



The Illustrated Old English Sheepdog

Nov. 2, 2016 Approved by BOD of the OESCA

Foreword

This booklet has been prepared under the auspices of the **Old English Sheepdog Club of America, Inc** as a guide to a practical understanding of the current AKC standard for the Old English Sheepdog. Our intent is that judges, breeders, and enthusiasts of the breed will each find this guide a useful reference. Specifically, the goals of this manual are to provide explanations of the current breed standard's sections using terminology and drawings which are understandable. In addition, we also encourage the reader to go to other expert sources to continue their detailed study of our fascinating breed.

Please note that in the following text, the official standard of the Old English Sheepdog, will always appear in **bold** and commentary in *italic* print.

Note: *Cover Dog has a walleye (blue eye).*



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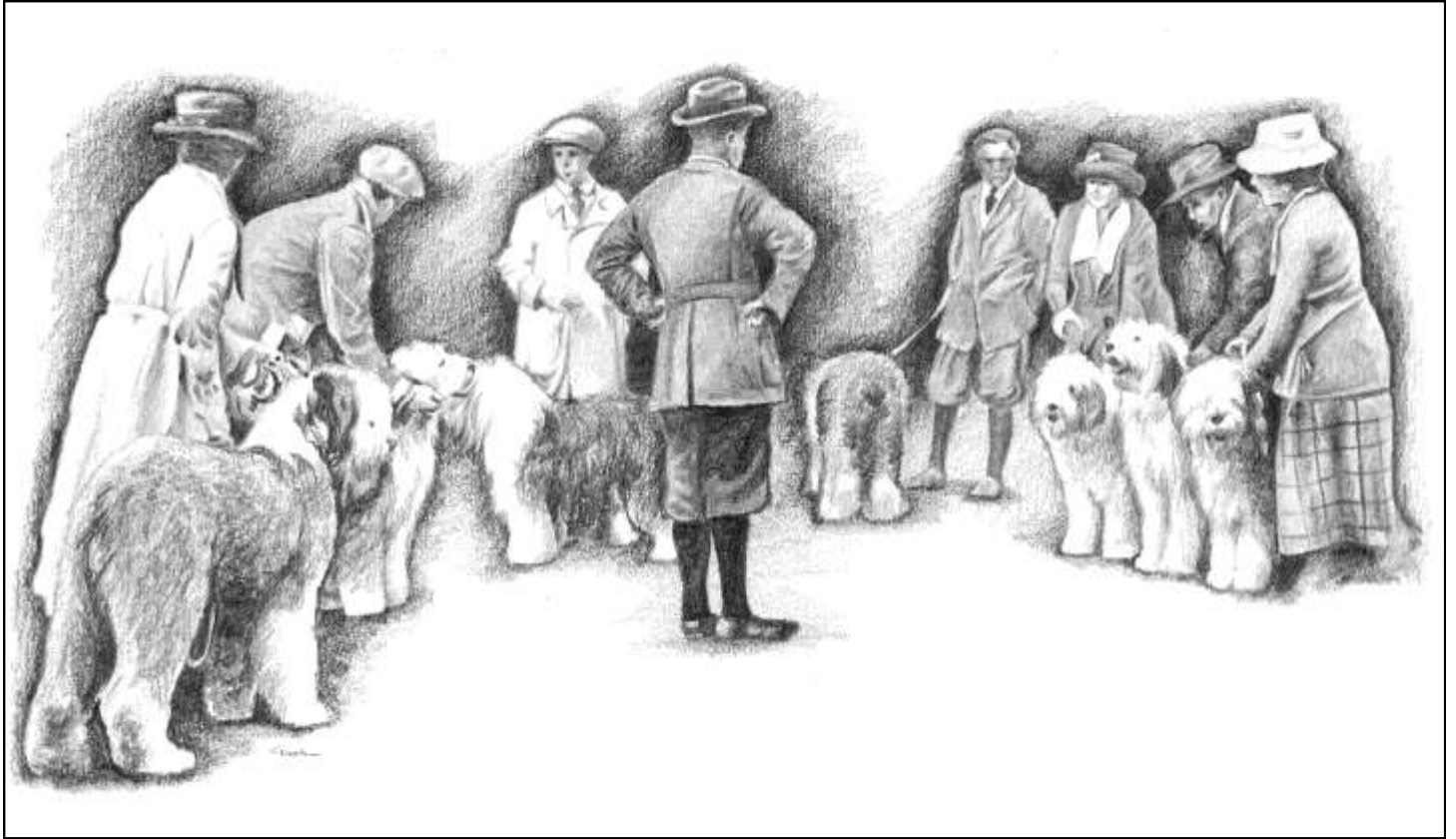
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Introduction

As one of the more heavily coated breeds currently in the ring, the “Bobtail” is often the most daunting for a aspiring judge or novice enthusiast to assess. This is definitely a “hands on” breed as both good and bad qualities may be hidden with coat by over grooming or the lack thereof. Everything is simplified when you get past the coat and learn to feel the dog underneath.



History



The name "Old English Sheepdog" is a bit of a misnomer; while the OES did originate in England, it is actually a relatively new breed of only a couple hundred years. The OES, or Bobtail, was used by drovers to manage and protect sheep and cattle in the English countryside and drive them to market. The Bearded Collie and the Russian Owtchar are thought to have played a part in the OES' mysterious lineage. The OES's type is very different today from what it was in those early years. This can be seen in early paintings of the breed. Few resemble the breed of today. Although it is called a Bobtail, the breed normally is born with a tail; its tail is docked when only a few days old. One theory suggests that English shepherds bobbed off the tails of their drovers to show that they were working dogs, therefore avoiding the luxury tax levied on owners of pet dogs. Another theory for docking being done was for the same reason the sheep were docked; to keep the hindquarters from becoming matted with feces and mud. Whatever the reason, the lack of a tail became an integral part of the breed. Our AKC Standard still calls for a docked tail today.

History (Cont'd)

The OES emerged as a medium sized, hardy dog that could withstand the harsh climate of the English countryside. It is believed that the OES was the drover's companion that was adapted over the years for the sheep and environment he worked. Its thick, insulated double coat not only protected it during warm summers and cold, wet winters, but also gave it a woolly, sheep like appearance that helped it blend in with the flock.

The breed came into its own in the late 1800s, when it began appearing at Kennel Club dog shows in England. Dogs of that day were often selected as much for their working ability as their looks. The breed was first shown in Birmingham England in 1873. The first stud book entries were in 1875. The most famous OES of that day was a bitch named Champion Fairweather, born May 8, 1898.

The popularity of the breed in the USA only came once it caught the attention of several wealthy Americans. The first Bobtail, aptly named Bob, came to the United States in 1885 and was also the first to be registered with the AKC. The first year for the OES to be shown at Westminster was in 1890. The Old English Sheepdog Club of America was founded in 1904 by English breeder Henry Arthur Tilley. AKC recognition of the breed came in 1905, along with the recognition of the club. The most notable enthusiast was Freeman Lloyd who wrote the first Standard in 1885 and who was instrumental in bringing Tilley and his dogs to the U.S.A. Many British dogs were imported into America that were well-bred, having been shown and used for breeding. Enormous price tags were put on these dogs. In the years leading up to WWI, several new kennels bred and imported some very influential dogs. The breed was strengthened thereafter with many great American kennels.



Ch Fairweather

(Sir James x Birthday)

General Appearance



General Appearance.

A strong, compact, square, balanced dog. Taking him all around, he is profusely, but not excessively coated, thickset, muscular and able-bodied. These qualities, combined with his agility, fit him for the demanding tasks required of a shepherd's or drover's dog. Therefore, soundness is of the greatest importance. His bark is loud with a distinctive "pot-casse" ring in it.

The adjectives used in General Appearance describe a dog with a solid, sturdy build yet one who still maintains agility, athleticism and endurance. The OES must be of sound mind and body.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Type, character and balance are of greater importance and are on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.

Having type, character and balance are more important than the size of the dog. A small or large specimen without balance would not be a useful working dog.

Type refers to the distinguishing features which make the OES different than the rest. Type is never a matter of personal preference but, rather, an adherence to desired breed characteristics.

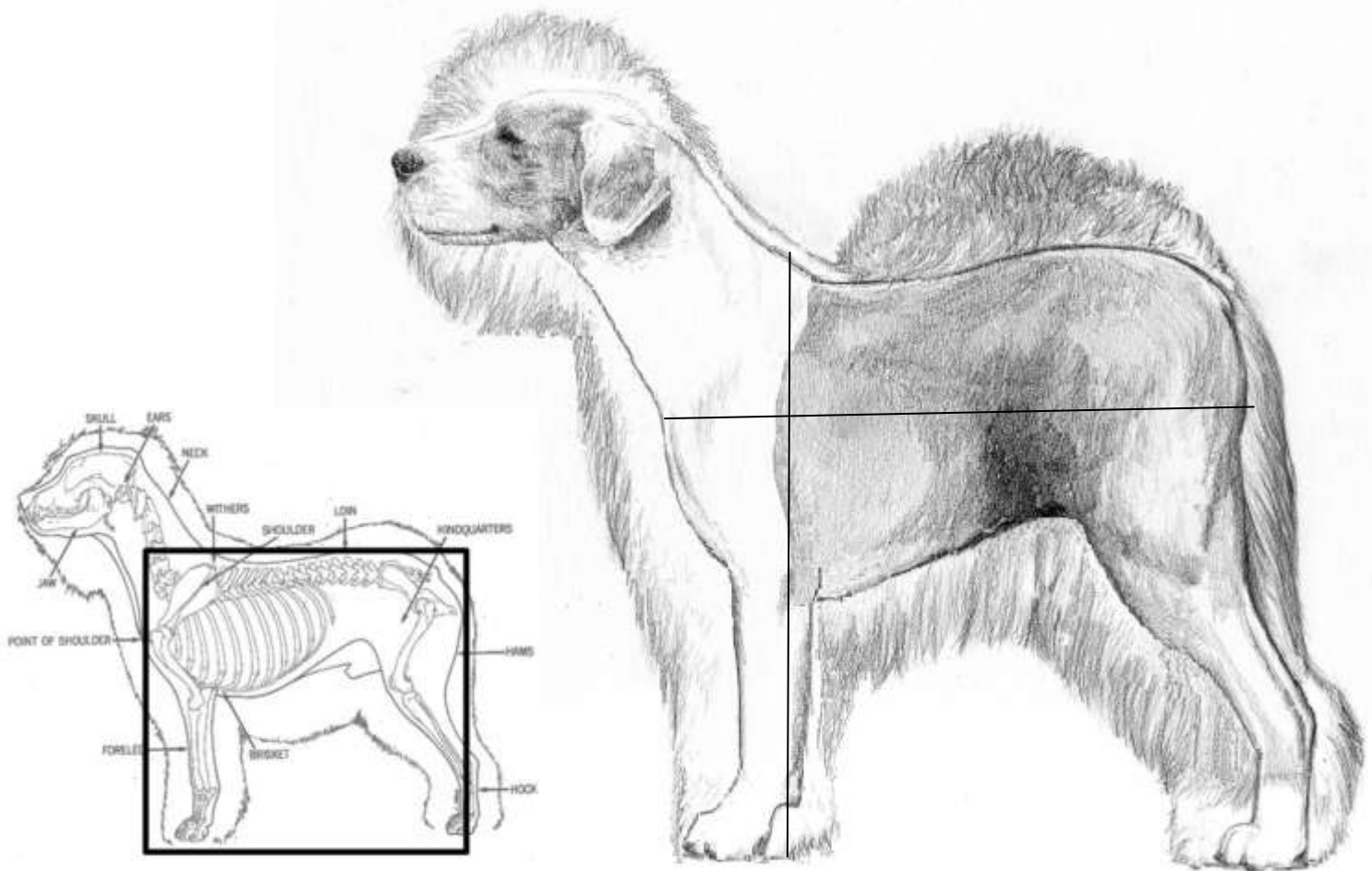


Size.

Height (measured from top of withers to the ground), Dogs: 22 inches (55.8 cm) and upward. Bitches: 21 inches (53.3 cm) and upward.

There is no upper height stated in our standard. Whatever the height, the dog must be balanced and in proportion. This breed is neither tall nor short on leg but practically square.

Size, Proportion, Substance (Cont'd)



Proportion.

Length, measured from point of shoulder to point of ischium (tuberosity) practically the same as the height. Absolutely free from legginess or weaselness.

Profuse coat and trimming could make a correctly proportioned OES look short on leg/long of body, or an incorrectly proportioned dog look correct. You must feel for correct proportions .

Substance.

Well muscled with plenty of bone.

This is a thick set compact breed, with good firm muscle mass and substantial bone.

Head, Eyes

Head.

A most intelligent expression.

The bobtail head should have a very strong foreface, large fully pigmented nose and a broad, flat, backskull. This should be evident with simple examination. Today's grooming techniques can hide both a very nice head and a very poor one.

Eyes.

Brown, blue or one of each. If brown, very dark is preferred. If blue, a pearl, china or wall-eye is considered typical. An amber or yellow eye is most objectionable.

Eye color is referring to having two brown, two blue or one of each. Shades of blue which are china, pearl or wall-eyes are typical and are not to be considered as light eyes.

Occasionally you will find a dog with an eye in which the blue iris background has a distribution of brown on it. Brown eyes should be very dark thus the very light brown eye (amber or yellow) should be penalized. Please note that our standard does not call for pigment around the eyes nor does it specify shape or size of the eyes so this should not enter into consideration when judging.



Assessing an OES Head

When assessing the head of an OES, it is most important to feel with your hands. The following is a “suggested” method for evaluation. First, check for width, depth and bluntness of muzzle and bite. Run the heel of your palm up the ridge of the muzzle until you reach the stop. It should easily come to a halt if the stop and ridges over the eyes are well defined. Eyes should be wide set. Width of skull should be felt from temporal to temporal. The width of the skull should be approximately equal to the length. Feel for ear set and size. Don’t forget that the head should be in proportion to the overall size of the dog!



Ears, Skull, Stop, Jaw, Nose

Ears.

Medium sized and carried flat to the side of the head.

The Ears are set just below the top of the skull. Most will lie flat, but you may find some incorrect ears that are carried away from the head at the base. This can be discovered only by careful examination.

Skull.

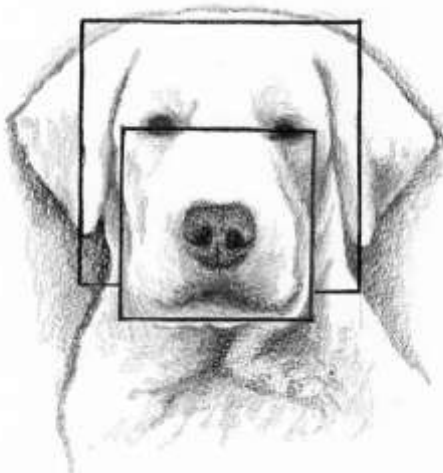
Capacious and rather squarely formed giving plenty of room for brain power. The parts over the eyes (supra-orbital ridges) are well arched. The whole well covered with hair.

The skull should be broad, fairly flat and squarely shaped in length, width and depth. Width should be felt spreading your hand from temporal bone to temporal bone, then from stop to occiput and finally feeling the depth.

Stop.

Well defined.

The stop and ridges over the eyes (eye brows) have a pronounced indentation but should not be abrupt.



Older dog head with beautiful expression

Jaw.

Fairly long, strong, square and truncated. Attention is particularly called to the above properties as a long, narrow head or snippy muzzle is a deformity.

The muzzle should be broad with a deep, well defined underjaw that has a definite blunt, squared off look.

Nose.

Always black, large and capacious.

The OES should always have a large black nose in relation to the foreface. If the dog was a born blue, pigmentation on the nose and around the eyes and lips will be a shade of slate. This is not a disqualification. A nicely truncated muzzle that does not taper or round off will invariably be finished with a large nose.

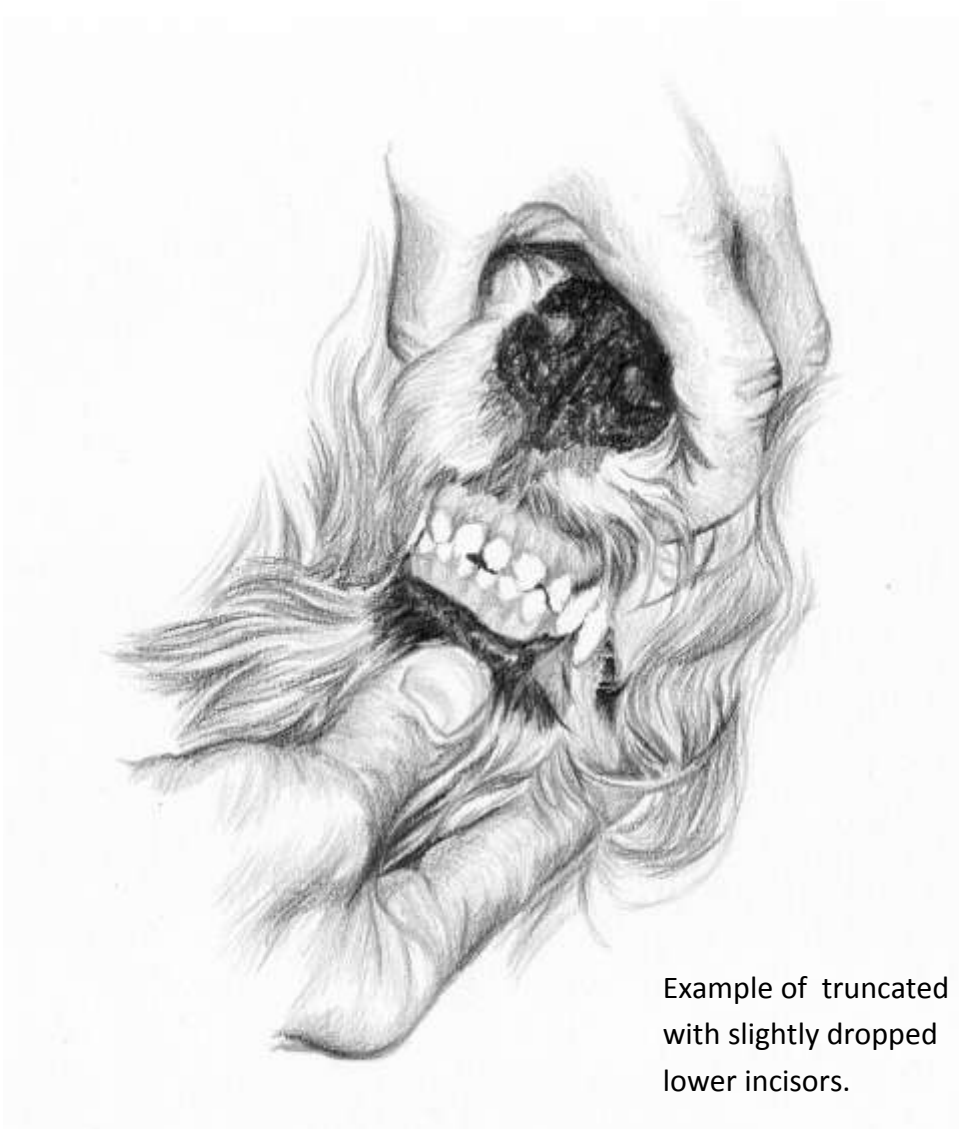
Teeth

Teeth.

Strong, large and evenly placed. The bite is level or tight scissors.

With a truncated bite, the teeth will appear parallel to each other across the front. A level bite is quite correct although you will often see some wear of the teeth that should not be unduly penalized. The OES nips at the sheep to control them. History shows that a dead level bite was preferred because it did not tear the wool on the sheep. A tight scissors bite refers to a firm overlap of the teeth. Dropped lower incisors are common in the breed and are not addressed as a fault in the standard.

Definition of Truncation: Appearing to terminate abruptly. Having the end square or even. To shorten by or as if by cutting off.



Example of truncated bite
with slightly dropped
lower incisors.

Neck, Body, Tail

Neck.

Fairly long and arched gracefully.

The neck of the OES is relatively long. It must be judged by feel since a stripped out or scissored neck will look longer than a heavily coated one. (Stripping or scissoring of the neck should be penalized by the degree it is done.) Your hand should run down the neck to the shoulder feeling the arch, the length and how it fits smoothly or blends into the shoulder.

Body.

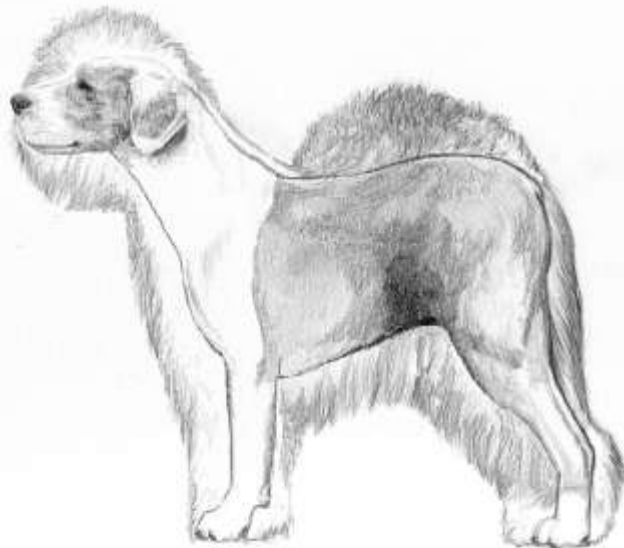
Rather short and very compact, broader at the rump than at the shoulders, ribs well sprung and brisket deep and capacious. Neither slab-sided nor barrel-chested. The loin is very stout and gently arched.

Examination is required to verify spring of ribs, depth of chest and conditioning. The body is rather short and should be solid to the touch. When viewed from above, the OES should be pear shaped, broader at the rump than at the shoulders. The pear shape is not attained by grooming as stripped out forequarters and exaggerated fluffing of coat in the rear only give the appearance. The chest is deep, reaching at least to the elbows. The spring of rib should be obvious with no sign of slab sidedness.

Tail.

Docked close to the body, when not naturally bob tailed.

If not a natural born bobtail, the tail should be docked as close to the body as possible.



Pear Shaped as seen from above.

Topline

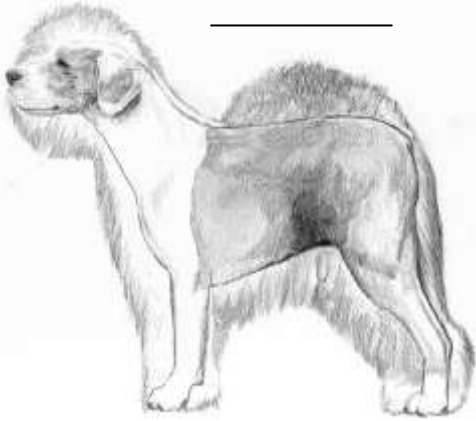


Topline.

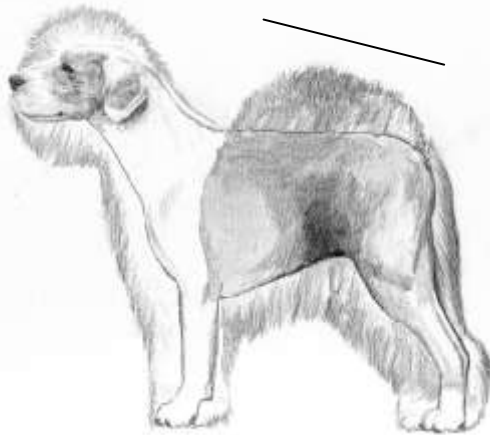
Stands lower at the withers than at the loin with no indication of softness or weakness. Attention is particularly called to this topline as it is a distinguishing characteristic of the breed.

*Clearly stated in our standard, the topline is a **hallmark** characteristic of the breed. Between the last rib and the pelvis is the loin. A group of muscles extends and rises covering the loin and blend into rounded muscular hindquarters. The strong, muscular loin is what creates the correct OES topline. The correct method to examine the topline is to start at the withers, running your hand along the back to feel the gentle rise over the loin. There should be no dip, or sway-back behind the withers, nor should there be a suggestion of a roach-back which rises right behind the withers and slopes off at the croup. Also incorrect is the exaggerated topline on dogs that have straight stifles, long in hock, or short front legs.*

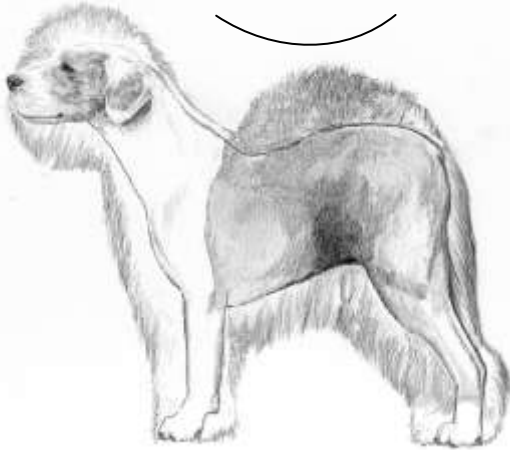
Correct/Incorrect Toplines



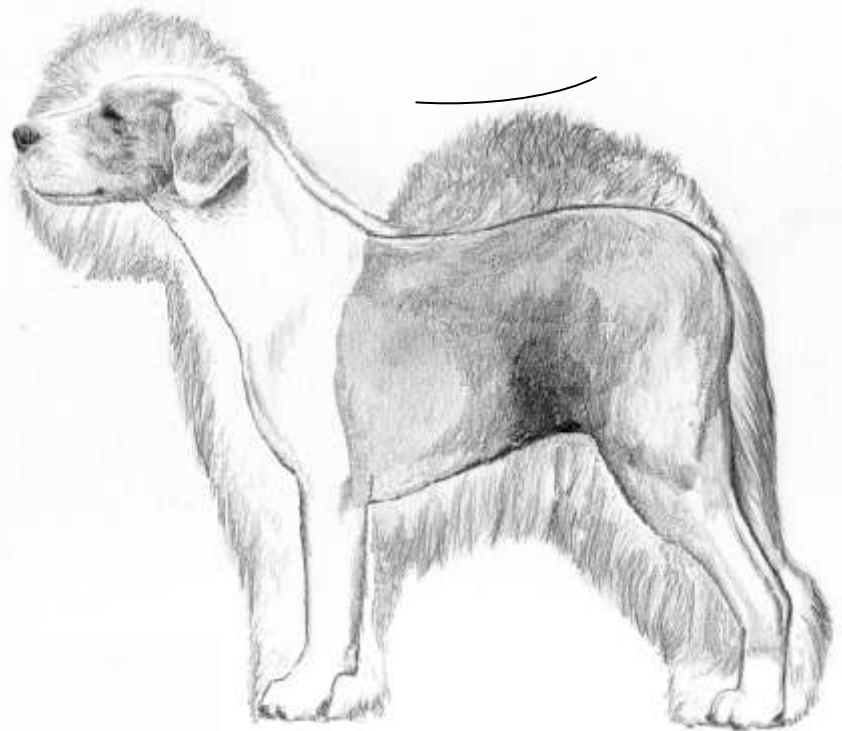
Level Back



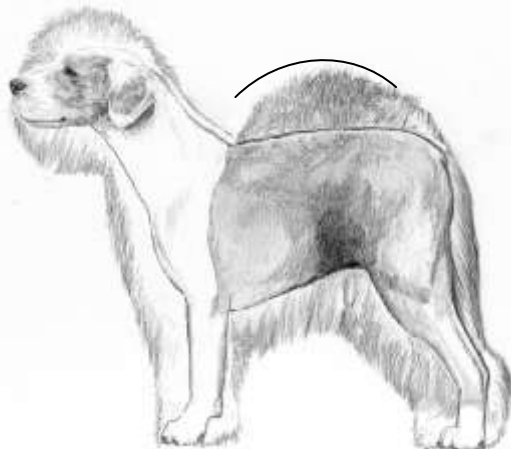
Slope Back



Sway Back

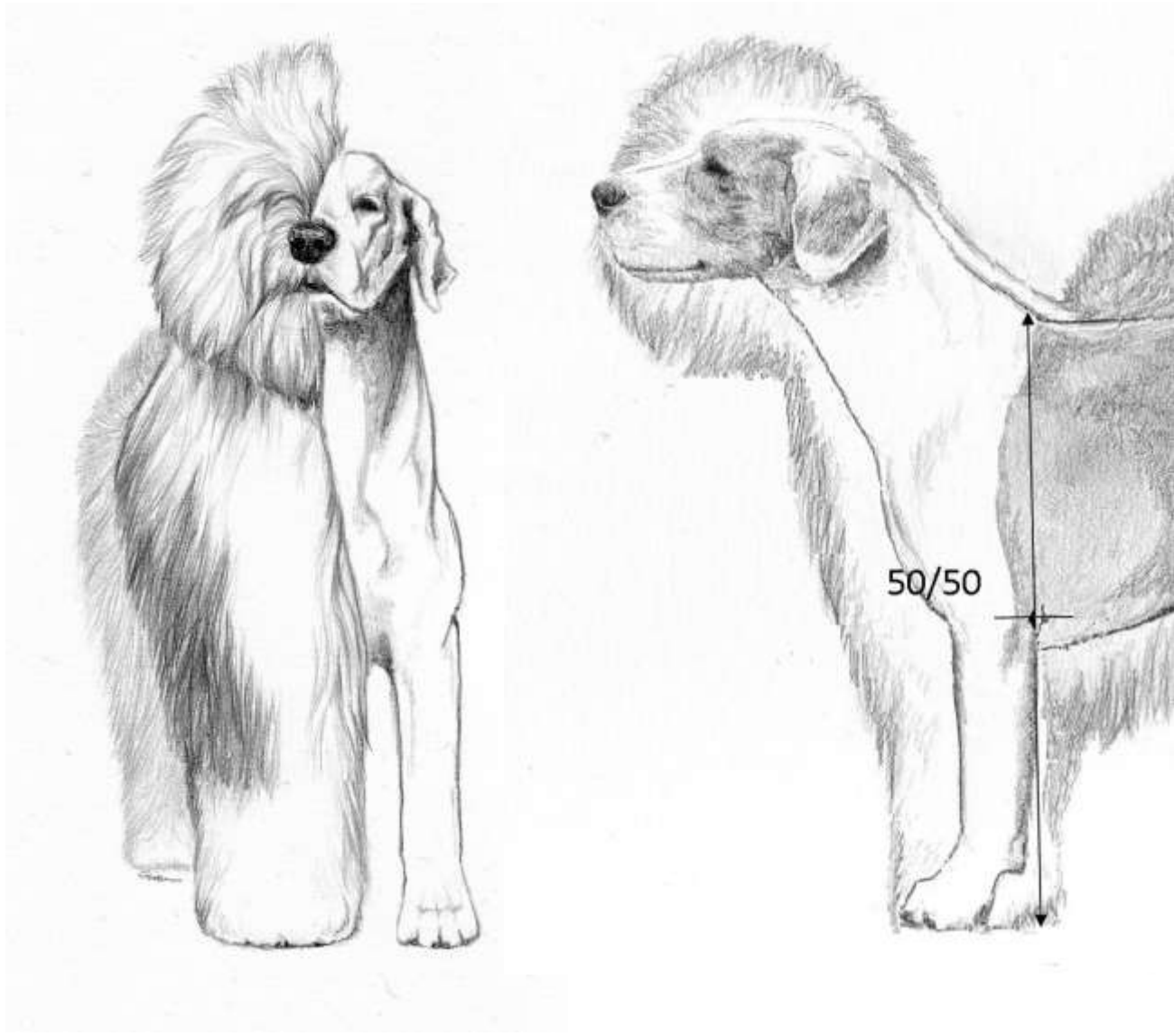


Correct



Roach Back

Forequarters



Forequarters.

Shoulders well laid back and narrow at the points. The forelegs dead straight with plenty of bone. The measurements from the withers to the elbow and from the elbow to the ground are practically the same.

Efficient movement in front calls for proper forequarter assembly. Shoulder blades should be well laid back and nearly equal in length to the upper arms. Front legs should be well boned and dead straight. The shoulder point spacing at the forechest (commonly called Point of Shoulder) is narrow enough to allow the front to converge at higher speeds. The shoulder blade separation should narrow smoothly as they follow the body contour up to the withers, where the shoulder blade tips should lie close together .

Hindquarters, Feet

Hindquarters.

Round and muscular with well let down hocks. When standing, the metatarses are perpendicular to the ground when viewed from any angle.

The hindquarters should be well-muscled with good width over loin. The croup is neither steep nor level, but well filled out and rounded with moderate angle. The hocks (metatarses) should be short and straight viewed from all angles. They should not turn in or out. Low set hocks give the drover's dog the required endurance to do its job.

To evaluate hocks, one must feel them to ensure they are vertical and well let down. Faults would be hocking out as well as double, sickle, or cow hocked.



Feet.

Small and round, toes well arched, pads thick and hard, feet pointing straight ahead.

Judges should examine the feet and pads. Correct feet should be small, round, uniformly arched with firm, thick pads. There should be no sign of them being splayed or down in the pastern. The dewclaws should be removed for safety. The hair should be removed between the pads to eliminate any dirt or mud from collecting and creating pain or sores.

Coat

Coat.

Profuse, but not so excessive as to give the impression of the dog being overly fat, and of good hard texture; not straight, but shaggy and free from curl. Quality of coat to be considered above mere profuseness. Softness or flatness of coat to be considered a fault. The undercoat is a waterproof pile when not removed by grooming or season. Ears coated moderately. The whole skull well covered with hair. The forelegs well coated all around. The hams densely coated with a thick, long jacket in excess of any other part. Neither the natural outline nor the natural texture of the coat may be changed by any artificial means except the feet and rear may be trimmed for cleanliness.



The Old English coat is a topic of unending discussion. Many hours are spent cleaning and brushing to maintain the OES coat in competitive show condition. The novice owner or judge may view this as intimidating, whether it is the continual coat care or learning to find the actual dog structure under the coat.

The OES is a double-coated dog. The undercoat is extremely soft and very waterproof, while the guard hairs in a mature dog should have a definite break and when rubbed together will have a hard feel. It is better to check texture in the gray hair as washing invariably softens the coat and in most cases the white will have been freshly washed. Puppies and adolescent dogs will usually have a soft coat. They are born with a soft black coat with no undercoat. This gradually changes through an adolescent coat to the mature coat, almost always by two to three years of age.

Appearance/Trimming

Our standard clearly states the natural outline and texture shall not be changed by artificial means. The dog should be clean and completely brushed out, free of mats with feet and bum neatly tidied up. Some shaping may be required, but excessive trimming, stripping and sculpturing should not be placed over a better specimen that is being shown in a more natural shaggy coat.



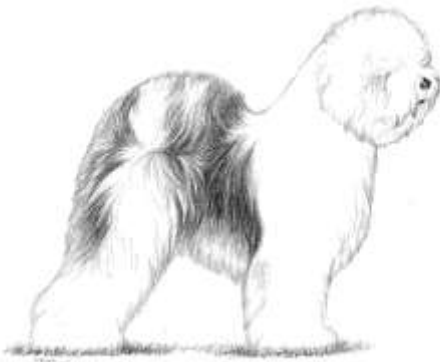
Judges must have the ability to get beyond the coat, examine the dog thoroughly and find the best dog.



Color/Markings



Black Puppy Coat



Splashed Markings



Young Adult—Silvery coat



Adult—Dark Markings



Color.

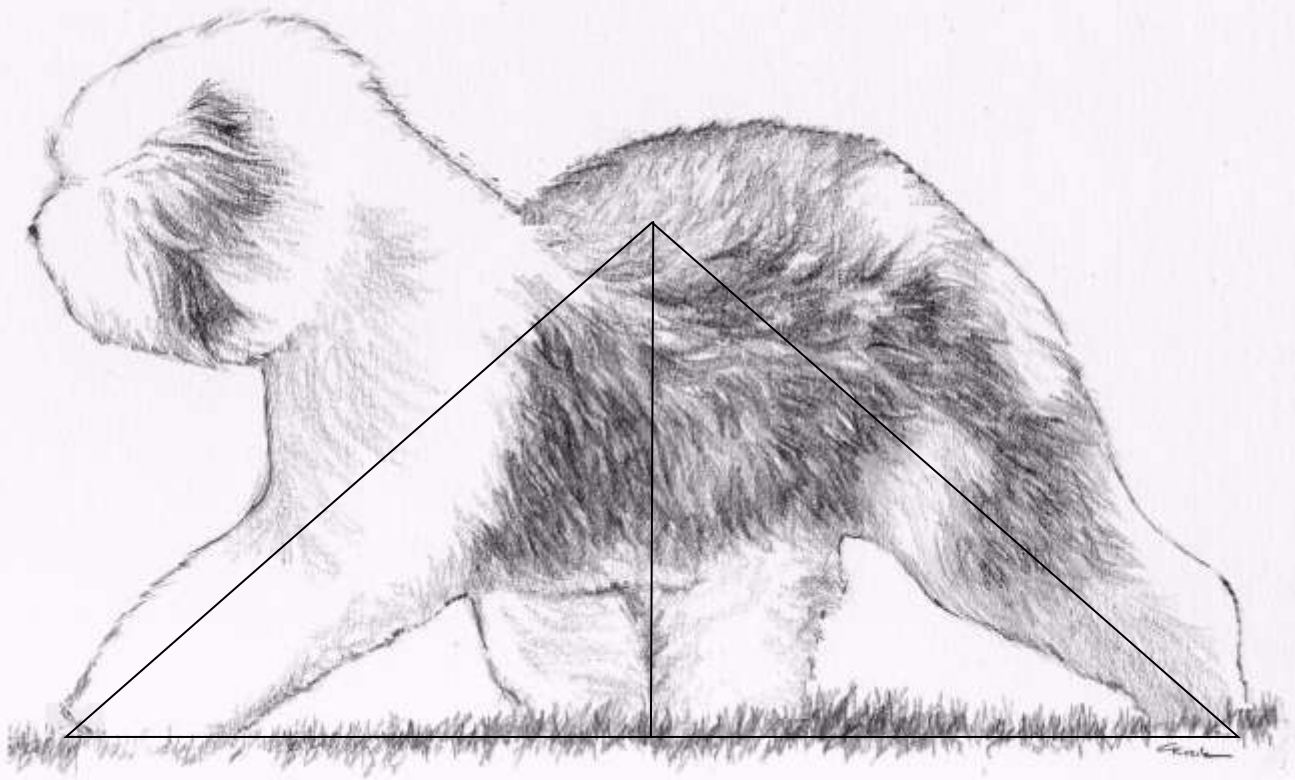
Any shade of gray, grizzle, blue or blue merle with or without white markings or in reverse. Any shade of brown or fawn to be considered distinctly objectionable and not to be encouraged.

Old English Sheepdogs come in many shades of gray ranging from a pale blue through to a dark gray. No preference should be given to any shade of gray and all markings are acceptable. Puppies are born black and then their color may change from brown tinged (dead puppy coat) to very pale silver. When in doubt as to whether the dog is going to clear from the brownish color, please separate the coat and check the roots to see if the gray is coming in. Mature Old English have a mixture of different shades of gray hair. It is incorrect for all the hairs to be completely black except in a very young dog.

Movement

Gait.

When trotting, movement is free and powerful, seemingly effortless, with good reach and drive, and covering maximum ground with minimum steps. Very elastic at a gallop. May amble or pace at slower speeds.



In the show ring, the OES should normally be judged at a trot. If you ask the dogs to be moved slowly, it is quite natural for this breed to pace. The pace is a resting action to conserve energy. The amble is by definition a smooth and leisurely gait. The gait should appear to be elastic and effortless with no hint of side-winding. Excessive and unnecessary motion such as a high kick in the rear, short strides or bicycling action in the rear are not correct. Soundness is of the greatest importance. The balanced gait has equal reach and drive.

Coming and Going



When the dog is going away, judges should watch the pads for proper foot placement. The front should not be visible when observing the rear on our pear shaped dog. The head carriage may adopt a level position. In summary, proper shoulder construction should give correct forward reach, and the sound rear with low-set short hocks will provide a powerful rear drive.

Temperament



Temperament.

An adaptable, intelligent dog of even disposition, with no sign of aggression, shyness or nervousness.

In the show ring, the OES should have a stable demeanor while being examined. The standard is explicit about the OES showing no signs of aggression, shyness or nervousness. At home, they have a clown like nature, yet are dependable, loyal companions.

Versatility



The OES competes in:

- Agility
- Barn Hunting
- Canine Good Citizen
- Conformation
- Coursing
- Herding
- Obedience
- Rally
- Tracking



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Highlights of the Old English Sheepdog

When evaluating the OES, the following points should be considered of major importance.

1. Soundness is of the greatest importance.
2. Gait is elastic and effortless with equal reach and drive.
3. Topline has a gentle rise over the loin—a distinguishing characteristic of the breed.
4. Head is fairly square, broad and flat with well defined stop.
5. Thickset body broader at the hips than at the shoulders.
6. Coat should be shaggy with hard texture.
7. Compact, square, balanced dog.

Note -There are no DQ's in our breed.

OESCA Breed Standard

General Appearance: A strong, compact, square, balanced dog. Taking him all around, he is profusely, but not excessively coated, thickset, muscular and able-bodied. These qualities, combined with his agility, fit him for the demanding tasks required of a shepherd's or drover's dog. Therefore, soundness is of the greatest importance. His bark is loud with a distinctive "pot-casse" ring in it.

Size, Proportion, Substance: Type, character and balance are of greater importance and are on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.

Size: Height (measured from top of withers to the ground), Dogs: 22 inches (55.8 cm) and upward. Bitches: 21 inches (53.3 cm) and upward.

Proportion: Length (measured from point of shoulder to point of ischium [tuberosity]) practically the same as the height. Absolutely free from legginess or weaseliness.

Substance: Well muscled with plenty of bone.

Head: A most intelligent expression.

Eyes: Brown, blue or one of each. If brown, very dark is preferred. If blue, a pearl, china or wall-eye is considered typical. An amber or yellow eye is most objectionable.

Ears: Medium sized and carried flat to the side of the head.

Skull: Capacious and rather squarely formed giving plenty of room for brain power. The parts over the eyes (supra-orbital ridges) are well arched. The whole well covered with hair.

Stop: Well defined.

Jaw: Fairly long, strong, square and truncated. Attention is particularly called to the above properties as a long, narrow head or snipy muzzle is a deformity.

Nose: Always black, large and capacious.

Teeth: Strong, large and evenly placed. The bite is level or tight scissors.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck: Fairly long and arched gracefully.

Topline: Stands lower at the withers than at the loin with no indication of softness or weakness. Attention is particularly called to this topline as it is a distinguishing characteristic of the breed.

Body: Rather short and very compact, broader at the rump than at the shoulders, ribs well sprung and brisket deep and capacious. Neither slab-sided nor barrel-chested. The loin is very stout and gently arched.

Tail: Docked close to the body, when not naturally bob tailed.

Forequarters: Shoulders well laid back and narrow at the points. The forelegs dead straight with plenty of bone. The measurements from the withers to the elbow and from the elbow to the ground are practically the same.

Hindquarters: Round and muscular with well let down hocks. When standing, the metatarses are perpendicular to the ground when viewed from any angle.

Feet: Small and round, toes well arched, pads thick and hard, feet pointing straight ahead.

Coat: Profuse, but not so excessive as to give the impression of the dog being overly fat, and of a good hard texture; not straight, but shaggy and free from curl. Quality and texture of coat to be considered above mere profuseness. Softness or flatness of coat to be considered a fault. The undercoat is a waterproof pile when not removed by grooming or season. Ears coated moderately. The whole skull well covered with hair. The neck well coated with hair. The forelegs well coated all around. The hams densely coated with a thick, long jacket in excess of any other part. Neither the natural outline nor the natural texture of the coat may be changed by any artificial means except that the feet and rear may be trimmed for cleanliness.

Color: Any shade of gray, grizzle, blue or blue merle with or without white markings or in reverse. Any shade of brown or fawn to be considered distinctly objectionable and not to be encouraged.

Gait: When trotting, movement is free and powerful, seemingly effortless, with good reach and drive, and covering maximum ground with minimum steps. Very elastic at a gallop. May amble or pace at slower speeds.

Temperament: An adaptable, intelligent dog of even disposition, with no sign of aggression, shyness or nervousness.

Approved February 10, 1990 Effective March 28, 1990



The End