



FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (AISBL)

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FCI-Standard N° 15

BELGIAN SHEPHERD DOG

(Chien de Berger Belge)

TRANSLATION: Mrs. Jeans-Brown, revised by Dr. R. Pollet.

ORIGIN: Belgium.

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF OFFICIAL VALID STANDARD: 13.03.2001.

UTILISATION: Originally a sheep dog, today a working dog (guarding, defence, tracking, etc.) and an all-purpose service dog, as well as a family dog.

CLASSIFICATION F.C.I.: Group 1 Sheepdogs and Cattle Dogs
(except Swiss Cattle dogs).
Section 1 Sheepdogs.
With working trial.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY: In Belgium, at the end of the 1800s, there were a great many herding dogs, whose type was varied and whose coats were extremely dissimilar. In order to rationalise this state of affairs, some enthusiastic dog fanciers formed a group and sought guidance from Prof. A. Reul of the Cureghem Veterinary Medical School, whom one must consider to have been the real pioneer and founder of the breed.

The breed was officially born between 1891 and 1897. On September 29th, 1891, the Belgian Shepherd Dog Club (Club du Chien de Berger Belge) was founded in Brussels and in the same year on November 15th in Cureghem, Professor A. Reul organised a gathering of 117 dogs, which allowed him to carry out a return and choose the best specimens. In the following years they began a real programme of selection, carrying out some very close interbreeding involving a few stud dogs.

By April 3rd, 1892, a first detailed breed standard had already been drawn up by the Belgian Shepherd Dog Club. One single breed was allowed, with three coat varieties. However, as was said at the time, the Belgian Shepherd only belonged to ordinary people and therefore the breed still lacked status.

As a result, it wasn't until 1901 that the first Belgian Shepherds were registered with the Royal Saint-Hubert Society Stud Book (L.O.S.H.).

During the following years, the prime movers among the Belgian Shepherd enthusiasts set to work with great determination to unify the type and correct the faults. It can be said that by 1910 the type and temperament of the Belgian Shepherd had been established.

During the history of the Belgian Shepherd, the question of differing but acceptable varieties and colours had led to many heated discussions. On the other hand, anything involving morphology, temperament and suitability for work has never caused any disagreement.

GENERAL APPEARANCE: The Belgian Shepherd is a mediolineal dog, harmoniously proportioned, combining elegance and power, of medium size, with dry, strong muscle, fitting into a square, rustic, used to the open air life and built to resist the frequent atmospheric variations of the Belgian climate.

Through the harmony of its shape and its high head-carriage, the Belgian Shepherd should give the impression of that elegant strength which has become the heritage of the selected representatives of a working breed. The Belgian Shepherd is to be judged in its natural stance, without physical contact with the handler.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS: The Belgian Shepherd dog can be fitted into a square. The chest is let down to the level of the elbows. The length of the muzzle is equal to or slightly longer than half the length of the head.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT: The Belgian Shepherd is a watchful and active dog, bursting with energy, and always ready to leap into action. As well as its innate skill at guarding flocks, it also possesses the highly prized qualities of the best guard dog of property. Without any hesitation it is the stubborn and keen protector of its owner. It brings together all those qualities necessary for a shepherd, guard, defence and service dog.

Its lively, alert temperament and its confident nature, showing no fear or aggressiveness, should be obvious in its body stance and the proud attentive expression in its sparkling eyes.

When judging this breed, one should take into consideration its calm and fearless temperament.

HEAD: Carried high, long without exaggeration, rectilinear, well chiselled and dry. Skull and muzzle are roughly equal in length, with at the most a very slight bias in favour of the muzzle which puts the finishing touch to the whole head.

CRANIAL REGION: Of medium width, in proportion with the length of the head, with a forehead flat rather than round, frontal groove not very pronounced; in profile, parallel to imaginary line extending muzzle line; occipital crest little developed; brow ridges and zygomatic arches not prominent.

Stop: Moderate.

FACIAL REGION:

Nose: Black.

Muzzle: Medium length and well chiselled under the eyes; narrowing gradually toward the nose, like an elongated wedge; bridge of the nose straight and parallel to the continuation of the topline of the forehead; mouth well split, which means that when the mouth is open the commissures of the lips are pulled right back, the jaws being well apart.

Lips: Thin, tight and strongly pigmented.

Jaws/teeth: Strong, white teeth, regularly and strongly set in well-developed jaws. Scissor bite; pincer bite, which is preferred by sheep and livestock herders, is tolerated. Complete dentition according to the dental formula; the absence of two premolars 1 (2 P1) is tolerated and the molars 3 (M3) are not taken into consideration.

Cheeks: dry and quite flat, although muscled.

Eyes: Medium size, neither protruding nor sunken, slightly almond-shaped, obliquely set, brownish colour, preferably dark; black rimmed eyelids; direct, lively, intelligent and enquiring look.

Ears: Rather small, set high, distinctly triangular appearance, well-rounded outer ear, pointed tips, stiff, carried upright and vertical when dog is alert.

NECK: Well standing out, slightly elongated, rather upright, well-muscled, broadening gradually towards the shoulders, without dewlap, nape slightly arched.

BODY: Powerful without being heavy; length from point of shoulder to point of buttock approximately equal to height at withers.

Topline: upper line of back and loins is straight.

Withers: Pronounced.

Back: firm, short and well-muscled.

Loins: Solid, short, sufficiently broad, well-muscled.

Croup: well-muscled ; only very slightly sloping ; sufficiently broad but not excessively so.

Chest: little broad, but well let down; upper part of ribs arched; seen from the front forechest little broad, but without being narrow.

Underline: Begins below the chest and rises gently in a harmonious curve towards the belly, which is neither drooping nor tucked up, but slightly raised and moderately developed.

TAIL: Well set on, strong at the base, of medium length, reaching at least to hock, but preferably further; at rest carried down, with tip curved backwards at level of hock; more raised when moving, although without passing the horizontal, the curve towards the tip becoming more accentuated, without ever at any time forming a hook or deviation.

LIMBS

FOREQUARTERS:

General view: Bone solid but not heavy; muscle dry and strong; front legs upright from all sides and perfectly parallel when seen from the front.

Shoulder: Shoulder blade long and oblique, well attached, forming a sufficient angle with the humerus, ideally measuring 110-115 degrees.

Upper arm: Long and sufficiently oblique.

Elbow: Firm, neither turning out nor tied in.

Forearm: Long and straight.

Wrist (carpus): very firm and clean.

Front pastern (metacarpus): Strong and short, as perpendicular to the ground as possible or only very slightly sloping forward.

Feet: Round, cat feet; toes arched and well closed; pads thick and springy; nails dark and strong.

HINDQUARTERS:

General view: Powerful, but not heavy; in profile hindlegs are upright and seen from behind perfectly parallel.

Upper thigh: Medium length, broad and strongly muscled.

Stifle: approximately on the plumb line from the hip; normal stifle angulation.

Lower thigh: Medium length, broad and muscled.

Hock: Close to the ground, broad and muscled, moderate angulation.

Back pastern (metatarsus): Solid and short; dewclaws not desirable.

Feet: may be light oval; toes arched and well closed; pads thick and springy; nails dark and strong.

GAIT / MOVEMENT: Lively and free movement at all gaits; the Belgian Shepherd is a good galloper but its normal gaits are the walk and especially the trot; limbs move parallel to the median plane of the body. At high speed the feet come nearer to the median plane; at the trot the reach is

medium, the movement even and easy, with good rear drive, and the topline remains tight while the front legs are not lifted too high. Always on the move, the Belgian Shepherd seems tireless; its gait is fast, springy and lively. It is capable of suddenly changing direction at full speed. Due to its exuberant character and its desire to guard and protect, it has a definite tendency to move in circles.

SKIN: Elastic but taut over all the body; edges of lips and eyelids strongly pigmented.

COATS AND VARIETIES: Since the coat varies in length, direction, appearance and colour among Belgian Shepherds, this particular point has been adopted as the criterion for distinguishing between the four varieties of the breed: the Groenendael, the Tervueren, the Malinois and the Laekenois.

These four varieties are judged separately and can each be awarded a C.A.C., a C.A.C.A.B. or a reserve title.

HAIR: In all the varieties the hair must always be dense, close-fitting and of good texture, with the woolly undercoat forming an excellent protective covering.

A. **LONG HAIR:** The hair is short on the head, the outer side of the ears and the lower part of the legs, except on the rear side of the forearm which is covered from elbow to wrist by long hairs called fringes. The hair is long and smooth on the rest of the body and longer and more abundant around the neck and on the forechest, where it forms a collarette or ruff and a jabot or apron. The opening of the ear is protected by thick tufts of hair. From the base of the ear the hair is upright and frames the head. The back of the thighs is covered with very long abundant hair forming the culottes or breeches. The tail is furnished with long, abundant hair forming a plume.

The Groenendael and the Tervueren are the long-haired.

B. **SHORT HAIR:** The hair is very short on the head, the outer sides of the ears and the lower part of the legs. It is short over the rest of the body and fuller at the tail and around the neck where it forms a collarette or ruff which begins at the base of the ear, stretching as far as the throat. As well, the back of the thighs is fringed with longer hair. The tail is ear of corn shaped, but does not form a plume.

The Malinois is the short-haired.

- C. **ROUGH HAIR:** What especially characterises the rough hair variety is the roughness and dryness of the hair, which, moreover, is rasping and tousled. About 6 cm long over the whole body, the hair is shorter on the top of the muzzle, the forehead and the legs. The hair around the eyes and those furnishing the muzzle should not be so long as to disguise the shape of the head. However, it is essential to have furnishings on the muzzle. The tail should not form a plume. The Laekenois is the rough-haired.

COLOUR:

Mask: For Tervueren and Malinois the mask must be very pronounced and tend to encompass the top and bottom lip, the corners of the lips and the eyelids in one single black zone. A strict minimum of six points of skin pigmentation is called for: the two ears, the two upper eyelids and the two lips, upper and lower, which must be black.

Black overlay: In Tervueren and Malinois, the black overlay means that the hairs have a black tip which shades the base colour. This blackening is in any case “flamed” and must not be present in great patches nor in real stripes (brindled). In the Laekenois the black shading is more discreetly expressed.

Groenendael: Only uniform black.

Tervueren: Only fawn with black overlay or grey with black overlay, with black mask; however, the fawn with black overlay is still preferred. The fawn must be rich, neither light nor washed-out. Any dog whose coat colour is anything but fawn with black overlay or does not match the desired intensity of colour cannot be considered an elite specimen.

Malinois: Only fawn with black overlay and with black mask.

Laekenois: Only fawn with traces of black overlay, mainly on the muzzle and the tail.

For all varieties: a small amount of white is tolerated on forechest and toes.

SIZE, WEIGHT AND MEASUREMENTS:

Height at withers:

The ideal weight at withers is on average - 62 cm for males
- 58 cm for females.

Limits: 2 cm less, 4 cm more.

Weight:

Males about 25-30 kg.

Females about 20-25 kg.

Measurements: Average normal measures for an adult male Belgian Shepherd of 62 cm at the withers:

- Length of body (from point of shoulder to point of buttock): 62 cm.
- Length of head: 25 cm.
- Length of muzzle: 12,5 – 13 cm.

FAULTS: Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

- General appearance: Cloddy, lacking elegance; too light or too slender; longer than high; fitting into a rectangle.
- Head: heavy, too strong, lacking parallelism, not sufficiently chiselled or dry; forehead too rounded; stop too accentuated or too flat; muzzle too short or pinched; Roman nose; brow ridges or zygomatic arches too prominent.
- Nose, lips and eyelids: traces of depigmentation.
- Dentition: badly aligned incisors. Serious fault: lack of one incisor (1 I), one premolar 2 (1 P2), one premolar 3 (1 P3) or three premolars 1 (3 P1).
- Eyes: light, round.
- Ears: large, long, too broad at the base, set low, carried outward or inward.

- Neck: slender; short or deep set.
- Body: too long; thoracic cage too broad (cylindrical).
- Withers: flat, low.
- Topline: back and/or loins long, weak, sagging or arched.
- Croup: too sloping, overbuilt.
- Underline: too much or too little let down; too much belly.
- Tail: set too low; carried too high, forming a hook, deviated.
- Limbs: bone too light or too heavy; bad upright stance in profile (e.g. front pasterns too sloping or weak wrists), from the front (feet turning in or out, out at elbow, etc.), or from behind (hindlegs too close, too wide apart or barrel shaped, hocks close or open, etc.); too little or exaggeratedly angulated.
- Feet: spreading.
- Gait: moving close, too short a stride, too little drive, poor back transmission, high stepping action.
- Coat: all four varieties: insufficient undercoat.
Groenendael and Tervueren: woolly, wavy, curly hair; hair not long enough.
Malinois: hair half-long where it should be short; smooth-haired; harsh hairs scattered in the short coat; wavy coat.
Laekenois: hair too long, silky, wavy, crisp-haired or short; filled with fine hairs scattered in tufts in the rough hair; hairs too long around the eye or the lower end of the head (the chin); bushy tail.
- Colour: for all four varieties: white marking on chest forming tie; white on the feet going beyond toes.
Groenendael: reddish tinges in the coat; grey breeches.
Tervueren: grey.
Tervuren and Malinois: brindle; tints not warm enough; not enough or too much black overlay or set in patches over the body; not enough mask.
Tervueren, Malinois and Laekenois: too light a fawn; a base colour which is very diluted, named washed-out, is considered a serious fault.
- Temperament: specimens lacking in self-confidence or overly nervous.

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:

- Temperament: aggressive or timid specimens.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.
- General appearance: lack of breed type.
- Dentition: overshot; undershot, even if contact is not lost (reverse scissor bite); crossbite; absence of one canine (1 C), one upper carnassial (1 P4) or lower carnassial (1 M1), one molar (1 M1 -upper jaw- or 1 M2; M3 are not taken into account), one premolar 3 (1 P3) plus one other tooth or a total of three teeth (excluding the premolars 1) or more.
- Nose, lips, eyelids: strong depigmentation.
- Ears: drooping or artificially kept erect.
- Tail: missing or shortened, at birth or by docking; carried too high and ringed or curled.
- Coat: lack of undercoat.
- Colour: any colours which do not correspond with those of the described varieties; too widespread white markings on forechest, especially if they reach as far as the neck; white on feet going more than halfway up the front or the back pasterns and forming socks; white markings anywhere other than forechest and toes; lack of mask, including a muzzle of lighter colour than the rest of the coat in Tervueren and Malinois.
- Size: outside the limits laid down.

N.B.:

- Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.
- Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation, should be used for breeding.

CROSSBREEDING – MATINGS BETWEEN VARIETIES:

Any matings between varieties are forbidden, except in exceptional circumstances, when this ban can be lifted by the appropriate and official breed councils (Text 1974, drawn up in Paris).

ANATOMICAL FEATURES

