

How to evaluate/assess the correct length/height ratio

Being able to understand and evaluate correct proportions is an important step in understanding breed type. Our standard describes two such sets: head proportions (muzzle length to skull length 3 : 5) and body proportions (length to height 1.8 : 1).

Body length/height ratios actually measure the length of body versus height at withers. This determines the body proportions, not the length of back. When I actually measure a dog, I use callipers and measuring tools, and carefully fix the tools at exactly the right spots. However, when I "eyeball" the dog, taking into account the skin, subcutaneous fat and coat (guard hairs and undercoat), then when in full coat, I get the impression of a dog that is about twice as long as it is tall.

Having said that, I need to say that many, many people have had their eye trained to see length of back rather than length of body, especially if they come from another breed where that is the proportion. That is how we get the wrong "look" in this breed -- dogs who are long but with no prosternum (look at the standard, the prosternum should project well ahead of the shoulders -- the deepest part of the chest should be between the front legs, not behind them); dogs with no angulation thus giving the impression of a very long dog, except that the length is in the back rather than the body; or dogs with short ribbing, thus giving the impression of length of back (the wrong ratio) when they are actually long in loin.

A well angled Cardigan, with good ribbing, where the shoulders are on the right place will look short-backed by comparison to what we so often see -- and have a deep, long body!!! A Cardigan, as a dwarf breed, will always give us a sense of length, but for us the important thing is to understand where that length should be, and what it should look like, rather than accepting any length as being correct. I would suggest that if a Cardigan had normal length legs, then we would get the impression of a miniature German Shepherd ... not a cobby dog by any means, but a dog which is long-bodied and relatively short coupled.

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April 2007