

# The Belgian Sheepdog

**Presented by:  
Belgian Sheepdog Club of America**

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# Presentation Format

- ◆ History
- ◆ The standard and breed type ---  
emphasis on what makes the Belgian  
Sheepdog different than the other  
herding breeds

# History

## A Variety of Livestock Dogs

### British Herding Dogs

- ◆ Large sparsely populated areas
- ◆ Used for gathering or fetching large herds
- ◆ Britain as an island had a lack of natural predators, so unnecessary for these dogs to have a strong protective instinct
- ◆ Example: Border Collie, Collie

### Continental Herding Dogs

- ◆ Small farms where animals were kept in barns at night
- ◆ Grazed along side crops so dogs kept the sheep out of the crops “living fence”
- ◆ Predators were a constant threat so dogs had a natural protective instinct
- ◆ Example: Belgian breeds, German Shepherd

There are also Cattle Dogs and Livestock Guarding Dogs

# History



- ◆ November 15, 1891, Professor Reul brought together shepherds and dog fanciers from the areas around Brussels, Belgium to ask if they could find a native shepherd dog of Belgium.
- ◆ He found the basic structure and appearance similar: medium sized, prick-eared, square, agile, hardy and intelligent

# History



- ◆ The Belgians were developed as one breed with different coat types and colors
- ◆ This presentation will focus on the Belgian Sheepdog



- ◆ If judging in Canada the breeds name has changed to the Belgian Shepherd Dog and all 4 breeds are shown together. The Belgian Laekenois is the 4<sup>th</sup> Belgian Shepherd Dog breed and has short wired haired coat.



## The Belgian Sheepdog (Groenendael - “Groan-en-dahl”)



- ◆ Nicholas Rose owned a famous hotel called “Chateau de Groenendael”, 10 km south of Brussels
- ◆ Mr. Rose began a breeding program that established a distinct line of long haired black sheepdogs.
- ◆ Mr. Rose was the breeder of Duc de Groenendael, who is considered the father of the Belgian Sheepdog.

# History

## Father of the Belgian Sheepdog



- ◆ Duc de Groenendael
- ◆ Circa 1890s
- ◆ Square appearing
- ◆ Elegant with proud neck & head carriage
- ◆ Agile
- ◆ First breed standard was written 1892

More history is available on the BSCA website  
[www.bsca.info/history.html](http://www.bsca.info/history.html)



# History



The Belgian Sheepdog has had many jobs over the years.

# History As a Herding Dog



*De prachtige tekening van A. Clarys uit 1910 toont ons links de kensse herder 'Dick', rechts de Groenendaeler 'Sam' en in het midden de Mechelaar 'Charlot'.*

- ◆ Farmers required herding ability and protection from attackers such as wolves
- ◆ Had to withstand the climate: heat, cold, snow, rain
- ◆ Highly valued for their trainability and helpfulness to the farmer

# History As a Police Dog



- ◆ Belgian Shepherds were also used as guard dogs and were the first dogs to be used by the Belgian Police
- ◆ March 1899, the city of Ghent began its police dog service with 3 Belgian Shepherd dogs.

# History

## WWI – War Dogs



- ◆ During WWI, many Belgian Shepherds were requisitioned by the military
- ◆ They served in several capacities during the war including Red Cross dogs
- ◆ They searched for injured soldiers on the battlefield

# History

## WWI – War Dogs



Messenger dogs were trained to ignore the sounds of battle and run through the battlefields to deliver important messages.



# Arriving in America

- ◆ The first Belgian Sheepdogs arrived in the United States in 1911
- ◆ They were shown along with other shepherd breeds as Continental Shepherds



Photo courtesy of American Belgian Tervuren Club



# The Varieties Become Breeds in AKC Registration



- ◆ All Belgians were registered as one breed in the US until 1959
- ◆ In 1959, the breed was split, the black dogs took on the original breed name of Belgian Sheepdog

Photo courtesy of American Belgian Tervuren Club

- Today the reasons many are attracted to the Belgian Sheepdogs are the same as in the past.
- Their intelligence, desire to learn and work as a partner with their owner, and for their agile, efficient working structure.



# What Is Breed Type?



Breed type refers to the combination of specific features that gives an overall impression to distinguish a group of dogs as a breed.



# General Appearance



- ◆ Well balanced
- ◆ Elegant in appearance
- ◆ Exceedingly proud carriage of the head and neck
- ◆ Stands squarely on all fours



# General Appearance



- ◆ Strong
- ◆ Agile
- ◆ Alert & Full of Life
- ◆ Impression of Depth & Solidity without Bulkiness
- ◆ Never coarse or Spindly

# General Appearance



- ◆ Males should be distinctly masculine
- ◆ Females should be distinctly feminine
- ◆ Should be able to tell the sex easily by looking
- ◆ Bitches should be given equal consideration



# General Appearance



Please remember there can be a great deal of difference between our dogs and bitches.

# General Appearance - Profile Males



# General Appearance – Male





# General Appearance - Profile Bitches



# General Appearance - Female





# General Appearance – Compare - Males





# General Appearance – Compare - Bitches

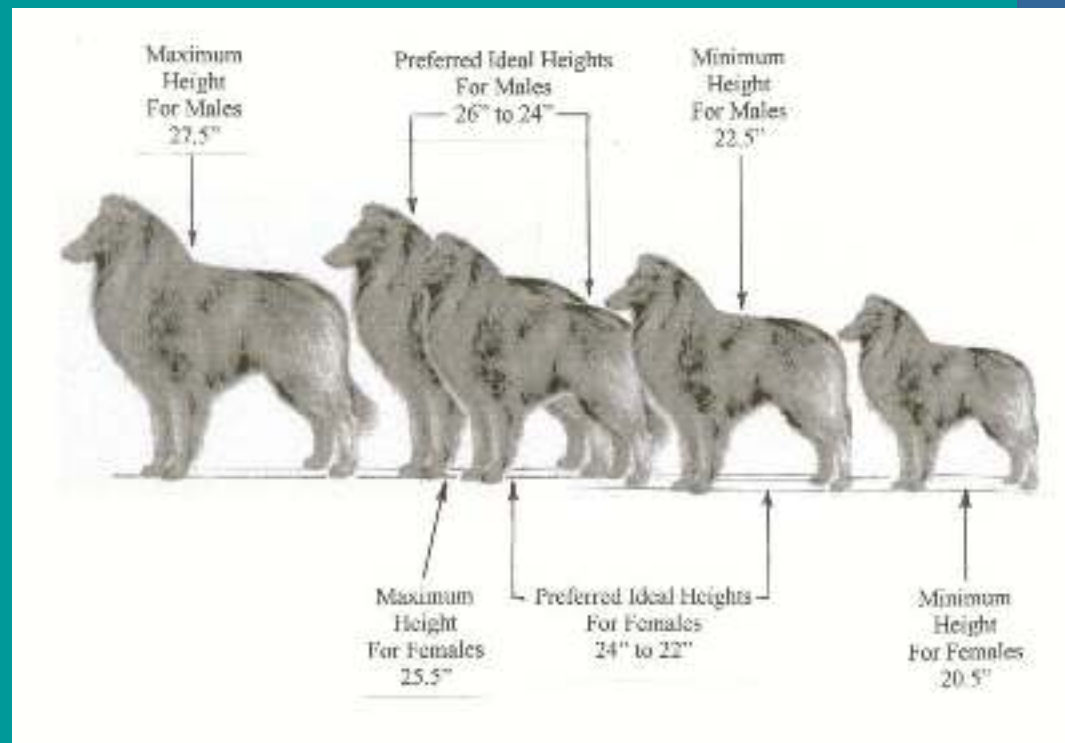


# Size, Proportion, Substance



- ◆ Males ideal 24” – 26”
- ◆ Females ideal 22” – 24”
- ◆ Length from point of breastbone to point of rump should equal height
- ◆ Topline, front legs, & back legs should approximate a square

# Size, Proportion, Substance - Disqualifications



- ◆ DQ - Males under 22 ½ or over 27 ½
- ◆ DQ - Females under 20 ½ or over 25 ½

# Head



- ◆ The head is very important in distinguishing a good Belgian Sheepdog. Head type is a combination of - correctly set ears, eye color and shape and proper proportion.
- ◆ When looking at the head, a judge should be able to tell the breed and even the sex.

# Head



- ◆ Clean-cut & Strong
- ◆ Top skull flattened rather than rounded
- ◆ Stop moderate
- ◆ Skull - width approximately the same, but not wider than the length
- ◆ Muzzle & Skull equal in length

# Head



- ◆ Alert
- ◆ Ready for activity
- ◆ Gaze should be intelligent and questioning



# Head - Ears



- ◆ Ears triangular in shape
- ◆ Stiff and Erect
- ◆ Set high on the head
- ◆ Base of ear should not come below center of eye

DQ – ears hanging

# Head – Ears



# Head - Ears



# Head - Eyes



- ◆ Medium size
- ◆ Slightly almond shaped
- ◆ Brown, preferably dark brown

# Head



- ◆ The difference between dogs and bitches should be easily apparent.
- ◆ Is there any doubt that this is a bitch?



# Head





# Head



# Good Examples - Heads



Nice bitch heads

# Good Examples - Heads

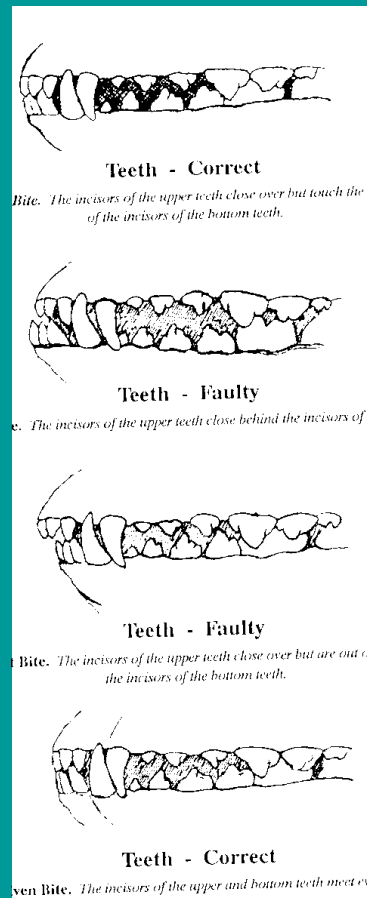


Nice male heads

# Good Examples - Heads



# Head - Bite & Teeth



- ◆ Even or scissors, both acceptable
- ◆ Should not be over or undershot
- ◆ Full complement of strong white teeth



# Examining the Bite



- ◆ Lift the front of the lips and check for Scissors bite or even bite.
- ◆ This is a nice scissors bite.



# Examining the Bite



- ◆ While the standard calls for “a full complement of strong white teeth” it is not necessary to open the entire mouth.
- ◆ Lift the sides of the mouth to examine our bites.
- ◆ The small pre-molars are the teeth normally missing.

Please do not pry open the mouth as done in the Rottweiler

# Neck

- ◆ Round & rather outstretched
- ◆ Skin tight
- ◆ Slightly arched
- ◆ Carries the head proudly



# Neck



Beautiful elegant neck



Too short lacks elegance

# Topline

- ◆ Withers slightly higher and slope into the back
- ◆ Back level, straight & firm
- ◆ Loin relatively short
- ◆ Croup medium long & slightly sloping



# Chest

- ◆ Deep not broad
- ◆ Lowest point reaches the elbow
- ◆ Forechest apparent to the extent that it is not hidden inside the shoulders
- ◆ Withers to chest = elbow to ground





# Tail



- ◆ Last bone to reach the hock
- ◆ Tail low at rest
- ◆ Tail lifted during movement, but should not be carried above the backline or hooked, may have slight curl
- ◆ DQ – Cropped or Stump tail



# Forequarters - Shoulder



- ◆ Long, oblique, flat against the body
- ◆ Shoulder & upper arm meet at a sharp angle (approx 90°)
- ◆ Shoulder & upper arm approximately equal in length, this sets the elbow under the top of the withers

# Forequarters – Legs & Feet



- ◆ Legs straight & parallel to each other
- ◆ Bone oval
- ◆ Pasterns medium in length & very slightly sloping
- ◆ Feet round (cat feet)

# Hindquarters - Legs



- ◆ Thighs broad and muscled
- ◆ In balance with the forequarters
- ◆ Hock low to ground & moderately bent
- ◆ Feet slightly elongated

# Coat

- ◆ Medium harsh coat
- ◆ Guard hairs long, well fitting, straight
- ◆ Undercoat dense commensurate with the climate
- ◆ Excessive coat that would interfere with the working ability or masks the elegant outline should be faulted



# Coat

- ◆ Bitches seldom carry the same coat as males
- ◆ Bitches should be given equal consideration when judging
- ◆ Don't be distracted by the amount of coat, proper texture is more important





# Color

- ◆ Black
- ◆ May have white, limited as follows:
  - Small to moderate patch or strip on forechest
  - Between pads of feet
  - Tips of hind toes
  - Chin and muzzle (frost maybe white or grey)
  - Tips of front toes allowable but a fault



# Color

May have white, limited as:



- ◆ White or gray is acceptable on chin and muzzle
- ◆ Frosting can be on young dogs. It is not age related
- ◆ White around the lower lip and over the eye brows are age related.

# Color

May have white, limited as:



- ◆ Small to moderate white patch or strip on forechest is acceptable
- ◆ The standard does not define the size of the white other than small to moderate

# Color

## May have white, limited as:



- ◆ White on tips of hind toes allowed in the standard
- ◆ White is allowed between the pads of the feet
- ◆ White on tips of the front toes are allowable but considered a fault

# Color



Reddening due to climactic conditions in an otherwise correct coat should not be grounds for disqualification



# Belgian Sheepdog Color Disqualifications



# Gait - Side

- ◆ Smooth, free, and easy
- ◆ Never tiring
- ◆ Backline firm & level
- ◆ Parallel to the line of motion, no crabbing
- ◆ Tail not above the backline
- ◆ Always appearing agile



# Gait – Coming & Going



- ◆ Tends to single track
- ◆ Correct coming and going is important in our agile herding dog

# Disqualifications - Summary

- ◆ SIZE
  - Males under 22 ½ inches or over 27 ½ inches
  - Females under 20 ½ inches or over 25 ½ inches
- ◆ Ears hanging (as a hound)
- ◆ Cropped or stump tail
- ◆ Any color other than black
- ◆ Viciousness

# Temperament

- ◆ Qualities of intelligence
- ◆ Alert & devoted to master
- ◆ Watchful & attentive
- ◆ Zealous for the attention of their master and very possessive
- ◆ Approachable & confident

Please do not award points to a dog that does not display the proper temperament.



# Judging the Belgian Sheepdog

- ◆ Mostly owner handlers
- ◆ Approach with confidence
- ◆ Many dogs will not be hand stacked, they are trained to move into position and stand
- ◆ The dogs are very focused on the handler make sure they know you are coming
- ◆ **NEVER** accept questionable temperament

# Summary



- ◆ Judging is a balancing act
- ◆ Always consider the entire dog
- ◆ Look for the best balance of positive points that are specific and functional for the breed.

# Summary



- ◆ A Belgian Sheepdog must have good breed type to distinguish it from other herding breeds
- ◆ A Belgian Sheepdog must be sound with good movement to perform the functions they were bred for.

# Summary



While we are low in popularity, the Belgian Sheepdog is very important to us. We appreciate the judges that make an effort to learn about our breed.

# This Slide Is to Remind You That the Belgian Sheepdog Is More Than a Pretty Face.



To be a good Belgian Sheepdog it must look like and act like a Belgian Sheepdog.



# Conclusion

The Belgian Sheepdog Club of America thanks you for your interest in improving conformation judging of the Belgian Sheepdog.





# Additional Information



Website – [WWW.BSCA.INFO](http://WWW.BSCA.INFO)







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Levy and Co  
Photography





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