

The Kuvasz

Interpretations and Comments on the Standard
A Guide for AKC Judges

INTRODUCTION

The current American Kennel Club standard on the Kuvasz was adopted by the parent club on July 9, 1974, re-formatted on March 28, 1991 and revised August 30, 1999. Judges of any breed are required by the American Kennel Club to make their selections based on how closely the exhibit conforms to its current standard. Standards are subject to interpretation. The following information is being provided by the Kuvasz Club of America to facilitate your understanding of the Kuvasz. Knowledge is an ongoing process and this is by no means the final word. We hope that you will continue to learn about our wonderful breed throughout your judging career.

All terminology in the Kuvasz standard and this commentary is as defined in Harold R. Spira's *CANINE TERMINOLOGY*, Howell Book House Inc., N.Y., N.Y., 1982.

Throughout this commentary the standard is printed in bold letters and the interpretation is printed in *italics*.

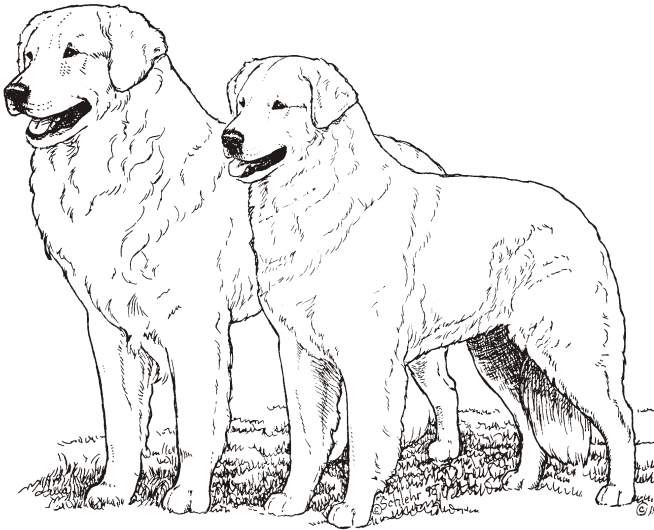
OVERVIEW

Looking at the standard as a whole, there are several areas that stand out and should be considered with importance when judging the Kuvasz. Descriptions of the head or parts of the head are quite detailed in the standard; movement descriptions not only in the gait section but throughout the standard are emphasized; descriptions of the coat need careful review; and descriptions of the temperament are important in the overall impression of the dog. The overall dog should be evaluated, both standing and moving, keeping the dog's working heritage in mind. Soundness of body and mind, proper size and proportion, correct coat texture and color, confident disposition without inappropriate aggression or shyness, and firm slimness of body in well-exercised condition should prevail. All of these areas together define this breed and should be weighed heavily and proportionally when judging. A judge is often presented with a tremendous diversity and variety in appearance in the ring. Judges should strive to select the best representative of the breed, according to the AKC standard, being careful not to penalize or reward the dogs in the minority on any given day. The dog must be unmistakably a Kuvasz.

OFFICIAL STANDARD FOR THE KUVASZ

GENERAL APPEARANCE

A working dog of larger size, sturdily built, well balanced, neither lanky nor cobby. White in color with no markings. Medium boned, well muscled, without the slightest hint of bulkiness or lethargy. Impresses the eye with strength and activity combined with light-footedness; moves freely on strong legs. The following description is that of the ideal Kuvasz. Any deviation must be penalized to the extent of the deviation.

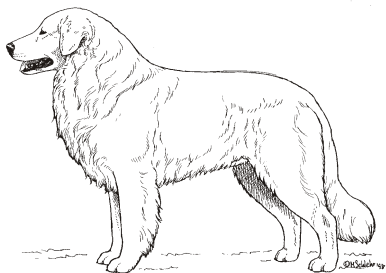


Standing Dog & Bitch, Ideal. $\frac{3}{4}$ View

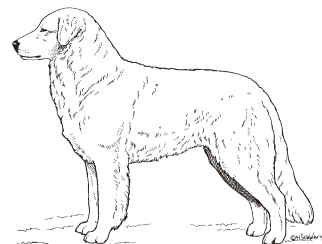
*D*ogs and bitches are easily distinguished from one another. Dogs are larger, more heavily built with more muscle mass and bone. The dog head is decidedly more masculine with the mane and ruff more pronounced. Bitches are decidedly more feminine. Always bear in mind that both the dog and bitch are working dogs. Nevertheless, dogs should not be allowed to become too coarse or lethargic, nor bitches too refined to perform their task of protecting their charges. There should be no difference between the working dog and the show dog.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

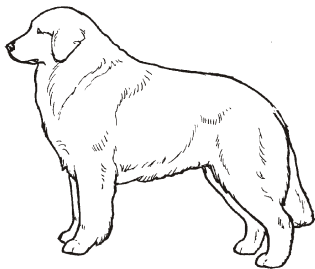
Height measured at the withers: Dogs, 28 to 30 inches, Bitches, 26 to 28 inches. Disqualifications: Dogs smaller than 26 inches. Bitches smaller than 24 inches. Weight: Dogs approximately 100 to 115 pounds, bitches approximately 70 to 90 pounds. Trunk and limbs form a horizontal rectangle slightly deviated from the square. Bone in proportion to size of body. Medium, hard. Never heavy or coarse. Any tendency to weakness or lack of substance is a decided fault.



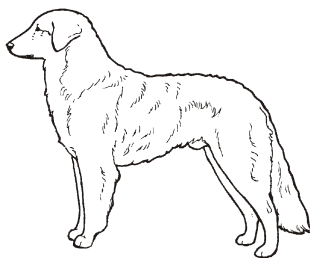
Standing Dog Ideal, Profile



Standing Bitch Ideal, Profile



Too Coarse



Too Refined

Size

Size parameters are defined by the standard. Ideal heights for the male Kuvasz range from 28 to 30 inches and for bitches 26 to 28 inches. The standard does not comment on Kuvasz that are above the ideal range but does have disqualification heights that are 2 inches below the lower end of the desired height ranges. When judging dogs that fall above or below the ideal height guidelines, one must take into consideration the other factors of the dog's quality when weighing this difference in height. Below 26 inches for dogs and below 24 inches for bitches are mandatory disqualification.

Proportion

When standing back and viewing the Kuvasz in profile, one should be impressed with a large white dog of balance and correct proportion. This horizontal rectangle slightly deviated from the square is a critical proportion when judging this breed. The length of body is approximately 5-10% longer than its height at the withers. A Kuvasz that is too short legged or too long bodied loses its balanced look. The same is true of a Kuvasz that is too square due to shortness of body or too much length of leg. Finding that rectangular proportion is a key when viewing several exhibits in a class. Realize that this proportion is one of perception and can vary depending on the amount of coat the dog is carrying and/or the background or surroundings of the ring.

Substance

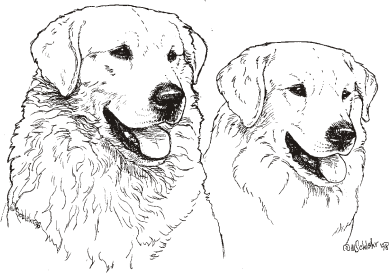
The term "substance" refers to the amount of bone (specifically leg bone) and muscle mass. Moderation is a good term with respect to Kuvasz substance. Too much substance or too little are equally undesirable in relation to a dog's overall balance. This moderate bone is covered by tightly fitting skin giving the Kuvasz a dry, hard appearance.

HEAD

Proportions are of great importance as the head is considered to be the most beautiful part of the Kuvasz. Length of head measured from tip of nose to occiput is slightly less than half the height of the dog at the withers. Width is half the length of the head. Eyes almond-shaped, set well apart, somewhat slanted. In profile, the eyes are set slightly below the plane of the muzzle. Lids tight, haws should not show. Dark brown, the darker the better. Ears V-shaped, tip is slightly rounded. Rather thick, they are well set back between the level of the eye and the top of the head. When pulled forward the tip of the ear should cover the eye. Looking at the dog face to face, the widest part of the ear is about level to the eye. The inner edge of the ear lies close to the cheek, the outer edge slightly away from the head forming a V. In the relaxed position, the ears should hold their set and not cast backward. The ears should not protrude above the head. The skull is elongated but not pointed. The stop is defined, never abrupt, raising the forehead gently above the plane of the muzzle. The longitudinal midline of the

forehead is pronounced, widening as it slopes to the muzzle. Cheeks flat, bony arches above the eye. The skin is dry. Muzzle: Length in proportion to the length of the head, top straight, not pointed, underjaw well developed. Inside of the mouth preferably black. Nose large, black nostrils well opened. Lips black, closely covering the teeth. The upper lip tight and not pendulous. Bite: dentition full, scissor bite preferred. Level bite acceptable.

DISQUALIFICATIONS: overshot bite; undershot bite.



Head study, Dog & Bitch
Nearly Full Face



Head study, Dog & Bitch
Profile



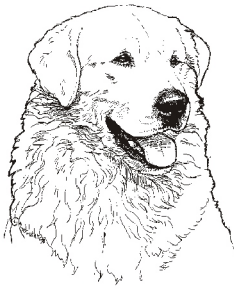
Head
in Top View

The head should be judged in three planes: full face, profile and from above. From above the skull is wedge shaped and elongated with proportions described above. From the side the stop is defined but graceful. Transitions from one area to another are smooth and not abrupt, creating a beautiful head of proportion and symmetry.



Three Faulty Head Profiles

Correct ears and eyes create an expression that is uniquely Kuvasz. Dark eyes that are almond shaped, set obliquely and well apart with outer corners slanted slightly upward give the Kuvasz an exotic expression. Common eye faults include round or protruding eyes, drooping or loose eyelids or rims, eyes which slant downward at the outer corners, light or yellow eyes and visible haws. The ears must have a fold and flare out at the base. The ear just covers the eye when pulled forward. Ears that are too long or short, are incorrect, as are ears that are set too high or low. Ears that lie flat against the head, have thin leather, or are cast backward, create a non-typical expression. Proper ears that fold and fan forward to frame the face create a harmonious and balanced look that is most desirable. Ears can and should move depending on the dog's mood and level of interest.



Ears Good, Eyes Good



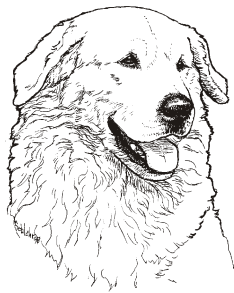
Eyes Too Slanted



Eyes Too Round



Ears Too Large



Ears Folded Incorrectly

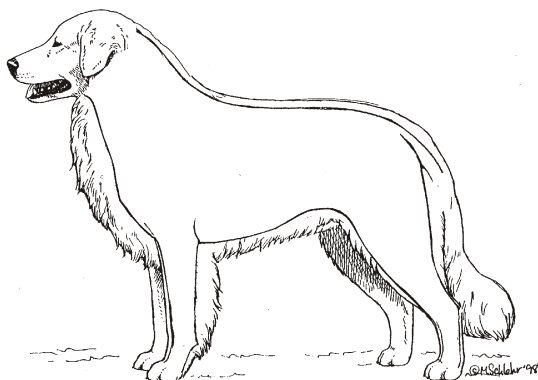


Ears Cast Back

The muzzle is a continuation of the skull and is approximately 45% of the total head length. The skin on the entire head is dry. Droopy flews, white haws, light eyes, round eyes, poor ears, exaggerated or imperceptible stop all ruin proper expression and should be penalized.

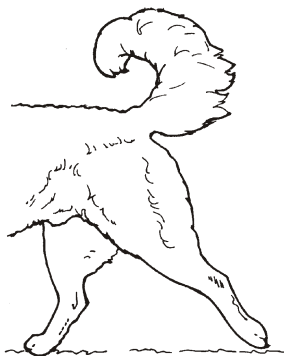
NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

Neck muscular without dewlap, medium length, arched at the crest. Back is of medium length, straight, firm and quite broad. The loin is short, muscular and tight. The croup is well muscled, slightly sloping. Forechest is well developed. When viewed from the side, the forechest protrudes slightly in front of the shoulders. Chest deep with long, well-sprung ribs reaching almost to the elbows. The brisket is deep, well developed and runs parallel to the ground. The stomach is well tucked up. Tail carried low, natural length reaching at least to the hocks. In repose it hangs down resting on the body, the end but slightly lifted. In a state of excitement, the tail may be elevated to the level of the loin, the tip slightly curved up. Ideally, there should not be much difference in the carriage of the tail in state of excitement or in repose.

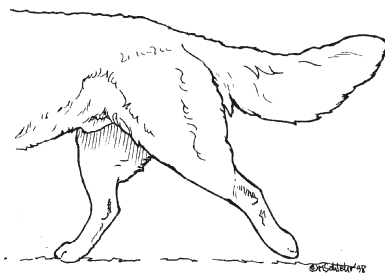


Standing Dog Profile
Outline of Body Under Coat

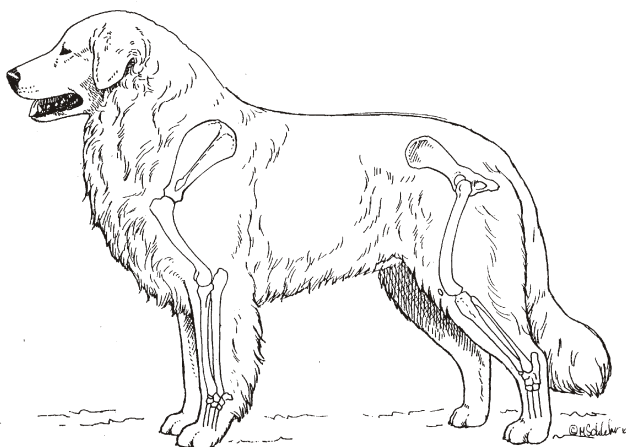
When evaluating these areas, one should be impressed by the muscular, hard nature of the Kuvasz. The back is broad with well sprung ribs, allowing the Kuvasz the heart and stamina it requires. The topline of the Kuvasz should present a smooth, continuous line from neck to croup. The neck, arched at the crest, must be set smoothly into the high, well muscled withers which flow into the medium length, firm, straight back, short loin, and slightly sloping croup. The tail should be set on low as an extension of the croup to complete the graceful outline. Any tail set or carriage other than that described in the standard should be penalized based on the extent of the problem. The true outline of the body is often obscured by coat growth patterns; therefore, manual examination of the Kuvasz structure is imperative.



Incorrect Tail Carriage
While Trotting



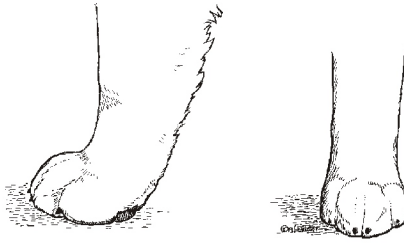
Correct Tail Carriage
While Trotting



Standing Dog Profile, Skeletal of Fore- and Hindquarters

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders muscular and long. Topline - withers are higher than back. The scapula and humerus form a right angle, are long and of equal length. Elbows neither in nor out. Legs are medium boned, straight and well muscled. The joints are dry, hard. Dewclaws on the forelegs should not be removed. Feet well padded. Pads resilient, black. Feet are closed tight, forming round “cat feet.” Some hair between the toes, the less the better. Dark nails are preferred.



Correct Front Foot. Side & Front Views

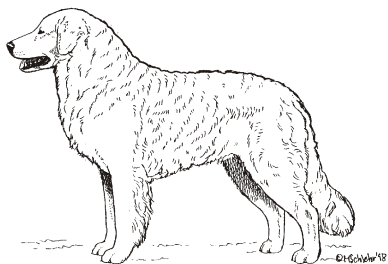
HINDQUARTERS

The portion behind the hip joint is moderately long, producing wide, long and strong muscles of the upper thigh. The femur is long, creating well-bent stifles. Lower thigh is long, dry, well muscled. Metatarsus is short, broad and of great strength. Dewclaws, if any, are removed. Feet as in front, except the rear paws are somewhat longer.

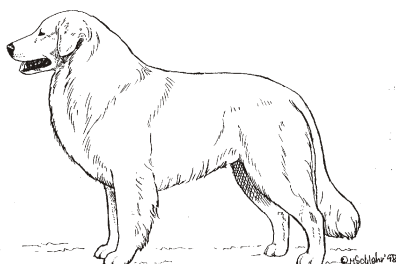
The forequarters and hindquarters simply exemplify the balance and power of the Kuvasz. This is a dog that is built to trot long distances tirelessly, while also having the ability to react quickly and powerfully in response to a threat. When judging the Kuvasz one must always keep the dog's function in mind. The standard describes the balanced Kuvasz with the scapula and humerus forming a right angle. The Kuvasz standard's discussion of right angles alludes to a well-angulated dog. Lack of sufficient angulation as well as over angulation should be penalized.

COAT

The Kuvasz has a double coat, formed by guard hair and fine undercoat. The texture of the coat is medium coarse. The coat ranges from quite wavy to straight. Distribution follows a definite pattern over the body regardless of coat type. The head, muzzle, ears and paws are covered with short, smooth hair. The neck has a mane that extends to and covers the chest. Coat on the front of the forelegs up to the elbows and the hind legs below the thighs is short and smooth. The backs of the forelegs are feathered to the pastern with hair 2 to 3 inches long. The body and sides of the thighs are covered with a medium length coat. The back of the thighs and the entire tail are covered with hair 4 to 6 inches long. It is natural for the Kuvasz to lose most of the long coat during hot weather. Full luxuriant coat comes in seasonally, depending on climate. Summer coat should not be penalized.



Acceptable Wavy Coat



Acceptable Straighter Coat

Whether wavy or straight the coat must have two features. It must be a double coat made up of a fine undercoat and longer guard hairs of a medium coarse texture. The coat will feel somewhat coarse to the touch especially on the dog's back. Second, it must have the correct distribution. Short, smooth facial and leg hair transitions to the medium length body hair and then to longer mane, tail and leg furnishings. Lack of leg furnishings (on a mature animal) or improper distribution should be penalized. Also, one must realize that this is a working dog. An excessively long coat with improper distribution and texture should also be penalized. The coat should be presented in a clean and natural manner. Flat, silky or felt-like guard hair is incorrect. Full luxuriant coat develops with maturity and is shed seasonally. Summer coat or puppy coat should not be penalized, and abundance of coat should not be given priority over proper coat texture or over the animal's general quality.

COLOR

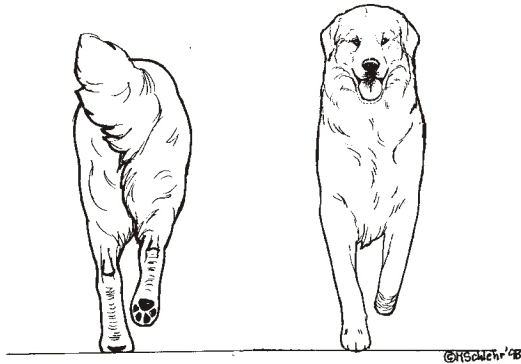
White. The skin is heavily pigmented. The more slate gray or black pigmentation the better.

Ideally, the Kuvasz is an all dark skinned dog with a white coat. A dog that has dark skin, black nails, dark eyes, black lips, mouth and eye rims is highly desirable. Lack of pigmentation, pink spots or reddish tones on lips, nose, muzzle or eye rims should be penalized. Judges should keep in mind that there are many shades of white, and that lighting, coat texture, and environmental factors (such as stress, soil type, staining, and coat care/parasite control products) can alter the hues of coat color. Judges should part the coat to help determine the true color near the roots. Judges should also guard against using the apparent whiteness of this working breed as a more important criteria than structure, soundness, or temperament.

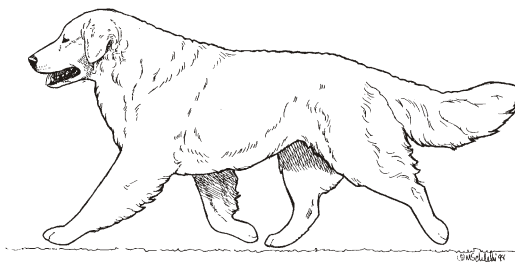
GAIT

Easy, free, and elastic. Feet travel close to the ground. Hind legs reach far under, meeting or even passing the imprints of the front legs. Moving toward an observer, the front legs do not travel parallel to each other, but rather close together at the ground. When viewed from the rear, the hind legs (from the hip joint down) also move close at the ground. As speed increases, the legs gradually angle more inward until the pads are almost single-tracking. Unless excited, the head is carried low at the level of the shoulders. Desired movement cannot be maintained without sufficient angulation and firm slimness of body.

The Kuvasz moves through the full range of gaits from walking to galloping, but the trot is its most natural gait. This is a working dog that is built to travel with untiring efficiency. The Kuvasz should be gaited on a loose lead. Proper movement is efficient with head and tail held relatively low. There should be no wasted motion, neither flamboyant prancing nor heavy, lumbering gait. There should be no excessive looseness of structure or skin.



Dog Trotting, Front & Rear Views, Good Gait



Dog Trotting, Side View, Good Gait

TEMPERAMENT

A spirited dog of keen intelligence, determination, courage and curiosity. Very sensitive to praise and blame. Primarily a one family dog. Devoted, gentle and patient without being overly demonstrative. Always ready to protect loved ones even to the point of self-sacrifice. Extremely strong instinct to protect children. Polite to accepted strangers, but rather suspicious and very discriminating in making new friends. Unexcelled guard, possessing ability to act on his own initiative at just the right moment without instruction. Bold courageous and fearless. Untiring ability to work and cover rough terrain for long periods of time. Has good scent and has been used to hunt game.

The words intelligent, determined, courageous, devoted and untiring are worn as a proud mantle by the Kuvasz and describe his very being. One should realize that this breed is slow maturing, and the breed's special characteristics may not fully develop until 2 or 3 years of age. Judges should appreciate the importance of the Kuvasz's cautious and reserved nature, to its role as an independent guardian. While such caution and reserve are acceptable in the ring, shyness and aggression are not. Judges should respect the suspicious nature of this breed, and make the judging as non-threatening as possible for the dog. This involves using a businesslike approach, confident body language, and smooth movements. Use casual, friendly eye contact rather than an intense stare. One should avoid wearing obtrusive or unusual clothing which makes odd or distracting motions or sounds, and heavy perfumes or colognes.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

Overshot bite. Undershot bite. Dogs smaller than 26 inches. Bitches smaller than 24 inches.

**APPROVED JULY 9, 1974.
REFORMATTED MARCH 26, 1991.
REVISED AUGUST 30, 1999.**

SYNOPSIS

When judging the Kuvasz, we can make the following recommendation: First, stand back and observe a class, noting which dogs have the correct proportions and balance. Evaluate head and expression remembering that eyes and ears are key factors. Evaluate coat texture and distribution, bearing in mind that straight and wavy are equally correct. Evaluate movement, looking for tireless, light-footed balance and ground covering efficiency. Once you have evaluated these major areas, then make final placements on the details like size, pigment (skin and nails), tail set, foot shape, etc. It is the details that make up the whole, but never let the details get in the way of the overall best dog. The Kuvasz breed has significant variation within the breed. A judge should strive to select the best representative of the breed, basing that decision on the virtue of the exhibit when compared to a mental ideal arising from the American Kennel Club breed standard. The overall dog should be evaluated keeping the dog's working heritage in mind. Soundness of body and mind, proper size and proportion, correct coat texture and color, proper disposition and firm slimness of body in well exercised condition should prevail. The dog must be unmistakably a Kuvasz.

NOTES



KCA Judges' Education Council
2005

Illustrations by Marcia Schlehr 1998
www.kuvasz.com