

Summary

7 Elements of Type

- Square
- Balanced
- Moderate Angulation
- Impressive Head
- Double Coat
- Compact and Short Loin
- Good Extension with Balanced Reach and Drive
- Sound Temperament



Bouvier des Flandres

American Bouvier des Flandres Club

Presented by the Judges Education Committee



This program is designed to help you more fully understand our standard. All standards contain words that are open to individual interpretation. Ours is no different. Hopefully, however, the program will clarify the intent of these words when applied to the Bouvier.

We have **no disqualifications** within our standard and what is presented in the following is a detailed picture of the ideal Bouvier des Flandres.

For more information about the Bouvier, visit our website at www.bouvier.org.

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Overview

Big, Bold & Powerful

Let me introduce you to a **big, bold and powerful** dog.

Unique & Agile Herding Style

The Bouvier possesses a **unique herding style requiring great agility**. Pay close attention to these pictures. They say just about all there is to say about the character and physical requirements needed to be a Bouvier.

From the standard... **Agile, spirited and bold!**



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History

The Early Bouvier

Originally, the word Bouvier referred to their function of being a cattle dog, not to a specific breed.

Bouviere were dogs to primarily work cattle and Bergers were sheepdogs

- In the book "Les Races de Chiens" of 1894 in discussing the Belgian Sheepdog, the Bouvier is mentioned as follows "The cattle dog is for the most part a shepherd dog, or a dog that resembles him in general make-up, but who is bigger, fiercer, more aggressive and has a bolder look."
- Not until 1912, when the first breed standard was written was the word used to refer to a specific breed — the Bouvier des Flandres.



The Bouvier is a descendant from a combination breeds: Lakenois, Ardennes and the Rouler

Lakenois

The fawn color came from the Lakenois. Some of the original Bouviers can trace their pedigrees back to one of the same Lakenois that was also the forerunner of the Tervuren, the Belgian Sheepdog and the Briard.



Lakenois



Bouvier des Ardennes



Bouvier des Roulers

Ardennes & Rouler

Ardennes

The Bouvier Ardennes was a significantly smaller dog, shorter in head, gray or fawn, with natural prick ears and short tails. Envision a 22 inch Lakenois with a short tail.

Rouler

The Abby of Duynen was also in the area of Northern Belgium. Some of these original Bouvier types may have been crossed with the:

- Wolfhounds or deerhounds from the Abby to get the harsh coat
- Matin type dogs for a more intimidating size to work with the cattle

You can see this in the Bouvier de Roulers...a taller dog, cobby, with a shorter harsh coat, and always black. These dogs were 27 inches.

Breed Standard Established

The Bouvier des Flandres as described in the 1912 standard was a compromise of:

- Moderate sized dog
- Around 25 inches
- Cobby bodied
- With a black, brindled or fawn coat

The important point to remember is that you may see remnants of these different styles, even today. The standard allows for them — within reason, in the range of size and colors permitted. **Proportion is most important when evaluating these different entries.**

The Past

The Bouvier is relatively new breed because so few existed after both World Wars. Dedicated breeders had to begin again with the few remaining dogs they could find. For all intents and purposes, this breed you see in the ring today was developed after 1945.

To put our history into perspective:

- 1912 standard was a compromise of styles
- 1929 the American Kennel Club recognized the Bouvier
- 1931, the first 2 were registered
- 1935 - a third Bouvier was registered
- 1965 - American Bouvier des Flandres Club was formed
- 1969 - First time there were more than 20 registrations per year



revised 3/30/2019

The Present

From 1969 to the present, as the Bouvier was exhibited more frequently in dog shows and was seldom used in his original capacity, significant changes to the length of coat and grooming occurred.

The "Standard", however, has changed very little. The physical and mental requirements that were necessary when the breed was developed should still be present in the exhibit today.

The Bouvier is a true 'form follows function' breed: A breed whose coat requirements, physical makeup and temperament are defined by their country of origin, the jobs they were developed to do and the stock they were asked to work.



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Country of Origin

First, the country of origin influenced the type of coat needed.

Belgium

- In pre-Industrial Revolution Belgium when the Bouvier was first developed, farms were small
- Most farms were 20 acres or less
- They were often dairy farms
- The farmers were poor and could not afford a horse, so they developed a dog who would work with them
- The dog lived outside in all weather and, because of the damp environment, they needed a thick double coat
- They lived off table scraps
- They needed a dog that was hardy, resilient and trustworthy



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Function

Second, the Bouviers job requirements influenced their structure. Farmers needed a dog that could ...

Herd

- Move the stock from field to field or to market... We're talking about **dairy cattle and not sheep**

Cart

- Work the grist mill and churn butter and then haul the product... Milk, grain or butter to market

Protect

- Guard the farm and the stock



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Bred to Herd Cattle

Inclement weather influenced the coat needed for to live outdoors. Structure was influenced by the many jobs required of the Bouvier.

To repeat: **A general purpose farm dog...
Not a specialist, but a combination herding dog
and draft dog.**

Bouviere were bred for... Cattle. These working cattle influenced the temperament required of the Bouvier.

Belgium Blues and Limousine

- Native Belgian cattle that are much bigger and beefier than Jerseys and Guernseys
- Meat cattle as well as dairy cattle
- 1,500 pounds for a bull
- Sheep are 'lighter' and more reactive than cattle
- Cattle are 'slower and 'heavier than sheep...
The Bouvier did not need to be as fast as say the Border Collie who was bred for open field work
- A cow will challenge a dog
- It takes more 'power' to get a cow to move than sheep
- Cattle will kick where sheep do not



Photo Copyright: Dreamstime/Eric Gevaert

Bouvier Herding Style

- To 'head' or 'bump' the cattle, and not to nip... not to mar the hide or rip the udders
- Not a 'moving fence' trotter like the German Shepherd or Briard as the Bouvier worked on country lanes and in closer quarters
- The Standard refers to "appearance of power" which is how they accomplish this task
- Power has to do with attitude more than actual size. Power is the presence the dog brings to the job

Form Follows Function

While there are other herding dogs bred for cattle work... **None were also asked to do draft work.** Keep all this all in mind when you look at the Bouvier in the ring... Purpose, climate, stock.



Photo Copyright: Glo Photo

Silhouette

We will take you through our Standard in the same order as a dog is judged in the ring.

- We have **no disqualifications**
- We are **describing the ideal** Bouvier des Flandres



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Photo Copyright: K. Rodwell

Square

Square — Our first element of “Type”:

- Square is the frame on which everything that follows is hung
- Square is the strongest geometric form
- Long backed is the drag of the breed
- A long-bodied dog is a serious fault

In fact, this is the only change that was made to our standard... From “A long-bodied dog is to be faulted” to “A long bodied dog is a “Serious Fault”.

- Measure from **point of shoulder to ishium, then from ground to the withers**

Length of Leg

- Elbow to ground should **equal** elbow to withers
- If they are not equal, one of two things exist:
 - Either the dog is short on leg, relative to length of back;
 - Or too high on leg thus too short in back

Set Under the Withers

- Front legs are straight and **set properly under the withers**

Balance

Balance — The second element of “Type”:

- Front and rear **angulation appear to match**
- Angulation in rear is **moderate** with the front of the rear toe in line with the ishium
- If the rear sets out behind the line, your exhibit is over angulated and not in balance with the front

🚩 Serious Fault

- A long-bodied dog should be seriously faulted

Profile

In addition you'll also see:

- **Head:**
 - Parallel planes
 - Proportionate to body — appears bigger because of the characteristic beard
 - Muzzle to Skull - 2:3 ratio
 - Length of the head and the length of the neck are about equal
- **Neck:** Medium length, arched
- **Topline:** Level and does not drop off before the tail
- **Tail:** High set, but never carried forward of vertical
- **Thigh:** Wide and muscular (viewed from the side)
- **Hocks:** Short and set perpendicular to the ground
- **Tuckup:** Moderate



Photo Copyright: R. Roberts

Bouvier in Profile

Height and squareness can be difficult to visually assess. Remember, what you are seeing on your first impression is often the creation of a good groomer, or sometimes the misguided after effects of a bad groomer. Your job, as a judge of this breed, is to look through the grooming and find the true dog.

- Grooming can change the appearance of the location of the withers, sternum, depth of chest
- Hair over the withers may be 2 inches taller than the actual dog
- **Remember, you must use your hands, not your eyes, to assess where to measure square**



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Head

Head — The third element of “Type”

As you approach the dog, the head is distinctive, however, this is not a head breed.

- Expression is ‘**command and engagement**’, not afraid to make eye contact with you...but do not engage an adult Bouvier in challenging eye contact
- Head is **impressive in scale but in proportion** with the body
- Beard and mustache **accentuate the appearance** of the impressive scale
- Head size is a **reflection of bone and size of** the dog
- Sex is evident by the **scale of the head — but in proportion**
- Run hands down side of head, notice **flat cheeks**

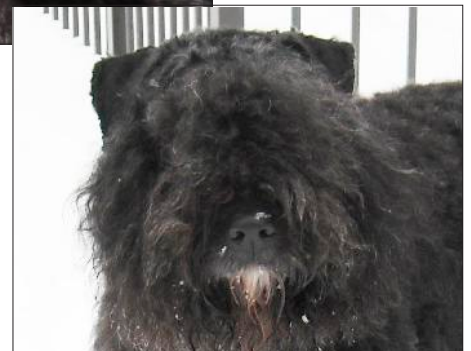


Photo Copyright: Judy Kasper, Pat Murray

Bite

- Strong white and healthy, meeting in a **scissors bite**
- Over or undershot mouths are severely penalized
- Our standard does not address full dentition and missing teeth are not a listed fault

Bouviars are not accustomed to having to open their mouths to count teeth. Our dogs are used to having the side bite looked at, but it is not necessary.

Front Incisors

- Two dropped front incisors are common and should not be faulted if the rest of the bite is ok... It is not a jaw or structural problem



Photo Copyright: Sharron Lux

Severely Penalized Fault

- Overshot or undershot bites are to be severely penalized

Nose

- Large, **always black** — regardless of coat color
 - Lip and mouth pigment is not addressed in the standard
- Well **open**
- Brown, pink or spotted nose is a serious fault
- Big nose is generally indicative of a broad, well filled muzzle
- Narrow, snipey muzzle is faulty
- Usually dark pigment but gray or mottled mouth pigment may be seen

Bouviere have odd coat colors and the fault becomes one of pigment, which is seen in the nose and eye rims. If the nose and eye rims are not black, it may be a blue dog, or a chocolate dog.



Photo Copyright: M. Hieronimus-Dimercurio

Serious Fault

- A brown, pink or spotted nose is a serious fault

Faulty

- A narrow, snipey muzzle is faulty
-

Eyes

Lift the fall, or push it up so you can see the eyes...
Do not be afraid of messing the hair.

Correct

- Dark brown preferred
- Black eye looks too somber
- **Oval** shaped
- On a horizontal axis looking forward
- **Black eye rims** without lack of pigment (this is the first place that shows loss of pigment)



Photo Copyright: P. Payne

Incorrect

- Haws should **not** hang open
- Light or yellow eyes give a haggard expression and are strongly penalized
- Walleyed or staring expression

Strongly Penalized Fault

- Yellow or light eyes are to be strongly penalized, along with a walleyed or staring expression
-

Ears

Our standard says “if cropped, triangular and in proportion to the head”.

Ear cropping is “man-made”; therefore, do not fault a poorly cropped ear. The standard does not address the uncropped ear; Today more Bouviers are entering the ring with an uncropped ear.

Correct Ear Set

- Set **high on the side of the head** and carried **alert**
- Inner corner of the ear should be **in line** with the outer corner of the eye
- Too high or too low ear set are serious faults
- **Wide** between the ears



Photo Copyright: American Kennel Club

Uncropped Ear

An uncropped should also be **triangular in shape**, and when alert, **flare out level with the top of the head** and with the inner corner next to the cheek

- Similar to Lab or a Rottweiler
- Visual effect of an uncropped ear can change the contour of the head and make the neck look short
- Verify the head proportions and shoulder layback with your hands

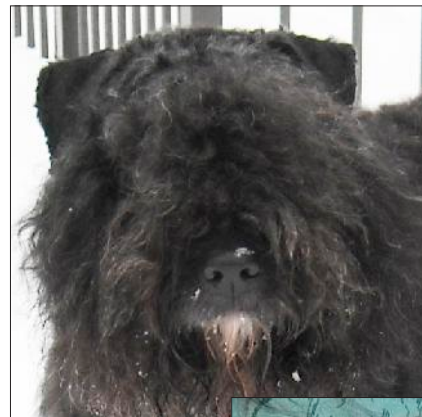


Photo Copyright: Pat Murray (top), Trisch Wentz

Serious Fault

- Ears that are too low or too closely set are serious faults.

Head Shape

The correct Bouvier head should be **slightly rectangular with parallel planes**.

- Backskull is almost as wide as it is long
- The old timers said the head should be 'brick' shaped... This refers to the entire shape of the head, not just the backskull

Muzzle to Skull Ratio

- Muzzle to Skull = 2:3 Ratio

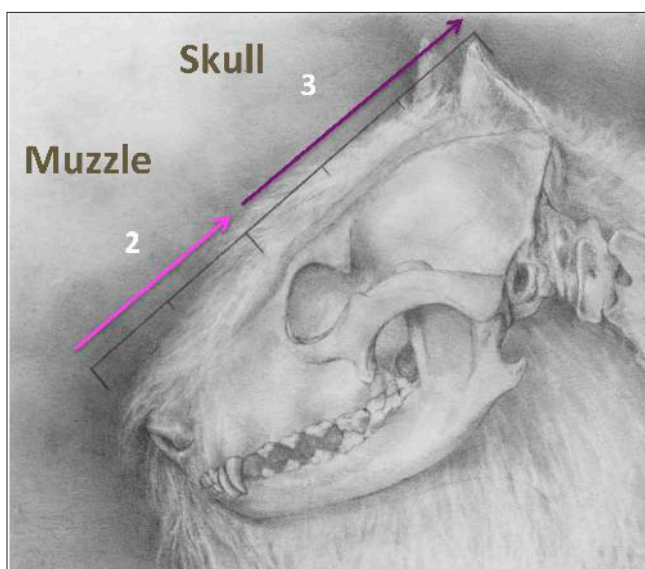
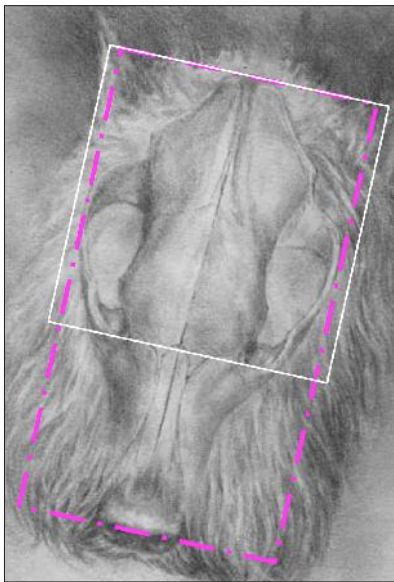


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Head Exam

An easy way to assess head proportions is:

- Measure the distance from the end of the nose to the inner corner of the eye with your hand
 - The nose will leave a wet spot on your palm
- Place the wet spot on your palm at the point midway between the eyes.
 - If the piece left from the end of your fingers to the occiput is half the distance of the muzzle, you have measured a 2:3 head
 - If not much is left over, the head is closer to 50/50
- When sliding your hand up the stop, your finger should slide from the middle center of the muzzle between the eyes to the skull with no impediment.

- The stop is "more apparent than real"

The most accurate method of measuring:

- Use your thumb and middle finger to span the distance of the muzzle
- Compare it to the skull



Photo Copyright: Judy Kasper

Head Type

Three of the most common head faults are Triangular, Oval, and 50/50.

- Triangular head will have the skull too wide, and will be lacking proper muzzle development
- Oval head will be wide at the eyes, more narrow at the occiput and muzzle and the ears may appear close together
- 50/50 head will have muzzle the same length as skull

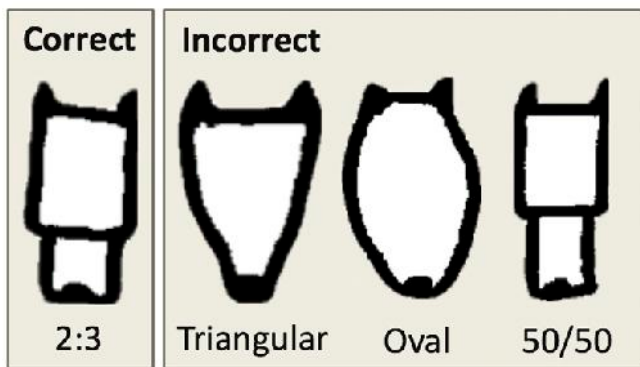


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Parallel Planes

When viewed from side, the top lines of skull and muzzle are parallel.



Photo Copyright: L. Van Dyke

Grooming Can Alter Perception

Many groomers leave too much hair on the head of their dogs. In the adult Bouvier, but especially true with puppies, their fall has no weight and so it flies up and creates the illusion of 'down faced'. If in doubt, view from the side.

Let's Review: Head

The head is a hallmark of our breed but a big head is not necessarily a good head. Dogs with overly large heads or very wide skulls need to be evaluated carefully. Is the head coarse or too much head for the frame of the body? Are they making a head out of hair or camouflaging faults? Examine carefully. Head develops well into the third year. Reward the good puppy head, but keep in mind the head is a work in progress at this point.

To review:

- **Impressive**
- Muzzle to Skull Ratio = 2:3
- Planes are **parallel**
- Eye and nose **pigment is dark**
- Muzzle **well filled in**
- Jaws of **equal length**
 - Bouvier has an incredible jaw power, but without the rounded zygomatic arch of a Rottweiler
- Cheeks are **clean and flat**
- Ears are **high and alert** and **wide between ears**
- Look of '**command and engagement**'

When comparing two exhibits of differing size, say a 23 ½ bitch to a 27" dog... **it is not about the biggest head but rather the best head in proportion in front of you.**

Body

Next examine the body. The working structure of our form follows function breed.

Neck

- Neck is **strong, muscular, wide clean** with no dewlap, gradually widening to the shoulders
- **Medium length**, a short, squatty neck is faulty
- Long neck would be subject to injury
- Ewe neck is not as strong as an arched neck
- Gracefully **arched with proud carriage**
 - The graceful arch is probably more apparent through the grooming than real
- From the side, the length of the head and the length of the neck are **about equal**



Photo Copyright: R. Roberts

Faulty

- A short, squatty neck is faulty

Height

The height of a “large” breed and not a medium nor a giant breed.

The height as measured at the withers:

- Dogs, from 24 ½ to 27 ½ inches
- Bitches, from 23 ½ to 26 ½ inches

In each sex, the **ideal height is the median** of the two limits, i.e., 26 inches for a dog & 25 inches for a bitch.

- “Ideal” size maintains the breed’s agility
- Tip: Find where 26 is on your body to help guide you
- Height is not a deciding factor when the dog/ bitch are within height limit

Bouvier grow slowly, you may encounter puppies that have not reached the standard... Bouvier keep growing after 9 months.

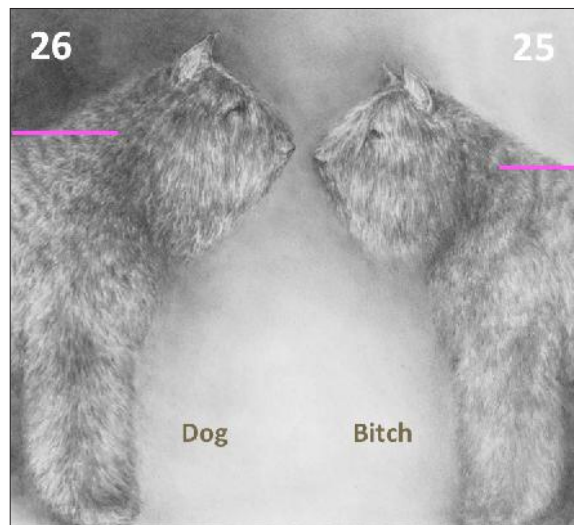


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Severely Penalized Fault

- Any dog or bitch deviating from the minimum or maximum limits mentioned shall be severely penalized

Forequarters

Most standards were written before the advent of x-rays, video cameras and other modern equipment that allows us to see structure. The Bouvier's legs are **parallel, straight, well muscled and strong boned**.

Many breeds call for a 45 degree angle at the shoulder. It has been proven this is almost impossible to achieve in nature... Especially in a square dog.

- The angle should be **slightly more open than 90 degrees**
 - Note: The French standard shows a 106° angle
- Sternum should be evident, but not prominent or sunken, with a nice width and depth to the brisket

We are seeing many shorter upper arms which is not desired. However, keep in mind that producing a square dog with correct angle all around is very difficult.

- Shoulder blade is **equal** to humerus
- Steep shoulders are faulty
- Elbow should **sit underneath the withers** when the Bouvier is stacked
- Elbows close to the body, too far out or in are faulty
- Dewclaws may be removed
- Pasterns quite **short and slightly sloping** to impart better endurance
- Fore and hind feet are **rounded and compact...**
Not hare feet
- **Strong boned** not large boned

The Bouvier should look and feel like they won't break very easily. There can be too much bone to remain agile; the bone should be more than a Doberman, but less than a Bullmastiff. This is a blue-collar worker and had to be strong enough to work cattle, not sheep.

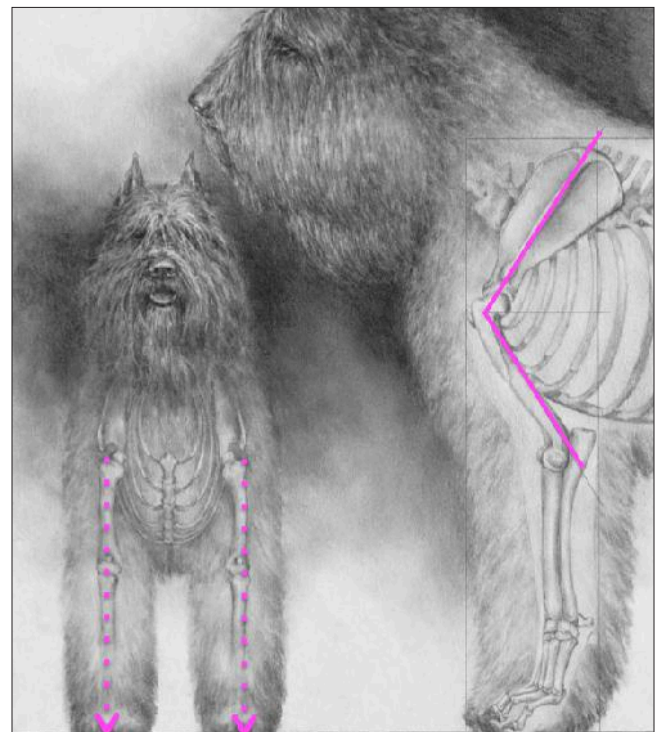
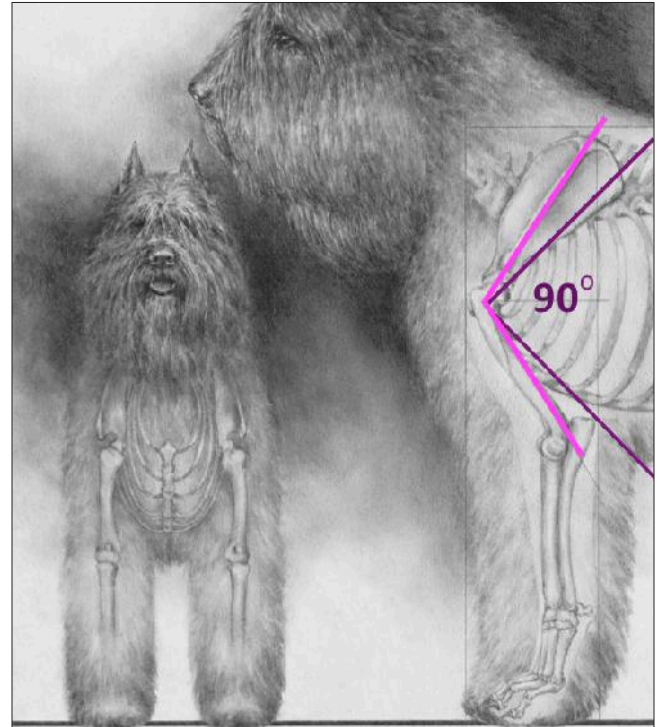


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Faulty

- Steep shoulders are faulty
- Elbows which are too far out or in are faults

Compact

Compact, with a short loin — The fourth element of “Type”.

This is a working cattle dog. Historically we’ve used the word ‘cobby’...This comes from horse terms... a Cob horse... a thickset pony when compared to a Thoroughbred.

- **Solid, dense** under your hands
- Chest is **broad** and must reach the elbow in depth
- Ribs are **deep and well sprung** without being barrel shaped
- **First ribs are slightly curved** to allow room for the elbows to move
- Flat ribs or slabsidedness is strongly penalized

To drive the herd forward, the dog must work off the cow’s flank. The Bouvier’s structure insures the ribcage provides ample room and maximum coverage to protect his vital organs.

Remember cows kick to the side. Therefore, the Bouvier with a short ribcage/long loin, even though square, could make a dog more vulnerable to injury.

Back

- Back is **short, broad and well muscled**
- **Firm, level topline**

Loin

- Loin is **short and broad with only a slight tuck up** — most of the length of the body is in the ribcage
- A long ribcage/short loin allows for maximum shoulder layback in a square dog

The word “short” is used twice here...for the back and loin...reinforcing the image that the Bouvier is a square and short-coupled dog



Photo Copyright: B. Kohler

Incorrect vs. Correct

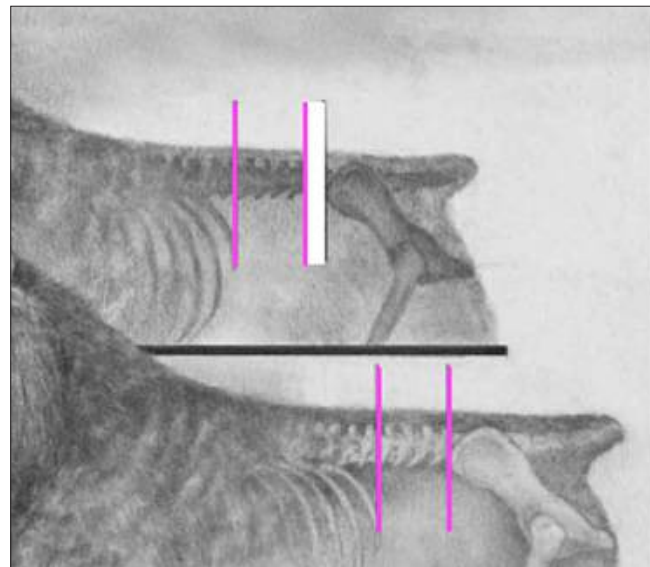


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Strongly Penalized Fault

- Flat ribs or slabsidedness is strongly penalized
-

Rump

- **Wide and muscled**
- **Negligible transition** from topline to rump and tailset

Tail Set

Some Bouviers are born tailless... If not, the tail is docked. As with the ears, a docked tail is "man made"... Do not fault a tail that is too short or long.

We are beginning to see dogs that have an undocked tail. Our standard says "tail is to be docked". While our standard has no disqualifications, possessing a tail would be a deviation, and therefore faulted.

- Tail is to be **docked**, leaving 2 or 3 vertebrae
- **Set on high and preferably carried upright** in motion
- Tail should be a **natural extension** of the topline
- Carried horizontal or higher... **between noon and 3 o'clock**... but never carried forward of vertical



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Fault

- A sunken or slanted croup is a serious fault
-

Hindquarters

- Firm, well muscled with large powerful hams that are the “motor” of the dog
- Legs are **straight and parallel** to each other
- Rear dewclaws are to be removed

Side View

- Thighs are **wide and muscular**
- Stifle angle is “**moderate**”

Cart dogs often have straight stifles to aid pushing... Where well bent stifles are needed for speed, flying trot, jumping and going to ground.

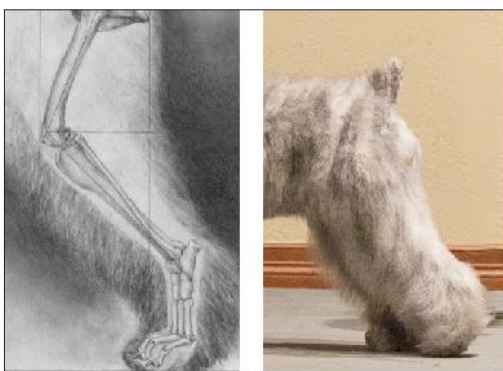


Photo Copyright:

R. Wolfe (top left), Nancy Villwock (bottom right), Jill Reifschneider (right)

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⚠ Serious Fault

- Sickle or cow-hocks are serious faults

Hock

The Bouvier is required to do when working stock.

- Angle at the hock joint is **slight**
- Hocks are **well let down** — **perpendicular to the ground** when standing naturally
- **Short hock** allows for a quick turn
- Sickle or cow-hocks are serious faults

Check the angle of the hock if in doubt.

Over-angulation is often hidden by grooming the hock to look straight when it is actually slanted under the dog.

A Herding Dog

The Bouvier’s job is to move stock 10 times it’s weight and pull a heavy laden cart... A combination of herding dog and draft dog. Your hands should feel a dog that is solid and dense.

The standard uses the term “well muscled” 7 times and “wide” or “broad” five times when describing the body of a Bouvier.

To use a horse comparison, neither a thoroughbred nor a draft horse but a warmblood... the best of both...speed and strength. (Think Quarterhorse, Andalusian as well). Or Football...not the quarterback or the tackle, the running back. Basketball...not the center or the guard, the power forward.



Coat

Along with Square and Balanced, Impressive Head and Compact with a Short Loin... Coat is the fifth element of "Type".

Proper coat balance and texture is a difficult thing to learn. The importance of learning the proper Bouvier coat can't be emphasized enough. However, this is not a 'coat' breed the same way it is not a 'head' breed.

This is not a fur coat with four legs. The coat faults listed are just that...faults. They are not severely nor strongly penalized... They are serious or faulty only.

There are Five components of proper coat:
Texture, Density, Balance, Length, Color.



Photo Copyright: Suzanne LaCroix



Fault

- A coat too long or too short is a fault, as is a silky or woolly coat



Serious Fault

- Flat coat denoting lack of undercoat is a serious fault

Texture

Most herding breeds standards call for a "medium texture" (Australian Shepherd) or "harsh" (Beardie, Collie, German Shepherd) with a dense undercoat.

Coat harshness is best evaluated about mid-back or right in front of tail (Many have a 'flat' spot over the withers where the undercoat is lacking, and so this is not a good area to check.)

- **"Harsh"** not "hard"... Herding breed and not a Terrier.
 - Broken-coated terriers have "hard" or "wiry" outer coats with the undercoat at the base of the hair
- **Coarse** or slightly raspy feel when the hairs are gently rubbed between the fingers
- Longer, coarser guard hairs, harsh to the touch, are visible throughout the body
- Absence of guard hairs leave soft undercoat
- A silky or woolly coat is a fault
- Dry to the touch, not oily or shiny

Keep in mind when judging puppies and comparing them to adults, puppy coats are softer and more profuse —typically take 18 months to 2 years for an adult coat to develop.



Photo Copyright: Paul Payne

Density

- A **tousled, double coat** capable of withstanding the hardest work in the most inclement weather
- Very **thick, full coat** adding to the look of a powerful, substantial dog
- Undercoat long enough to mix with guard hairs creates a profuse covering, if separated the skin is barely visible
- Flat coat denoting lack of undercoat is a serious fault
- Silky coat swings or parts when moving and also lacks undercoat

Balance

- Proportion of topcoat (guard hairs) to undercoat is **about 50/50**
- Stripping and trimming can change the balance
- Soft undercoat and harsh outer coat are both needed to attain the proper density of coat that still remains harsh to the touch
- Balanced coat has a matte finish and never shiny



Photo Copyright: Ryan Wolfe

Length

- **Approximately 2 ½ inches** — the standard does not specify where the length is to be 2 ½ inches
- Coat may be **trimmed slightly only to accent the body line:**
 - Trimming methods are not specified
 - Hand stripping is traditional and leaves the coat various lengths
 - Scissoring leaves blunt ends
- Difficult to trim with only scissors and retain a tousled look and proper coat balance
- A tousled coat does not mean “unkempt”

Overtrimming altering the natural rugged appearance is to be avoided. However, overtrimming is not listed as a fault in the standard.

This is not a grooming contest. It is not your job to judge the grooming, only the effect it might have on the proper coat texture. Some groomers excel in hiding faults while others unknowingly hide virtues.

You must feel these dogs to determine what is dog and what is grooming.

Coat Influences

- Jacket should **lay close to the body**, but not tight against it
- An open coat would not be resistant to rain and cold
- Weather affects coat texture and density
- Bathing opens up the jacket for about six weeks
- Humidity “springs” the coat out, leaving the topcoat and undercoat thick but coat will not feel as crisp and dry to the touch
- Less coat density (less undercoat) apparent in warmer areas and the warmer seasons
- Bitches may drop their coat during their season or shortly afterwards

Color

A small white star on the chest regardless is acceptable and a white on the chin is common.

From Fawn

- Fawn defined as “a brown, red-brown with hues of medium brilliance”
- Must be saturated with rich tones
- Fawn guard hairs often black



Photo Copyright: D. Dennis

To Black

- Blacks (except in the puppy coat) may have white guard hairs throughout
- Black hair may not be as harsh



Photo Copyright: B. Kohler,

Passing Through Salt And Pepper



Photo Copyright: C. Lindemaier

Gray

- Grays may be solid, highly brindled, or anything in between



Photo Copyright: M. Callea

And Brindle



Photo Copyright: M. Callea

Acceptable Color Variations

Many fawns and silver dogs will have lighter colored legs compared to their body...This is not parti-colored. There should be black pigmentation and dark brown eye color regardless of coat color.

Brindle

- Colors go through stages by age and type of grooming
- Gray puppies may be lighter until about 2, and then darken
- Brown stripes on a brindle will also turn gray as they age

Fawn

There is a divide in our membership when it comes to the definition of "Fawn". At this time our standard doesn't define the color. Until our standard is changed, these colors are allowable as long as the nose and pigment are black.

- Fawns tend to get lighter with age and have a grey saddle

Irregular Colors

- Parti-colored is distinct patches of color clearly seen at the skin... where, Brindle is a color pattern with variation but consistent skin color
- Phantom can be distinct points, like a Doberman or Rottweiler while Parti-color is various patches of white or brown — mostly stockings as in a Portuguese Water dog



Severely Penalized Fault

- Chocolate brown, white or parti-color are to be severely penalized

Movement

Balanced movement is the sixth element of "Type".

Free, Bold & Proud

'Free, bold and proud gait' appropriate to a square dog, as opposed to the extension of reach and drive called for in some of the other herding breeds. But **balanced does not mean restricted**.

The Bouvier is an endurance trotting breed with movement of a square built dog. We call for "Moderate" angulation, but with good reach and drive. We do not ask for a flying trot like a German Shepherd...we are not a moving fence...but we also don't ask for the more restricted reach and drive in keeping with some of the other Belgian breeds.

Reach & Drive

- **Moderate speed**...This will best show the natural balance for a good moving dog
- **Smooth and efficient**

Sidegait

- **Head should be held out forward**, to balance the dog about 45 degrees off the back
- **Topline is always level** without bouncing up and down
- **Equal triangles** when seen from the side
- **Feet meet under the center of the body**.
- **The front feet reach the nose**
- **No lift up off of the ground, no front or rear kick**
 - Excessive kick and any other movement fault is a waste of energy and as a herding dog and an endurance trotting dog... This would tire the dog

Some Bouviers may appear to "roll" on the move.

Four common causes of roll:

- Lack of conditioning/overweight
- Improper grooming lending a "hula skirt" effect
- Lateral displacement
- Too much rear angulation for the front

Down and Back

- **Clean** with no weaving, crossing over or any other common movement faults
- Bouviers tend to **single track** the faster they move
 - Small rings may prevent opportunity to see the Bouvier single track

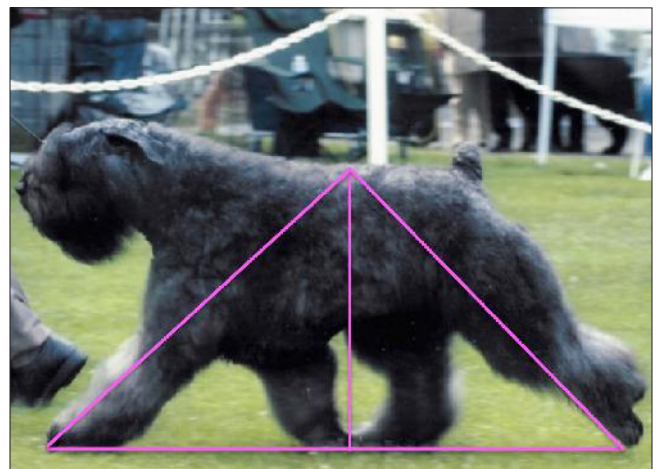


Photo Copyright: MikRon

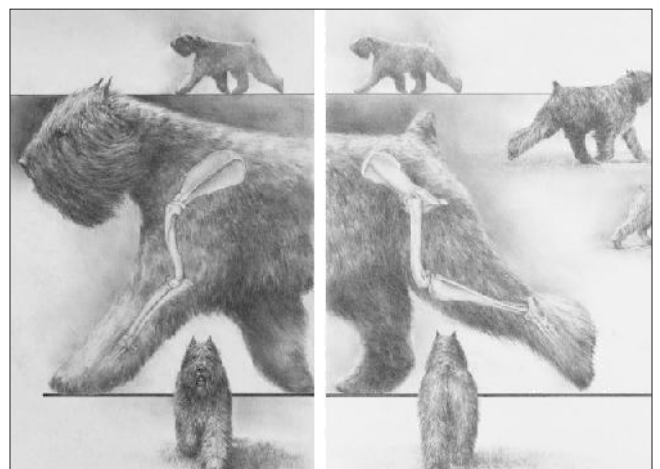


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Temperament

Temperament is the seventh element of “Type”. A Bouvier is an intelligent dog, eager for new experiences, and learns quickly.

Bouvier as Show Dog

Temperament is difficult to truly assess in the dog show ring. **Never shy or aggressive, Bouviers are an equable breed. Repetitious tasks with no new challenge or apparent purpose (at least in the dog’s mind), such as the dog show routine, often bore Bouviers.** This leaves them either disinterested and unresponsive or in a mood to invent their own fun, usually at their handler’s expense...especially puppies.

So don’t unduly penalize a dog of good type and sound movement because of the lack of “show dog” attitude in the ring.

Additionally, many of them are black or dark brindle. They heat up quickly in the sun so don’t let them stand around without shade.

Leave plenty of space between the boys...
As boys will be boys.



Photo Copyright: Judy Kasper

Approach

Approach the Bouvier at a slight angle so that he can see you begin your examination of his head. **If you approach head on, he may back up.** This is generally due to the fall of hair between his eyes which limits his “window” on the world.

A Bouvier overwhelmed by their first dog show or a bitch coming into season, may lean on the handler, look up at the judge, turn around while you are examining them and “check you out”. These insecure behaviors should not be rewarded, nor necessarily penalized, but simply understood.

- **Don’t hesitate** as you approach a Bouvier
- **Be confident**, business-like and, as we say, “get on with it” because Bouvier will instantly pick up that you are worried and begin to worry also
- **Examine with a sure touch...** A heavy handed approach may be resented by the dog and a Bouvier never forgets

A dog bred to work may become impatient at being made to stand still so they squirm, gnash their teeth

- A less experienced, or young, Bouvier may not tolerate a lengthy examination

In the Show Ring

To sum up visually.

First you see the pretty, groomed silhouette and you assess the exhibit for “Type”.

Evaluate their movement...Look for moderate, balanced reach and drive that is bold, free and proud with a level topline and no sign of heaviness or clumsiness.

And finally, as you prioritize your selection by “Type”, but before you point your finger at the dogs you believe best fulfill the breed standard... Ask yourself this: Do I believe they have the agility to do the jobs they were originally designed for? If the answer is ‘yes’, then those are your winners... possessing type and soundness plus still able to perform the functions for which they were bred.

You See This...



Photo Copyright: Sue Vroom

And Evaluate That...



Photo Copyright: MikRon

Can They Do This?



Photo Copyright: Michelle Pardee

Summary

The Bouvier is a true 'form follows function' breed: a breed whose coat requirements, physical makeup and temperament are defined by their country of origin, the jobs they were developed to do and the stock they were asked to work.

Versatility

In closing, this is the breed we love. The versatile working dog developed at the turn of the century.

While they are seldom used for their original purposes, their native abilities are now used in agility, obedience, carting competition, herding competition, flyball, search and rescue, therapy, bug and bomb detection and household watchdog and family friend. **Still a multi-purpose dog.**

Each one of you comes from a breed you dearly love. **Our sincere hope is that when you have the chance to judge Bouviers in the ring you will appreciate them for what they were and what they are...Take care of our breed as you would your own!**

Find the best overall dog...none are perfect, after all... and put those up... the ones that are truest to their 'bouvier-ness'.

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Additional Articles

AKC Bouvier Standard

General Appearance

The Bouvier des Flandres is a powerfully built, compact, short-coupled, rough-coated dog of notably rugged appearance. He gives the impression of great strength without any sign of heaviness or clumsiness in his overall makeup. He is agile, spirited and bold, yet his serene, well behaved disposition denotes his steady, resolute and fearless character. His gaze is alert and brilliant, depicting his intelligence, vigor and daring. By nature he is an equable dog. His origin is that of a cattle herder and general farmer's helper, including cart pulling. He is an ideal farm dog. His harsh double coat protects him in all weather, enabling him to perform the most arduous tasks. He has been used as an ambulance and messenger dog. Modern times find him as a watch and guard dog as well as a family friend, guardian and protector. His physical and mental characteristics and deportment, coupled with his olfactory abilities, his intelligence and initiative enable him to also perform as a tracking dog and a guide dog for the blind. The following description is that of the ideal Bouvier des Flandres. Any deviation from this is to be penalized to the extent of the deviation.

Size, Proportion & Substance

Size

The height as measured at the withers: Dogs, from 24 ½ to 27 ½ inches; bitches, from 23 ½ to 26 ½ inches. In each sex, the ideal height is the median of the two limits, i.e., 26 inches for a dog and 25 inches for a bitch. Any dog or bitch deviating from the minimum or maximum limits mentioned shall be severely penalized.

Proportion

The length from the point of the shoulder to the tip of the buttocks is equal to the height from the ground to the highest point of the withers. A long-bodied dog should be seriously faulted.

Substance

Powerfully built, strong boned, well muscled, without any sign of heaviness or clumsiness.

Head

The head is impressive in scale, accentuated by beard and mustache. It is in proportion to body and build. The **expression** is bold and alert.

Eyes neither protrude nor are sunken in the sockets. Their shape is oval with the axis on the horizontal plane, when viewed from the front. Their color is a dark brown. The eye rims are black without lack of pigment and the haw is barely visible. Yellow or light eyes are to be strongly penalized, along with a walleyed or staring expression.

Ears placed high and alert. If cropped, they are to be a triangular contour and in proportion to the size of the head. The inner corner of the ear should be in line with the outer corner of the eye. Ears that are too low or too closely set are serious faults.

Skull well developed and flat, slightly less wide than long. When viewed from the side, the top lines of the skull and the muzzle are parallel. It is wide between the ears, with the frontal groove barely marked. The stop is more apparent than real, due to upstanding eyebrows. The proportions of length of skull to length of muzzle are 3 to 2.

Muzzle broad, strong, well filled out, tapering gradually toward the nose without ever becoming snipey or pointed. A narrow, snipey muzzle is faulty.

Nose large, black, well developed, round at the edges, with flared nostrils. A brown, pink or

spotted nose is a serious fault. The cheeks are flat and lean, with the lips being dry and tight fitting. The jaws are powerful and of equal length. The teeth are strong, white and healthy, with the incisors meeting in a scissors bite. Overshot or undershot bites are to be severely penalized.

Neck, Topline, & Body

The **neck** is strong and muscular, widening gradually into the shoulders. When viewed from the side, it is gracefully arched with proud carriage. A short, squatty neck is faulty. No dewlap.

Back short, broad, well muscled with firm level topline. It is supple and flexible with no sign of weakness.

Body or **trunk** powerful, broad and short. The chest is broad, with the brisket extending to the elbow in depth. The ribs are deep and well sprung. The first ribs are slightly curved, the others well sprung and very well sloped nearing the rear, giving proper depth to the chest. Flat ribs or slabsidedness is to be strongly penalized.

Flanks and **loins** short, wide and well muscled, without weakness. The abdomen is only slightly tucked up. The horizontal line of the back should mold unnoticeably into the curve of the rump, which is characteristically wide. A sunken or slanted croup is a serious fault.

Tail is to be docked, leaving 2 or 3 vertebrae. It must be set high and align normally with the spinal column. Preferably carried upright in motion. Dogs born tailless should not be penalized.

Forequarters

Strong boned, well muscled and straight. The **shoulders** are relatively long, muscular but not loaded, with good layback. The shoulder blade and humerus are approximately the same length, forming an angle slightly greater than 90 degrees

when standing. Steep shoulders are faulty.

Elbows close to the body and parallel. Elbows which are too far out or in are faults.

Forearms viewed either in profile or from the front are perfectly straight, parallel to each other and perpendicular to the ground. They are well muscled and strong boned.

Carpus exactly in line with the forearms. Strong boned.

Pasterns quite short, slightly sloped. Dewclaws may be removed. Both forefeet and hind feet are rounded and compact turning neither in nor out; the toes close and well arched; strong black nails; thick tough pads.

Hindquarters

Firm, well muscled with large, powerful hams. They should be parallel with the front legs when viewed from either front or rear.

Legs moderately long, well muscled, neither too straight nor too inclined.

Thighs wide and muscular. The upper thigh must be neither too straight nor too sloping. There is moderate angulation at the stifle.

Hocks strong, rather close to the ground. When standing and seen from the rear, they will be straight and perfectly parallel to each other. In motion, they must turn neither in nor out. There is a slight angulation at the hock joint. Sickie or cow-hocks are serious faults.

Metatarsi hardy and lean, rather cylindrical and perpendicular to the ground when standing. If born with dewclaws, they are to be removed.

Feet as in front.

Coat

A tousled, double coat capable of withstanding the hardest work in the most inclement weather. The outer hairs are rough and harsh, with the

undercoat being fine, soft and dense. The coat may be trimmed slightly only to accent the body line. Overtrimming which alters the natural rugged appearance is to be avoided.

Topcoat must be harsh to the touch, dry, trimmed, if necessary, to a length of approximately 2 ½ inches. A coat too long or too short is a fault, as is a silky or woolly coat. It is tousled without being curly. On the skull, it is short, and on the upper part of the back, it is particularly close and harsh always, however, remaining rough. Ears are rough-coated.

Undercoat a dense mass of fine, close hair, thicker in winter. Together with the topcoat, it will form a water-resistant covering. A flat coat, denoting lack of undercoat is a serious fault.

Mustache and **beard** very thick, with the hair being shorter and rougher on the upper side of the muzzle. The upper lip with its heavy mustache and the chin with its heavy and rough beard gives that gruff expression so characteristic of the breed.

Eyebrows, erect hairs accentuating the shape of the eyes without ever veiling them.

Color

From fawn to black, passing through salt and pepper, gray and brindle. A small white star on the chest is allowed. Other than chocolate brown, white, or parti-color, which are to be severely penalized, no one color is to be favored.

Gait

The whole of the Bouvier des Flandres must be harmoniously proportioned to allow for a free, bold and proud gait. The reach of the forequarters must compensate for and be in balance with the driving power of the hindquarters. The back, while moving in a trot, will remain firm and flat. In general, the gait is the logical demonstration of the structure and build of the dog. It is to be noted that while moving at a fast trot, the properly built Bouvier will tend to single-track.

Temperament

The Bouvier is an equable dog, steady, resolute and fearless. Viciousness or shyness is undesirable.

Effective February 23, 2000

Examining the Bouvier: Do's and Don'ts

Do — Approach the front of the dog slightly at an angle.

Don't — Be hesitant in your approach, talk over the top of the dog or linger in your hands-on exam. Don't be alarmed by the 'teeth grinders' — some dogs do that.

Do — Use your hand to measure the fill of the muzzle and the correct muzzle to skull ratio of 2:3.

Don't — Hold on to or tug on the beard—they resent it.

Do — Feel with your hand the ridge of the shoulder blade and its relationship to the angle, set of the upper arm and depth of chest. Don't lower your head even with the side of the dog's head while doing this.

Do — Open the flat of your hand along both sides of the loin with your forefinger touching the last rib and thumb placed on the side of the upper thigh to measure the length of loin.

Don't — Pick up the feet.

Do — Feel for muscling along the inner and outer upper and lower thigh-condition on a Bouvier is key.

Don't — Run your hand backward on the topcoat — it is unnecessary in checking for correct coat texture.

Do — Take a handful of topcoat in the middle of the dog's back and close your hand over it to feel for correct harsh texture And density. The guard hairs should poke back in the palm of your hand.

Don't — Perform surgery or do a full-body massage on the hands-on examination. Bouviers become very impatient standing like a statue for any length of time.

Function/Purpose of the Bouvier

Sue Vroom

The Bouvier is a unique breed whose cobby body, rough coat and beard set it apart from other herding breeds. His is a spirit forged on the fields and in farm work done on their homeland. This essence has its roots in the working partnership between stockman and drover. The herd-guarding function is the key to the Bouvier soul. This is the heritage of the breed. Above all else, he was a dog, evolved purposefully from other dogs, that could do varying kinds of work on the farm. This is what led to the versatility of the modern Bouvier.

The Bouvier's character is to be calm, rational, discriminating — prudently bold. He can be stubborn but still he is quite intelligent and very trainable. Because they have a high level of trainability, responsibility and discrimination, they are suited to modern police-style working functions. They can excel at tracking, search and rescue, drug detection, are extremely agile for their size and have an excellent capacity to react appropriately and only to the degree a situation requires.

Although a Bouvier should not be obnoxiously aggressive to the stranger approaching his home or automobile, he should be watchful and alert and announce the approach, responding in kind to only the level of the threat. This balance between aggressive protectiveness and respect for other creatures in routine social situations is the key characteristic of the breed.

Much of the Bouvier's character is the direct consequence of his original herding function, where, after initial direction, working without human supervision was often the norm. Consider the herd dog threatened by a marauding wild

animal or person — the correct Bouvier strategy is to ward off the intruder and break off the encounter when they flee. The Bouvier must be shrewd enough not to be drawn away from his charges, leaving them alone and vulnerable. His natural inclination should be to protect rather than punish; he comes to know that his responsibility is the survival of the herd or his family, rather than the pursuit and defeat of an individual offender.

The herding and farming needs of societies where the Bouvier evolved required that each dog have interaction with his people. In contrast, many of the hunting breeds, for example, were and still are pack oriented, working as a group rather than as individuals. Generations would be bred, kept and worked, still useful in their labor, but without real human contact.

Many herding breeds, including the Bouvier, did not work primarily at the constant direction of the shepherd or cattleman, but rather took on much individual responsibility. If a predator threatened, it was routinely driven off. If a young animal strayed, it was returned to the herd. Even when it wandered out of sight the dog's keen olfactory and hearing capabilities made it possible for him to find and return it.

Among the herding breeds, there are differences in the relationship between dog and herd. Herding dogs serve two broad functions. One is to control and move stock; the other is to protect from predators. Some breeds perform one function exclusively, and others are more versatile. Relatively large central and eastern European sheep dogs such as the Komondor essentially become surrogate herd members.

By their very nature they adapt well to living with the sheep as virtual members of one extended family. Because of these loyalties, they drive off any predator — human as well as animal that poses a threat, but they do not direct or control the stock. Other breeds, such as the Border Collie, have strong control over the stock. They keep the herd together and move them into or out of pens or elsewhere at the direction of the shepherd. This breed has a close relationship with their human partners, but such breeds are not necessarily inherently protective of either the animals or humans. They evolved to meet a set of specific needs — assisting the shepherd in controlling the sheep and moving them long distances.

Neither of these molds exactly fit the Bouvier. As is evidenced by history and his structure, he is primarily a cattle dog, with not only strong protective instincts, **and** the ability to move and direct stock as well. Regarding the movement and control of stock by the herding breeds, there are two specific styles or predispositions for type of herding work: Driving-moving the stock out in front of the handler keeping them together as they go, and Gathering-rounding up the stock and bringing them to the handler.

The Bouvier is primarily a 'drover' in herding style versus a 'gathering' dog. Some may have a clear preference for one style or another, but most have the ability to do whichever the situation calls for.

The Bouvier is generally a free-moving dog, who runs fast and close in first encounters with stock. Deliberate training teaches slower pace and distance in the approach. He exhibits strong body language even body-blocking, anticipating

movement with 'heading off' and an ability to focus and concentrate in controlling his charges through intimidation. He moves with confidence and a bold, steady, stable calmness.

His upright carriage and self-assuredness contribute to the overall sense of power the dog conveys.

An understanding of the Bouvier's herding characteristics gives insight into his behavior and interactions in social situations and with other animals. Although an intelligent, independent (and remember, sometimes stubborn) thinker capable of evaluating a situation and making up his own mind, the Bouvier is readily responsive to appropriate control — looking to his owner or handler for cues. He is sensitive to both his 'person's' feelings and to the demands of a situation.

Owning a Bouvier like many a dog requires patience, a commitment to coat grooming and a desire to have a loyal companion that follows you around the house keeping a watchful eye on his family.

Hair of the Dog

Sue Vroom

Herding Breed Coat Requirements

Listed below are the breeds in the Herding Group whose standards contain very specific coat requirements taken from each as they are written.

Australian Shepherd - Medium texture, weather resistant, of medium length. Undercoat varies in quantity with variation in climate. Non-typical coats are severe faults.

Bearded Collie - Outer coat is flat, *harsh*, strong and shaggy. Severe fault is a long, silky coat..."Trimmed or sculpted coat..."

Belgian Malinois - ..."Straight, *hard* enough to be weather resistant..."

Bauceron - Coat is *course* and dense...
DQ-Shaggy Coat.

Bouvier Des Flandres - A tousled double coat, outer hairs are *rough* and *harsh*. Topcoat must be *harsh* to the touch. A flat coat denoting lack of undercoat is a serious fault. A silky or woolly coat is a fault.

Briard - Outer coat is *course*, *hard and dry*, making a dry rasping sound between the fingers.

Canaan Dog - Outer coat-straight, *harsh*, flat-lying...

Rough Collie - The well-fitting, *properly textured* coat is the crowning glory of the Rough Collie. Outer coat is straight and harsh to the touch. A *soft, open* outer coat, regardless of quantity is penalized. The texture, quantity and the extent to which the coat "fits the dog" are important points.

German Shepherd - Double coat of medium length. Hair is straight, *harsh*, and lying close to the body. Faults in coat include soft, silky, too long outer coat, woolly curly or open coat.

Norwegian Buhund - Outer coat is thick and *hard*...

Old English Sheepdog - Coat of a good *hard texture*. *Quality and texture of coat to be considered above mere profuseness*. Softness or flatness considered a fault.

Shetland Sheepdog - ...Outer coat consisting of long, straight, *harsh* hair. Faults-..."wavy, curly, soft or silky."

Swedish Vallhund - Medium length hair, *harsh*. Fluffy coats are a serious fault. *The following faults are to be so severely penalized as to effectively eliminate the dog from competition: Fluffy Coat..."*.

Hair... Is it the sole defining characteristic of a Herding breed or is it one key element among other essential qualities? A defining characteristic by direct definition means that without possessing this particular type component, the breed ceases to be the breed. Most will agree that the Maltese coat is their defining characteristic. The white, silky hair makes him what he is. A Yorkshire Terrier is not a Yorkie without the luxurious single-coated dark steel blue curtain of hair. These are examples of dogs whose sole function on the planet is to look the part and be a home companion, even though the one breed was originally bred down from farm ratters; this no longer being the attraction to own one.

Bouvier's have the distinction of being one of the highest functioning AKC recognized breeds, anatomically designed for great diversity in their duties and responsibilities. This demands a variety of essential physical characteristics in order to perform vital tasks. An efficient, well-constructed body means the difference between a tireless farm worker and a porch pooch. Compact, short-coupled, well-boned, deep chested, proportionately balanced front to rear are essential for maximum functional efficiency.

Coat quality and texture is one of the physical components that enable the dog to more effectively perform his outside duties in varying weather conditions and climate. In hot, dry, and humid areas, the cuticles of the hair shaft and the top coat open to allow air to flow to the skin and cool the body. Many of us complain about our “fuzzy hair” in hot humid weather.

In cold wet weather conditions, guard hair and undercoat act as a seal and close to protect the skin from moisture and warm the body. The skin and coat are the thermal protectors that function as a sensor mechanism to shield and aid in survival in harsh conditions. Upon touch, one may expect to feel a variation and a range of texture qualities depending on the weather and the temperature. In evaluating the characteristics of hair, one must remember that it is a living organism on the body of a living thing for a specific reason...protection. It acts and feels differently in various climate conditions because it is doing its job. A fur pelt will feel the same to the touch in all conditions as it has been stripped from the body of an animal. The coat is no longer living. Why, when evaluating fur on a live animal are we expecting to feel the same thing in all weather conditions? It would not be functioning properly if the texture is the same in tepid humidity as opposed to 50 degree dry air conditioning.

The ratio of guard hair to undercoat is an important consideration in evaluation. In humans, each hair follicle yields one strand of hair. In canines, one hair follicle is possessed of both properties — undercoat and guard hair. The density of the coat is of crucial consideration.

If the coat is comprised of silky or woolly texture and quality, it will not have the ability to provide protection no matter what the conditions are. Poor quality coat can be a genetic trait, may be indicative of a nutritional deficiency, or a coat

that has not been cared for properly; essentially, poor condition. This, in both cases would be a consideration for evaluation in a show ring by a judge.

Given the variables of coat quality and the external conditions that affect it, should undue emphasis be placed on it to the exclusion of other physical characteristics in the show ring? Why does it seem that many discussions with a judge in regards to the evaluation of a Bouvier, start with only the coat; its texture and trim without mere mention of any structural components? Bouviers are not the only Herding breed with a very specific coat texture requirement specified in their standard (See listed standards above), yet very seldom do we hear judges say that the reason for not awarding an otherwise quality Briard a ribbon was because the hair failed to make a dry rasping sound when rubbed between the fingers and was not hard and dry. There is no question that this feature of the Briard is inherently important but it is not the first thing one typically remarks on. It would appear that the Bouvier seems to be the only herder whose primary consideration is a fur pelt held up by four legs and a spine to the sacrifice of other functioning aspects. If ribbons are to be awarded based solely on this, then a study of what a correct Bouvier coat is made up of, and the properties which make it so and in what climate conditions is necessary. Bouviers are not hard-coated Terriers.

On exam, the initial visual assessment of the dog from several feet away should give one an impression as to whether the coat's density would be the capability to protect the body in varying weather conditions or not. A hands-on inspection should confirm texture and the ratio of undercoat to guard hair. As far as the outline of the body, in regards to the trim, on stepping back several feet, one should be able to notice the tips or ends of the guard hair rather than a uniformly blunt cut hair shaft more typical of a Bichon or Poodle...breeds

that do not require harsh, tousled coat. Do not mistake a "tousled" with an "open" coat.

An open coat lacks the sufficient undercoat to provide protection. This does not mean that the hair can not be stripped, mucked out and trimmed to create the pleasing body outline of a show-ring finish.

Learning how to correctly evaluate an all-weather coat and becoming familiar with the properties that make it so, is the key to the appreciation of the herding breeds.

Helping Hands

Bouvier des Flandres — Breed-Specific Examination Technique

Sue Vroom

A conformation judge's proficiency and skill with the Bouvier breed often times can be determined as soon as he begins the hands-on examination in a class. Where he puts his hands on the dog's body immediately tells the knowledgeable exhibitor and interested observer how familiar that judge is with the specifics of breed standard detail. An accurate assessment of type in any breed starts with the hands-on exam. The expression "good hands" does not necessarily imply a breed-specific exam. Only that the judge is generically thorough, gentle and respectful of a dog's patience level with the process. The reference of "great hands" is all of the above considerations combined with a familiarity of key breed-specific traits and how to feel for them.

Judges that do not have a background in heavily-coated breeds may be intimidated by where and how to feel around the hair and into the coat. It can pose a significant challenge to recognize and identify specific virtue using the eye alone. Breeds exhibited in a stylized trim combined with a talented groomer/trimmer using tools such as scissors, blades and a stripping knife has a distinct advantage in visual presentation. The ability to carve out an ideal outline deepens the degree of difficulty for the evaluator, but never the less it still is just a haircut.

Attendance at breed seminar workshops offers the ideal setting to acquire hands-on practice before and even after applying to judge the Bouvier. A judge continuing to utilize his existing mentor relationships has the advantageous opportunity for additional standard review and discussion while mastering the breed under hand.

The initial approach is the first contact a judge has with each exhibit. Confidently walk toward the dog and approach at a slight angle with the arms held at sides. Some Bouviers are wary of those that lock both hands behind their body and suddenly swing them out in front when reaching a face to face position with the dog. This quick motion can be misinterpreted as a threatening gesture. First, steady the dog's head by placing the flat of the hands on either side of the beard and jawline. Do not grasp or hold the beard. For a fair number of Bouvier owners gripping the beard is a common method of correction, therefore the dog is likely to resent it. Once the hands are on the head, lay the flat of the left palm on the muzzle with the middle finger at the stop and feel where the moist nose print is on the palm. Then put the moist spot left on the palm at the dog's stop and extend the hand the length of the top skull. If the end of the middle finger is halfway back on the skull toward the occiput, this is a 3:2 skull/muzzle head ratio. With the thumb and forefinger, straddle the bridge of the muzzle to check for adequate skeletal fill and breadth. The nostrils should be large, well-open and situated in a straight line directly at the end of the muzzle with no nasal drop. If the nose is large and nostrils are well-opened, it's a good indicator of a strongly built, broad muzzle. Large nose, broad muzzle. Quickly brush away the eye fall to evaluate eye color. Don't make a project out of checking eye color. Wandering fingers heading directly toward eyeballs does not meet with quiet acceptance. Lastly, check bite and side occlusion. Practice the head examination; one has a limited amount of time with a Bouvier to determine the individual structural components of the head.

For the body exam, pivot your body so as to face the same direction as the dog and cup the palm of the hand around the breastbone extending the fingers down into the chest to feel for width and prosternum, keeping the right hand atop the withers. Run both hands down either side of the upper shoulder area and upper arm to the elbow to evaluate the depth of the chest and rib spring. A quick, light closing of the hand on the left foreleg will determine adequate bone shape and size. Do NOT pick up the feet to examine foot construction. A well-constructed foot is very apparent on the move by how it strikes the ground. A poorly constructed foot will hit the ground in a plodding-like slap.

Next, run the right hand along the length of the back and downward into the loin area without breaking touch contact. With the palm facing inward on either side of the loin, extend the forefinger until it touches the last rib and the thumb reaching the front of the upper thigh. The degree of the extension of the hand and fingers will tell one the loin length. A dog that appears visually square on the line may in fact have poor relationship of rib to loin but has a glorious length-cutting trim.

To assess the characteristics of coat texture, quality and density, bury the fingers into the topcoat at the loin/croup area and lightly close the right hand over the hair. The depth of which the fingers sink into the coat will determine the density and ratio of undercoat to guard hair. If the guard hair pokes back in the palm, the coat is right. As the fingers descend into the coat, it additionally gives the opportunity to measure the length and slant of the croup and set-on of the tail. Do not run the hand backward over the topcoat. It serves absolutely no purpose in determining coat quality and makes a mess for the exhibitor to put the hair back into some semblance of order.

The dog's muscle condition is a vital component of an examination. Muscle tone and mass in both upper and lower thigh is extremely important. A manual examination is mandatory as strong hams and firm legs are essential in an athletic herding dog. Once breaking hand contact, step backward away the dog to view the construction of the rear assembly and the relationship of the hock to the stifle and upper leg. The rear should drop straight from the hip having good width from the ilium (hip) to ischium (buttock) to ground. The hock should be short and well let down from the lower thigh.

Standing behind the dog also allows for an 'over the top' view. The neck should appear powerful and blend smoothly into the trunk of the body, with a slight indentation at the loin. The entire overhead picture should give one the impression of a "one-piece" substantially built dog.

At no time during the hands-on exam should a judge linger, hover or speak over the dog to the handler.

Breaking down the elements of the exam may make it sound like a surgical procedure, or at the very least, a time-consuming process. Once the skill is perfected, it should be completed in about 8 to 10 ticks of a second hand. Any more than this carries the possibility of an impatient, teeth-grinding, shoulder-lifting, fidgeting challenge. It is generally not a patient breed when faced with space-restricting containment.

A breed-specific examination by a judge is an invaluable aid in identifying the key characteristics in the correct order of priority and is certainly owed to the breeders.