

ORIGINS



A BRIEF HISTORY:



A BRIEF HISTORY:



1980s and 1990s



WELCOME TO THE AKC



BSCA Supported Entry, Philadelphia
Kennel Club's National Dog Show
November 17, 2018

Photos by Doris Pitt



FORM and FUNCTION



- Built for strength and resistance, the Bergamasco is to be seen as a mountain sheepdog.
- He has a well-developed chest, and a relatively short neck with strong muscles.



- The Bergamasco is a drover and a guardian. The primary functions are to move and guard herds and livestock along the alpine rocky slopes and pastures. He has a well-developed chest, and a relatively short neck with strong muscles.
- The dog's job is to keep the upper hand without provoking panic in a flock of timid sheep.
- The Bergamasco certainly has its own initiative, but when danger lurks, he first warns the shepherd before deploying himself.



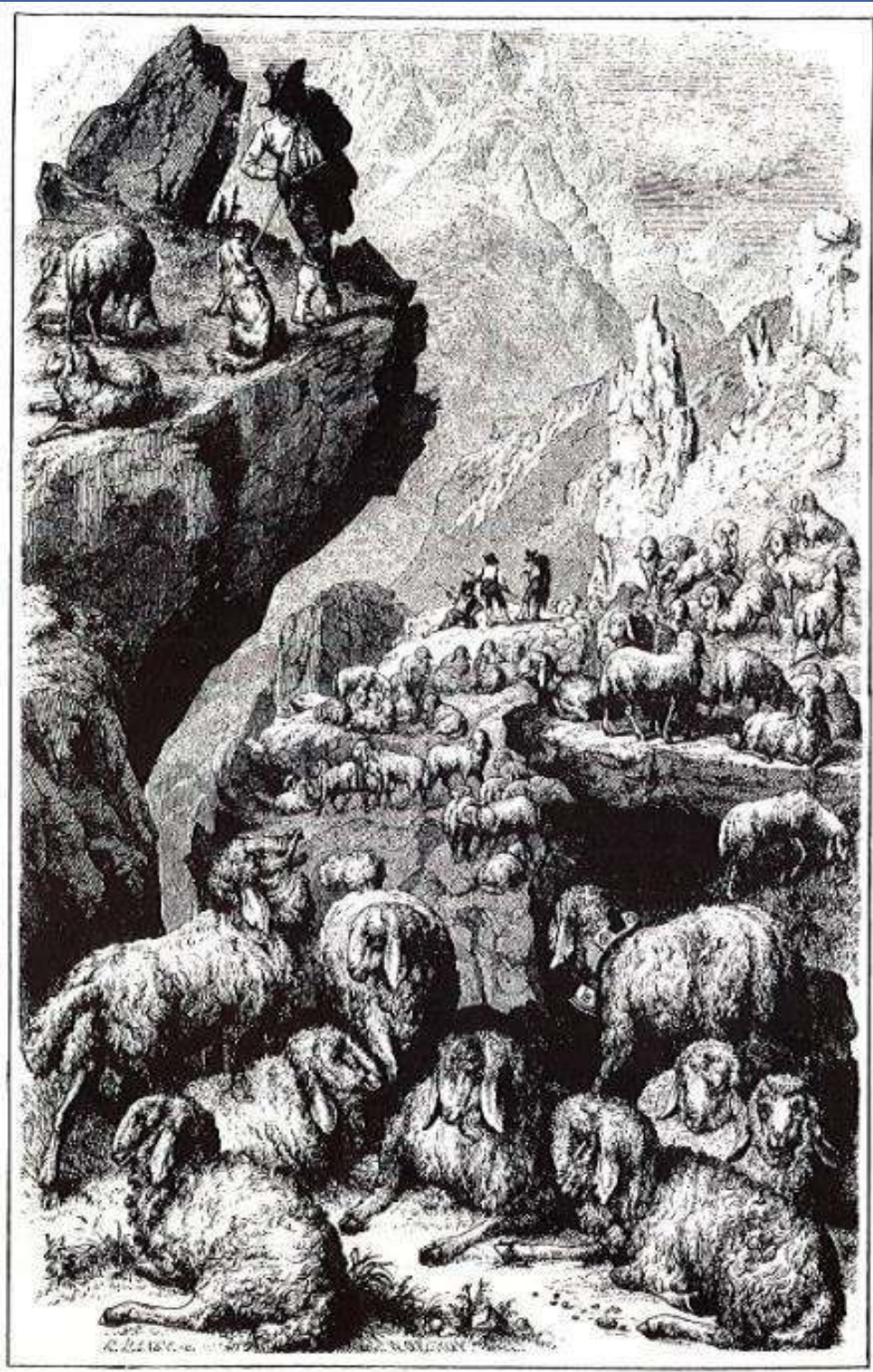


- The Bergamasco is a drover; he moves livestock over long distances by walking them over difficult, mountainous terrain.
- To achieve this, the gait must have steady and elastic movement with resistance for efficiency and power.



- Once the pastures are reached, he keeps a watchful eye on the grazing sheep so that they do not wander off or come too close to ravines or cliffs.
- The Bergamasco, meets aggression with the amount necessary to alleviate the threat. Too much assertiveness and too much hardness would after all, disrupt the herd in the already dangerous alpine landscape.





- Friedrich von Tschudi mentions the annual migration of these Bergamasker sheep in his book *Thierleben der Alpenwelt* (1860). Alpine Life, Tschudi states that the shepherds can leave most of the work along the way to their excellent dogs. In warm weather, the shepherds usually migrate in the evening or at night with their flocks, going to places where they often spend their entire life.
- Once on the alp, the herd is split into four parts: the ewes with lactating lambs, castrated sheep for fattening and slaughter, the uncastrated rams and young ewes, and finally the dairy sheep that no longer have young with a few uncastrated rams.
- The dog here has the task of gradually driving the sheep to the entrance of the milk hut and when they have been milked to bring the sheep back into the field where they can graze. They also make sure that no danger appears. Passers-by are left undisturbed to what the dogs see as the end of their territory; however, if one goes in the direction of the sheep, the dogs sound the alarm and scare them off by their loud barking and threatening. In the rare case of an approaching lynx or wolf, a great alarm is raised and the flock is circled at lightning speed until the sheep are closely packed.
- Elsewhere, von Tschudi praises the Bergamasco when he discusses the wolves. Wolves have never been very numerous in the Alps. In addition, says von Tschudi, the wolf would rather run away than be aggressive. Only in case of severe hunger, the wolf overcomes his reluctance. There was also a dark gray 'butcher's dog' in these regions. These dogs reacted with panic to the presence of a wolf. Only the Bergamascos would, if the interests of the herd demanded it, dare to fight the wolf. If the dog lost, the wolf ate him, and if the dog got it, he turned away from the wolf in disgust.

Interpreting The Standard



GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Bergamasco, with origins dating back almost 2000 years, is a true heritage breed, which developed unique characteristics without man-made aesthetics.

Approximately 2 years of age

Note the flocks are still forming and sticking out. In a hands-on-exam of the breed under the fluff you would feel patches or clumps of woven wool with the beginnings of flock formations.



Approximately 3 years of age

In a hands-on-exam of the breed you should be able to run your hands through the flocks similar to winding avenues. You should not feel wide patches of wool against the skin.

GENERAL APPEARANCE



The Bergamasco Sheepdog Is:

- Rustic In Appearance
- Medium-Sized
- Off Square – Slightly Longer than Tall
- Height Ranges From 21 to 25 inches

GENERAL APPEARANCE

- Strong, sound and brave, the Bergamasco is above all very intelligent, calm and even-tempered.



GENERAL APPEARANCE



- The distinctive flocks (flat woolly strands of felted hair) that cover their bodies protect them from the elements, as well as making them appear larger, with a foreboding appearance warning most predators to stay away.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Their unique skeletal structure makes them well-equipped for working in rough terrain. Correct, efficient movement is essential.



GENERAL APPEARANCE



- Owing to the steeper shoulder and pelvis angles, they have a free, low-reaching, extended elastic trot with both front and rear feet remaining close to the ground.
- Having no need for speed, their gait is a steady, slow trot that can be maintained for long periods without tiring.

Correct, efficient movement is essential.

GENERAL APPEARANCE



There is a fair amount of variation both with respect to size and coat. The variations discussed further are not considered undesirable as they do not affect the working ability of the dog.

The ideal, Bergamasco at any stage in coat development is a well-balanced dog with a rustic appearance

GENERAL APPEARANCE



**The ideal height ranges from 21 to 25 inches.
Bergamascos are slightly longer than tall.**

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

FEMALES



IDEAL HEIGHT: 22 inches
IDEAL WEIGHT: 57-71 pounds

MALES



IDEAL HEIGHT: 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
IDEAL WEIGHT: 70-84 pounds

- ❖ **For dogs over 12 month of age, height under 21 inches is a disqualification.**
- ❖ **Any height over 25 inches must be considered a fault.**

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

FEMALES



MALES



- Height-to-length ratio is approximately 10:10.5 to 11.
- Taller females or shorter males are acceptable as long as they are between 21 and 25 inches tall.
- The minimum height requirement of 21 inches shall not apply to dogs or females under twelve months of age.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

The Bergamasco is ideally suited to move and guard sheep on the alpine rocky slopes and pastures with a body slightly longer than tall.



SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE



The length of body measured from point of shoulder to point of buttocks is 5 to 6 percent longer than the height measured at the withers.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Built for strength and resistance, the Bergamasco has a lean, athletic build on sturdy (but not heavy) bones with a well-developed chest, relatively short necks with firm, limber muscles. This framework is well-muscled, without being thick or bulky.



KNOWLEDGE CHECK



Examine the Breed



HEAD

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

FOREQUARTERS

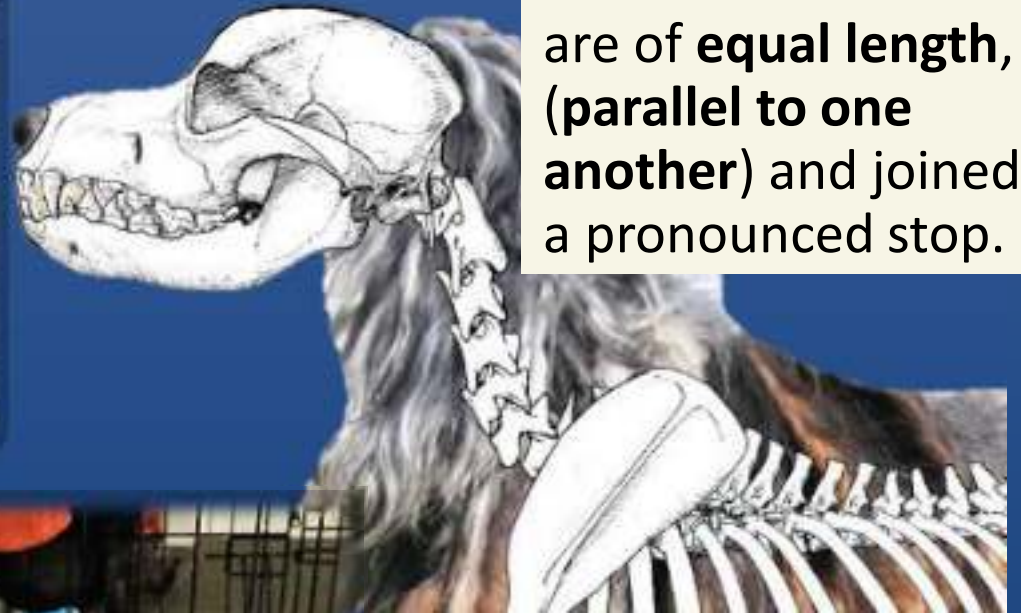
HINDQUARTERS

COAT

HEAD



The head is large, roughly proportionate to the size of the dog.



The skull and muzzle are of equal length, (parallel to one another) and joined at a pronounced stop.



The hair on the head may either be flocked or not. In either case, the **typical disheveled appearance** is natural and rustic.

EYES

Eye color is chestnut, with the darkness of the color varying from hazel to dark brown.



EYES

The eyes are large, oval, and set just slightly obliquely.

The eye rims are tight-fitting and black pigmented; eyelashes are particularly long so that they can lift the hair falling from the forehead over the eyes



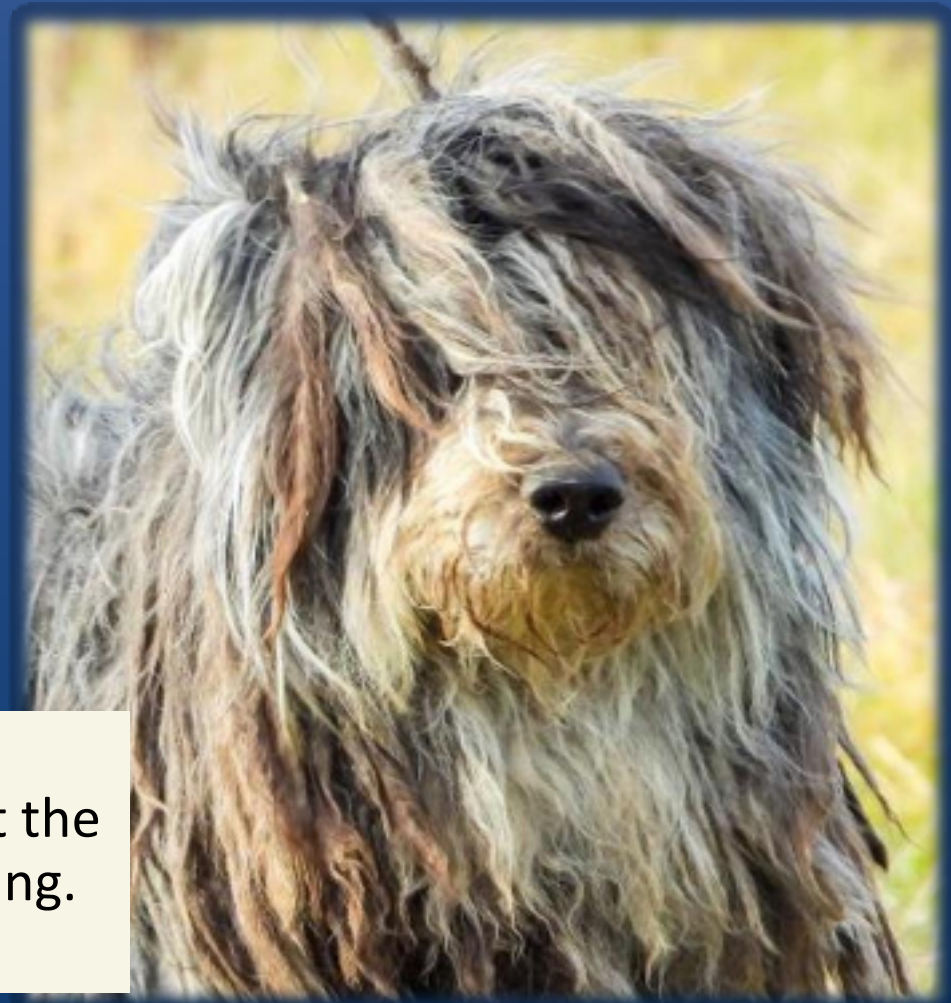
The expression is attentive and calm.



❖ **Disqualifications – Any lack of pigmentation of the eye rims; one (or two) full blue eye(s).**

EARS

- The ears are set high. At its widest point, the ear is from 2½ to 3 inches wide. The top two-thirds of the ear is triangular, with slightly rounded tips.



- When the dog is alert, the ears prick up at the base, with the top two-thirds semi-drooping.

EARS



- The ears are soft and thin and hang down on either side of the face.
- Ear length does not exceed half the length of the head, and shorter is preferred.
- Viewed from the side, the ears appear to be an extension of the curve of the back of the neck. The ears may either be flocked or not.

SKULL



- The skull is **slightly domed** between the ears and **rounded at the forehead**. The skull is about as **wide as it is long**, and features a **prominent occiput** and a **marked median furrow**.

MUZZLE

- The depth and width of the muzzle, measured at midpoint, are each half the length of the muzzle.

- The muzzle is blunt, tapering only slightly toward the nose.



- The upper longitudinal planes of the skull and the muzzle are parallel.

NOSE

- The nose is **large and black**, with big, well-opened nostrils.



- In profile, the nose is on the same line as the top of the muzzle and does not extend beyond the forepart of the muzzle

❖ **Disqualifications – Dudley nose.**

LIPS and BITE



- The lips are tight and black pigmented.
- The jaw is **wide** with **strong, evenly spaced teeth** meeting in a **scissors bite**.
- The line of the incisors is straight and perpendicular to the outside lines of the jaw.

❖ A level bite is acceptable.

❖ Serious Fault: Overshot, with a space greater than one eighth of an inch.

❖ Serious Fault: Undershot bite, such that there is a complete loss of contact by all the incisors

KNOWLEDGE CHECK



NECK

- The neck is **strong, slightly arched**, with **well-developed muscles**.
- Measured from the nape to the forward edge of the withers, the neck is **20 percent shorter than the length of the head**.
- The neck **circumference is at least twice the length of the neck**. There is no dewlap.
- The hair on the neck forms a thick collar with a varying degree of floccs present.



- In action, the neck is **carried forward** with its upper profile almost a continuation of the topline, with only a **slight angle at the withers**.

TOPLINE



Approximately 2¹/₂ years of age
Black dog greying. Flocks have started the separation process. You will still feel some the patches of wool under the flocks. Especially on the top of the croup and shoulder blades.

- The stacked side silhouette presents a **level topline** to a **slight rise over the loin** with a **slightly sloping croup** falling off to a low-set tail.
- While **moving**, the **topline is level**.

CHEST and RIBS



- The chest is heart-shaped when felt from the front.

- The rib cage is well-sprung and let down to the elbow.
- The depth of the rib cage is equal to half the dog's height at the withers.

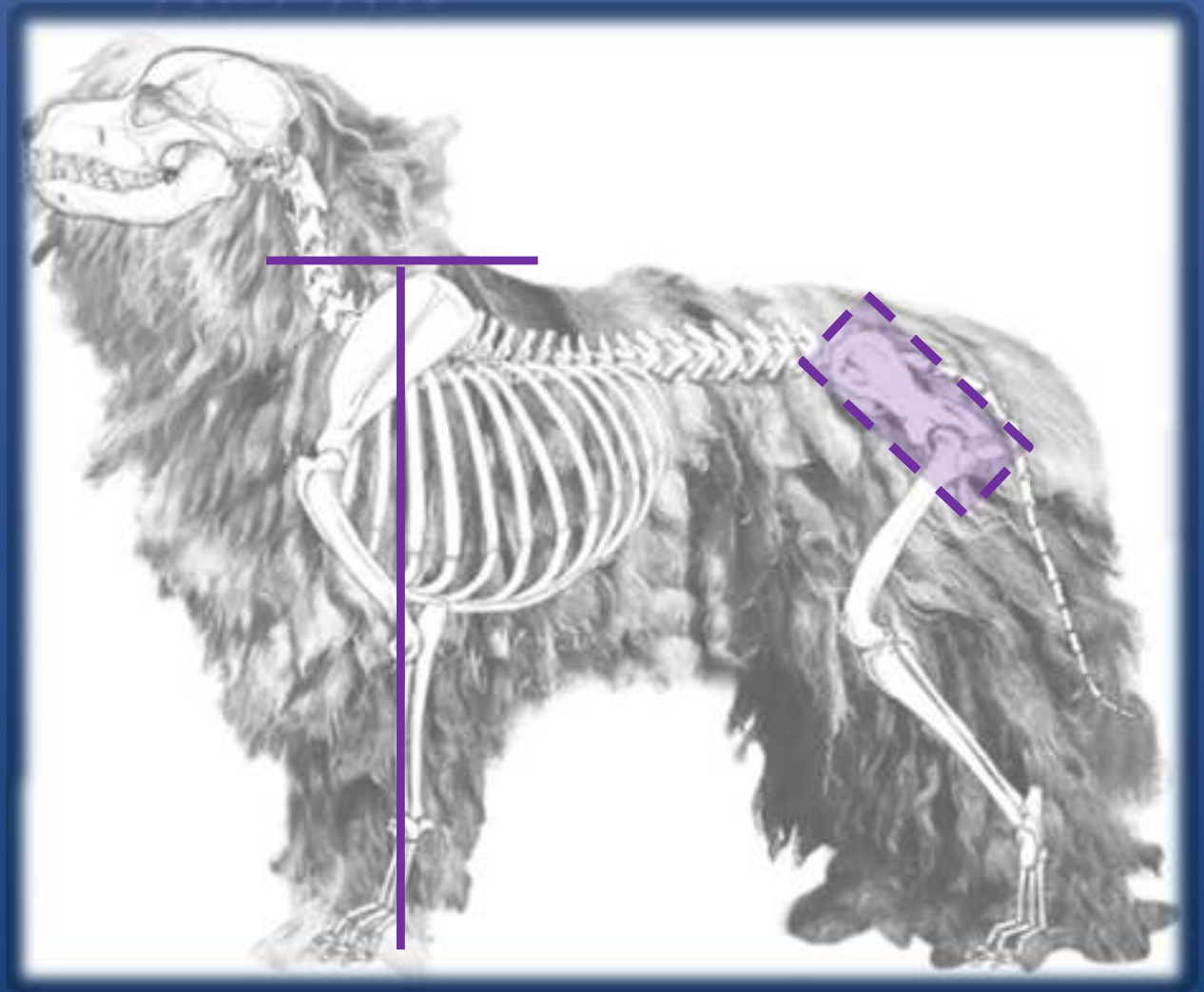
TUCK-UP, BACK, LION and Croup



- **Tuck-up** is nearly absent.
- The **back** is straight.
- The **loin** is slightly convex, firmly joining the back and the croup.
- The **croup** slopes about **35 degrees** downward from the horizontal.

PELVIS

- The pelvis is well-developed



- The **length of the pelvis** is **31 to 32 percent of the height at the withers** with a fallaway of 35 to 40 degrees from horizontal.

PELVIS



- Due to the **steeper inclination of the pelvis**, the **rear extension is lesser** than other breeds who work on flat terrain where speed and stride width are more important than power.
- At a trot, the Bergamasco's drive will not be as high and long as other herding dogs.

PELVIS



- The tail is **natural** and **undocked**, **thick at the base**, and **tapering to the tip**, inserted in the lower third of the croup. When in repose, the tail hangs down to the hock and curves slightly outward. While moving the tail flags back-and-forth at a level higher than the topline, but not curling forward over the back.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK



FOREQUARTERS and SHOULDERS



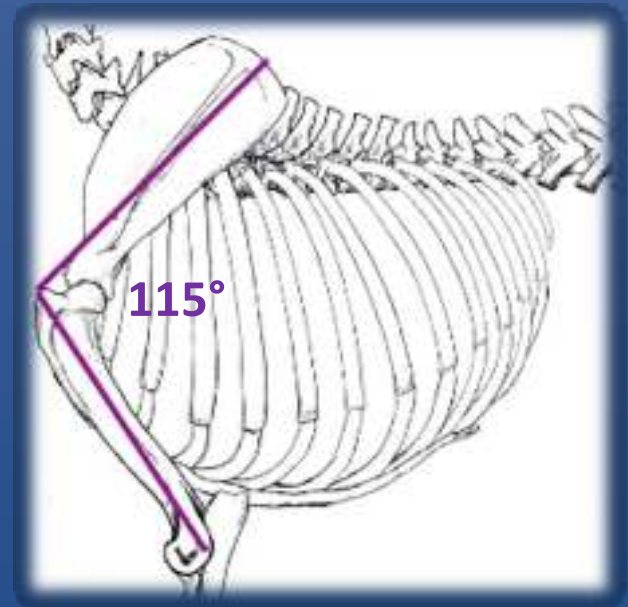
- The **legs are straight** when viewed from the **front** and **side** and **well-proportioned** in relation **to the size of the dog**.



- The shoulders are tightly knit and strong.

- The shoulder blades are wide and long with a steep angulation, 55 to 60 degrees from the horizontal. The length is at least one-fourth the height at the withers.

UPPER ARMS



- The upper arms are strong and well-muscled. They are just slightly longer than the shoulder blades.

- The angle formed by the upper arm and shoulder blade is about 115 degrees.

UPPER ARMS

- The ratio between the distance from withers to elbow and from elbow to the ground is 1:1.

This is essential for a dog which has to move both up and downhill where extra effort is required.

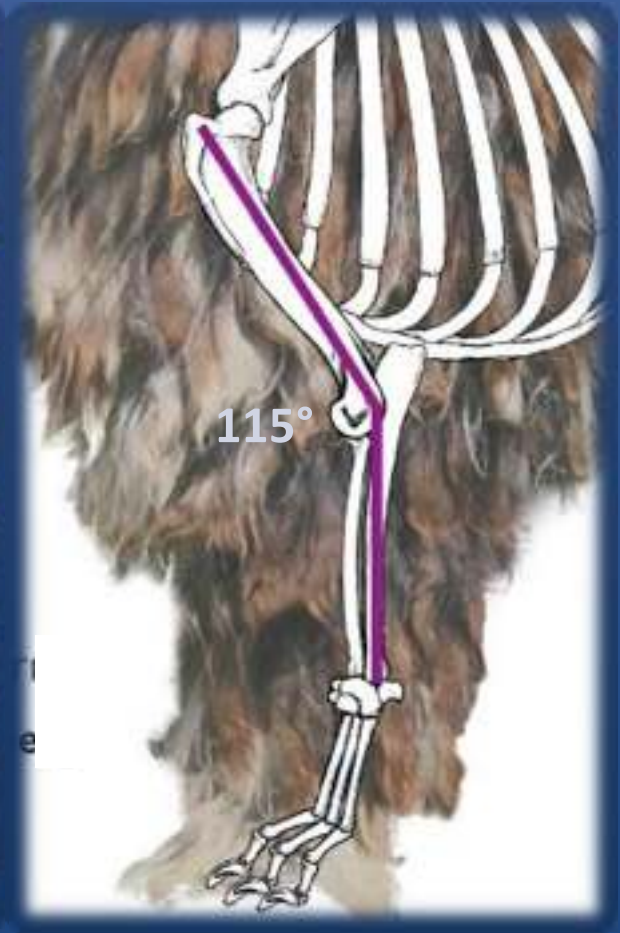


ELBOWS



- Elbows are set on a plane parallel to the body.
- The hair hanging down from the elbows is profuse, long and thick, tending to flock.

ELBOWS



- Elbows are set on a plane parallel to the body.
- They are neither close to the body nor jutting out.
- The humero-radial angle (between upper-arm and forearm) ranges from 150 to 155 degrees.

PASTERNS



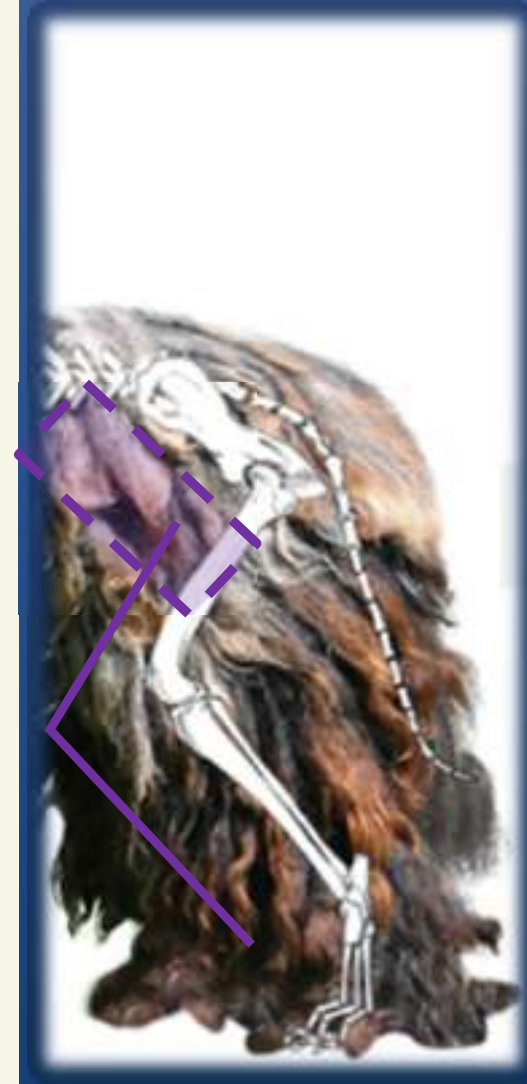
- The **pastern joint** (carpus) follows the vertical line of the forearm and is very mobile.
- The pasterns are **straight** when **viewed from the front**, and **slightly sloping** when **viewed from the side** (about 10 degrees from vertical).
- Dewclaws may be removed.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK



HINDQUARTERS

- The **Legs** are **straight** when **viewed from the back** and well-proportioned in relation to the size of the dog.
- The femur and tibia are roughly the same length.
- This, in combination with the 35 to 40 degree slope of the pelvis, make the dog better suited for locomotion over hilly territories.
- The upper thighs are **long, wide, and well-muscled**, sloping downward and forward at a **95 to 100 degree angle from the pelvis**.
- The Stifles are perfectly in line with the limbs, **neither turned in nor out**.
- Lower Thighs - The lower thighs are as long as the upper thighs, **with lean muscles**. They slope downward and back, forming an angle of about **105 to 110 degrees at the stifle joint** (femur-tibia.)



HOCKS



- The length of **the hock** is no less than 25 percent of the height at the withers.

HINDQUARTERS

- Viewed from behind, the rear pasterns are vertical and parallel to one another. Viewed from the side, the rear pasterns are vertical and placed so that the hocks just slightly extend past a vertical line dropped from the point of buttock. The angle of the hock joint (tibio-tarsal) is about 130 to 135 degrees.
- Dewclaws - Dewclaws may be removed.



HINDQUARTERS

- The back feet are slightly smaller than the front ones. They are oval shaped, arched with tight toes, well-flocked with hair.
- The pads of the feet are thick and black pigmented with a tight skin.
- The toenails are strong and black.



COAT



- The Bergamasco is a **rustic**, working dog with a coat that takes years to reach maturity, and can vary considerably. As discussed in detail below, **the distribution, size, texture and thickness of the flocks grow differently in each individual**. A young dog's coat goes through a number of stages in the early years. Female coats are subject to change due to hormones and raising pups. These are natural differences and therefore are not to be penalized.

COAT



- The make-up of the Bergamasco's coat is extremely complex.
- The hair is composed of three types of hair:
 1. **Undercoat**, "goat hair," and woolly hair.
The undercoat is short, dense, and of fine texture adhering to the skin forming a protective, waterproof layer.
 2. **The "goat hair"** is strong and rough in texture, as in goats, which stays smooth without tufting together with itself.
 3. The third type of hair is woolly hair. This type is somewhat finer in texture and grows together in tufts. The "goat hair" and the woolly hair naturally weave together over time and form the flocks, which have a tight consistency akin to boiled wool.

COAT

- From birth to 10 to 12 months of age, the coat is soft and short.
- At approximately 9 to 10 months of age, the goat hair and woolly undercoat begin to grow in. Human intervention is usually required to separate the coat into the beginnings of flocks at this point. This leads to the formation of informal bundles, then eventually to stubby formations that can give an unkempt and messy appearance at this period of the dog's life. This is natural and unavoidable.
- It is only at approximately 3 years of age that the flocks will have grown long enough for the unique look for which the dog is known to begin to be achieved. The flocks continue to grow throughout the dog's life. They may reach the ground at 5 to 6 years of age; hence young dogs must not be penalized for a coat which has not yet lengthened.



COAT



❖ Disqualification – White coat color on more than one-fifth of the total area of the body

GAIT

Bergamascos had to adapt to various ways of moving the sheep, sometimes covering long distances every day to get to the grazing grounds, while at other times they would only cover short distances within specific areas.



- The gait must have steady and elastic movement with resistance for efficiency and power.
 - Due to its unique angulations of the fore and hind quarters and compact build, the Bergamasco's gait is focused on resistance, strength and low center of gravity, with both fore and hind feet closer to the ground.
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- The forward and backward reach, while extended are less than flatland herding breeds. The proportions and angles of the fore and hind quarters provide the needed for strength and resilience in hilly terrain. Their natural gait is slower paced than other herding dogs.

GAIT



- The natural and preferred gait for the Bergamasco to achieve a calm and balance movement while preserving energy in a mountainous terrain is a free, extended, elastic, slow trot with both front and rear feet remaining close to the ground.
- The pasterns are supple and flex freely at a 90-degree angle. The head is carried forward with the neck forming a slight angle at the withers.
- The topline is level, and the tail flags back and forth at a level higher than the topline, but not curling forward over the back.

COAT



TEMPERAMENT

- The Bergamasco is a drover and a guardian.
- The primary functions are to move and guard herds and livestock. Tasks for which the breed expresses consummate ability, thanks to its qualities of vigilance, concentration and harmonious build. The Bergamasco's capacity for learning and strong determination are combined with a calm and patient temperament.
- They are bred to think for themselves and assess each situation. This does account for some of the stubbornness that runs in them.
- Bergamascos have a unique ability to size people up and determine the appropriate way to interact with both family members and strangers. While they may appear aloof, they are ever watchful. Just because the eyes are not seen does not mean they are not watching.
- They have an eager-to-please nature and establish a close relationship with humans.
- The breed must never be aggressive without cause, or fearful. Bergamascos are highly intelligent and self-possessed and may display indifference to attempts to engage their attention.

