

# **The Israel Canaan Dog**

**FCI Standard No. 273**

# *The Israel Canaan Dog*



*Bar Aharon*

# History and development



The Israel Canaan Dog is a unique breed, and therefore one that holds a position of great importance to cynology. The Canaan Dog is a primitive breed. As such it is very close in type and behavior to the original dog, the ancestor of all of our dogs of today.

It is one of the very few breeds existing today that is purely natural, a reflection of development based on the necessities of survival, rather than being the result of selective breeding to produce a dog that was suitable for a particular task or environment.



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**Rock carvings from approximately 2000 years ago showing Canaan type dogs hunting ibex.**

Central Sinai



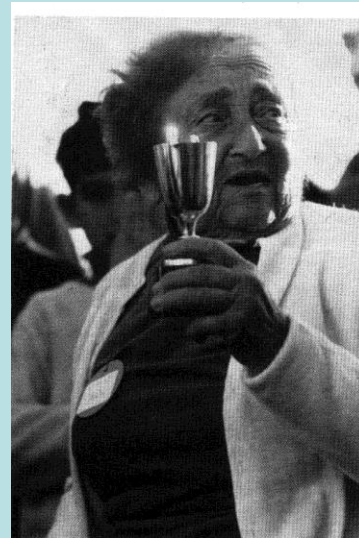
Har Harif



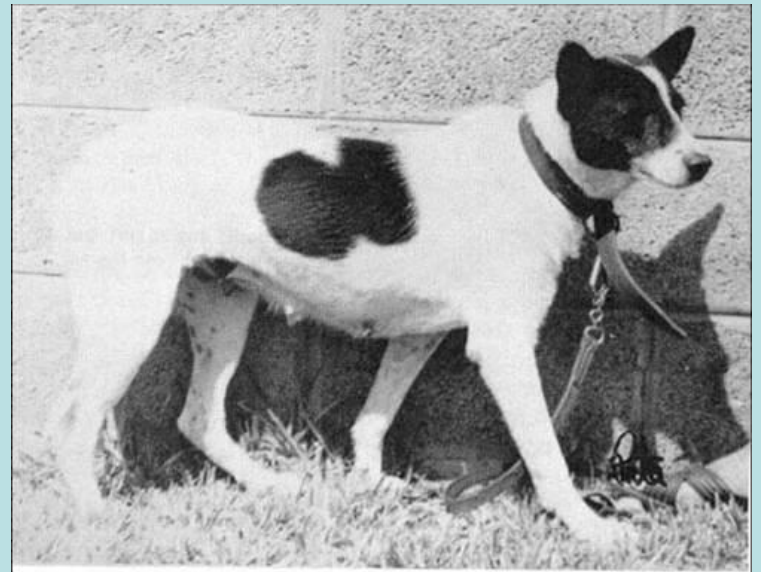
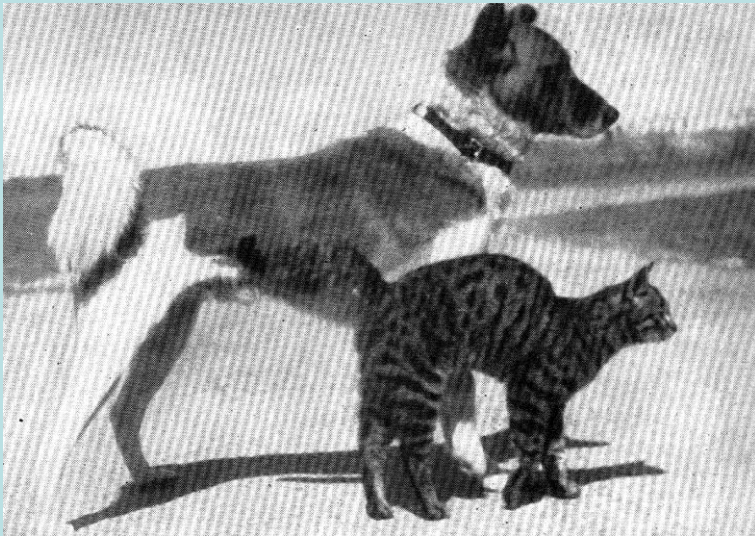
**Bedouin dogs in the Huleh valley  
in the 1930's**

- This breed existed solely as a free-living pariah until the end of the 1930s. A good number of animals were added to the gene pool from the pariah population through the 1980s. Nowadays, we rarely have the good fortune of being able to find a wild born dog that we can add to the breeding population, but when such a dog is found, after examinations, it is added to the stud book. The breed is, today, very much as it has been through its thousands of years of history, and it is important to preserve these characteristics, existing in so few modern breeds, for the future. We are looking for a survivor, a sound and hardy animal that is capable of surviving in the very harsh environment of its natural home.

The founder of the breed was Prof. Rudolphina Menzel who immigrated to Israel in 1934 from Austria. In her search for a dog that would function well as a working dog in the very difficult conditions of Israel, she identified the Canaan as a native breed. She started to collect free living and Bedouin dogs, discovered that they were indeed able to function very effectively, and she set up the first breeding program. She gave the breed its name, Canaan Dog, after the biblical Land of Canaan, and she wrote the first breed standard accepted by the Israel Kennel Club and the FCI.







**Some of Professor Rudolphina Menzel's early breeding stock**



**Free living and Bedouin Canaans from the early 1970's**

**FCI-Standard N°273 / 16. 06.**

**1999 / GB**

**CANAAN DOG**

**ORIGIN : Israel.**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION**  
**OF THE ORIGINAL VALID**  
**STANDARD** : 28.11.1985.

**UTILIZATION** : Watch- and security  
Dog.



- **CLASSIFICATION F.C.I.** : Group 5  
Spitz and primitive type.
- Section 6 Primitive type.
- Without working trial.

- **GENERAL APPEARANCE** : A medium sized, well balanced, strong and square dog resembling the wild dog type. Strong distinction between the sexes.





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**Free living dog**



**One of the last dogs bred by Prof.Menzel**



**Two well known multi champions**



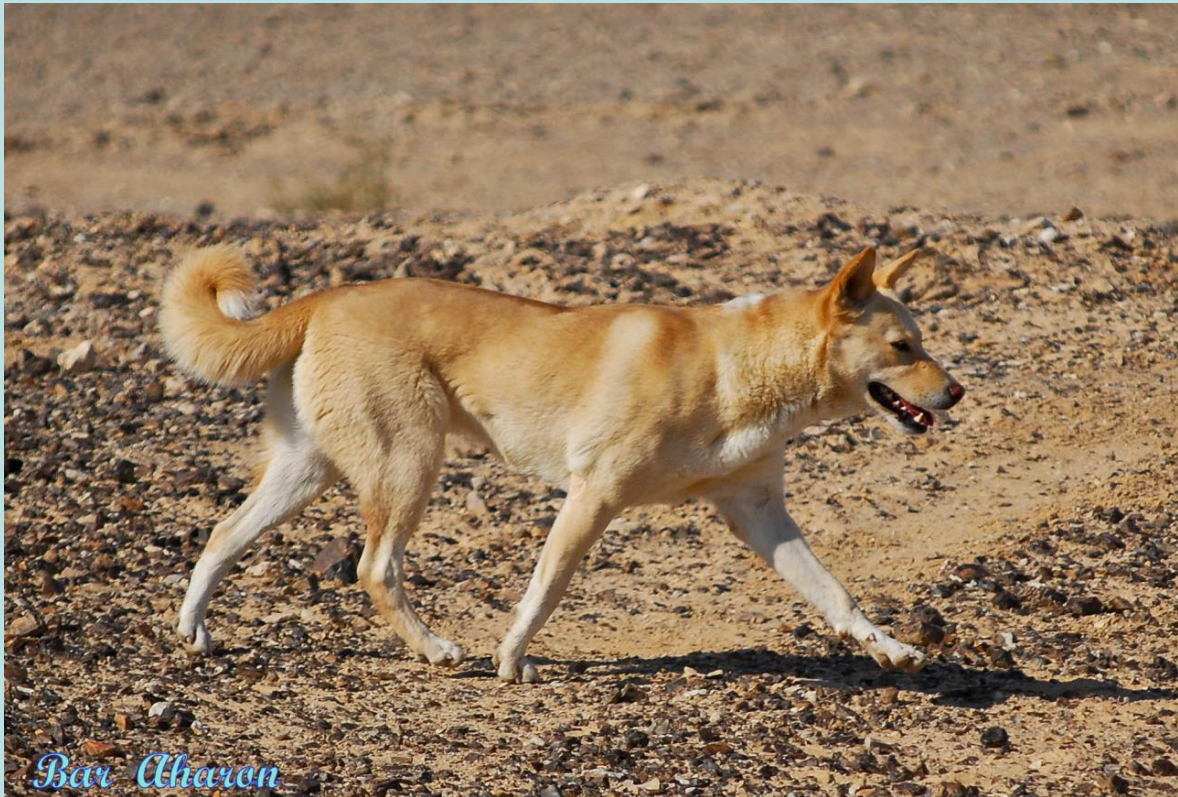


**Strong distinction between sexes**

*The overall first impression we should get of the Canaan Dog is of a dog that is totally natural and as close as possible to the original ancestor of our modern dogs.*



*It is a medium sized, medium boned, square, compact, and very well balanced dog, agile and muscular, that looks as if it could cover ground all day without tiring.*



***Nothing about the Canaan should be exaggerated; everything must be in balance and harmony and give the appearance of pure functionality.***



- **BEHAVIOUR /TEMPERAMENT** : Alert, quick to react, distrustful of strangers, strongly defensive but not naturally aggressive. Vigilant not only against man but other animals as well. Extraordinarily devoted and amenable to training.



- **The Canaan is not a dog that is outgoing and friendly to everyone. He has survived because of his highly developed suspiciousness and his ability to react instantly to anything that may be considered danger. This often results in the Canaan being a reluctant show dog – he does not like being outside of his own territory, especially in places with large numbers of other dogs and strange people, and he doesn't care to be handled by strangers. Intelligent and trainable, he will learn to put up with this, but he doesn't usually enjoy it. The may result in him being reluctant to put his tail up in the show ring, and to him at times backing away when approached by a strange judge. If given a moment to look over the situation, and to take a look at the human approaching him, the well socialized and well trained Canaan will settle and behave with dignity, honoring his human master with his agreement to put up with all of this nonsense if his master really wants him to. It is important for the judge to understand that this type of behavior is not indicative of a shy dog or a dog of bad character, but is rather the true nature of the Canaan.**



The Cane Corso is not an aggressive dog by nature and certainly not when he is outside of his own territory. He should never show any signs of aggression to humans that approach him in the ring in a normal manner, and should be willing to allow himself to be touched. He also should never display uncontrolled aggressiveness to other dogs. This type of behavior is definitely undesirable.

- **HEAD** : Well proportioned, blunt wedge shape of medium length, appearing broader due to low set ears.





*The head shape of the Canaan is very typical of the pariah type and is also very similar to the head shape of many of the Spitz breeds that are considered to be close to the original type of dog.*



**Dingo**



**Canaan Dog**

*From the front, the head is a perfect blunt wedge shape, fairly broad between the ears and tapering evenly to the end of the full muzzle. There should be no flaring at the cheeks or narrowing at the muzzle, the tapering should be continuous and the end of the muzzle should be blunt and rounded, not sharp and pointed. There should be no appearance of elongation.*



*The width of the head between the ears, the length of the skull from occiput to stop, and the length of the muzzle from the stop to the end of the nose are approximately equal.*





**Good male head**



**Head too heavy and cheeky**



**Overly refined**

*There should be no appearance of elongation. The standard does not call for an elongated wedge, but for a blunt medium length wedge shape. One of the most common head faults is an overly elongated head, caused by too little width between the ears and too much length of skull and muzzle often resulting in snipiness in muzzle or weak underjaw.*

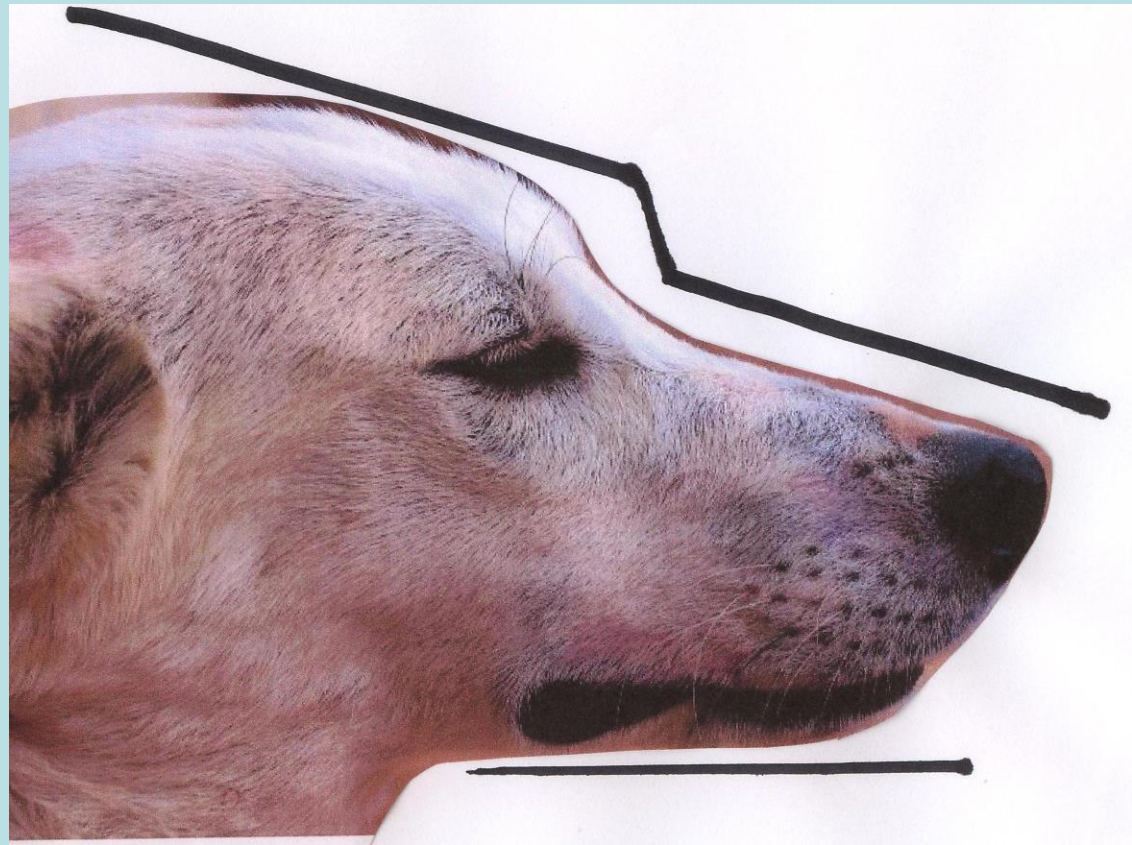


*Too elongated*

- CRANIAL REGION :
- Skull : Somewhat flattened. Some width allowed in powerful male heads.
- Stop : Shallow but defined.



*From the side, the head consists of two parallel lines of skull and top line of muzzle, divided by an apparent but not exaggerated stop. The stop should be a harmonious part of the head, and not too deep or square. The topskull is not totally flat, but slightly rounded, although it is so slight as not to be very apparent without touching the skull and feeling the structure.*







**Lacking stop**

- FACIAL REGION :
- Nose : Black.
- Muzzle : Sturdy, of moderate length and breadth.
- Lips : Tight.
- Jaws / Teeth : Jaws should be strong. Full dentition with scissor or level bite.

- The line of the underjaw is approximately parallel to the top line of the muzzle. The jaw must be full and powerful, never receding or weak. This is a dog that must be capable of hunting for himself and of defending himself and his herds from predators, and must appear powerful enough to do so.



*The head must always be in proportion to the body, not too heavy or too fine. There should be a clear difference between the head of a dog and a bitch. A dog's head is powerful and masculine, and a bitch's head is more feminine and refined, though it should not appear weak or lacking in strength.*



*The standard allows only the black-pigmented nose. This is a survival factor for an animal that spends a good portion of its life exposed to the strong desert sun.*

*There is, however, a factor that (for lack of better terminology) has been called the “snow nose” (as it is referred to in northern breeds). The nose leather of these dogs is black in the summer when the sunlight is strongest, but may fade to a dusty or pinkish shade in the winter when the sun is not as strong, or when the dog is kept out of the sun. This nose color is acceptable, as it does provide the proper protection from the sun, but it is not desirable. Highest preference is to a nose that is permanently black.*

*Liver, pink, or parti-colored nose pigmentation is unacceptable.*



**Snow nose**



**Flesh colored nose - unacceptable**

- The plier or level bite, which was the preferred bite in the original standard of the breed, is also a bite commonly found in wild canines such as wolves, jackals and foxes. This sort of bite is efficient for self-grooming, for removing thorns and stickers from the coat, for freeing oneself from parasites, and so on. However, over the years that the Canaan has been selectively bred for the show ring, selection has been made for the bite more commonly seen in the show ring, the scissors bite. As this bite does not really interfere with functionality, it is totally acceptable. Both scissors and level bites should be equally acceptable.
- Missing teeth is not a common problem in the Canaan, although it is not very rare for one or two premolars to be missing, or in an older dog, to be worn down to the point where they can not be seen or felt. One or two missing premolars should not be seriously penalized; this will not interfere with the effectiveness of the bite. However, a number of missing teeth is definitely undesirable and should be penalized.
- Overshot or undershot bites are definitely not permissible, as well as other bite abnormalities.

- Eyes : Dark brown, slightly slanted, almond-shaped. Dark rims essential.



- The Cane Corso has what has been called a “sloped eyed” Oriental look, created by the very dark almond shaped slightly slanting eyes emphasized by the black “eye liner” around them. The result is an alert, intelligent, and at the same time sweet expression which is expressive of the character of the breed.
- Eyes that are too light will have a hard and staring expression. The criterion for judging the correctness of the eye color should be the effect it has on the expression as a whole.
- Round eyes result in an expression that lacks the intelligent and alert look that are so expressive of the breed’s character. Small or piggy eyes create a “mean” expression.





**Light eyes spoil the expression**

- Ears : Erect, relatively short and broad, slightly rounded at the tip and set low.

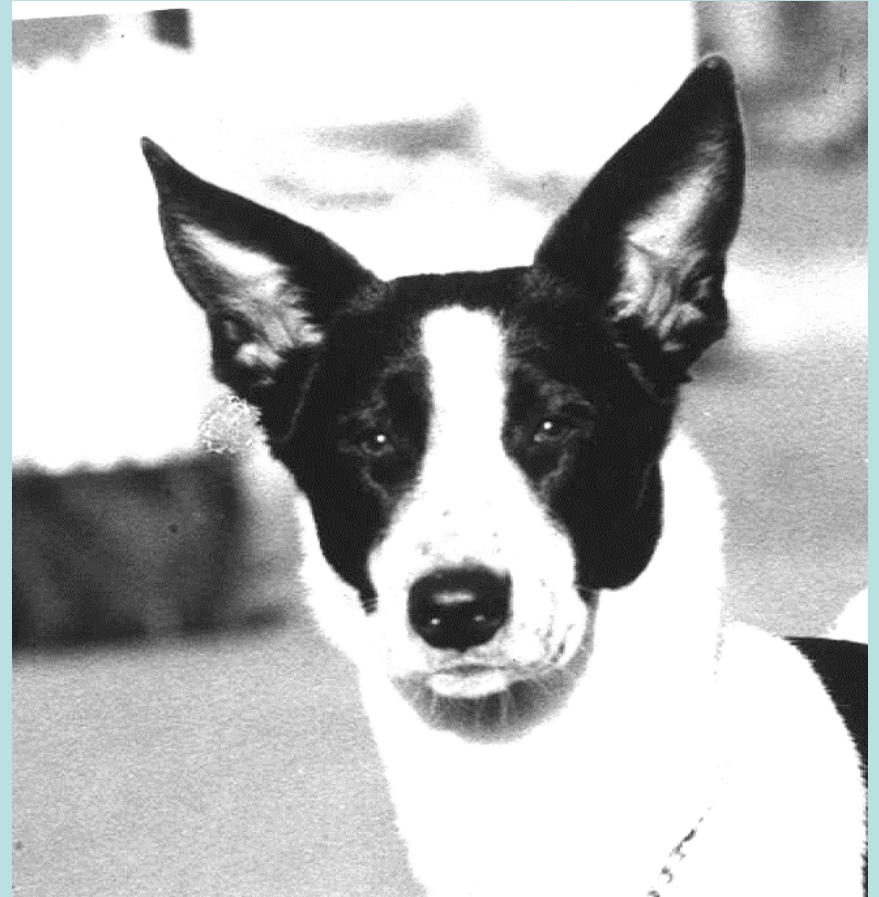




**Too wide**



**Too high set**



**Large weak ears**

- The Canaan's ears, as are those of all the pariah dogs, and of all the wild canines as well, must be pricked. The prick ear is the most effective at catching sounds, and the great mobility of the ear is a highly effective tool for identifying the direction from which the sound comes. This characteristic is extremely important as a survival factor.
- The ears of the Canaan are not set high on the skull, they are set a bit wider on the skull, the inside edge of the ear being approximately even with the inside corner of the eye but, although strongly pricked, they are oblique in carriage.
- The Canaan ear is triangular with the height being a bit longer than the width, and they are slightly rounded at the tips. The ear should be in proportion to the head, and therefore should not be too large or too long.
- Any form of drop or button ear, or semi-prick ears, is totally unacceptable.

- **NECK** : Muscular, of medium length.

The neck must be in proportion to the rest of the dog. It should be of sufficient length to give the dog an athletic, well balanced and elegant appearance, but should not be as long as the neck of a sight hound, for instance. There should never be an impression of heaviness or stockiness, nor of weediness and insufficient strength. The neck must be powerful and well muscled. Canaans, especially males, often have very thick protective hair on the neck, which may make it appear more massive than it actually is. Even so, the neck should never appear too heavy.

- **BODY** : Square.
- **Withers** : Well developed.
- **Back** : Level.
- **Loins** : Muscular.
- **Chest** : Deep and of moderate breadth. Ribs well sprung.
- **Belly** : Well tucked up.



- **LIMBS** : Moderate angulations. Balance is essential.
- **FOREQUARTERS** : Forelegs perfectly straight.
- **Shoulders** : Oblique and muscular.
- **Elbows** : Close to the body.



- HINDQUARTERS : Powerful.
- Thighs : Strong, lightly feathered at the rearside.
- Stifles : Well bent.
- Hocks : Well let down.



***Dogs of excellent shape and construction***



**Examples of incorrect body shape and construction**



**Good parallel rear**



**Too wide in front**



**Too refined**

- **FEET : Strong, round and cat-like with hard pads.**



Strong feet are necessary for the rough terrain





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- **TAIL** : Set high, thick brush carried curled over the back.





**Undesirable tail carriage**

- **GAIT/MOVEMENT** : Quick, light and energetic trot. Should demonstrate marked agility and stamina. Correct movement is essential.





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**Incorrect  
movement**





- **COAT**
- HAIR : Outer coat dense, harsh and straight, of short to medium length. Undercoat close and profuse.

- COLOUR : Sand to red-brown, white, black, or spotted, with or without mask. If masked, mask must be symmetrical. Black mask permitted on all colours. White markings are permitted on all colours : « Boston Terrier » patterns are common. Grey, brindle, black-and-tan, or tricolour are unacceptable. Desert colours-sand, gold, red, cream- are most typical of the breed.



**Excellent tail set and carriage, true red color, correct coat**







**Black and tan - unacceptable**



**Black shading over lighter body color - undesirable**



**Liver color - unacceptable, sickle tail**



**Undesirable color pattern**





**Excellent coat type and texture**



**Coat too long and soft**

- **SIZE AND WEIGHT :**
- Size : Height at withers : 50-60 cm.
- Males can be considerably larger than females.
- Weight : 18-25 kg.

- **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.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.
- **N.B.** : Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

# Essential breed features

- Square
- Well balanced
- Moderate wedge shaped head
- Erect ears
- Tail carried over the back
- Double coat
- Strong tight feet
- Free and powerful movement

# Serious faults

- Any form of ear that is not completely erect
- No undercoat, coat too long or soft
- Elongated body
- Soft topline
- Anything other than round, tight foot with strong pads
- Incorrect bite
- Incorrect colors – liver, black and tan, lack of pigment
- Cow hocks
- Incorrect movement



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