

Breed History

The Löwchen as a breed has a long and somewhat controversial history. We know from works of art depicting images of small dogs in a very distinctive lion trim that the breed dates to the 16th century. The breed is depicted throughout the centuries in paintings, block prints, line drawings and tapestries from around the world.

The controversy arises as to the exact origin of the breed. There are several theories on this debate, depending on who is doing the talking. One theory holds that the breed originated in the area of Northern Europe now known as Germany, France and Belgium. In this area the Löwchen is thought to be tied to the breeds that were the forerunner of the

modern day poodle, and quite possibly as a factor in the development of the Toy Poodle.

Another line of thinking holds that the Löwchen originated in the Mediterranean region and are directly related to the Bichon type breeds of that area. The Löwchen has also been set in Russia and even the region that is now Tibet. Whatever one's view of the origin of the Löwchen, we know that the breed has survived through the great upheavals of hundreds of years to emerge very nearly as they appear in the art that is the documentation of their history.

The Löwchen has been the resident of all manner of households through the ages, from castles to the most ordinary farmyards and cottages. Aside from their primary function as a companion they were most likely great varmint hunters and fierce little guards of beloved hearth and home.



Photo Courtesy LCA

Breed History

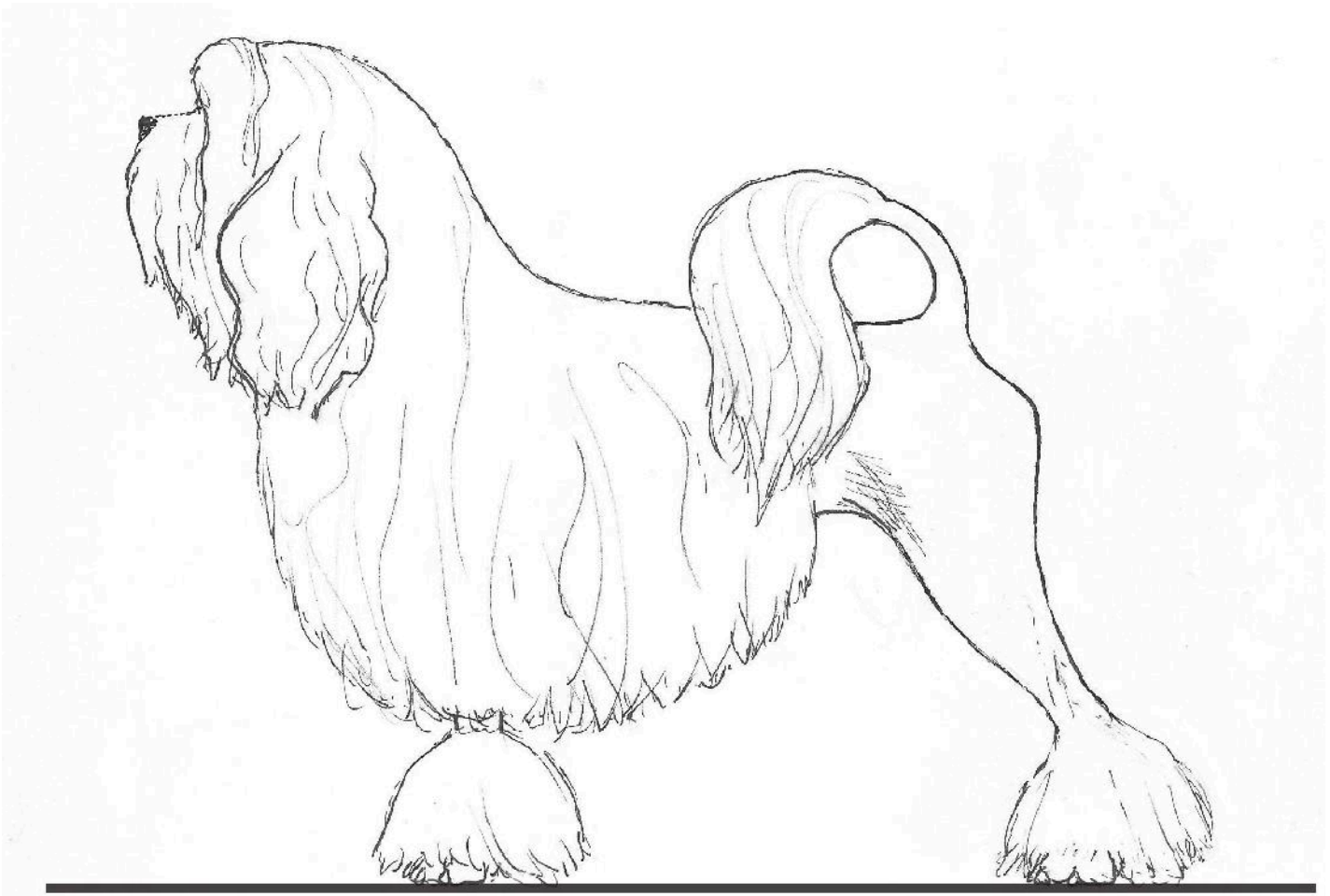
Folk tales surround the Löwchen, bringing a charming side to their history. It is said that the Löwchen was a favorite of castle ladies as a sort of living hot water bottle. The trimmed area would go under the covers for warmth and the furry part would attract the fleas out of the beds and away from the people. Another legend associated with the breed was that if a knight died in battle a lion was carved at the foot of his tomb, if he died at home in bed, a Löwchen was carved on his tomb.

The story of Bijou, while basically true has also added to the charm of the breed. In the late 1700's, Bijou, a parti-colored Löwchen lived in a castle in Weilburg, Germany on the Lahn River. The story goes that, Bijou, through extreme loyalty to his beloved master, jumped from a window 60 feet above the river rather than be left behind when his master went off on a hunt. The ending of the story is the stuff of legend. One ending says that Bijou survived the jump and was rewarded by riding to the hunt on his master's saddle, the other that the jump ended in disaster. Whichever ending is true, Bijou became famous. His life size portrait completed in 1787 still hangs in the baroness' bedroom in Weilburg Castle. Bijou's devotion, loyalty and fearlessness are very much evident in the Löwchen of today.

Little is written about the Löwchen during the early years. The first record of a breeder and fancier was a Dr. Walthier in the early 1800's in Germany. The first know Löwchen standard was published in a book by Count Henry de Bylart, Dogs of All Nations. Maximillian de Conick was the first documented modern breeder and exhibitor of Löwchen. In 1897 he sold Madame Madelaine Bennert her first Löwchen. Madame Bennert would become recognized world wide for her efforts to save the rapidly disappearing breed.

General Appearance

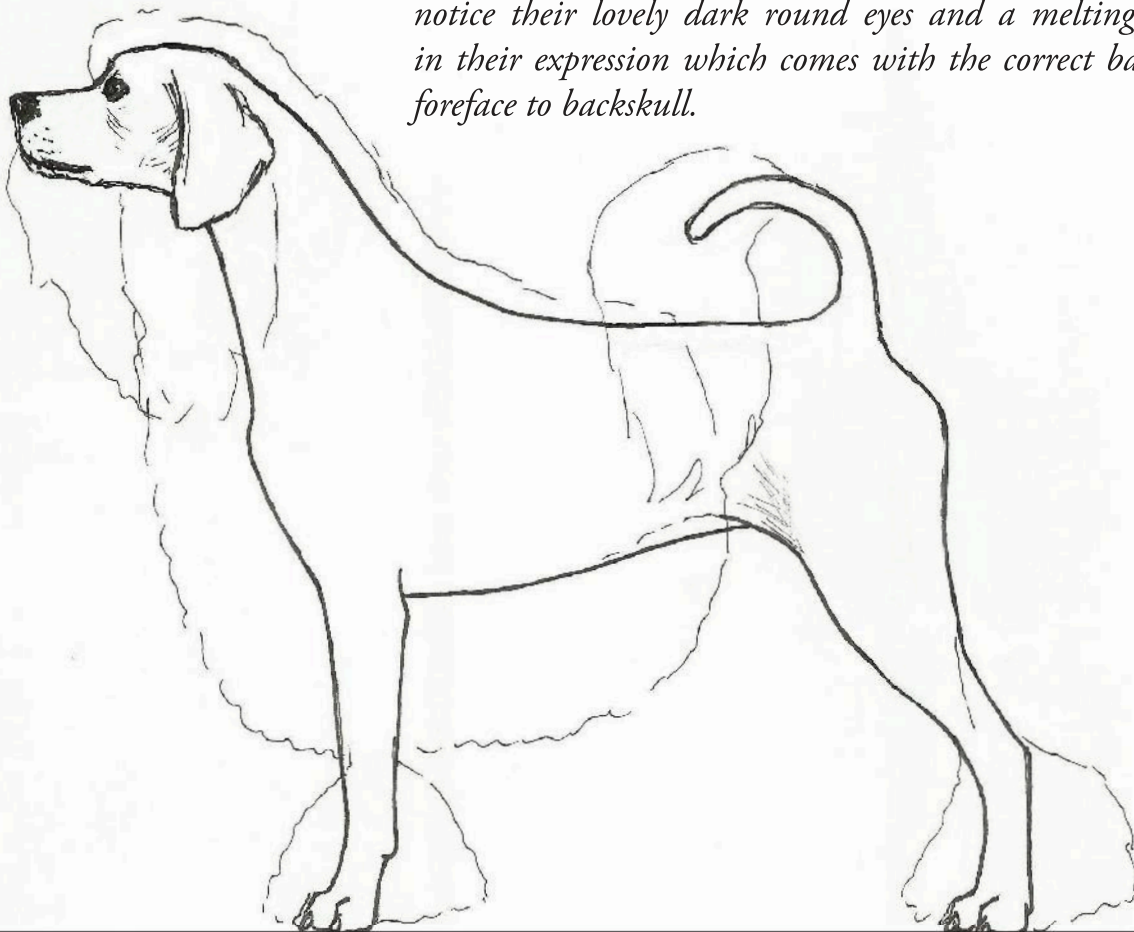
“A small, bright, and lively dog that originated as a companion breed in pre-Renaissance Europe where ladies of the court groomed it in the likeness of a little lion. Breed characteristics are a compact, balanced body; a relatively short, broad topskull and muzzle; and a proud, lively gait that accentuates the lion cut with a long flowing mane. These quintessential features, combined with an outgoing and positive attitude, result in a dog of great style.”



General Appearance

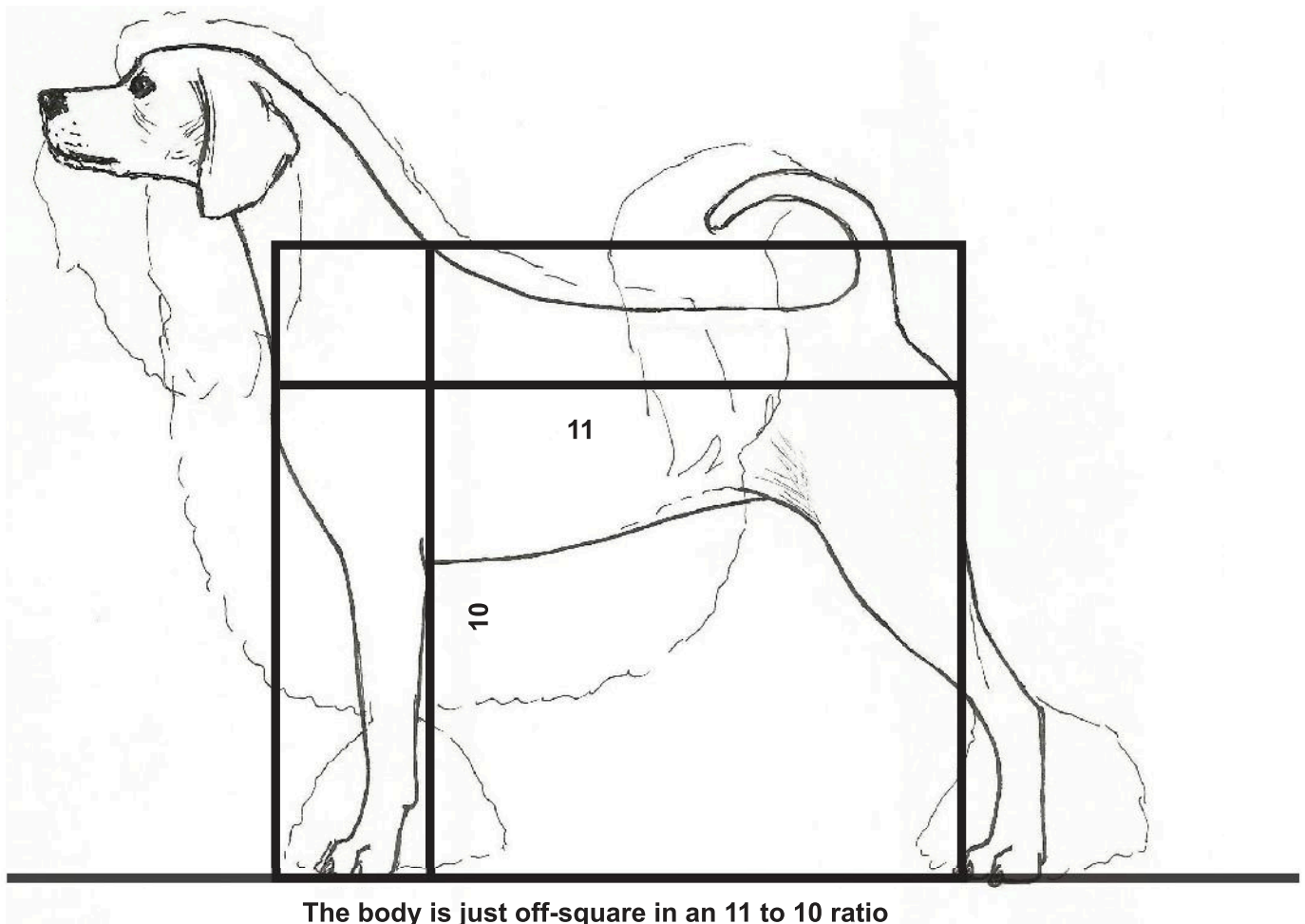
At first look, the Löwchen should give an overall impression of a happy, enthusiastic little dog. The Löwchen should be neither shy nor timid in the ring, but rather they should be happily moving with head up, tail over the back which is quite often wagging as they make their way around the ring. The top line remains level and the dog moves easily and effortlessly. This is not a dog that should be expected to have the over-extension of movement as a sporting, herding or even working breed does, however, there should be efficient extension of front and drive in rear. This is a moderate dog, not to be overdone in bone or angulation. Their coat should appear natural with somewhat of an unkempt look about it which adds to the breeds' charm.

When they stop and look at you, you should immediately notice their lovely dark round eyes and a melting softness in their expression which comes with the correct balance of foreface to backskull.



Size, Proportion and Substance

“SIZE - Ideally, mature dogs and bitches are between 12 to 13 inches at the withers. Height may vary 1 inch above or below this ideal. Only where the comparative superiority of a specimen outside this range clearly justifies it should greater latitude be taken. Absolute height at the withers should not take precedence over correct proportion and substance. **PROPORTION** - The body is just off-square when properly balanced. The distance from the prosternum to the point of buttocks is slightly greater than the distance from the withers to the ground in an 11 to 10 ratio. The distance from the ground to the elbow is slightly greater than the distance from the elbow to the withers. The Löwchen should never be low stationed. **SUBSTANCE** - The mature Löwchen is sturdily built with strong bone and muscular hindquarters, but never coarse.”

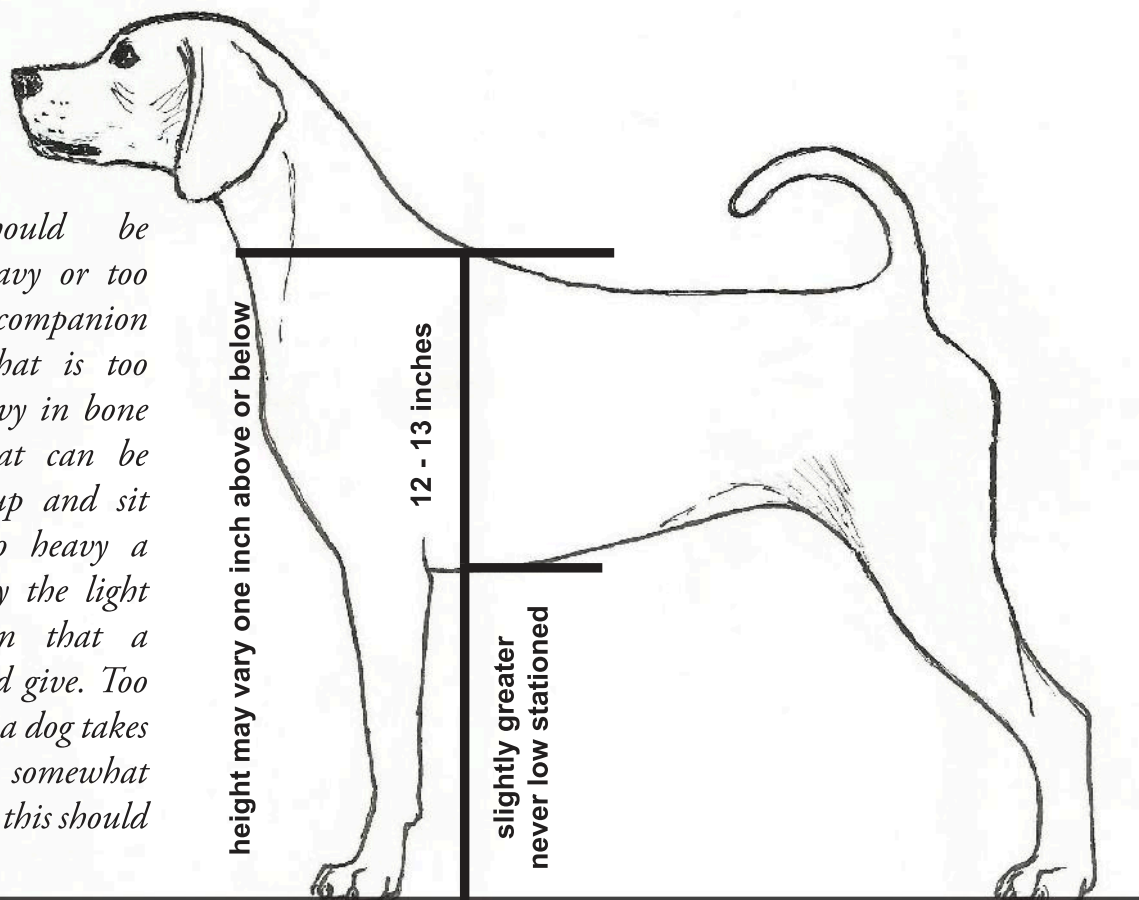


The body is just off-square in an 11 to 10 ratio

Size, Proportion and Substance

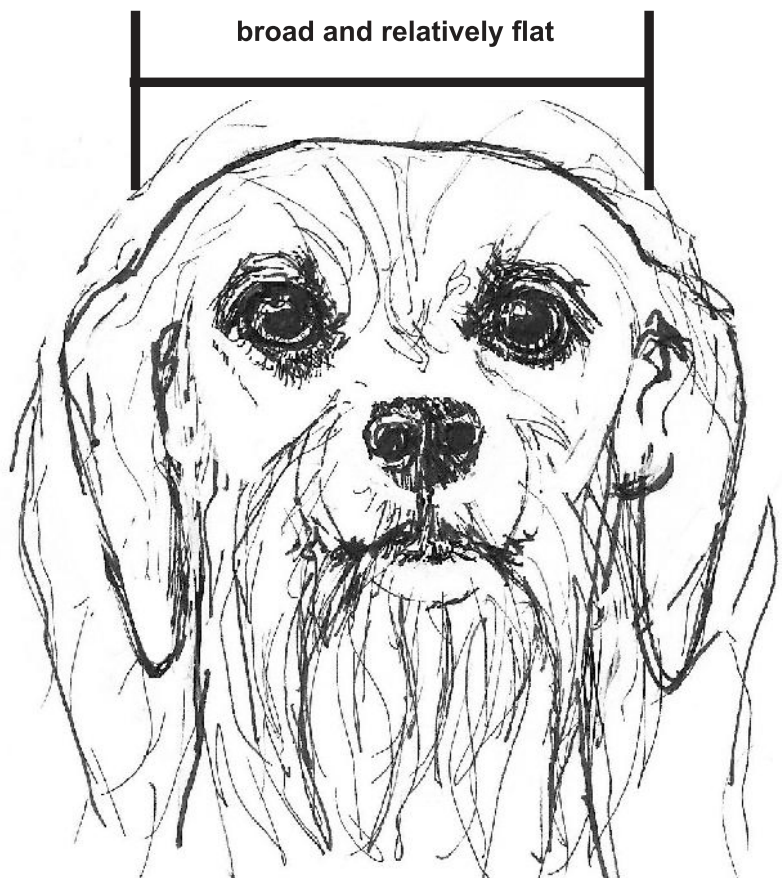
The standard calls for the ideal size to be between 12 – 13”. Size can affect the overall look of the dog as well as movement, but a superior representative of the breed that is slightly over or under the ideal size clearly justifies their selection over dogs with less proportion and breed type. While proportions may appear to be correct at first glance, a smaller boned dog can appear to be more fragile and a dog that is too heavy boned can appear too coarse. There has been a problem within the breed with low in stature dogs which also makes the dog look out of proportion and long in back. When judging the Löwchen you need to look for a dog that is slightly off square. Comparison should be made between the length of leg to depth of body to ensure the legs are slightly longer than the body is deep. Having a correct layback will shorten the coupling and a correct croup and placement of tail will give a balanced presentation.

Substance should be neither too heavy or too light. This is a companion dog. A dog that is too coarse and heavy in bone is not one that can be easily picked up and sit on a lap. Too heavy a dog takes away the light airy impression that a Löwchen should give. Too small and light a dog takes away from the somewhat sturdy little dog this should appear to be.



Head

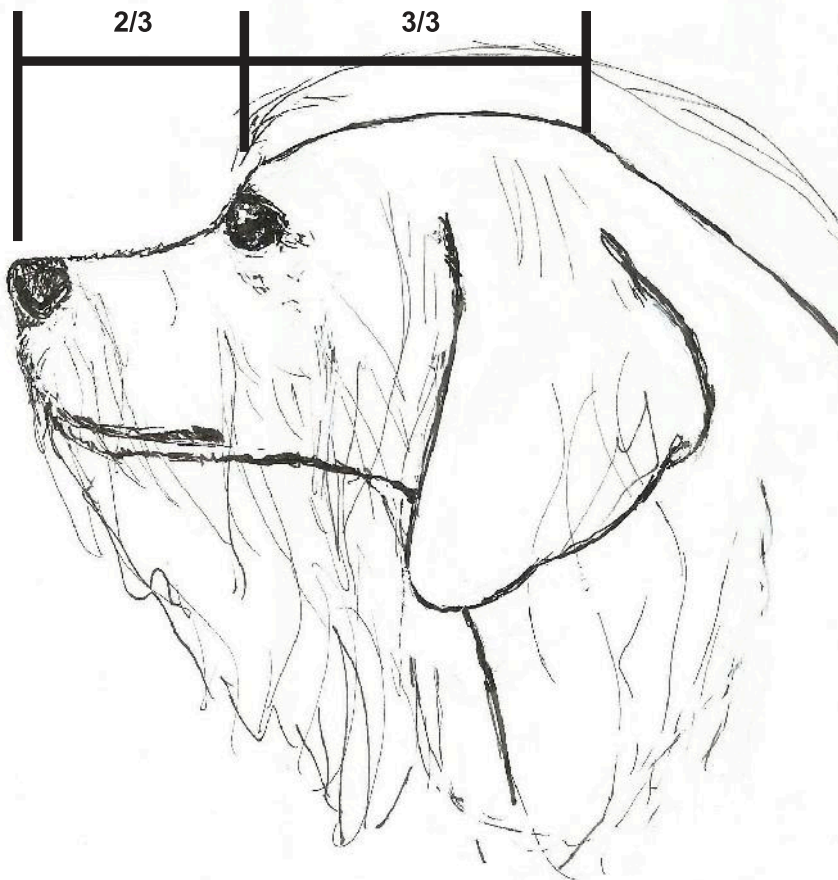
“The HEAD is a hallmark breed characteristic. The expression is bright, alert, and lively. The eyes are set well into the skull, round in shape, large, set well apart, and forward looking. Eyes are dark brown in color; lighter colored dogs may have lighter brown eyes but darker eyes are preferred. The ears are pendant, moderate in length, well fringed, and set on slightly above the level of the eye. The backskull is broad and relatively flat from ear to ear. The stop is moderately well defined. The length from nose to base of stop is two-thirds of the length from base of stop to occiput. The muzzle is well filled and relatively broad with moderate depth of underjaw resulting in a slightly rounded finish to the muzzle. The jaw is wide enough to accommodate all incisors in a straight row. Coloration of pigment is in accordance with coat color. Nose and eye rims are completely pigmented. The lips are tight with color the same as the nose. The bite is scissor and the teeth are rather large and well spaced with complete dentition.”



Note the nice round eye, moderate stop, relative flatness to the topskull and breadth of muzzle which contribute to the softness of the expression.

Head

The head is the MOST important feature of the Löwchen next to their distinctive clip. The first impression when you look at a Löwchen should be that of well-balanced, soft expression. The correct proportions of backskull to foreface sweeten the face however the correct placement of the eyes and adequate stop contribute to the overall soft expression. When examining the head, you should feel for an almost flat top skull in adults. Puppies can still be slightly rounded. The back skull is of good width – wider than a Lhasa or Havanese – not at all narrow in appearance. The ears should be well fringed and hang slightly above the ear. The eyes are round, full pigmentation. Stops should be moderate but well defined. A sloping stop takes away from the overall expression of the dog. The foreface is level and does not slope downward. The nose should be well leathery and fully pigmented, the lips tight and also fully pigmented. You should see a full muzzle which should be in proportion to the wideness of the back skull allowing for the teeth to appear to be large, strong and straight. Full dentition is desired. When you see a correct head with not only the proportions being correct but all other things also coming together there is a softness to it.

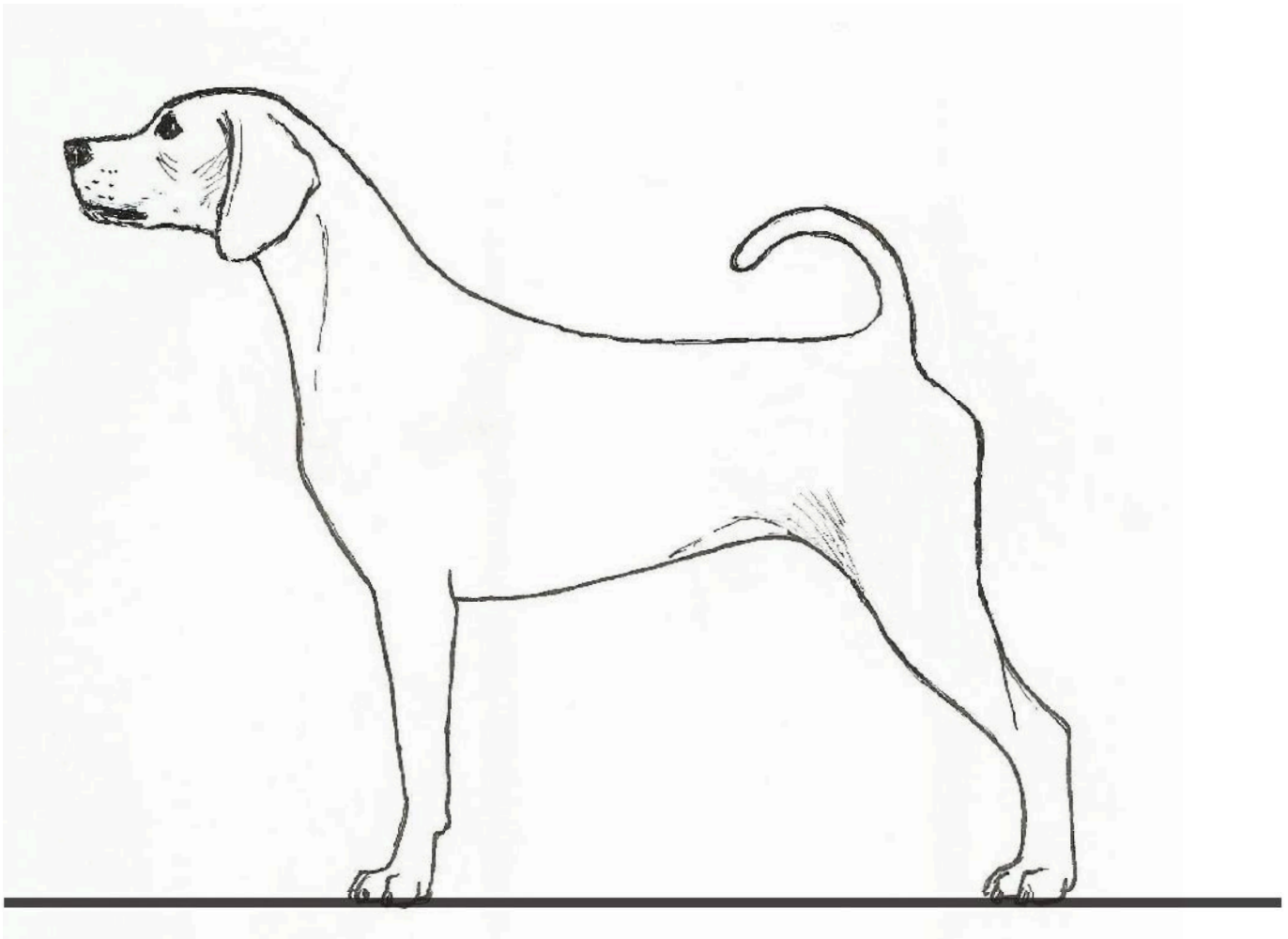


Neck, Topline, Body

“The **NECK** is of good length with a slight arch, fitting smoothly into the shoulders and topline. The head is carried high when the dog is moving.”

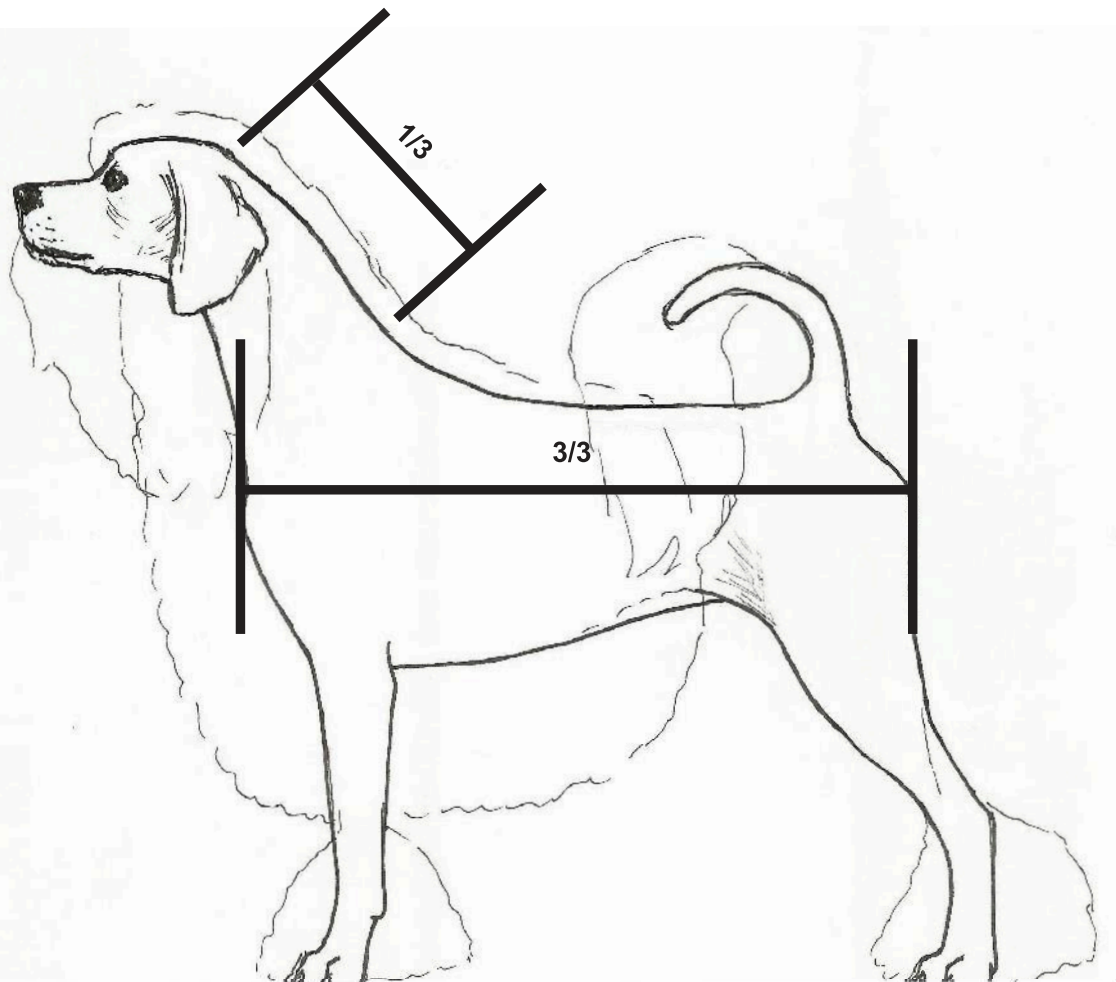
“The **TOPLINE** is level from withers to tailset.”

“The **BODY** is slightly off-square when properly balanced. The loin is short and strong. The ribs are well sprung. The brisket is moderate in width and extends approximately to the elbows. The underline has a slight tuck-up at the loin.”



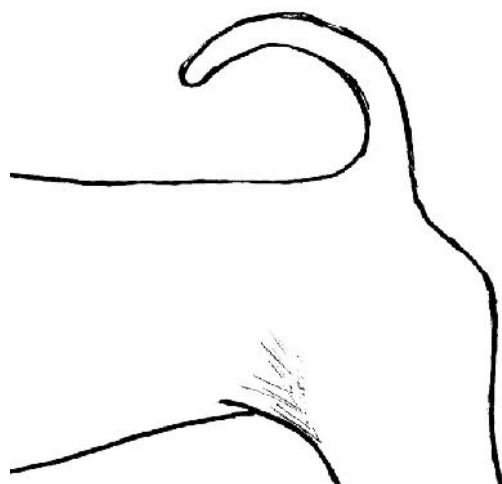
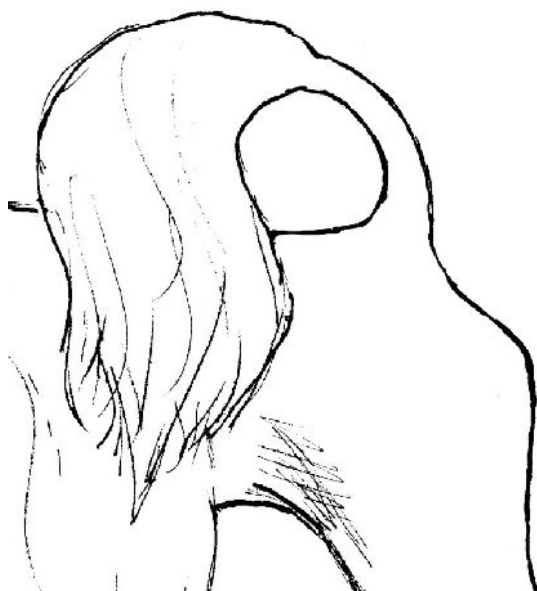
Neck, Topline, Body

The neck should be arched and carried proudly behind an erect head blending smoothly into the shoulders. The neck is approximately 1/3 the distance from fore chest to buttocks. Topline should be level from withers to tail set.



Tail

“The TAIL is set high and carried in a well-arched cup-handle fashion with the plume touching the back when the dog is moving. A dropped tail while standing is not to be penalized.”



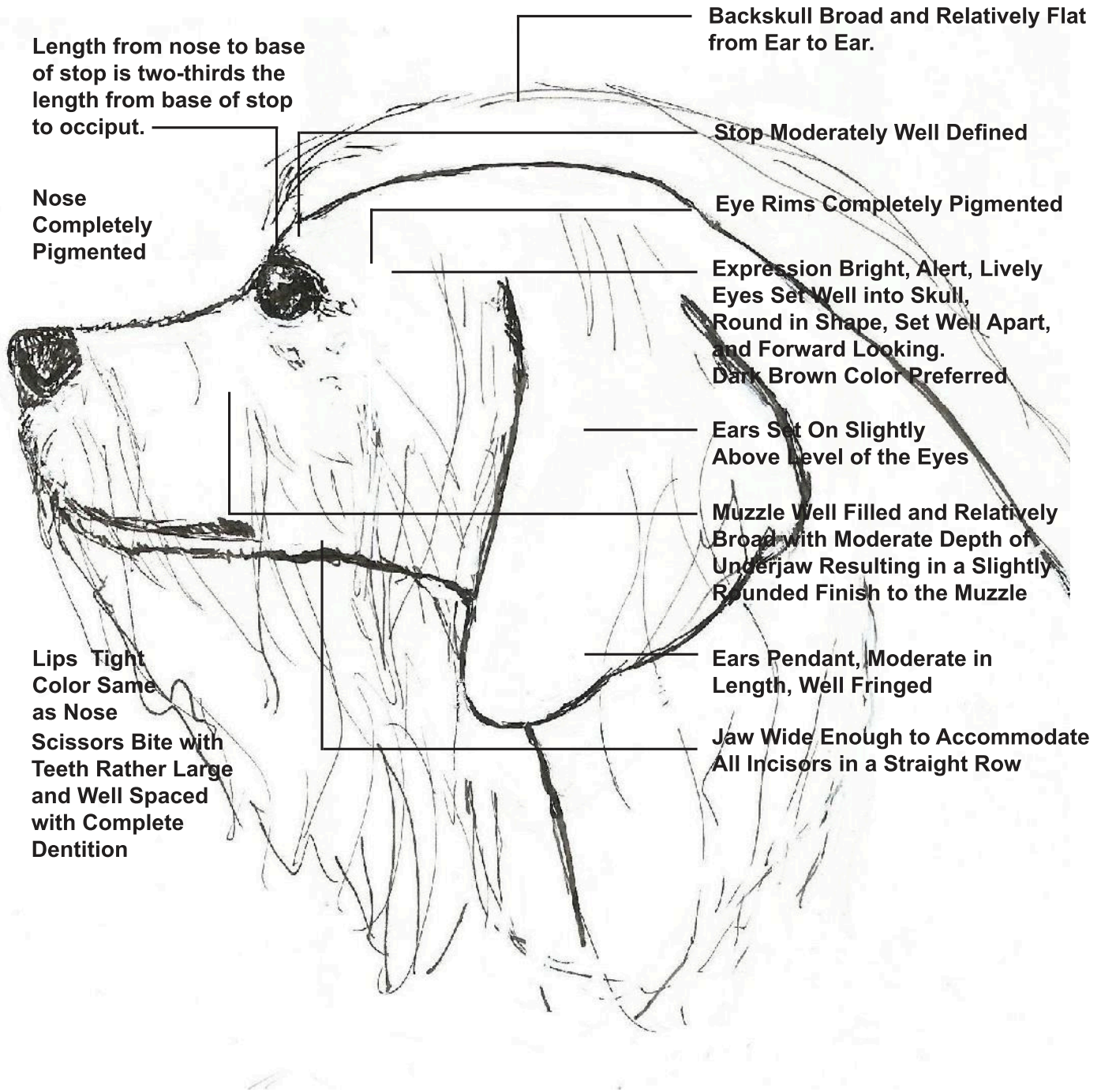
Tail

Tail is well plumed, set level with the topline and curved gracefully over the back in a teacup fashion so that the plume of the tail will touch the back or sides of the back. A low tail set, a tail carried perpendicularly to the back (flag fashion) or dropped on movement is to be penalized. The tail can be dropped when Löwchen is either stationary or standing.



Standard At-A-Glance

The Head is a Hallmark Breed Characteristic



Length from nose to base of stop is two-thirds the length from base of stop to occiput.

Nose Completely Pigmented

Lips Tight
Color Same as Nose
Scissors Bite with Teeth Rather Large and Well Spaced with Complete Dentition

Backskull Broad and Relatively Flat from Ear to Ear.

Stop Moderately Well Defined

Eye Rims Completely Pigmented

Expression Bright, Alert, Lively
Eyes Set Well into Skull, Round in Shape, Set Well Apart, and Forward Looking. Dark Brown Color Preferred

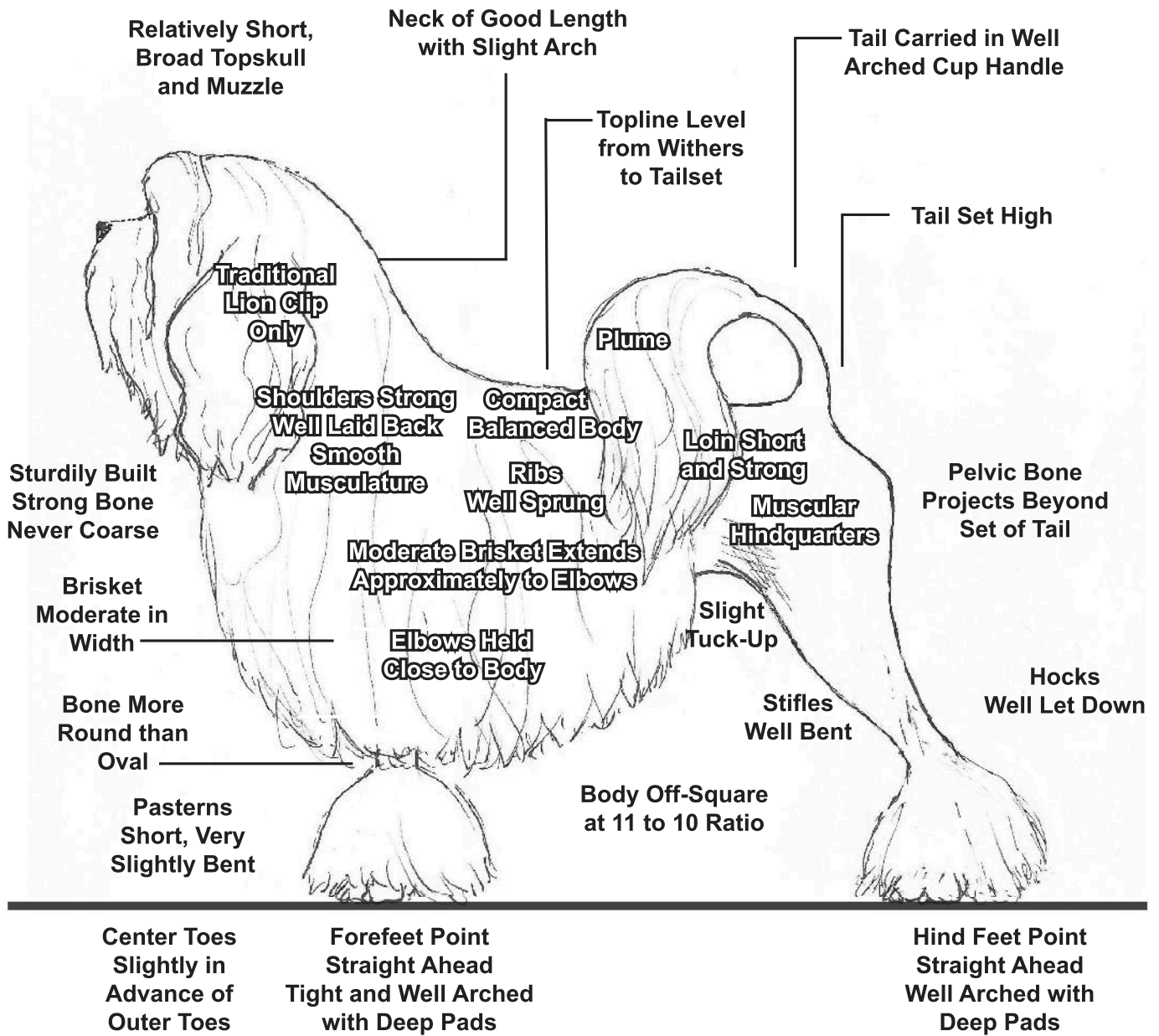
Ears Set On Slightly Above Level of the Eyes

Muzzle Well Filled and Relatively Broad with Moderate Depth of Underjaw Resulting in a Slightly Rounded Finish to the Muzzle

Ears Pendant, Moderate in Length, Well Fringed

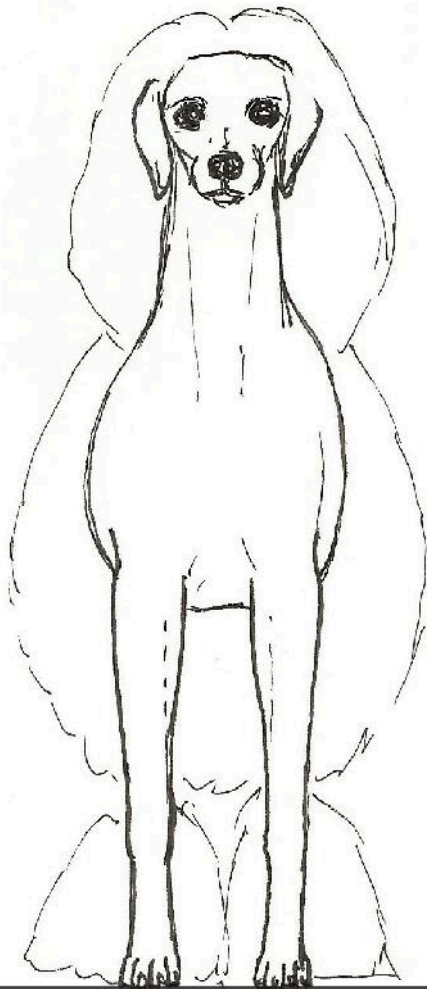
Jaw Wide Enough to Accommodate All Incisors in a Straight Row

Standard At-A-Glance



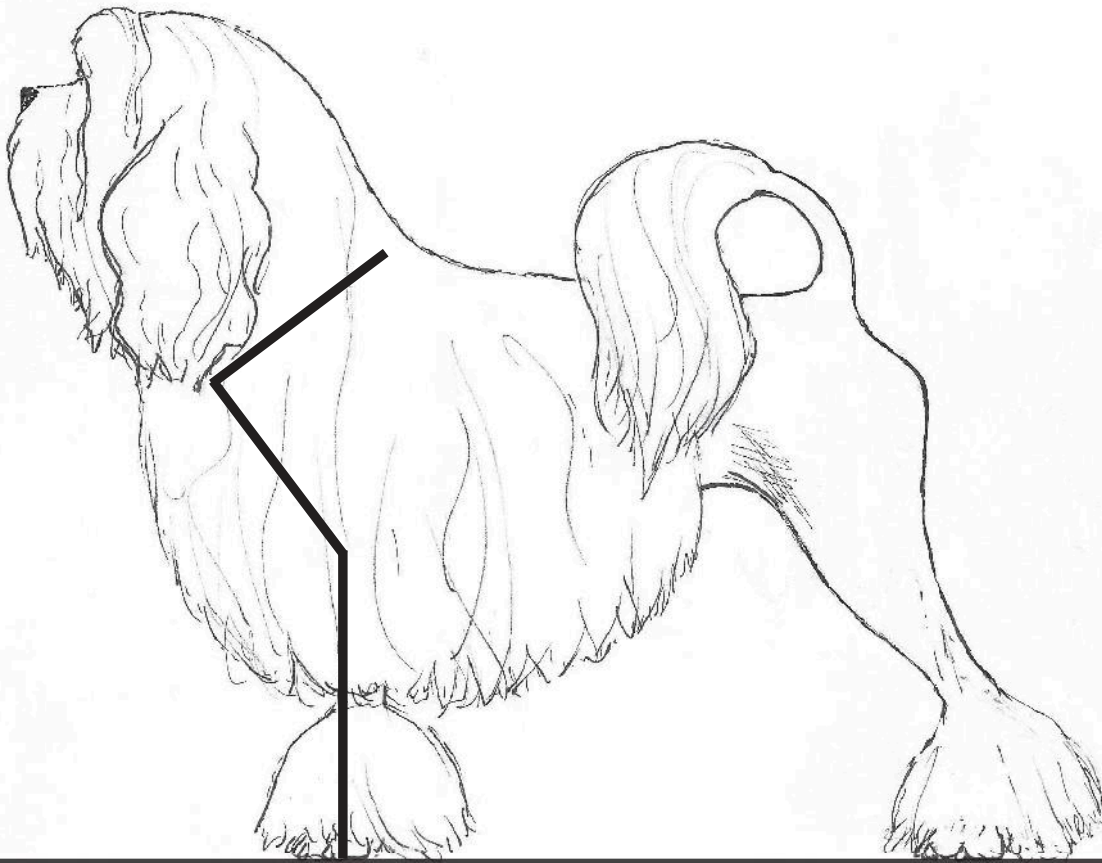
Forequarters

“The shoulders are strong and well laid back with smooth musculature. The upper arm is of equal length to the shoulder blade and the two meet in a near 90 degree angle. The elbows are held close to the body. Forearms are of good length and the distance from the withers to the elbow is slightly less than the distance from the elbow to the ground. From the front the legs are perfectly parallel from the elbows to the feet. The bone is more round than oval and of medium size with only a slight decrease in size at the pasterns. The pasterns are short, parallel from the front, and very slightly bent when viewed from the side. The forefeet point straight ahead and are tight and well arched with deep pads, and the two center toes are slightly in advance of the two outer toes. Dewclaws may be removed. The nails are relatively short.”



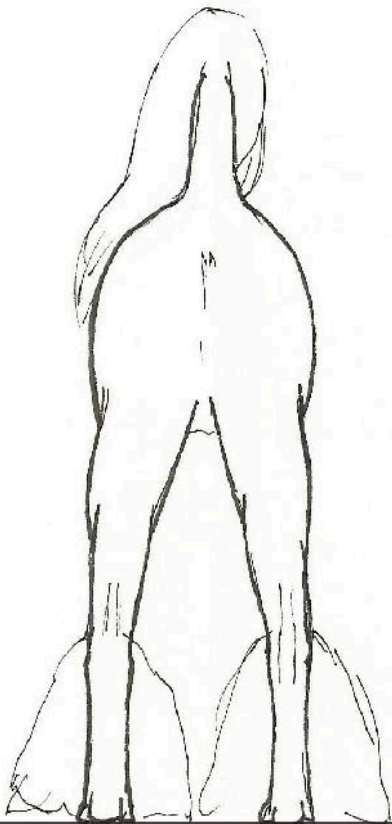
Forequarters

A bad front affects both movement and overall outline. When you put your hands on a good Löwchen front you should find as good a front as you would in any other breed. The elbows are tight against the ribs which are well sprung. You should be able to feel a sternum. When viewing from the side the legs should lie behind the ears and sternum allowing for adequate neck and chest to appear. If the front is too steep the neck will disappear and the outline of the dog is lost, movement is duly affected. When moving, the head should be in the 10 – 11:00 position which allows for good reach.



Hindquarters

“The pelvic bone projects beyond the set of the tail and is at an approximate 30 degree angle from a perfectly horizontal line. The upper and lower thighs are well muscled and of approximately equal length with medium bone. The stifles are well bent. The hocks are well let down and perpendicular to the ground from any angle. The hind feet point straight ahead, are slightly smaller than the forefeet, and are well arched with deep pads.”



Hindquarters

The hindquarters are of medium bone, well angulated with muscular thighs and spaced moderately wide. The upper and lower thigh is nearly equal in length meeting at a well bent stifle joint. The leg from the hock joint to foot pad is perpendicular to the ground.

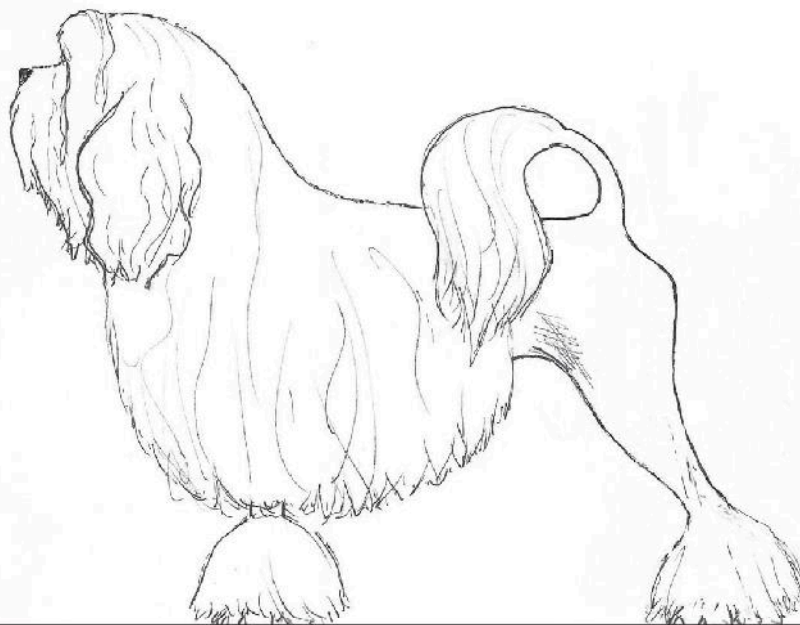


Coat

“The Löwchen must be shown in the traditional Lion Clip. The unclipped areas of the coat are long, rather dense and moderately soft in texture. The unique Löwchen coat consists of hairs of varying diameters with a more noticeable collection of denser hair around the neck and withers. The coat may fall to either side but must never be artificially parted.”

“It has a slightly to moderately wavy appearance. Wiry, woolly, curly, and flat coat textures are not correct and are to be penalized to the degree of severity. No scissoring or shaping of the unclipped coat is permitted. Puppies typically have a softer coat.”

“Lion Clip - The coat is clipped to about 1/8 inch on the following parts of the body: from the last rib back to and including the hindquarters; the hindquarters to the hock joints; the front legs from the elbows to a point on the legs which is equal to the same distance from the ground to the hock joints leaving cuffs of hair on all four legs; the tail from the base to approximately one-half way to the tip leaving a plume at the end of the tail; and the feet are entirely clipped. The unclipped areas must be completely natural and untrimmed. On no account should the unclipped areas be smoothed, shortened, shaped or otherwise tidied with anything other than a comb or brush. Any clip other than specified or any shaping or scissoring of the long coat are disqualifications.”



Lion Clip

The Löwchen has a “single coat”; if you look closely heavier “guard hairs” and finer “undercoat” are mixed (50/50 is ideal) throughout the coat. When left to grow, the Löwchen coat, with proper care, will be long and flowing.

There is to be no scissoring is done on the long coat. This is the only disqualification in the show ring for exhibitors. The pattern is easily set: BODY: The hindquarters are trim from just above the hocks to just behind the last rib. TAIL: The ½ of the tail closest to the body is trimmed to match the hindquarters, leaving a long plume of hair on the untrimmed end.

LEGS: The front legs are trimmed starting at a line matching to top of the back cuffs or bracelets up to the elbow and all the way around the leg, allowing the long hair from the body to fall over the trimmed area.

FEEET: The feet are trimmed in the same manner as those of a poodle on front an rear feet leaving full long bracelets to fall over the feet. Toenails are to be trimmed in a short fashion to avoid splaying of feet.

Color

“All colors and color combinations are acceptable with no preference given to any.”



Red Sable



Gold Sable



Silver Sable



Sable Parti



Cream Sable



Cream Sable Irish

Color



Silver Irish Pied



Black Pied



Silver Cream



Chocolate Cream



Black and Tan



Black and Silver

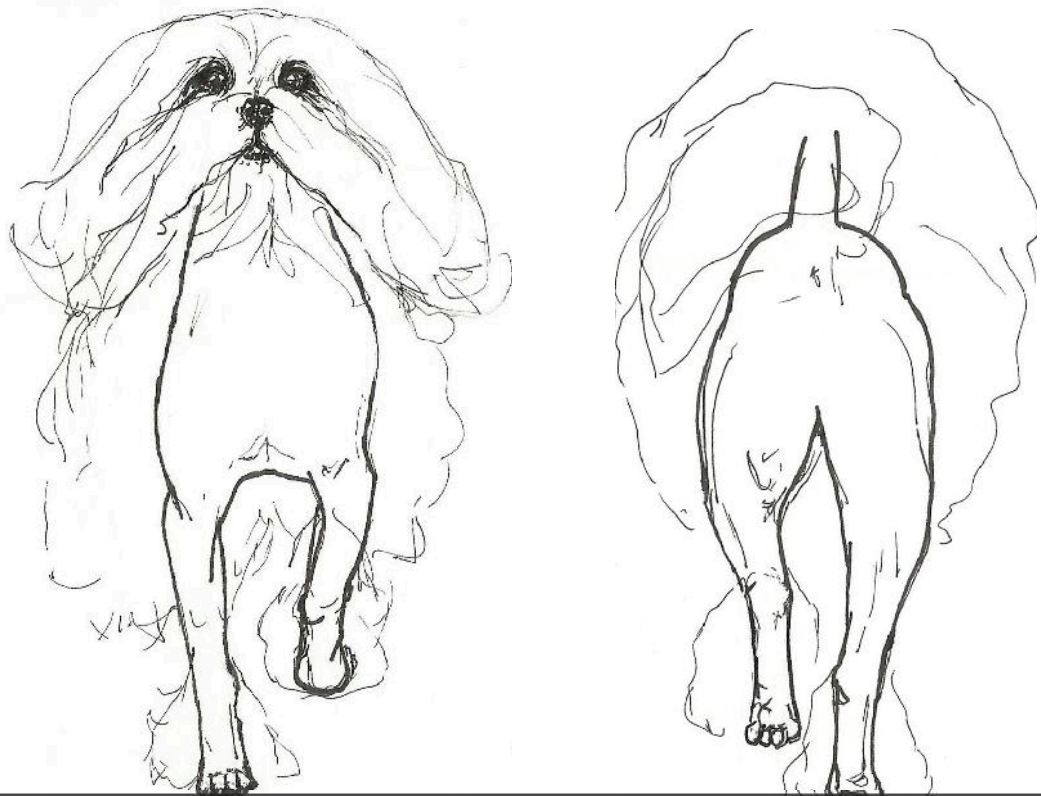
Gait

“Movement at a trot is effortless with good reach in front and full extension in the rear. From the front the forelegs move in almost parallel lines converging slightly as the speed increases. From the rear the legs move in almost parallel lines and in the same line of motion as the forelegs, converging slightly as the speed increases. From the side movement is efficient and ground covering. The forelegs reach well out in front in a long, relatively low stride, and the rear legs come well under the body and extend behind to maximize propulsion. The body remains nearly square in outline and the topline is held firm and level, with the tail being carried curved over the back and the head held above the level of the back.”



The Löwchen's movement is above all effortless and ground covering. It is essential the rear pastern, between hock and foot, extend rearward beyond the vertical. Proper rea extension by itself, is not sufficient to produce correct movement. It must be matched by equal forward extension of the front legs.

Coming and going, there is only a slight convergence of the legs and then only at a speedy trot. While the rear quarter movement of the Löwchen is less wide than one might be accustomed to in other breeds, this does not mean to imply a Löwchen should move close behind. Close movement is defined as that in which there is a distance between the upper legs, but the lower legs, from hock to foot, brush against each other.



Temperament

“The Löwchen is alert, intelligent, and affectionate with the overall qualities of a loving companion dog. It has a lively, outgoing, and inquisitive personality.”



Temperament

The Löwchen is agile, smart, wants to please, loves to learn, gets jokes and makes jokes, and is physically muscular, sturdy and sound. This is not a sissy dog, In fact, the Löwchen's lack of fear, especially as far his body is concerned, can be a mixed blessing. The Löwchen has great prey and play drive and loves to retrieve. Add to this the fact that they're just so darn cute (you can't look into that face and not smile), and you have to wonder why everyone in agility, obedience and tracking doesn't have one!

Truth is, the Löwchen is the best-kept secret in Companion Events. Yes, they're a rare breed so getting a puppy isn't easy, and yes, the wait for the right one can be extensive. The potential, however, is "all there." Of course, you'll have to get used to hearing, "I give up...what is it?" every time you step into a ring, but that can be fun too.

Based on the limited sample of Löwchens now competing, you're probably going to want a male rather than a female, as males seem to have more drive. You're definitely going to want to get your puppy from a reputable breeder who is acquainted with and interested in Companion Events. It's best to get your puppy at about 9 weeks of age so you can socialize it and expose it to every single thing it will have to deal with as an adult. A Löwchen puppy is exceptionally impressionable and has a great memory, so you'll want him to have lots of varied and positive experiences. This is also why, when you begin formally teaching him things, you'll want to be sure he gets it right the first time and that the learning experience is always fun. This is not a breed that can handle negativity, pressure, or correction, so make it fun. (This means that you have to have patience and a great sense of humor, as well.) There seems to be no limit to how much your Löwchen can be taught or how long he's willing to work.

Löwchen make not only great performance dogs, but also therapy dogs, tracking, dock diving, competitive frisbee and just wonderful all-around great dogs.

Disqualifications

“Any trim other than specified. Shaping or scissoring of the long coat.”

Disqualifications

The only disqualification (other than undescended testicles in a male) is any trim other than as described, and the shaping and scissoring of the coat. When checking for the trim, gently lift body coat checking to see if the trim line comes to the last rib. Do not slide hand backwards along back moving skin and coat as this gives the illusion of the coat being taken up too far from the last rib. Checking the feet and front legs for trim entails just lifting plums and front coat. Shaping and scissoring can be difficult to detect in a coat that is well maintained. The best thing to look for is scissor marks or a “rounded” appearance in the body coat such as the body coat of a poodle. Always remember a young puppy that has not had time to produce the natural breakage on the coat, will look “neatened” in their appearance. This natural breakage will usually start showing around 10-12 months of age.