KUSA
Kennel Union of Southern Africa

TIBETAN SPANIEL

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 01/01/2026

ORIGIN

Tibet (China). (Patronage: Great Britain)

UTILISATION

Companion Dog.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. for interest – from Wikipedia: The Tibetan Spaniel]:
Small monastery dogs, thought to be early representatives of the Tibetan Spaniel, loyally trailed behind their Lama masters and came to be regarded as "Little Lions", owing to their resemblance to the Snow Lions – a variation of the Chinese guardian lions – that gave them great value and prestige. The practice of sending the dogs as gifts to the palaces of China and other Buddhist countries grew significantly, and more "lion dogs" were presented back to Tibet, continuing till 1908. Due to exchanges of Tibetan Spaniels between palaces and monasteries, the breed is likely to have common ancestors with Oriental breeds such as the Japanese Chin and the Pekingese.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Small, active, and alert. Well-balanced in general outline, slightly longer in body than height at withers.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

Gay and assertive, highly intelligent, aloof with strangers. Alert, loyal but independent.

HEAD

Small in proportion to body, carried proudly. Masculine in dogs but free from coarseness.

Cranial Region:

Skull: Slightly domed, moderate width and length.
Stop: Slight but defined.

Facial Region:

Nose: Black preferred.
Muzzle: Medium in length. Blunt with cushioning, free from wrinkle. Chin showing some depth and width.
Jaws and teeth: Slightly undershot. Teeth evenly placed and the lower jaw wide between the canine teeth. Full dentition desirable. Teeth and tongue not showing when mouth closed.

Eyes:

Dark brown, oval, bright, and expressive, medium size, set fairly well apart but forward looking. Rims black.

Ears:

Medium size, pendant, well-feathered in adults, set fairly high. Slight lift from the skull desirable but must not fly. Large, heavy, low-set ears atypical.

NECK

Moderately short, strong, and well set on. Covered with a mane or “shawl” of longer hair, more pronounced in dogs than bitches.

BODY

Slightly longer from withers to root of tail than the height at withers.

***Back*:** Level.

***Ribs*:** Good spring of rib.

TAIL

Set high, richly plumed, and carried in a gay curl or over back when moving. (Not to be penalised for drooping tail when standing).

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: Moderate bone; forelegs slightly bowed but firm at shoulder.

Shoulder: Well-laid.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: Well made and strong.

Stifle (knee): Moderate turn.

Hock joint: Well let down, straight when viewed from behind.

FEET

Hare-foot. Small and neat, with feathering between toes, often extending beyond the feet. Round cat-feet undesirable.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Quick-moving, straight, free, positive.

COAT

- Topcoat silky in texture, smooth on face and front of legs, of moderate length on body, but lying rather flat.
- Undercoat fine and dense.
- Ears and back of forelegs nicely feathered, tail and buttocks well furnished with longer hair.
- Not over-coated; bitches tend to carry less coat and mane than dogs.

COLOUR

All colours and mixture of colours permissible.

SIZE

Height at withers:

About 25.4cm (approx. 10”).

Weight:

Ideal: 4.1kg – 6.8kg

N.B. *Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.*

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog, and on the dog’s ability to perform its traditional work.

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.

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FCI Standard No 231: TIBETAN SPANIEL

FCI Classification: Group 9: Companion and Toy dogs
Section 5.1. Tibetan breeds
Without Working Trial