**PASTERNS, REAR** - Metatarsus ... That section between the hock joint above and the foot below [on the rear legs]. Often incorrectly termed the “hock.”

**PLUME** - A tuft of long hairs in the shape of a plume on the tail.

**RIBCAGE/RIBS** - The series of flat, narrow, elongated bones forming the chest wall.

**RIBS, SPRING OF** - A reference to the shape of ribs after their emergence from their articulation with the thoracic vertebrae. Spring of rib has direct influence upon chest capacity.

**RUFF** - A collar of profuse, stand-offish, rather long and often coarsely textured hair about the neck. ... The term ruff, or neck ruff, includes the whole neck area, i.e., mane, frill and upper part of apron, in contrast to mane, which consists of hair arising only from the top ridge.

**SHOULDER** - The top section of the fore leg, extending from the withers above to the elbow, including the upper arm. The true shoulder region's bony component is the shoulder blade (scapula).

**SHOULDER, POINT OF THE** - Articulation of scapula [shoulder blade] with humerus [arm].

**STIFLE** - Knee joint, stifle joint ... A joint in the hind leg, formed by the articulation of upper and lower thighs. ... “hindquarter angulation” ... relates directly to the angle formed at this joint.

**STOP** - A depression or step down in the topline of the head, situated almost centrally between the eyes, at the junction of the frontal bones of the skull with those of the upper jaw (maxilla) nose (nasal bones) in front.

**SUBSTANCE** - Timber ... Used in reference to bone, particularly leg bone.

## **Bibliography**

Dog Locomotion And Gait Analysis, Curtis M. Brown, Hoflin Publishing Ltd., Wheat Ridge, CO, 1986.

The Great Pyrenees, Mary W. Crane, Advantage Printing Service, Boston, MA, 1949.

The New Dog Steps, Rachel Page Elliott, Howell Book House Inc., New York, NY, 1985.

The Dog In Action, McDowell Lyon, Howell Book House Inc., New York, NY, 1971.

How To Raise And Train A Great Pyrenees, Edith K. Smith, T.F.H. Publishing, Inc., Neptune City, NJ, 1964.

Dog Structure And Movement, R. H. Smythe, Popular Dogs Publishing Co., London, England, 1970.

Canine Terminology, Harold R. Spira, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1982.

The New Complete Great Pyrenees, Paul Strang, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1991.

The Great Pyrenees Illustrated Standard is a publication of The Great Pyrenees Club of America, Inc.

Text Copyright © 1994 by The Great Pyrenees Club of America, Inc.

Illustrations Copyright © 1994 by Marcia R. Schlehr.

The Copyrighted © illustration of the Newfoundland head on page 14 is the Ideal Head (Dog) from the Newfoundland Illustrated Guide (1992), and is used by written permission of The Newfoundland Club of America, Inc.

Definitions contained in the Glossary are quotations from Canine Terminology (1982 ed.), Copyrighted © by Macmillan Publishing Company and used with written permission.