

## CHOW TYPE

In October's column I discussed the antiquity and uses of the Chow in its homeland of China as I believe these facts must be kept in mind when considering what is true Chow type. What are the characteristic qualities that distinguish this ancient breed from others and particularly his cousins of Northern origin?

### *General Appearance and Balance*

First, the general appearance described in the Standard is "A massive, cobby, powerful dog, active and alert with strong muscular development, and perfect balance." To expand this important initial sentence let us first consider massive, which is a dog having a large mass. I believe the physics definition of Mass, which is Weight divided by Volume, quickly explains what is sought. Mass does not mean weight or height or size: consider one pound of lead versus one pound of feathers. Which is massive? Similarly, a 22 inch Chow weighing 75 lbs. is less massive than a 19 inch Chow weighing 70 lbs. Cobby is defined as short-bodied and compact, powerful is easily understood.

The next two adjectives, active and alert, are of great significance as they denote that the Chow must not be so massive, cobby and powerful that he becomes clumsy or cloddy. He must remain active and alert to exhibit true Chow type; only such a dog would have been able to fulfill its functions in China. Too many breeders and judges at present have forgotten those two important words, active and alert.

Continuing, "with strong, muscular development" note the comma. Development should be strong and muscular. Concluding the first sentence are the words "and perfect balance." To begin to understand what this is we must move on to the next section, "Body squares with

height of leg at shoulder." The perfectly balanced Chow must be square. This measurement is clearly seen in the AKC COMPLETE DOG BOOK and should be studied and understood by all who would know Chow type. It is plain that it is the length of BODY, not the length of back, which must square with the shoulder height. These two measurements are quite different as the body length is ten to fifteen percent longer than the length of back.

The other points of balance, which unfortunately are not defined in the standard, are the depth of body and the length of leg. I believe the perfectly balanced Chow will have a brisket that carries down to the elbow. Chows which do not have this depth of body lack massiveness and substance and appear shelly. I believe that the length of leg (measured from ground to point of elbow) should be one-half the shoulder height. A longer length of leg appears racy or rangy. Those with legs shorter than the body depth will rarely tend to be square and tend to move sluggishly instead of being active and alert. A short-legged Chow would be an abomination in China as he would not be a good hunter nor could he move easily in deep snow. When today's breeders and judges seek greater bone and substance at the expense of balance they ignore the history and purposes of our breed.

My readers will note I have not mentioned what the shoulder height or weight should be. Those familiar with the Standard know why; there is no height or weight in the Standard nor any word describing size. This "omission" has been debated frequently over the years but according to our standard a 23 inch Chow or a 16 inch Chow is equally desirable, provided that each has the correct balance and massiveness.

## *Head and Legs*

To further complete the picture the Standard states, "Head - Large and massive in proportion to the size of the dog... Muzzle - Short in comparison to length of skull ." The massive head is accomplished by a broad, flat skull and a muzzle which is broad from eyes to end of nose, the two joined by a moderate stop.

The conformation must be correct to produce the desired head and though wrinkles at the sides of the skull and on the muzzle will give an illusion of width, they must not substitute for the required breadth of bone structure.

The Chow must be heavy-boned in both forelegs and hindlegs. The hindlegs are unique to the breed, being described as "straight-hocked" and "Gait - Completely individual. Short and stilted because of straight hocks." It follows that there can be little stifle angulation because it is anatomically impossible to have a well-angulated stifle joint and a straight hock joint. The gait must be sound with no knuckling at the hock or slipping of the patella. In the ideal hindquarters a vertical line which bisects the hip joint will also bisect the hock joint and pass very slightly posterior to the middle of the foot. A unique conformation, indeed! Unfortunately, correct structure and gait is seldom seen in the ring today and when seen is often not appreciated by the judges. It is sad that this hallmark of the breed for over 200 years is rapidly disappearing and that judges too often condone unsound or unstilted gait. Such judges do not know Chow type and do a great disservice to our breed.

I would like to discuss other aspects of type such as tail set and chest but space limitations imposed by the Editor of the GAZETTE necessitate an end to this column. Most of the words have pictured a Chow as seen in silhouette, as he is

predominantly judged in the show ring. His silhouette is unmistakable, beginning with the distinctive straight hind legs and continuing with the characteristic square body, let down flank, cat feet, upright pasterns and short, blunt muzzle of equal depth. None of his Northern cousins have exactly these characteristics. All these attributes plus others combine to produce correct type in the Chow. How rarely are all present in one Chow! -

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