

Origin

The Sussex Spaniel is named after Sussex, England, where the first and most important kennel of these dogs was established.

Specimens of the breed competed in Britain as far back as 1862.

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History

The first and most important kennel of Sussex Spaniel dogs belonged to a Mr. Fuller - it was he who developed the rich golden liver color that has long distinguished the breed. Phineas Bullock, of Field Spaniel fame, also did notable work in furthering the best interests of the Sussex. Specimens of the breed competed in Britain as far back as the Crystal Palace show of 1862.

The Sussex was used for certain types of rough terrain and underbrush in England, where an abundance of game, together with the custom of hunting on foot, rendered the dog satisfactory as a sporting companion. He has not been imported to any great extent to this country, Although he lacks the speed of other flushing spaniel, the Sussex has an extremely good nose, and he is a determined hunter. He is inclined to give tongue on scent. The Sussex Spaniel is a happy dog, and is not too difficult to train, and when properly taught becomes an excellent retriever.

Breed Standard

General Appearance

The Sussex Spaniel was among the first ten breeds to be recognized and admitted to the *Stud Book* when the American Kennel Club was formed in 1884, but it has existed as a distinct breed for much longer. As its name implies, it derives its origin from the county of Sussex, England, and it was used there since the eighteenth century as a field dog. During the late 1800's the reputation of the Sussex Spaniel as an excellent hunting companion was well known among the estates surrounding Sussex County. Its short legs, massive build, long body, and habit of giving tongue when on scent made the breed ideally suited to penetrating the dense undergrowth and flushing game within range of the gun. Strength, maneuverability, and desire were essential for this purpose. Although it has never gained great popularity in numbers, the Sussex Spaniel continues today essentially unchanged in character and general appearance from those 19th century sporting dogs.

The Sussex Spaniel presents a long and low, rectangular and rather massive appearance coupled with free movements and nice tail action. The breed has a somber and serious expression. The rich golden liver color is unique to the breed.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Size--The height of the Sussex Spaniel as measured at the withers ranges from 13 to 15 inches. Any deviation from these measurements is a minor fault. The weight of the Sussex Spaniel ranges between 35 and 45 pounds. *Proportion*--The Sussex Spaniel presents a rectangular outline as the breed is longer in body than it is tall. *Substance*--The Sussex Spaniel is muscular and rather massive.

Head

Correct head and expression are important features of the breed. *Eyes*--The eyes are hazel in color, fairly large, soft and languishing, but do not show the haw overmuch. *Expression*--The Sussex Spaniel has a somber and serious appearance, and its fairly heavy brows produce a frowning expression. *Ears*--The ears are thick, fairly large, and lobe-shaped and are set moderately low, slightly above the outside corner of the eye. *Skull and Muzzle*--The skull is moderately long and also wide with an indentation in the middle and with a full stop. The brows are fairly heavy, the occiput is full but not pointed, the whole giving an appearance of heaviness without dullness. The muzzle should be approximately three inches long, broad, and square in profile. The skull as measured from the stop to the occiput is longer than the muzzle. The nostrils are well-developed and liver colored. The lips are somewhat pendulous. *Bite*-- A scissors bite is preferred. Any deviation from a scissors bite is a minor fault.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck--The neck is rather short, strong, and slightly arched, but does not carry the head much above the level of the back. There should not be much throatiness about the skin. *Topline and Body*--The whole body is characterized as low and long with a level topline. The chest is round, especially behind the shoulders, and is deep and wide which gives a good girth. The back and loin are long and very muscular both in width and depth. For this development, the back ribs must be deep. *Tail*--The tail is docked from 5 to 7 inches and set low. When gaiting the Sussex Spaniel exhibits nice tail action, but does not carry the tail above the level of the back.

Forequarters

The shoulders are well laid back and muscular. The upper arm should correspond in length and angle of return to the shoulder blade so that the legs are set well under the dog. The forelegs should be very short, strong, and heavily boned. They may show a slight bow. Both straight and slightly bowed constructions are proper and correct. The pasterns are very short and heavily boned. The feet are large and round with short hair between the toes.

Hindquarters

The hindquarters are full and well-rounded, strong, and heavily boned. They should be parallel with each other and also set wide apart--about as wide as the dog at the shoulders. The hind legs are short from the hock to the ground, heavily boned, and should seem neither shorter than the forelegs nor much bent at the hocks. The hindquarters must correspond in angulation to the forequarters. The hocks should turn neither in nor out. The rear feet are like the front feet.

Coat

The body coat is abundant, flat or slightly waved, with no tendency to curl. The legs are moderately well-feathered, but clean below the hocks. The ears are furnished with soft, wavy hair. The neck has a well-marked frill in the coat. The tail is thickly covered with moderately long feather. No trimming is acceptable except to shape foot feather, or to remove feather between the pads or between the hock and the feet. The feather between the toes must be left in sufficient length to cover the nails.

Color

Rich golden liver is the only acceptable color and is a certain sign of the purity of the breed. Dark liver or puce is a major fault. White on the chest is a minor fault. White on any other part of the body is a major fault.

Gait

The round, deep and wide chest of the Sussex Spaniel coupled with its short legs and long body produce a rolling gait. While its movement is deliberate, the Sussex Spaniel is in no sense clumsy. Gait is powerful and true with perfect coordination between the front and hind legs. The front legs do not paddle, wave, or overlap. The head is held low when gaiting. The breed should be shown on a loose lead so that its natural gait is evident.

Temperament

Despite its somber and serious expression, the breed is friendly and has a cheerful and tractable disposition.

Faults

The standard ranks features of the breed into three categories. The most important features of the breed are color and general appearance. The features of secondary importance are the head, ears, back and back ribs, legs, and feet. The features of lesser importance are the eyes, nose, neck, chest and shoulders, tail, and coat. Faults also fall into three categories. Major faults are color that is too light or too dark, white on any part of the body other than the chest, and a curled coat. Serious faults are a narrow head, weak muzzle, the presence of a topknot, and a general appearance that is sour and crouching. Minor faults are light eyes, white on chest, the deviation from proper height ranges, lightness of bone, shortness of body or a body that is flat-sided, and a bite other than scissors. There are no disqualifications in the Sussex Spaniel standard.

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