

THE SMOOTH CHOW

Judith-Ann Robertson, copyrighted May 2011

The first recorded appearances of Chow Chows in the western world were in the 1800s as gifts and zoo exhibits. The first Chow ever exhibited was a **smooth-coated** bitch by the name of Chinese Puzzle, winning a silver medal at the 1880 Crystal Palace Show. Chow records indicate the population of Chows (imported and domestic) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were about half smooth and half rough.

This same western history of Chows shows that all modern Chows are descended from a rather select and small group of foundation Chows. Studies of western pedigrees indicate the on-going mingling of rough and smooth coated dogs in breeding programs from the beginning, continuing to the present day.

However in Australia and other countries, the written standard describing the perfect Chow Chow only mentions that there is the Smooth variety as a foot note rather than being included in the description of the coat. As a result, many fail to notice it. Thus, many judges are unaware that there is a smooth variety and this occasionally gives rise to a contention by some that the smooth exhibit is incorrect. Unfortunately, this means some excellent Chows are adversely judged due to an unnoticed footnote.

In the ANKC Standard for Chows, the Coat descriptor reads: *Abundant, dense, straight and stand-off. Outer coat rather coarse in texture and with a soft woolly undercoat. The Chow Chow is a profusely coated dog and balance should therefore be assessed when the coat is at its natural length.* The final footnote of the Standard reads: *The Standard of the smooth variety is identical with the above except that the coat is smooth.*

Both variations of coat (which have longer, shorter and intermediate variations as well) are double coated. In the rough coat, the outer coat is longer with a pronounced ruff/ mane around the head and neck which frames the head (fuller on dogs than bitches). There is longer coat on the backs of the legs and “pluming” on the tail. In the smooth coat the length and distribution of the coat is different, with very little to no ruff or feathering on the legs and tail.

Figure 1: Anatomical Points described in the ANKC Breed Standard

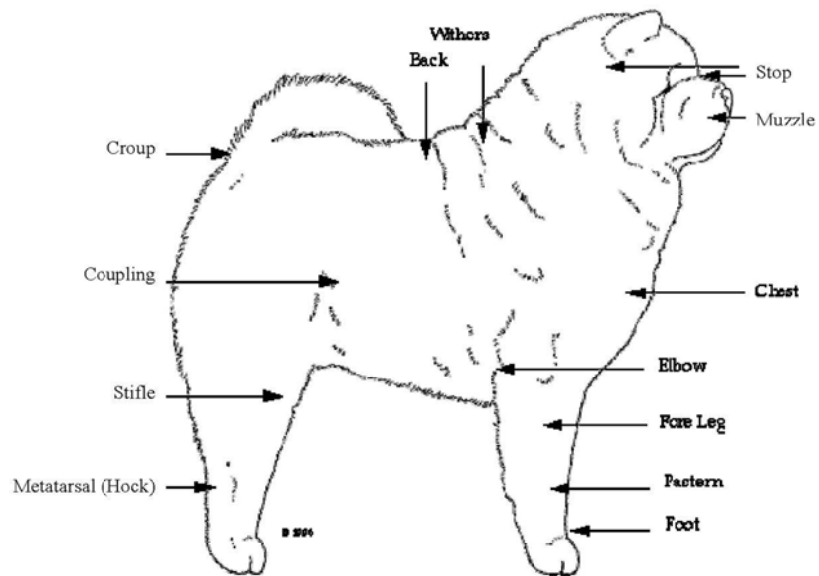
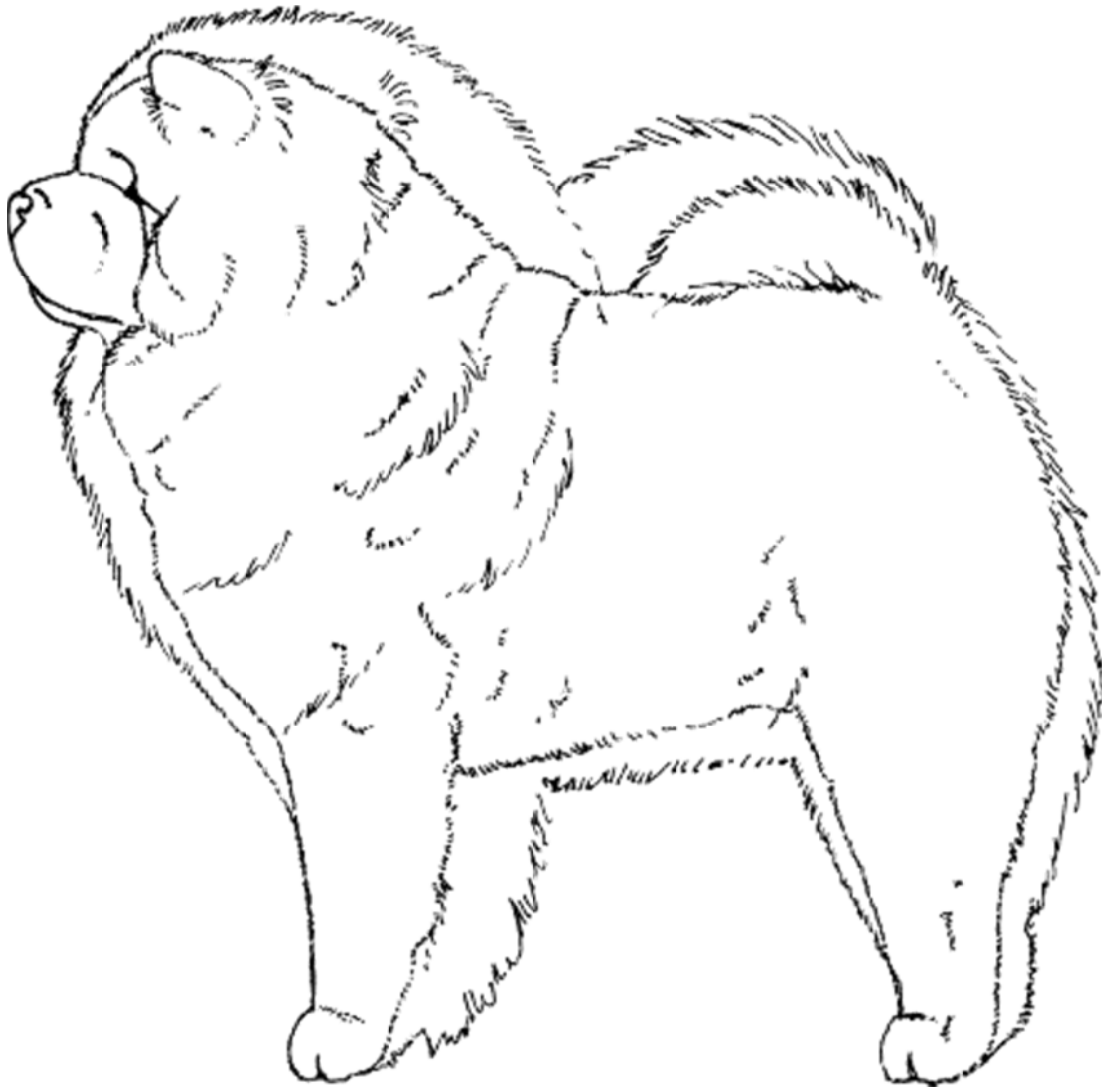


Figure 2: The Smooth Chow head without the framing ruff/mane



Figure 3: This illustration demonstrates that coat is the only specified difference between the rough and smooth coated varieties. The illustration shows the difference using an overlay of a rough outline on the smooth.



Since length can vary markedly on different Chows – rough and smooth alike - it is the thickness, the texture and the condition of the coat that should be considered rather than length.

Rather than dismiss the smooth exhibit as a poorly coated or out-of-coat Chow, this variety needs to be assessed and judged on its merits as a Chow – one with a shorter coat. One of the advantages to judging a Smooth Chow is that there is nothing that can be hidden by coat and skilful grooming



To quote from the American Standard: *Clothed in a **smooth** or an off standing rough double coat, the Chow is a masterpiece of beauty, dignity and naturalness, unique in his blue-black tongue, scowling expression and stilted gait.*

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