

# The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc.

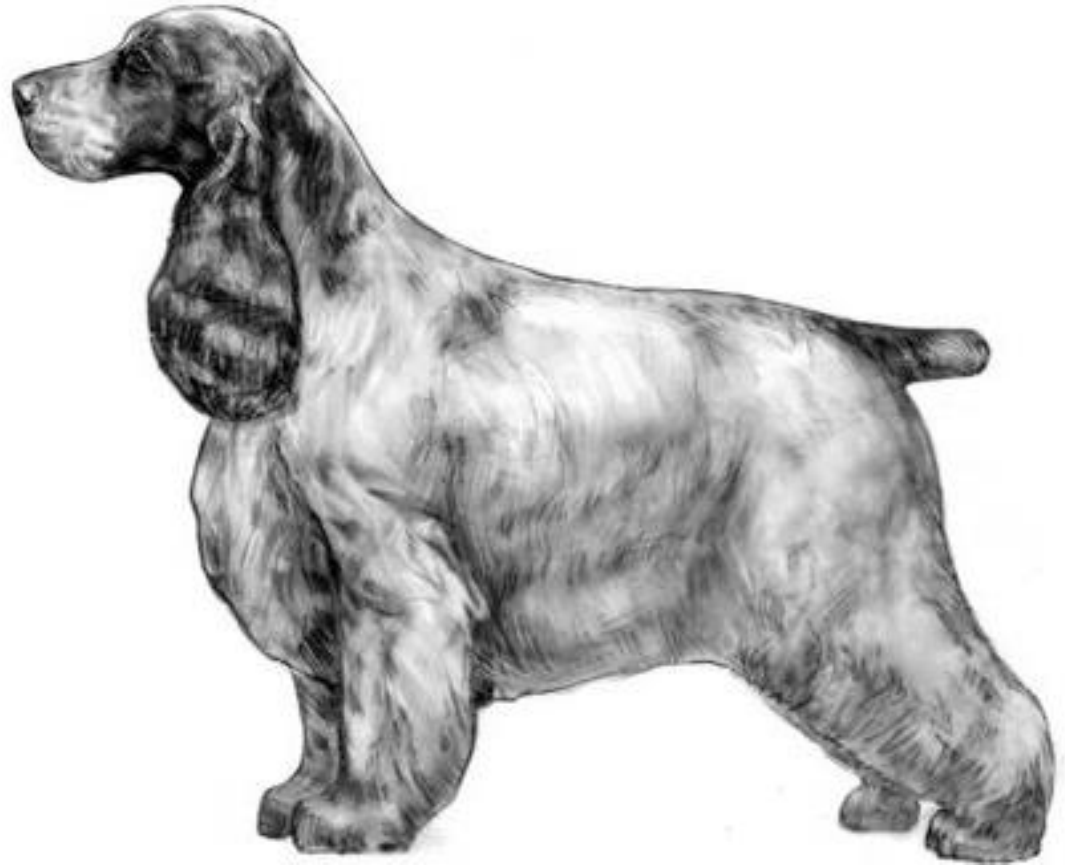
## Illustrated Breed Standard



Illustrations by Patricia Janzen

Elaborations by the ECSCA Breed Education Committee

# General Appearance



## *Standard: General Appearance*

*The English Cocker Spaniel is an active, merry sporting dog, standing well up at the withers and compactly built. He is alive with energy; his gait is powerful and frictionless, capable both of covering ground effortlessly and penetrating dense cover to flush and retrieve game. His enthusiasm in the field and the incessant action of his tail while at work indicate how much he enjoys the hunting for which he was bred. His head is especially characteristic. He is, above all, a dog of balance, both standing and moving, without exaggeration in any part, the whole worth more than the sum of its parts.*

Bred in England originally to hunt woodcock, hence the name, he is perfectly capable of working larger game such as pheasant & hare. The English Cocker is a big dog in a small package - strong for his size, compact, and very active in the field. These qualities make him an ideal dog for hunting in rough terrain and dense cover, often taller than the dog. To perform efficiently, he is notably compact and round in build, never rangy and narrow. He is a dog of power rather than speed. The emphasis placed on head properties set him apart from other spaniels and is an important component of the dog's job. The English Cocker is, above all, a dog of moderation rather than extremes; exaggeration of any characteristic will upset the balance of a compact, one-piece dog.

**\*Judges should note that while looking at the breed on the line, your eye should not be drawn to any one specific feature. This is a well-knit, one-piece dog, balanced and moderate throughout and free from exaggeration of any kind. He is rounded all over, nether angular nor narrow in any part.**

# Size, Proportion and Substance

## **Standard**

### **Proportion:**

***Compactly built and short-coupled, with height at withers slightly greater than the distance from withers to set-on of tail.***

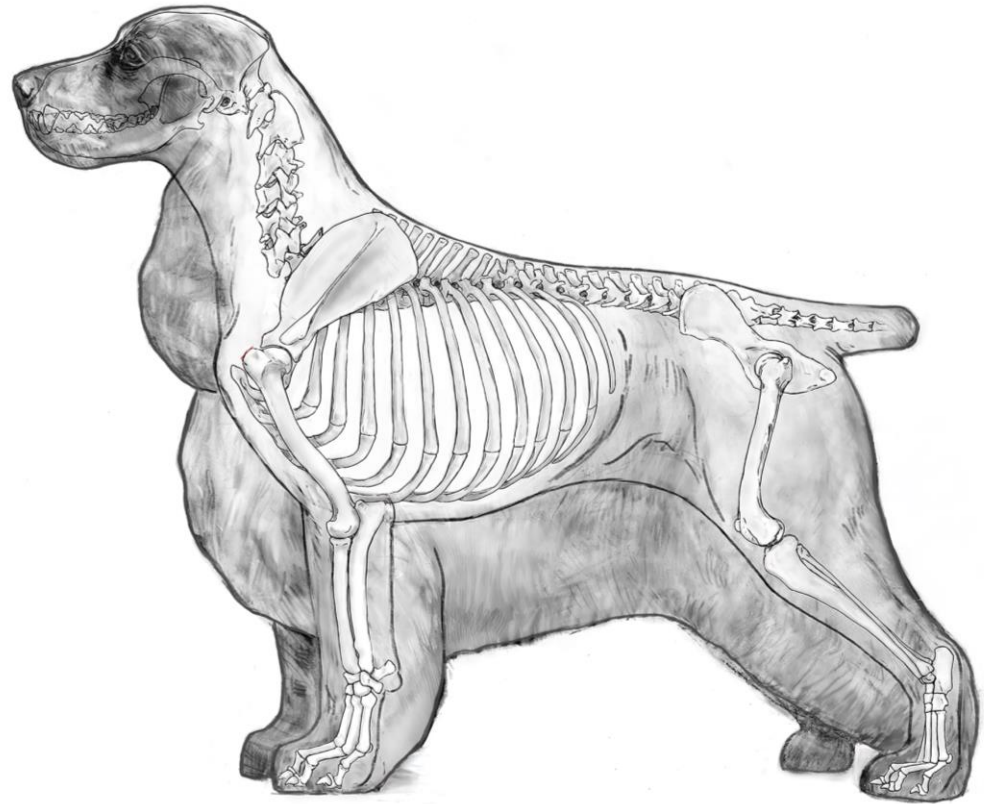
This is a short-backed, compact, and cobby breed. From the points of measurement, he is slightly taller than long. Any length added to make the overall outline slightly off square, should come only from the required forechest and rounded, muscular buttocks behind the tailset. As a breed of moderation and balance, the English Cocker is neither leggy nor low on leg, the elbow being midpoint between the withers and the ground.

## **Standard**

### **Substance:**

***The English Cocker is a solidly built dog with as much bone and substance as is possible without becoming cloddy or coarse.***

The English Cocker must be powerfully and broadly built to accomplish his job. He is a lot of dog in the space he occupies. A compact, one-piece dog, he should possess as much substance and bone as possible while still being athletic. There should be no question that the dog has the required strength, frame, and muscling to work in dense cover carrying relatively heavy game.



## **Standard**

### **Size:**

***Height at withers: males 16 to 17 inches; females 15 to 16 inches. Deviations to be penalized. The most desirable weights: males, 28 to 34 pounds; females, 26 to 32 pounds. Proper conformation and substance should be considered more important than weight alone.***

There is not a size disqualification. The breed does not have a tendency to become too big or too small and there have been dogs of outstanding breed type at both ends of the size spectrum. As long as the dog exhibits correct substance for size, dogs at the top and bottom of the standard should be considered equally, both male and female.

# Head



## ***Standard:***

### ***General appearance:***

***Strong, yet free from coarseness, softly contoured, without sharp angles. Taken as a whole, the parts combine to produce the expression distinctive of the breed.***

## ***Standard***

### ***Expression:***

***Soft, melting, yet dignified, alert, and intelligent.***

### ***Eyes:***

***The eyes are essential to the desired expression. They are medium in size, full and slightly oval; set wide apart; lids tight. Haws are inconspicuous; may be pigmented or unpigmented. Eye color dark brown, except in livers and liver parti-colors where hazel is permitted, but the darker the hazel the better.***

The head and particularly the kind, endearing expression are the appeal of the breed. The soft eyes draw you in and you instinctively know that this is a breed that exudes a willingness to please and is game for anything involving human companionship. There is a slight lift to the top eyelid which gives the English Cocker an alert expression, and not "hound-like" or mournful. His expression should never appear hard or startled. The head is strong but clean and gently contoured. A correctly fashioned headpiece allows for important functionality in the field.



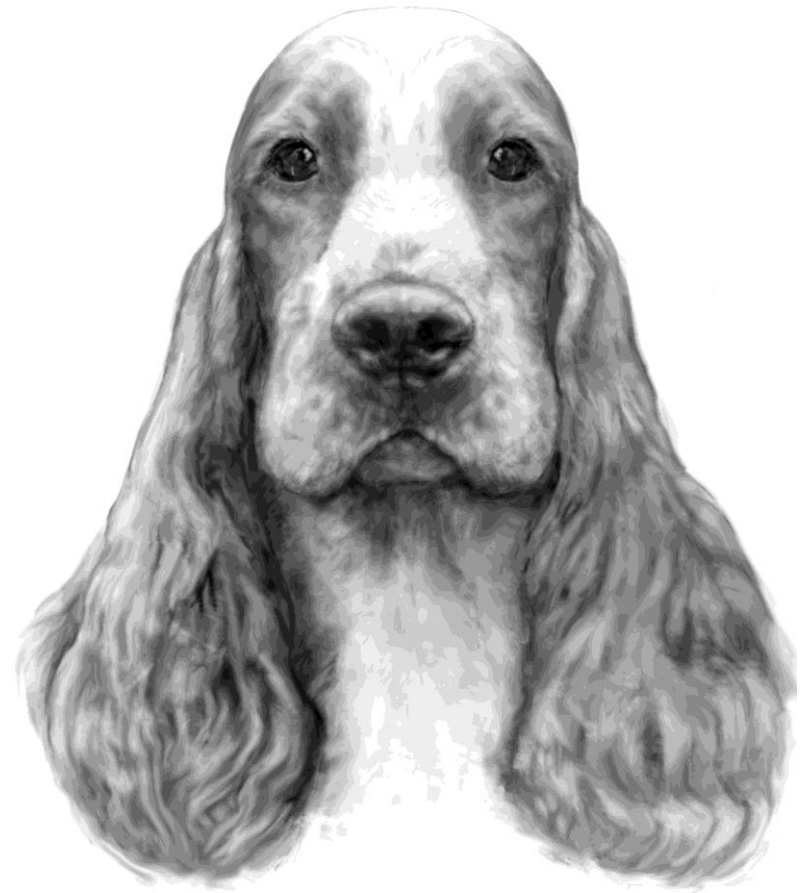
## **Standard**

### **Ears**

*Set low, lying close to the head; leather fine, extending to the nose, well covered with long, silky, straight or slightly wavy hair.*

### **Skull**

*Arched and slightly flattened when seen both from the side and from the front. Viewed in profile, the brow appears not appreciably higher than the back-skull. Viewed from above, the sides of the skull are in planes roughly parallel to those of the muzzle. Stop definite, but moderate, and slightly grooved.*



#### **When viewed from the FRONT:**

The sides of the backskull and the sides of the muzzle appear to be approximately parallel, indicating that the zygomatic arch is not prominent and the backskull is not coarse or rounded. The sides of the backskull above the zygomatic bone are elevated and arched, to allow good jaw muscle attachment which aids in carrying heavy game. The very top of the backskull is only slightly flattened. The cheeks are flat.

\*Judges should note that in the standard, parallel planes are referenced when looking straight on at the head and NOT from the side.



## **Standard**

### **Muzzle:**

*Equal in length to skull; well cushioned; only as much narrower than the skull as is consistent with a full eye placement; cleanly chiseled under the eyes. Jaws strong, capable of carrying game. Nostrils wide for proper development of scenting ability; color black, except in livers and parti-colors of that shade where they will be brown; reds and parti-colors of that shade may be brown, but black is preferred. Lips square, but not pendulous or showing prominent flews.*

### **Bite:**

*Scissors. A level bite is not preferred. Overshot or undershot to be severely penalized.*

The muzzle is equal in length to the backskull and only slightly less in width. The grooved stop and chiseling under the eyes are essential breed details and distinctive of the breed. The grooved stop is indicative of future chiseling on an adolescent head, once molars have finished dropping. The lips are well cushioned for protection and cover the underjaw but are not pendulous with prominent flews. The teeth are of good size and the nostrils wide open for scenting.



### **When viewed from the SIDE:**

The correctly constructed backskull precludes the top of the backskull and the top of the muzzle from being on absolute parallel planes but, for functionality, the planes of the backskull should approach parallel enough to enable the eye to look forward over the muzzle.

# Neck, Topline and Body

## *Standard*

### Neck:

*Graceful and muscular, arched toward the head and blending cleanly, without throatiness, into sloping shoulders; moderate in length and in balance with the length and height of the dog.*

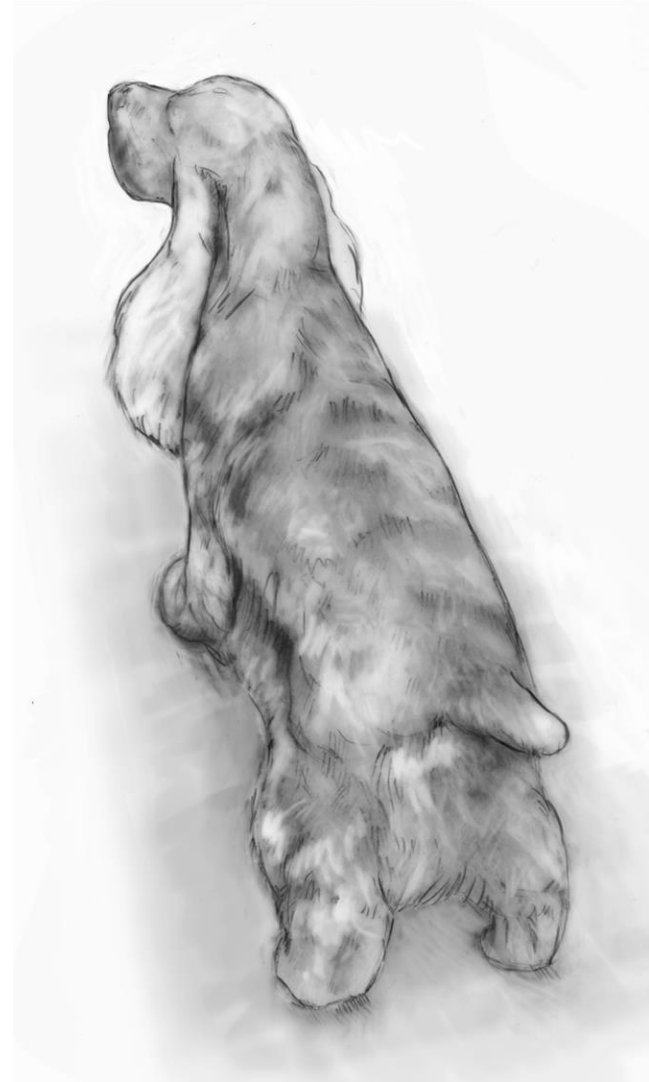
Being moderate in length, the neck is just long enough for the dog to easily reach down, pick up a bird, and carry it high enough to not interfere with his front legs. The neck should be clean, but with sufficient strength to carry heavy game.



## *Standard*

### Topline:

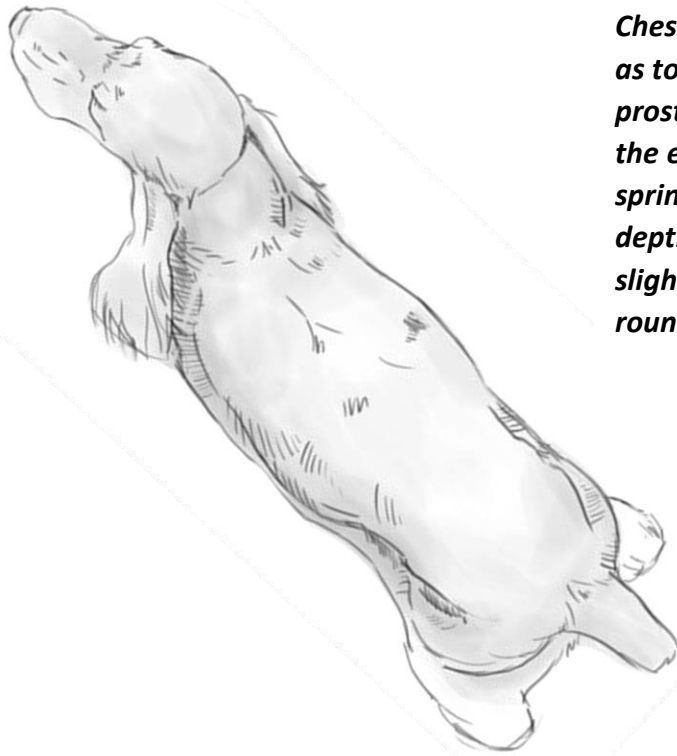
*The line of the neck blends into the shoulder and backline in a smooth curve. The backline slopes very slightly toward a gently rounded croup and is free from sagging or rumpiness.*



## **Standard**

### **Body:**

*Compact and well-knit, giving the impression of strength without heaviness. Chest deep; not so wide as to interfere with action of forelegs, nor so narrow as to allow the front to appear narrow or pinched. Forechest well developed, prosternum projecting moderately beyond shoulder points. Brisket reaches to the elbow and slopes gradually to a moderate tuck-up. Ribs well sprung and springing gradually to mid-body, tapering to back ribs which are of good depth and extend well back. Back short and strong. Loin short, broad and very slightly arched, but not enough to affect the topline appreciably. Croup gently rounded, without any tendency to fall away sharply.*



As part of the judging process, the English Cocker must be viewed from above, both on the table and on the ground to check for the correct width on a well-rounded, compact body. The widest part of the dog, the ribs are heart-shaped, not only well-sprung but deep, most often below the elbow, and carried well back and close to the hind legs. At the deepest part, the heart shape allows for unrestricted movement. The broad, muscular rear quarters appear as wide or nearly as wide as the well-sprung ribs. The loin is short and thick, in keeping with a compact, rounded body.





### ***Standard***

#### **Tail:**

***Docked. Set on to conform to croup. Ideally, the tail is carried horizontally and is in constant motion while the dog is in action. Under excitement, the dog may carry his tail somewhat higher, but not cocked up.***



### **JUDGING THE ENGLISH COCKER SPANIEL WITH A NATURAL TAIL (ECSCA Breed Education Committee Directive)**

The English Cocker Spaniel is a docked, hunting breed. The characteristic incessant, merry action of the tail while working in thick, dense cover, normally deeper than the dog is tall, necessitates docking to prevent injury. The ECSCA does not intend to change the breed standard.

In accordance with A.K.C. rules (Chapter 7, Section 15), you may either choose to excuse an English Cocker with a natural tail as being inconsistent with the standard, or judge the dog, considering the tail to be a fault. The ECSCA will support your decision to excuse, as well as judge, an undocked dog. Should you choose to keep a natural-tailed English Cocker in the ring, it is expected that you would prioritize by virtues and factor in faults lastly.

The natural tail is thick at the root (consistent with the required generous amount of bone), tapering to the end, and ideally not reaching below the hock joint. As this has always been a docked breed, determine the tail carriage by observing the first quarter to third of the tail as the dog is being moved.

# Forequarters

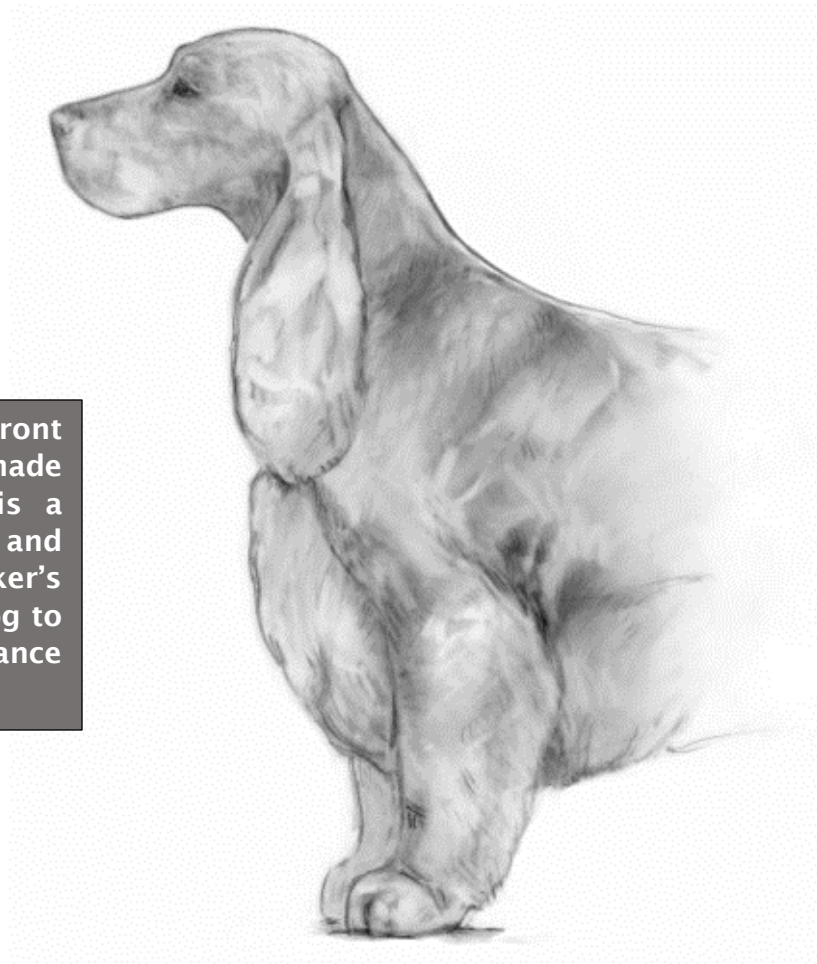
## **Standard**

### **Forequarters:**

***The English Cocker is moderately angulated. Shoulders are sloping, the blade flat and smoothly fitting. Shoulder blade and upper arm are approximately equal in length. Upper arm set well back, joining the shoulder with sufficient angulation to place the elbow beneath the highest point of the shoulder blade when the dog is standing naturally.***

The English Cocker is moderately angulated. Shoulders are sloping, the blade flat and smoothly fitting. Shoulder blade and upper arm are approximately equal in length. Upper arm set well back, joining the shoulder with sufficient angulation to place the elbow beneath the highest point of the shoulder blade when the dog is standing naturally.

\*Judges must understand that a correctly made front is an integral part of breed type. The correctly made front assembly, with a protective forechest, is a necessary essential for pushing into dense and unforgiving brush and thickets. The English Cocker's front legs must be well placed underneath the dog to support his substantial body and maintain balance while carrying game.



## ***Standard***

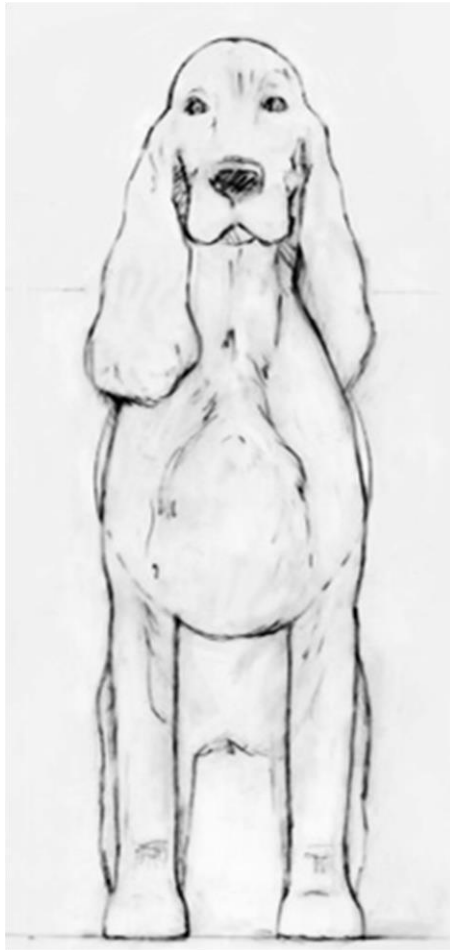
### ***Forelegs***

***Straight, with bone nearly uniform in size from elbow to heel; elbows set close to the body; pasterns nearly straight, with some flexibility.***

### ***Feet***

***Proportionate in size to the legs, firm, round and catlike; toes arched and tight; pads thick.***

Feet are an extension of bone, with little to no difference in width. They are deep, compact, and round, with well-knit, arched toes, set on protectively thick pads, essential to sporting dogs. Pasterns slightly sloping to ensure flexibility and cushioning upon impact.



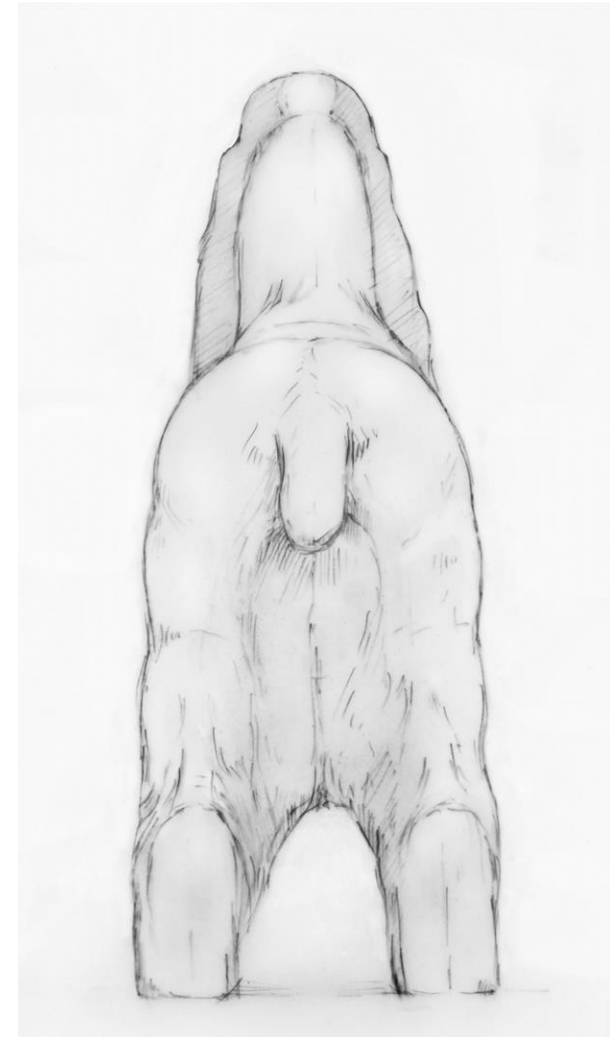
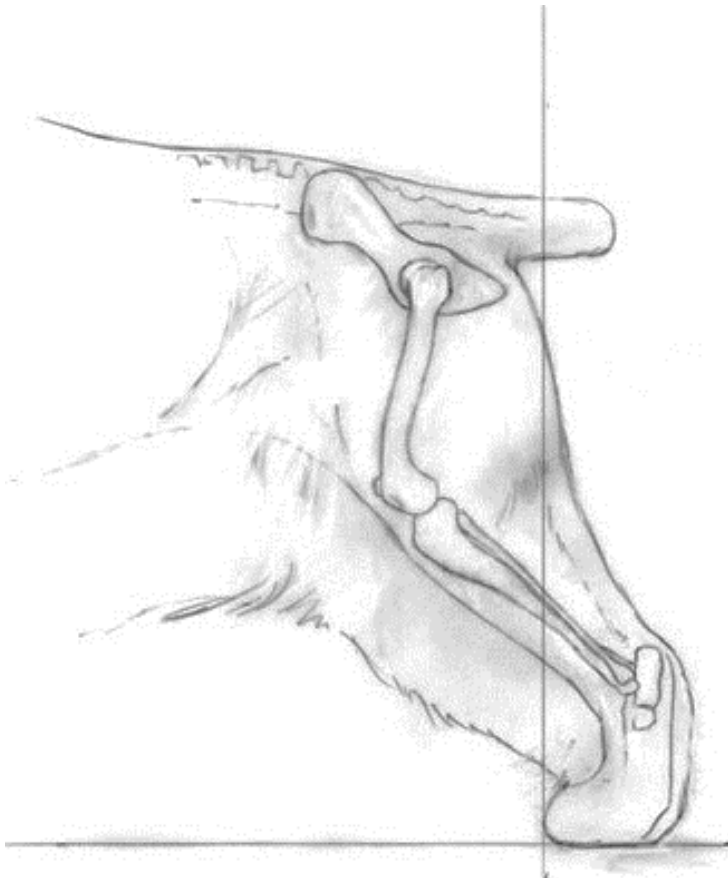
# Hindquarters

## *Standard*

### **Hindquarters:**

***Angulation moderate and, most importantly, in balance with that of the forequarters. Hips relatively broad and well rounded. Upper thighs broad, thick and muscular, providing plenty of propelling power. Second thighs well muscled and approximately equal in length to the upper. Stifle strong and well bent. Hock to pad short. Feet as in front***

A sturdy, compact dog of balance must have broad hindquarters, with significant muscling on both upper and lower thighs in order to find, flush and retrieve game in difficult terrain. Thick muscle should accompany a moderately angulated rear. The rear pastern is short by necessity for pushing into dense cover.



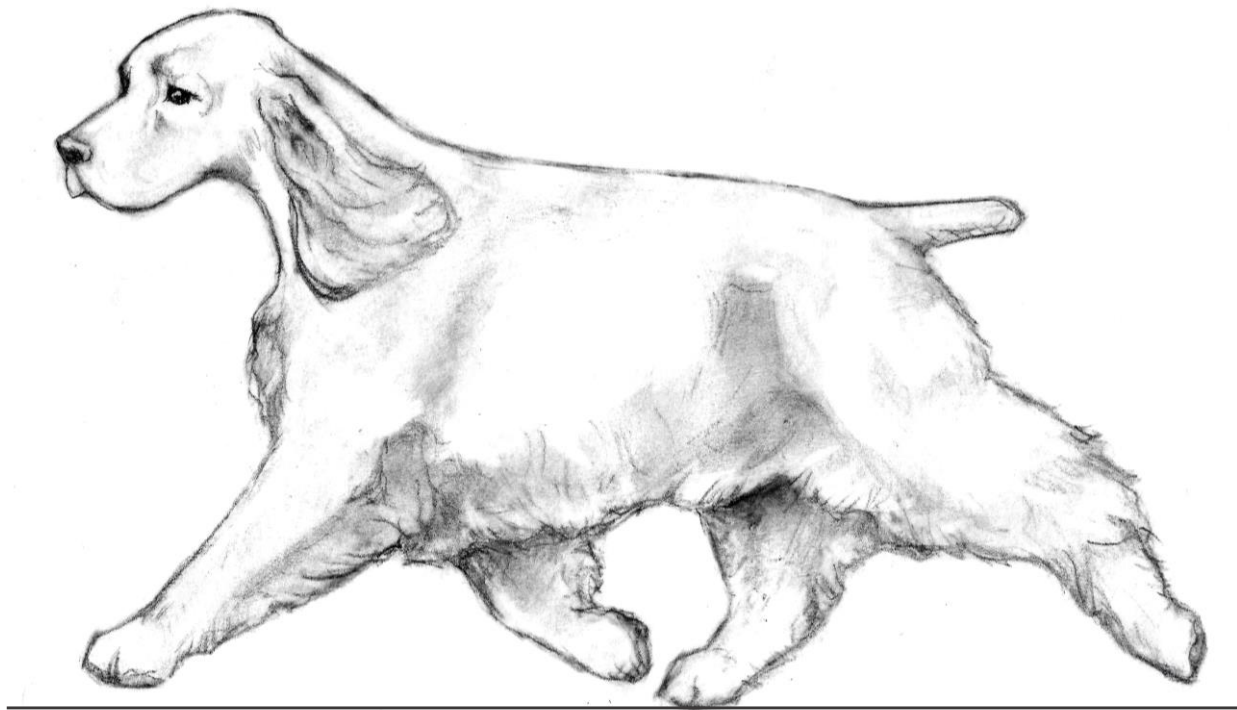
# Gait

## *Standard*

### ***Gait:***

*The English Cocker is capable of hunting in dense cover and upland terrain. His gait is accordingly characterized more by drive and the appearance of power than by great speed. He covers ground effortlessly and with extension both in front and in rear, appropriate to his angulation. In the ring, he carries his head proudly and is able to keep much the same topline while in action as when standing for examination. Going and coming, he moves in a straight line without crabbing or rolling, and with width between both front and rear legs appropriate to his build and gait.*

When moving, a balanced English Cocker keeps the same outline as standing. He should show equal reach and drive in moderation, with his feet remaining close to the ground. His motion is deliberate and efficient with no extra lift or extension. Because of his roundness and considerable width, a correctly made dog cannot single track or execute a flying trot. His topline is very slightly sloping and the tail is carried horizontally.







# Coat and Color



These are just a few examples of our many colors. Starting top left: blue roan and tan, liver roan and tan, black and white ticked, liver roan, light blue roan, orange and white, solid red, black, white and tan (tri), black and tan, solid liver, solid black, orange roan

## Standard

### Color:

***Various. Parti-colors are either clearly marked, ticked or roaned, the white appearing in combination with black, liver or shades of red. In parti-colors it is preferable that solid markings be broken on the body and more or less evenly distributed; absence of body markings is acceptable. Solid colors are black, liver or shades of red. White feet on a solid are undesirable; a little white on throat is acceptable; but in neither case do these white markings make the dog a parti-color. Tan markings, clearly defined and of rich shade, may appear in conjunction with black, livers and parti-color combinations of those colors. Black and tans and liver and tans are considered solid colors.***

## CLARIFICATION OF ECS COLORS

The Breed Education Committee and breeder-judges of English Cocker Spaniels have noticed an increase in the number of questions regarding acceptable color and markings. In order to provide information on color and markings in accordance with the Breed Standard, this clarification was drafted by the Committee.

The English Cocker Spaniel standard states under Color – “Various.”; then goes on to list the acceptable colors and markings in the breed.

The AKC guidelines (1994, amended 2006) for writing breed standards states: “In breeds where multiple colors or color combinations are acceptable, but not all colors are permitted, the complete list of all acceptable colors and color combinations must be included in the standard. In such cases, any color or color combinations not mentioned are unacceptable, and judges are to pass judgment on this basis.”

Please keep in mind when judging this breed, that color patterns occurring in breeds outside the Sporting group, such as brindle or sable, etc., are not described in the English Cocker Spaniel Breed Standard as they are neither parti-color (ticked, roaned, or open marked, with or without tan points) nor solid color (with or without tan points).

*Issued by the E.C.S.C.A. Breed Education Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc.*

*Issue Date: October 12, 2010*

## Standard

### Coat:

***On head, short and fine; of medium length on body; flat or slightly wavy; silky in texture. The English Cocker is well-feathered, but not so profusely as to interfere with field work. Trimming is permitted to remove overabundant hair and to enhance the dogs true lines. It should be done so as to appear as natural as possible.***

The correct, silky coat will either pull out of the dog or slide through the cover, with little debris attached. A cottony coat will collect debris and sometimes hang up a dog in the field. The jacket lies flat to the body with natural length and enough depth to afford protection. The feathering follows the contours of the body with no trimmed in exaggerations.

# Temperament

## Standard

### Temperament:

*The English Cocker is merry and affectionate, of equable disposition, neither sluggish nor hyperactive, a willing worker and a faithful and engaging companion.*

The characteristic and very important word "merry" appears in the first and last sentence of the standard.





## English Cocker Spaniel Club of America, Inc.

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Illustrations by Patricia Janzen