

# AKC Judges BREED STUDY The Greater Swiss Mountain Dog



Presented by  
The Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Club of America  
Judges Education Committee

# HISTORY



This dog, Bello vom Schlossgut, was the first recognized in 1908 by the great supporter of the Swiss Mountain Dogs, Albert Heim, as not just another short haired Berner but as...”a representation of the almost extinct former ‘Butchers dogs’, the ‘Great Swiss Mountain Dogs’. Thus the last of the four Swiss Mountain and Cattle dog breeds gained recognition and pure breeding began.

Heim wrote the first Grosse Schwiezer Sennehunde standard based on “Bello” and Schertenleib (Bello’s owner) started to search for other members of the new breed.

However the real father of the breed was Barri von Herzogbuchsee. From Barri’s matings with two found short-haired bitches came today’s pure breed. Only seven of the first 21 dogs registered in the Klub fur Grosse Schweizer Sennenhunde are shown in the pedigrees of the modern Great Swiss Mountain Dog



# Dr. Albert Heim



# Arno v Fryberg-1929



*Der Grosse Schweizer Sennenhund*

HISTORICAL PHOTOS OF GREATER SWISS MOUNTAIN DOGS



Baldo v Hinterfeld, SHSB 27 106. Single tree cart of Mr. Marti. Milkman in Olten, Switzerland. Cart has only one shaft held by handler. Dog is only assisting in pulling vehicle.

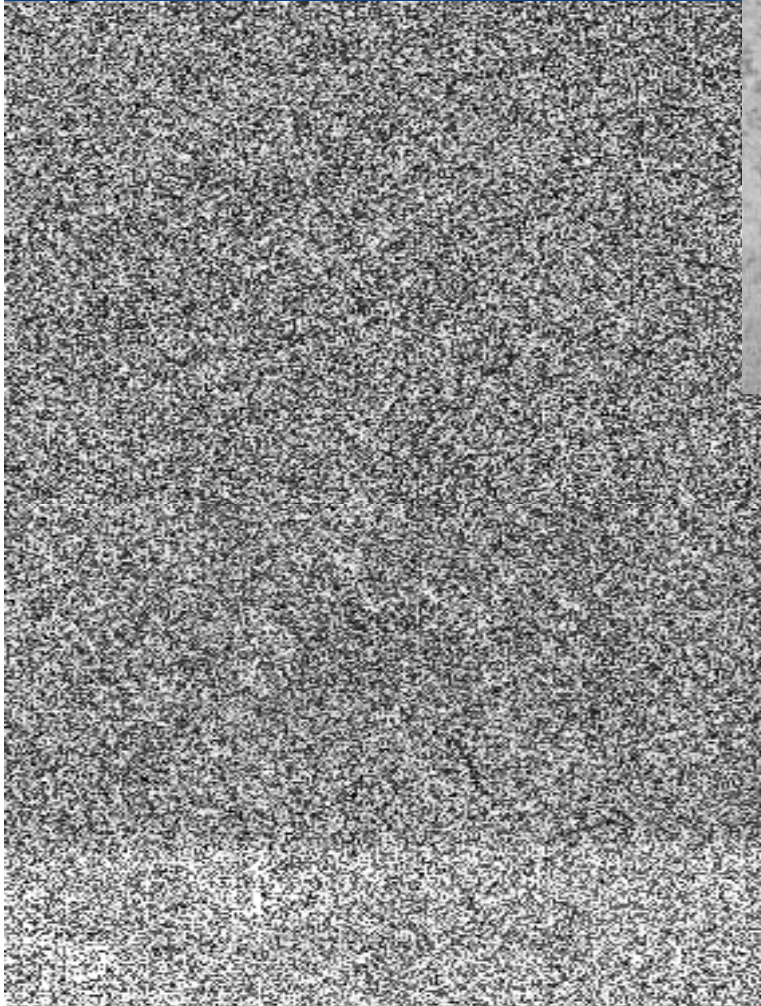
Arno v Fryberg, SHSB 29413. Single tree wagon of Mr. Mauer, Master baker of Langenthal, Switzerland. Driver sits on the wagon. Dog pulls independently and is guided like a horse. Dog and wagon are very good. Harness could be better. Breast strap is narrow.



# Swiss Draft Dogs



# Swiss Army Dogs



# Swissies In Action

- The dog should be capable of performing all the aspects that it was bred to do
- Three videos shown next are to help you to see the Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Performing some of the tasks of the breed: Herding, Weight Pull, and Drafting



# Herding



# Weight Pull – Record #4106



# Drafting



# Swiss Sennenhund Breeds



**Greater Swiss Mountain Dog**  
(Grosser Schweizer Sennenhund)

Males - 25.5 - 28.5 inches Females - 23.5 - 27 inches



**Bernese Mountain Dog** (Berner Sennenhund)

Males - 25 - 27.5 inches Females - 23 - 26 inches



**Appenzell Cattle Dog** (Appenzeller Sennenhund)

Males - 52 - 56 centimeters (20.5 - 22 inches)  
Females - 50 - 54 centimeters (19.7 - 21.3 inches)



**Entlebuch Cattle Dog** (Entlebucher Sennenhund)

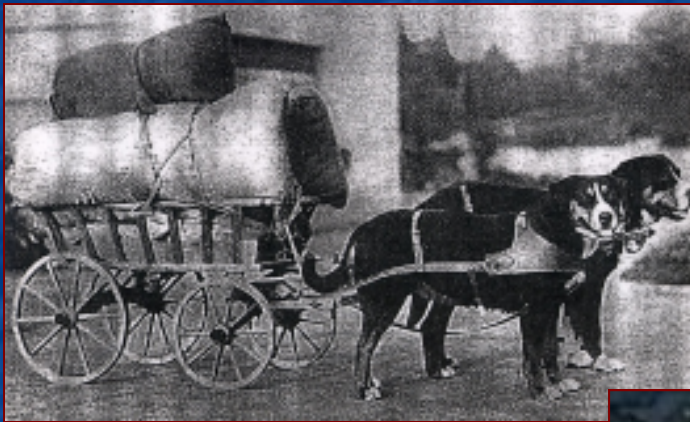
Males - 44 - 50 centimeters (17.3 - 19.7 inches)  
Females - 42 - 48 centimeters (16.5 - 18.9 inches)

## FORM & FUNCTION

Of the four Sennenhund breeds developed in Switzerland, the *GREATER SWISS* is both the *LARGEST* and the *OLDEST*

Developed in the remote and isolated areas of Switzerland, the GSMD was adapted to general farm use as a *LIVESTOCK DROVER*, *GUARD DOG*, and *UTILITARIAN DRAFT DOG*.

Thus, when judging the GSMD, keep in mind, first and foremost that the dog should have the *SUBSTANCE*, *STRUCTURE* and *TEMPERAMENT* suited to the many duties for which it was bred.



### Clockwise from upper left:

- Historical pair of GSMD with wagon
- Bitch droving sheep
- Working Weight Pull dog
- Working Pack Dog (bitch)

## GENERAL APPEARANCE

The GSMD is a striking, tri-colored, large, powerful, confident dog of sturdy appearance. It is a heavy boned and well muscled dog....



Historical  
Photos



*TYPICAL BITCH*

*TYPICAL DOG*



Current  
Photos



# Typical Examples

Typical Dog



Typical Bitch



# Typical Swissies





# Typical Swissies



...which, in spite of its size and weight, is agile enough to perform the all-purpose farm duties of the mountainous regions of its origin



## SIZE, PROPORTION and SUBSTANCE



Height at the highest point of the shoulder is ideally :

“Body *LENGTH* to *HEIGHT* is approximately a 10 to 9 *PROPORTION*, thus appearing slightly longer than tall. It is a *HEAVY BONED* and *WELL MUSCLED* dog of *STURDY* appearance.”

- DOGS: 25.5 to 28.5 inches
- BITCHES: 23.5 to 27 inches



Dogs and bitches within these height ranges are equally correct. Bigger is not necessarily better.

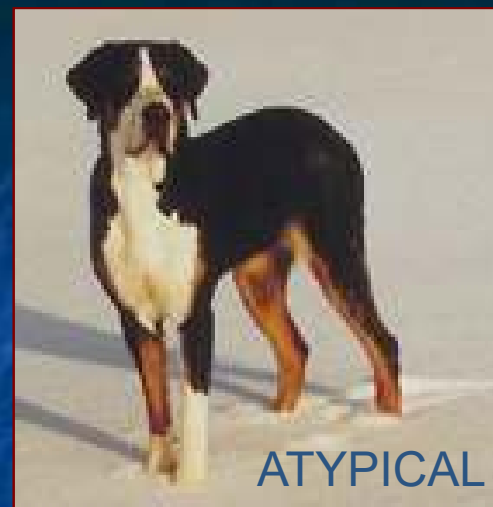


Bitch      TYPICAL      Dog

## SUBSTANCE

*and*

## SIZE



ATYPICAL

Both dogs and bitches are expected to fulfill the requirements of having a *large and powerful* structure.

Proper evaluation of the GSMD will put great emphasis on the well-conditioned and athletic animal and will *denigrate* the *overweight, lacking, or out-of-shape* dog.

Height is not necessarily a virtue when it fails to be accompanied by the athletic balance and substance so crucial in defining the correct Swissy.

*We ask judges to always keep in mind that bigger is not better; the more correct dog is always better.*



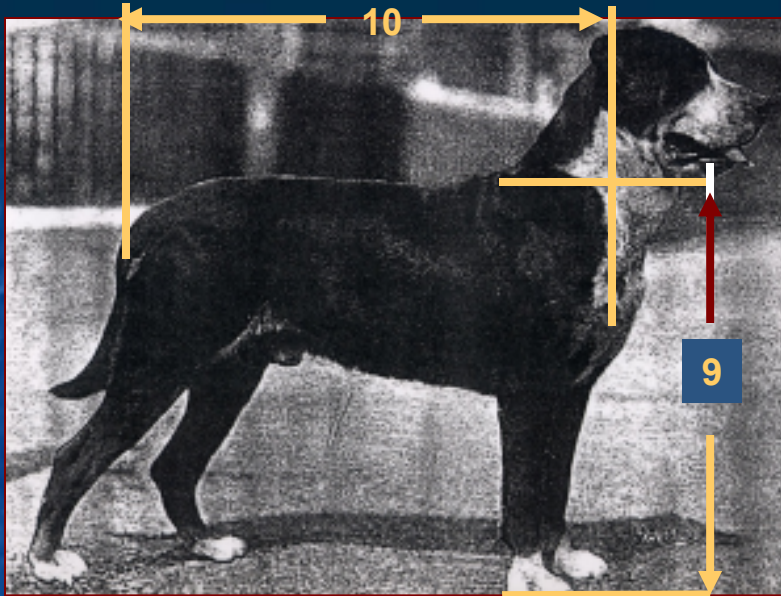
Both Pictures are the same dogs in each. While both dogs are represented within the size standard, judges can expect to see this variation in the ring.



As implied by its name, the GREATER Swiss Mountain Dog should be a “large, powerful, and confident dog.”

*Dog A is more typical of desirable size and substance whereas Dog B lacks desirable substance and bone*

## Important PROPORTIONS

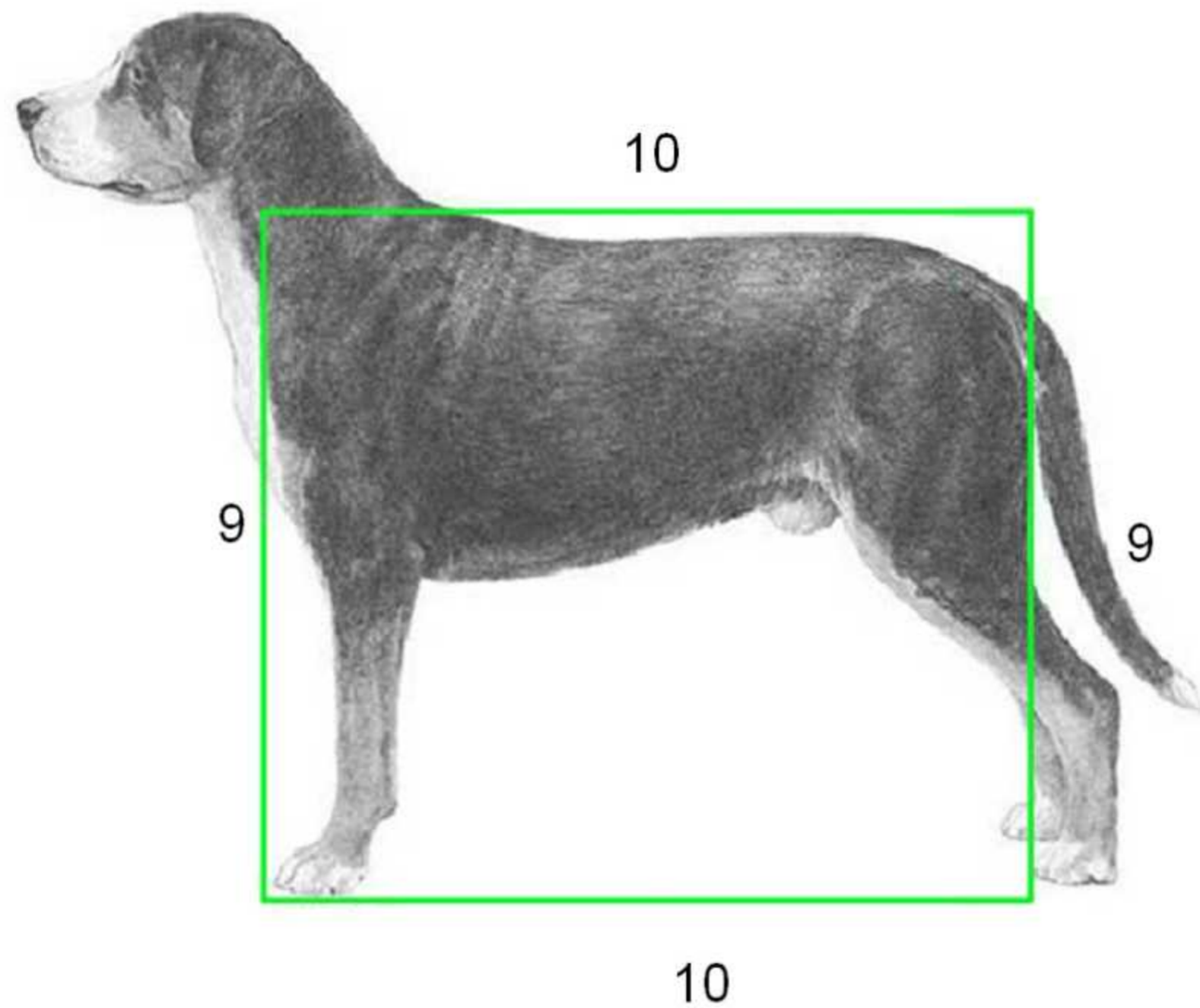


Body LENGTH TO HEIGHT  
approximately 10 : 9 proportion



Depth of chest is approximately  
one half the total height of the  
dog at the withers

# Body Proportions- Length to Height



**approximately 10 : 9**

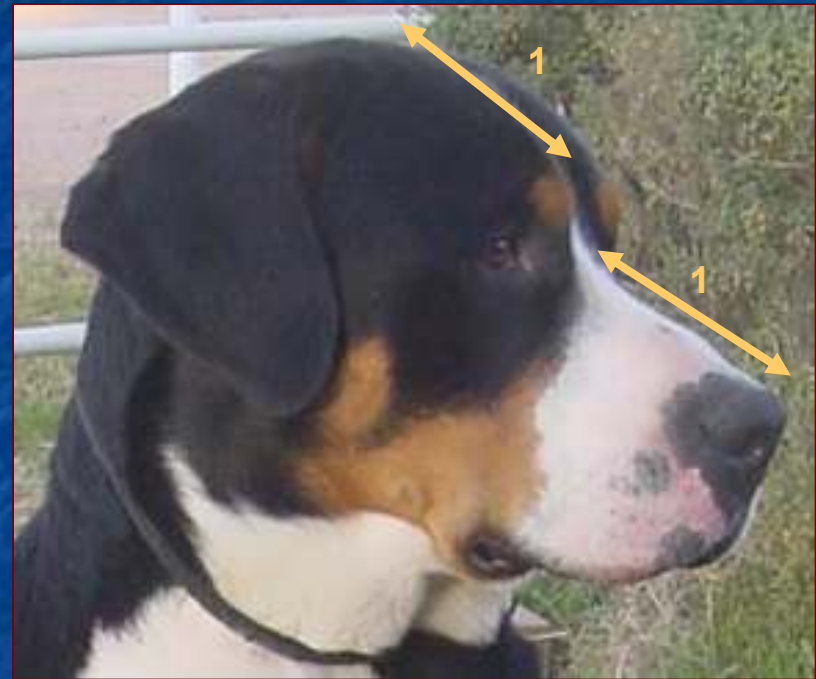
appearing slightly longer than tall



# Important Proportions of the HEAD



- The *BACKSKULL* is approximately *TWICE* the *WIDTH* of the *MUZZLE*



- The *BACKSKULL* and *MUZZLE* are of approximately *EQUAL* length

## Head and Expression



DOG



BITCH

- Expression is *ANIMATED and GENTLE*
- Eyes are *almond shaped* and brown, *dark brown preferred*, medium sized, neither deep set nor protruding
- Eyelids are closefitting and eye rims are black
- The top of the ear is level with the top of the skull
- The skull is flat and broad with a slight stop
- In *ADULT* dogs, the nose leather is always black

## HEAD



- Muzzle is LARGE, BLUNT and STRAIGHT, not POINTED and most often with a slight rise before the end
- The lips are clean and as a dry mouthed breed, flews are only slightly developed

*Darker eye color would be preferable than both examples shown here. Judges should expect to see a range of brown eye colors.*



*BLUE eye color is a DISQUALIFICATION*

# Male Heads



There is variation in correct heads. Nuances of the head along with coloring can impact the look of a correct head.

# Female Heads



There is variation in correct heads. Nuances of the head along with coloring can impact the look of a correct head.

# More Heads



# More Heads



# Faults in GSMD Heads

The head of a GSMD should not resemble that of a Collie, Rottweiler, Hound or St. Bernard



Snipey head - narrow muzzle and backskull.



Narrow and weak head. Ears set too far back. No substance in the cheek or muzzle.



Muzzle too short. ears set too high.





# Faults in GSMD Heads

The head of a GSMD should not resemble that of a Collie, Rottweiler, Hound or St. Bernard



Houndy head with pendulous lips & low earset.



Low earset.  
Droopy eye lids.



Fleshy face and neck.  
Too much dewlap.



Ears too high.

# What to look for in a SWISSY HEAD



DOG



BITCH

This dog and bitch have nice head type,  
proportions , color  
and lovely expression

## Faults seen in GSMD Heads

The head of a GSMD should *not* resemble that of a Collie, Rottweiler, Hound or St Bernard



Snipey head w/narrow muzzle and backskull



Rotty-like head. Earset too high. Muzzle too short



Houndy head w/pendulous lips & low earset



Fleshy face and neck. Too much dewlap.

# Teeth and Bite



The teeth meet in a scissors bite.

Dentition is not addressed in the standard. Missing teeth is not considered a fault for this breed.

## Neck , Topline and Body



DOG

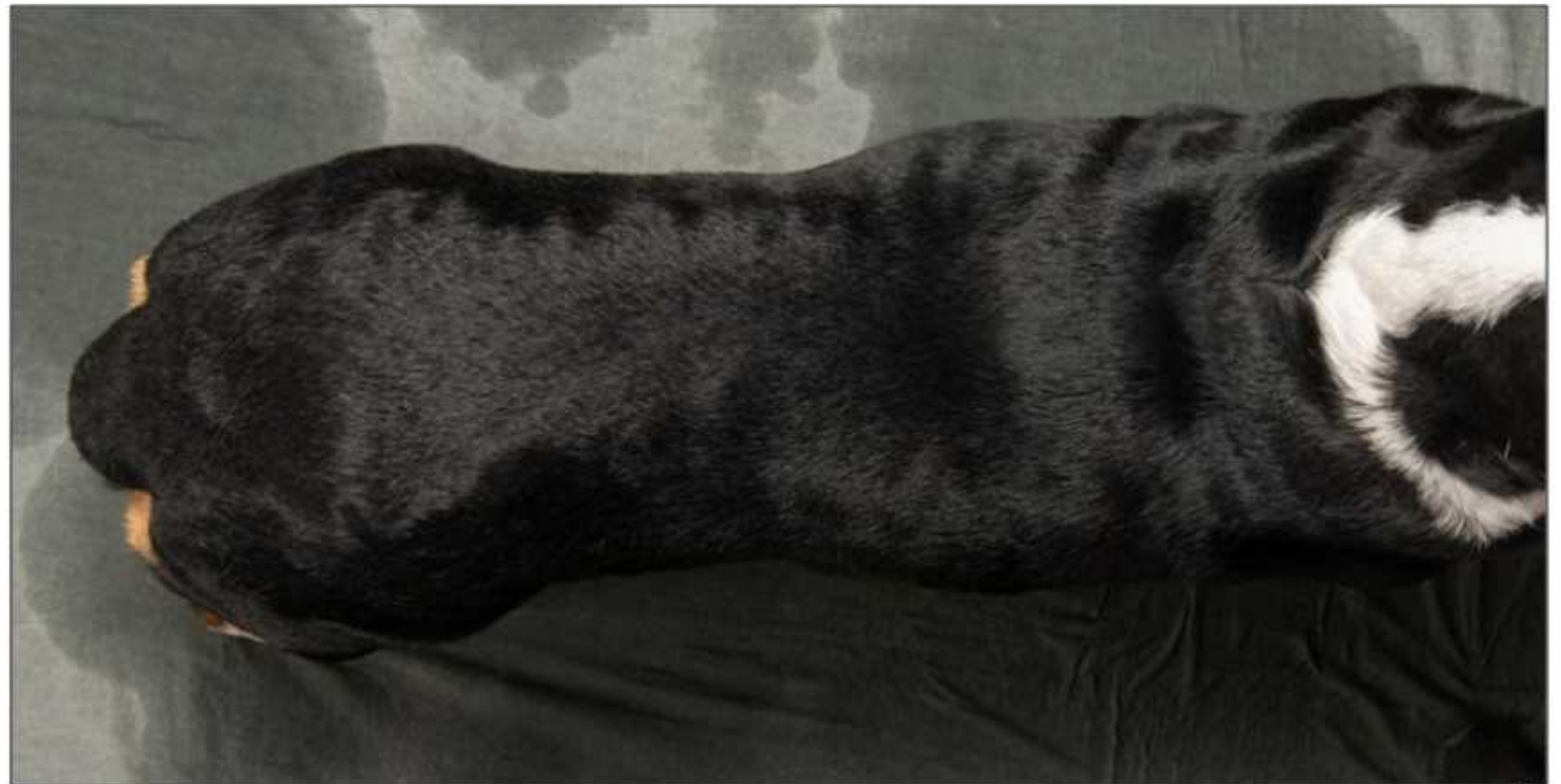


BITCH

- The neck is of moderate length, strong , muscular and clean
- The topline is level from the withers to the croup
- Body is FULL with a slight tuck up
- Ribs are well sprung
- The deepest point of the chest should lie between the elbows , not above them
- The loins are broad and strong
- The croup is long and broad and smoothly rounded to the tail insertion

# Body

Ribs are well-sprung. Dogs should be muscular and conditioned.

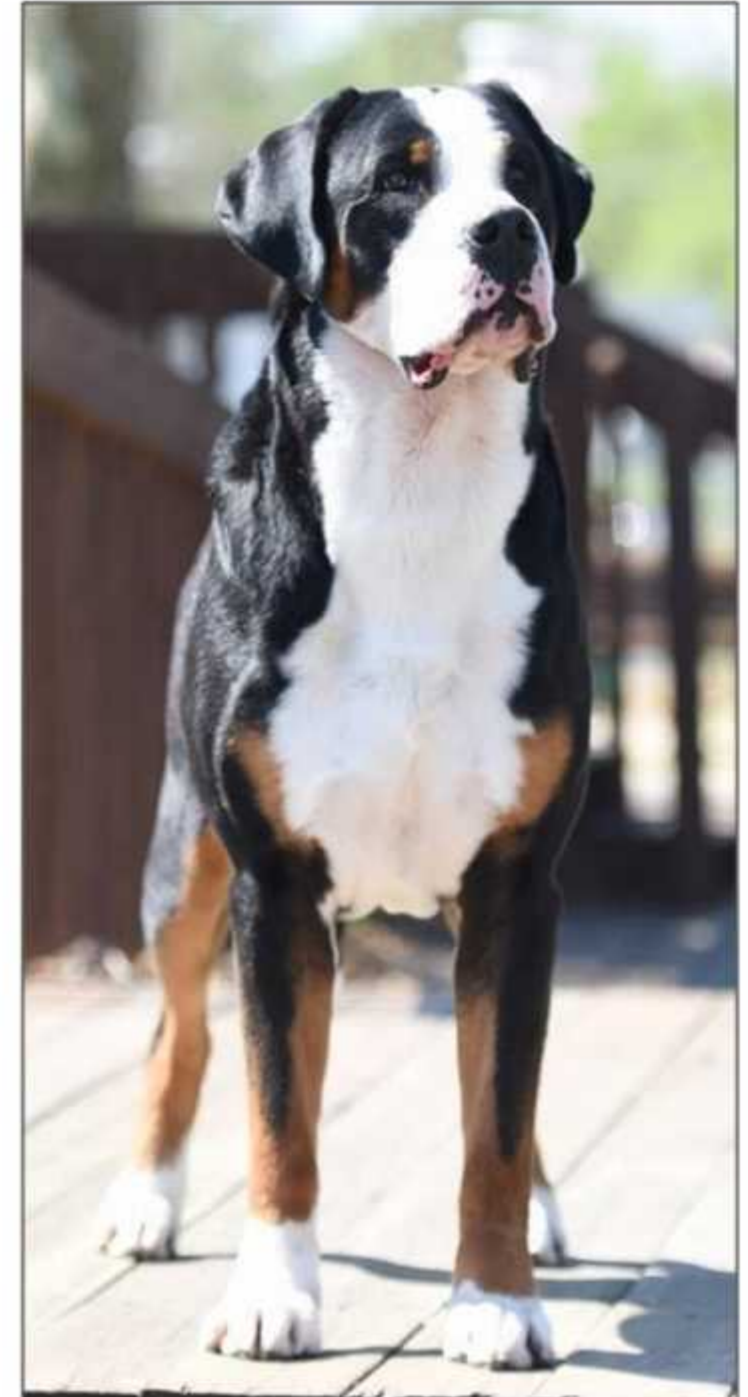


## FOREQUARTERS



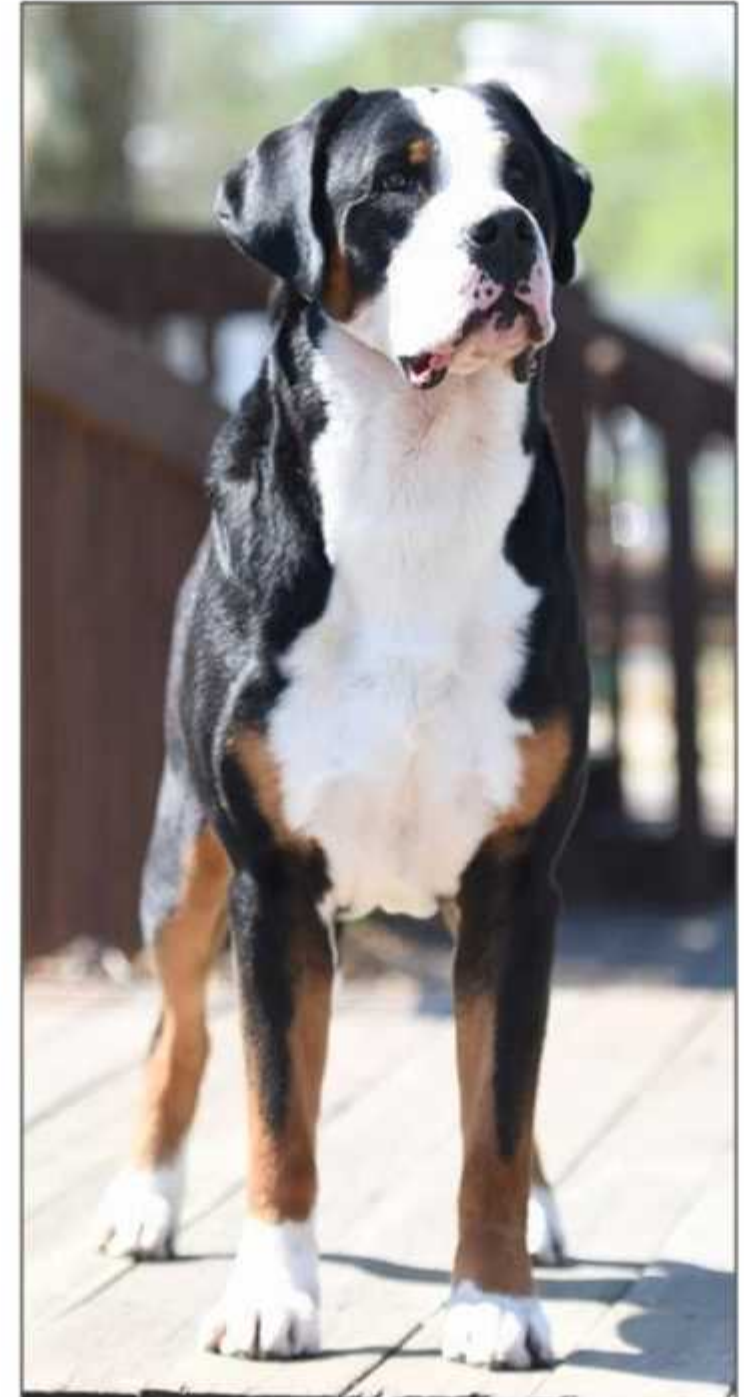
- Chest is *DEEP* and *BROAD* with a *slightly protruding breastbone*
- Shoulders are long, sloping and *moderately laid back*. They are flat and well muscled
- Forelegs are straight and strong
- Pasterns slope slightly but are *NOT WEAK*

# Front and Chests





# Front and Chests



# Lack of Chest and Body



Chest and body may come with maturity. Lack of chest in body in adults is a severe fault.

## HINDQUARTERS



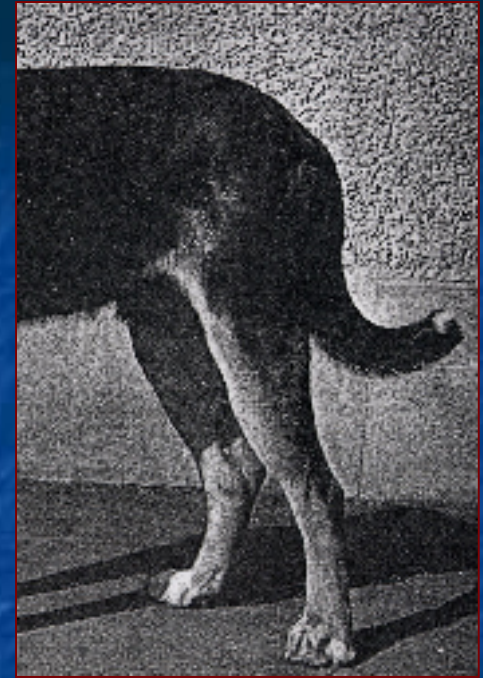
“Hocks are well set down & straight when viewed from the rear”



“Stifles are moderately bent & taper smoothly to the hocks”



Overangulated  
Cow-hocked



Straight in stifle  
Cow-hocked

Broad, strong, muscular hindquarters and proper rear angulation are essential for a draft dog to provide powerful rear drive during movement as called for in the standard.

Rear dewclaws should be removed

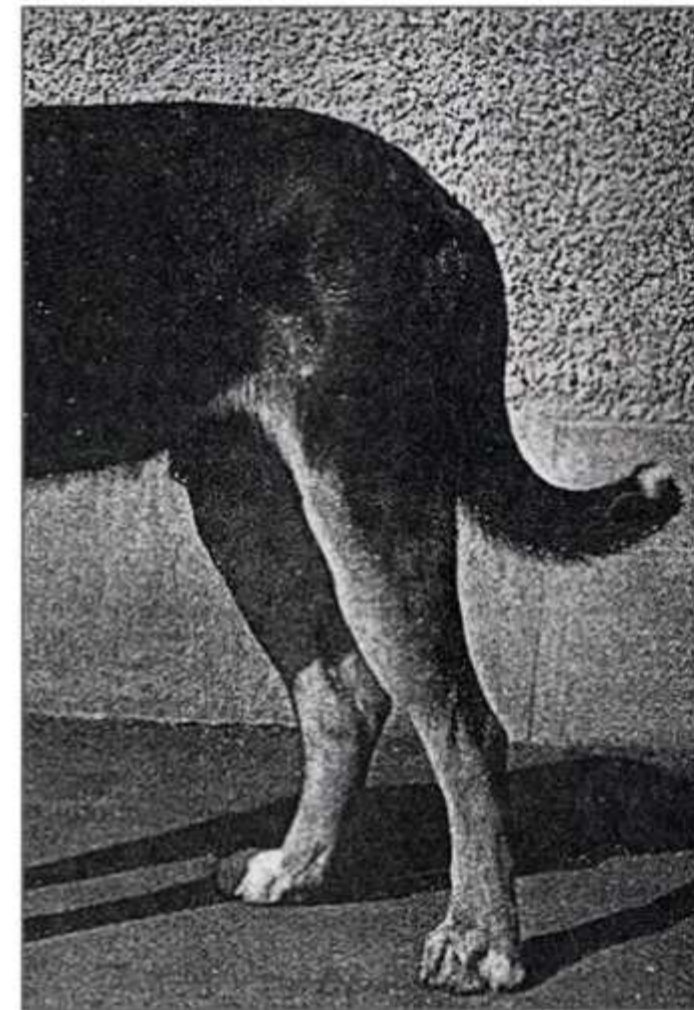
# Incorrect Hindquarters



Cow-hocked  
Incorrect tail

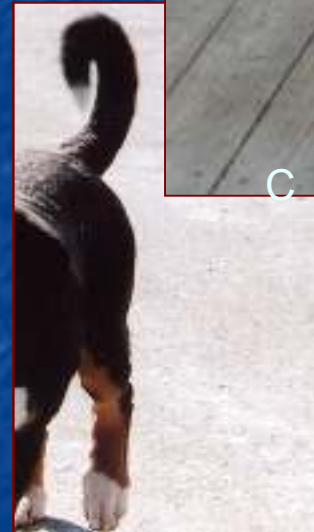


Over-angulated  
Cow-hocked



Straight in stifle  
Cow-hocked

# TAILSET and CARRIAGE



YES

NO

- The tail is thick from root to tip, tapering slightly at the tip (A) reaching to the hocks and carried down in repose
- When alert and in movement the tail may be carried higher and slightly curved upwards (B) but should NOT CURL (C), or TILT over the back (D and E)
- The bones of the tail should FEEL straight

# Tail Carriage in Movement

All tail carriages depicted are correct.



# Tailset

- Tail is thick from root to tip, tapering slightly at tip, reaching to hocks and carried down in repose
- Bones of tail should feel straight



Correct rears with adequate muscling, correct tail set, and thick straight tails.

## FEET



FRONT

- YES -



REAR



- NO -



FEET are *round* and *compact* with *well arched toes* and turn neither in nor out.

Front dewclaws may or may not be present



# COAT



Straight, Smooth coat



Undercoat



Wavier, Coarser coat

TOPCOAT is dense, approximately 1-1/4 to 2 inches in length

Acceptable lengths and textures of GSMD topcoat range  
from short, straight & fine to slightly longer, wavier & coarser

*Undercoat must be present* and may be thick and sometimes showing.

*Undercoat color* ranges from the preferred dark grey, to light grey  
to tawny

TOTAL LACK OF UNDERCOAT IS UNDESIRABLE AND SHOULD BE  
PENALIZED

# Coat Types

Topcoat is dense, approximately 1-1/4 to 2 inches in length. Acceptable lengths and textures of GSMD topcoat range from short, straight, fine to slightly longer, wavier, coarser.

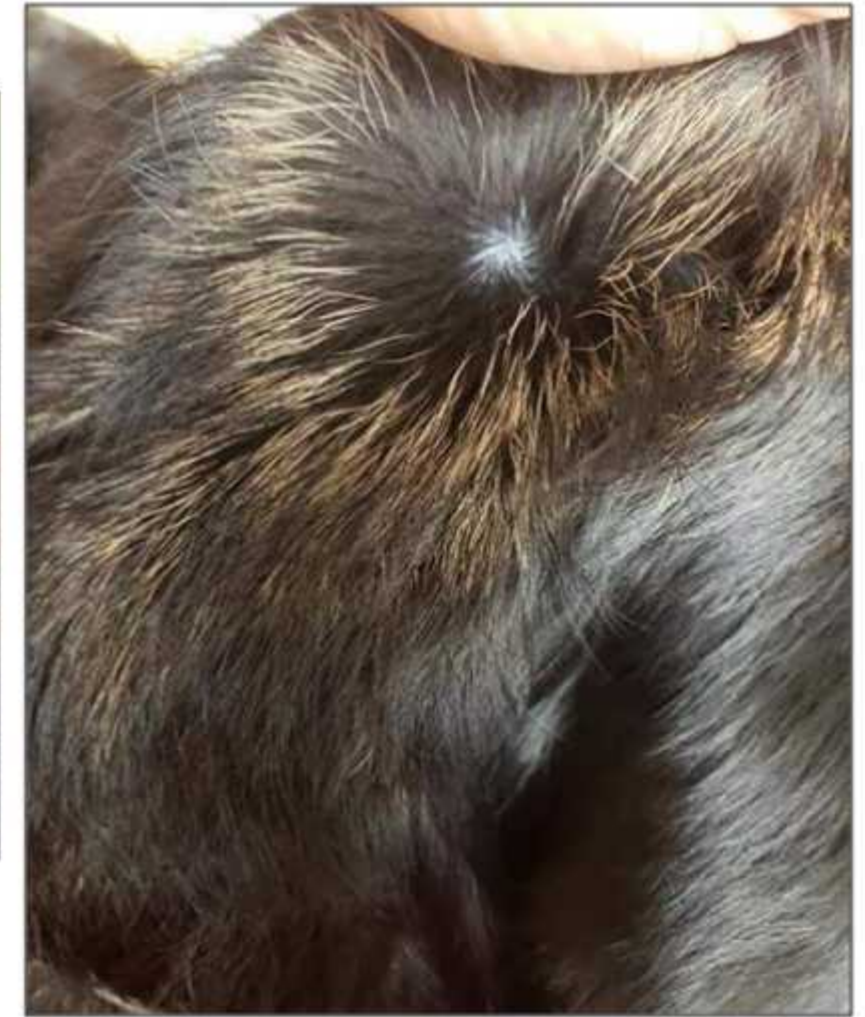
Straight, smooth coat



Wavier, coarser coat



# Coat



- Undercoat must be present and may be thick and sometimes showing.
- Undercoat color ranges from the preferred dark grey, to light grey to tawny.
- Total lack of undercoat is undesirable and should be penalized.

# COLOR and MARKINGS



- Topcoat is Black
- Presence of agouti hairs is not considered a fault in the Standard. Markings are rich Rust & White
- Rust appears on the cheeks, under the tail , on both sides of the fore chest and on all four legs
- Blaze may vary in length and width and may run over the top of the skull and meet with white patch or collar on neck
- White markings may be more conservative as seen in (A) or brighter as seen in (B). Both are acceptable. Symmetry of markings is desired
- A white collar or patch on the neck is acceptable (C)

Markings and other cosmetic factors should be considered of lesser importance than other aspects of type which directly affect working ability

## Comparison: Correct vs Incorrect



DOG

### CORRECT

DOG (L) and BITCH (R)  
with *DESIREABLE BREED*  
*TRAITS*

of  
Correct size, substance  
and proportions



BITCH

### INCORRECT

DOG (L) and BITCH (R) with  
MAJOR STRUCTURAL  
FAULTS

Dog: - *lacks body depth*  
- *frame is too light*  
- *high in the rear*  
- *sway backed*

Bitch: - *lacks size & substance*  
- *snipey head*  
- *curled tail*



JUDGES: If you see GSMDs with severe faults like the above examples, PLEASE WITHHOLD RIBBONS !!

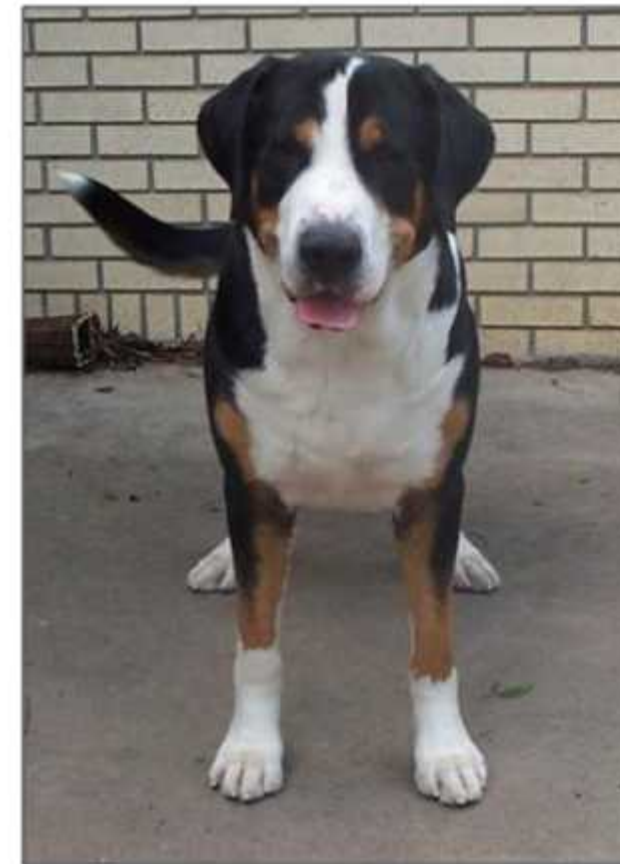
# Color and Markings

White markings may be more conservative or brighter.  
Both are acceptable. Symmetry of markings is desired

Conservative



Brighter



\*Pink on nose is a fault.  
Typical in puppies.

Markings and other cosmetic factors should be considered of lesser importance than other aspects of type which directly affect working ability.

# Head and Neck Markings

Variation in markings. White collar or patch on neck is acceptable.



# Markings on Legs and Feet

Conservative Socks



High Socks with or without Rust

Cosmetic Fault



Markings and other cosmetic factors should be considered of lesser importance than other aspects of type which directly affect working ability.



# MOVEMENT



INEFFICIENT MOVEMENT  
HACKNIED GAIT RESTRICTS REACH

GOOD REACH IN  
FRONT

POWERFUL DRIVE IN  
REAR

MOVEMENT WITH A  
LEVEL BACK



SHOWS BEAUTIFUL LEVEL TOPLINE  
WHILE MOVING  
DOG MOVING TOO FAST - overreaching



SOUND , PURPOSEFUL GAIT WITH LEVEL BACK

Soundness, balance and efficiency that accompany *correct structure* and *good condition* are the crucial factors in Swissy movement.

# Tail Carriage in Movement

All tail carriages depicted are correct.



# TEMPERAMENT



LOYAL FAMILY  
COMPANION



ALERT &  
VIGILANT



BOLD, FAITHFUL, WILLING WORKER

Shyness or aggressiveness shall be severely penalized.

It is these THREE conditions ONLY that warrant Disqualification in the GSMD Standard

BLUE COAT



BLUE EYE(S)



RED COAT



When judging the Greater Swiss Mountain Dog, defects of structure and temperament are to be judged more severely than mere lack of elegance because they reduce the animal's capacity to work. Any fault that detracts from the description in the breed standard should be penalized to the extent of deviation.

# Disqualifications

Only three conditions warrant disqualification.

BLUE COAT



BLUE EYE(S)



RED COAT



# Blue and Red Coat Disqualification



# Blue Eye(s) Disqualification



*THANK YOU for participating in this seminar  
and for your continued interest in our breed!!*



For information on upcoming Specialties, accompanying Breed Studies  
and ringside mentoring opportunities, please contact  
The Greater Swiss Mountain Dog Club of America  
[www.gsmdca.org](http://www.gsmdca.org)