

## BREED STANDARD CLARIFICATION

### Balance And Gait

At its June Meeting the Board of Directors of the Chow Chow Club voted unanimously to instruct the Breed Standard Council to prepare a letter of clarification regarding balance and gait in the Chow Chow. After Board and membership approval the letter is to be sent to all Chow Judges. It is the Board's opinion that balance and gait are so widely misunderstood by judges and breeders that action must be taken before the deterioration in these areas becomes irreversible.

#### *Balance*

The Standard's first one and a half sentences are "General Appearance - A massive, cobby, powerful dog, active and alert, with strong muscular development and perfect balance. Body squares with height of leg at shoulder ..." The trend today is toward larger head and bone and greater massiveness; balance is sacrificed for these attributes. The Chow must be square to possess correct type; a mushy-faced, fuzzy caterpillar is not a Chow. Massiveness can be increased by shortening the legs, but the short-legged and bow-legged Chow with immense bone is incorrect and far removed from the active, alert working dog known in China for 2000 years.

It is generally accepted by students of the Breed that the distance from the point of elbow to the ground should be one-half the distance from the withers to the ground. I hope to see this proportion included in the revised Standard to aid fanciers and judges in understanding correct balance. It should be particularly noted that it is *body length* and not the length of the back which should square with the highest part of the shoulder. The measurement of body length is well explained in the *AKC Complete Dog Book* and is quite different and considerably

longer than the length of back. The Chow must never have the outline of a Clumber Spaniel. The Board of Directors have been deeply disturbed by the pursuit of head, bone and coat while ignoring true Chow type and balance.

#### *Gait*

To quote the Standard: "Completely individual. Short and stilted because of straight hocks. " Perhaps the phrase "completely individual" is the most unfortunate one in our Standard, as all too often it is interpreted as permitting any gait. I would like to see the phrase "completely unique" used in the English and F.C.I. Standards, instead. This more accurately expresses what is meant: the Chow gait is unique because of the structure of the hind legs. There is little angulation of the stifle and hock, and this produces the unique short and stilted gait that has characterized the Breed for two thousand years.

The gait must be sound. Common problems of structure that cause unsoundness are hip dysplasia, bowing of the tibia and/or femur, loose or subluxated kneecaps, injuries to the anterior cruciate ligament, and weak, hyper-extended or knuckled-over hocks. With the possible exception of the cruciate ligament, my experience is that each of these structural defects can be inherited. Yet breeders are exhibiting and judges are giving points to dogs that exhibit these defects to the point of lameness. The Chow is too large to be readily carried; his legs must be structurally sound to hold up for a lifetime.

Our breed fell into disfavor in the 1930's because of unsound temperament; I pray that our breed will not be ruined in the 1980's by crippling structural defects. The Board of Directors are deeply concerned

with the deterioration of soundness in the gait of the Chow.

The undersigned is a member of the Breed Standard Council and would be happy to receive comments or questions from breeders or judges regarding balance and gait in the Chow. Such communications would help the Council in its work of clarification. -

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*(Note: Most of these points have been addressed in the later revision to the Breed Standard, but the discussion of these points retains valuable to clarify these important issues.)*