



FCI COMMITTEE FOR DOG  
WELFARE AND HEALTH

---

# **GUIDELINES FOR FCI SHOW JUDGES**

# **Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) (Aisbl)**

13, Place Albert 1er, B - 6530 Thuin (Belgique) | Tel +32.71.59.12.38

**This booklet has been created by the  
FCI Committee for Dog Welfare and Health by the contribution of**

Ekaterina Domogatskaya	Attila Márton
Axel Dubois	Dr. José Luis Payró
Gopi Krishnan	Dr. Claudio Rossi
Ernesto Larre	Julie Sanders
Dr. Niksa Lemo	Wenche Skogli
Raymundo Lo	

**Selected photos by the kind courtesy of**

Ffiona Erskine

**[www.fci.be](http://www.fci.be)**

© 2022. Fédération Cynologique Internationale

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this booklet or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.

For further information, please contact the publisher.

“The judge keeps the influence upon the breeds. Let me say, when you have the honour to judge the European Show or the World Show, and you give the title to a male, you have to remember that this male will come into the breed as the producer. So, when you take a wrong type, or a dog with a fault, which is very dominant in this breed, your decision can cause big, big damage. You have to look at your judgement from this point of view! Your responsibility is really huge, when you feel that you’re there not only to give “one-two-three-four”, but to think about what you must do for the breed which you judge now. And if you’re going to the ring with this feeling, then it’s sure that you have read your Standard once more, that you know what is important for this breed, and what for this breed was created. You have to understand, if the dog standing in front of you is able to do the work, which we’re breeding for. It’s really much more difficult, than just to find stylish dogs, but for me it’s essential.” Horst Kliebenstein, FCI judge (Germany)

Being an FCI show judge, you should never try to substitute a veterinarian or to give any veterinary diagnosis in your critics. However, you must remember that **every breed standard describes a healthy animal**, and every new breed standard, before being accepted, is passing the rigorous supervision by the FCI scientific commission, as well as the whole population of



every new breed is checked for the health status before recognition. When the dog comes into your ring, the first thing that you must understand and recognise is his health condition. If the dog looks happy and friendly, if his behaviour is active and typical for the breed, if his movements are free and sound, if his weight is normal, if his eyes are clear and his coat is shining, if there are no visible respiratory problems, you can rely upon your first impression, and can think that in general he is healthy and well-cared for.

## GENERAL APPEARANCE & TYPE

Any dog in the ring should produce the impression of a sound animal with normal substance, good condition and active behavior. Either cachectic dogs or very thin and evidently obese or overweight dogs should be penalized and cannot be awarded with any title. Both deviations from normal condition are harmful for the dog, especially being overweighted, since it causes an extraordinary strain for the heart, joints, etc. Cachexia can be associated with an underlying illness causing ongoing muscle loss. The type is another point.

Be careful: getting fascinated with massive representatives of the breed with hyper developed skin, excessive skin folds, excessive substance and weight, you’re putting up the hyper type that is probably connected with severe health problems. Untypical specimen must be disqualified.

## BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

Temperament must be in line with the breed standard. Shy and shy-aggressive behavior must be seriously penalized. The judges' goal is to promote the dogs that are **comfortable for the society**. Some breeds according to the standard and their type of work / purpose are allowed to be reserved or to have a special self-confidence or attitude, and this must not be mistaken with shyness or bad temperament.

Aggressive behavior in the show ring towards the judge or any other person cannot be tolerated and under any circumstances must lead to disqualification. Male domination shouldn't be misinterpreted as the aggression but must be controlled. Aggressive dogs shouldn't be allowed for showing and breeding.

## HEAD

Head size is considered in proportion with the body. Males normally have more massive heads than females. That indicates on correct sexual type (unless the standard says that sexual dimorphism is not noticeable).

## CRANIAL REGION

### Skull

In some breeds, we shouldn't forget to check the skull for a fontanel. The adult dog with an open fontanel must be penalized according to the breed standard.

## FACIAL REGION

### Nose

is assessed according to pigmentation. Nowadays, there is a lot of dogs with grey, grey-pink noses in the breeds, where good pigmentation has always been strictly regulated. In these cases, the mark should be according to the standard recommendation. The nose must be clear from any organic trace (crust, pus, blood, erosions, etc.) and artificial substance (chalk, ointment, cream, ink), both categories must lead to the mark "cannot be judged".

The nostrils should be open, and breathing should be free. Stenotic nares (nostrils) making it more difficult for a dog to breathe and resulting in a lot of open mouth breathing and panting. Stenotic nares are categorised in mild, moderate, and severe categories. The dogs with moderate stenotic nostrils shouldn't be awarded any titles. The dogs with severe stenotic nostrils should be disqualified. Special attention must be done with brachycephalic breeds not only with nostrils but also for breathing sounds. Stridor is highly undesirable and an audible high-pitched sound with respiration. It occurs when air is forced through a narrowed airway lumen. In general, narrowing superior to the vocal cords leads to inspiratory stridor, whereas narrowing below the vocal cords produces either expiratory or mixed stridor. Animals with signs of respiratory distress should be penalized according to severity.

### Muzzle

Should have functional jaws and teeth of correct size.

### Jaws/ Teeth

Bite and dentition are specified in the standard. In the majority of FCI breed standards, especially in the standards of working and hunting breeds with long or medium muzzles, scissor bite is considered ideal, and called for as preferable or even as the only permitted; in many breeds, pincer bite can be also tolerated. For most of brachycephalic breeds, undershot is required. However, with all the various types of bites in different breeds, overshot and wry mouth are always taken as malocclusions and must be heavily penalized, because in such cases the dog's ability to grasp and chew food is affected, gums and / or palate can be injured, and the tongue may be protruded.

As for dentition, it's complete with 42 teeth in adult dogs. If the standard clearly says that the lack of teeth (normally with the exception of PM1 and M3) should be penalized, it should be penalized according to the standard. But even if the breed has no specific demands for the number of teeth, the judge should always look for the healthy dentition. Dogs with unhealthy dentition, which affects the quality of their life, for example dogs without most of premolars, one of canines or incisors, especially in underjaws, shouldn't be allowed in the show ring. Important to check if the gums have pigmentation. Teeth are stronger in well pigmented gums. In working breeds, strong and healthy teeth are the part of the dog's ability to perform his function.

*NB* \_\_\_\_\_

*Broken tooth in a working breed is very different from multiple teeth missing.*

## EYES

Every judge has the obligation to check the eyes carefully not only in short-haired breeds; in long-haired and harsh-haired breeds the judge should move the hair over the eyes to make a check. The eyes should have the size and the colour according to the standard, without signs of cornea clouding, wall-eye (an eye with a whitish iris, a blue eye, fisheye, pearl eye if it's not specially mentioned in the standard as permitted), strabismus or any other visible problems. The dog should be excused from the ring in case that eyes are not open, symmetrical, healthy, and functional. Blind dogs or dogs with reduced vision are not allowed in the show ring. Most breeds have closely fitting eyelids, but even if the standard allows some dampness and eyelids somewhat pendulous, it should not produce the impression of a inflammation of the eyes and surrounding area. Eyes and eyelids should never look inflamed or irritated, and must be free of pathological secretion. Entropion and ectropion are serious health issues, and must be strictly penalized, up to disqualification in many standards. However, the judge is not a veterinary ophthalmologist in the ring and cannot give such a diagnosis. The judge can only describe visible problems and recommend the owner to take the dog to veterinarian specialists for a check-up.

## BODY

In general, in all breeds, the body shouldn't be too narrow, otherwise there is no space for vital organs and for the muscle attachment.

### Topline

Most breeds have a strong top line with correct proportions (2-1-1). However, in some breeds standards describe a specific top line, and it should be evaluated according to this description.

### Chest

is well developed since it gives the place to heart and lungs. If a ribcage is excessively narrow and / or short, they can't fulfil their function properly. Any departure is to be regarded as a fault in exact proportion to its degree.

## TAIL

It should have the length specified by the standard. A shortened tail (if it's not indicated in the standard) should be penalized. Too short tail is a major fault. The tail should be carefully examined for kinks. If the standard doesn't specify their presence, it is regarded as a severe / eliminating fault. Any fusion of vertebrae is also not tolerated for health reasons.

## LIMBS

The standard specifies the length of the limbs, bone structure, angulations and set of limbs. Any departure should be regarded as a fault in exact proportion to its degree. Often a flat and shallow chest leads to elbows turned in (towards each other), and it results in turning front feet out. Feet out can be the result of weak ligaments as well. Often over angulated hind quarters lead to a very narrow and even crossed set in movements. All these problems should be mentioned in the judge's critique and be penalized.

In some breeds we can see dogs with shortened front toes. It must be regarded as malformation, and such dog should be disqualified. Wrists knuckled over make it impossible to move springy, and should also lead to disqualification.

## GAIT / MOVEMENT

A judge must look for sound movements typical for the breed according to its anatomic construction. The gait that should be considered correct for each certain breed is specified in the standard, and the judge cannot apply the same requirements in all breeds. In general, tied movements of hind quarters, inability to move in a stable trot indicate on constructive problems and should be penalized by a lower mark. High back end in movements indicates on a straight set and short upper thigh, and should be penalized in exact proportion to its degree. This feature is inherited quite insistently.

Dog that is limping in the ring should be excused without evaluation.



## COAT & SKIN

Coat should look healthy and well-cared for. If the dog is in shedding, there should be the possibility to evaluate specific characteristics of the coat that are required by the standard.

Dogs in small short haired breeds sometimes do not have enough coat on the neck, on the lower part of the chest and on the area around the ears. This should be penalized.

Any trace of skin inflammation shouldn't be tolerated in the show ring, and must lead to "cannot be judged".

Excessive skin folds can be physical barriers either for vision or for movement, and can cause serious health problems due to inflammation which is recognized by reddish, humid and alopecic skin. Each mentioned condition leads to disqualification.

## OPERATED DOGS

Any kind of surgery or other veterinary procedures in order to modify the appearance of the dog should lead to disqualification. In general, the judge must remember that the main purpose of the show is to put up the best dogs as the base for a better results of the breeding program, and for the breed preservation. It means the ability to produce healthy offspring should be taken into account during the evaluation. However, dogs over eight years old shown in veteran class can be neutered or sterilized.

## PAY ATTENTION TO THE LAST POINTS OF THE FCI MODEL STANDARD:

### 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 its ability to perform its traditional work.

### DISQUALIFYING FAULTS

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

**NB** —————

- *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.*