

PART TWO:

COAT & SKIN



The dog enters the ring and it attracts your attention immediately with the healthy bloom in the well-groomed coat glinting in the sunlight or flowing in the breeze with the action of the dog. The coat is easily visible, very often an indicator of a dog's general health and well-being, and is an essential element of a dog's breed type. Since it is the first thing you are likely to notice, it's the first element we will examine in the study of a dog's conformation and anatomy.

A universally generic description of canine coat will never be truly adequate because of the enormous varieties of coats that have developed along with the development and maintenance of different breeds. At all times, therefore, the breed standard must be used as starting point for a study of any particular feature of any breed, and in this case, the coat.

Dogs basically have two types of coats:

- **double coat:** this type of coat comprises an **outer coat** and an **undercoat**. The undercoat is normally short, dense, soft and acts as a blanket close to the skin to regulate body temperature not only in cold conditions, but to protect against harsh heat as well. The outer coat is supported by the undercoat and is usually longer, harsher in texture and may stand off the body. Often called guard hairs, the longer outer coat serves to protect the softer undercoat and provide weather-proofing. If a dog is supposed to have a double coat, but the undercoat is very sparse or completely shed, it is called an open coat, a fault.
- **single coat:** this coat comprises only a top coat.

Every hair in the dog coat grows from a **hair follicle**, which has a cycle of growing, then dying to be replaced by another follicle. When the follicle dies, the hair is shed during the **moulting process**. The length of time of the growing and shedding cycle varies by breed, age, and by whether the dog is an inside or

outside dog. Many dogs shed their undercoat each spring and regrow it again as colder weather comes in; this is also referred to as **blowing the coat**. Many domesticated breeds shed their coats twice a year. In some climates, the topcoat and undercoat might shed continuously in greater and smaller quantities all year.

As you work through the many different breed standards, you will encounter many grooming traditions – some breeds that are presented in a scissored clip, such as the Poodle, while in other breeds, scissoring and trimming is forbidden, such as the Welsh Corgi. Many Terriers are hand-stripped seasonally, such as the Airedale Terrier, while other breeds are brushed and teased into flowing tresses and topknots, like the Shih Tzu. By and large, exhibitors go to great lengths to ensure their exhibits are presented in peak condition, proved by a coat glowing in good health and good grooming. Your task, as a judge, is to respect the grooming hours involved (ie. please don't leave the Poodle's headpiece in a mess when you've finished examining it), but make an effort to find the dog underneath the flowing tresses – a lot easier on a smooth-haired dog, admittedly!

Many breeds no longer perform their original function, while coat care and presentation has vastly improved. The secret of good judging is to be mindful of the breed's original purpose and find the balance between glamour and purpose.

Coat characteristics	
It is useful to discuss canine coat in terms of the following characteristics, all of which help to determine breed type	
functionality	refers to the function of the coat in terms of the breed's original purpose, as described in the breed standard, eg. a Labrador Retriever in its water environment needs a weather-proof double coat to keep the skin warm and relatively dry.
texture	is a distinctive characteristic of breed type, often related to functionality, eg. a Cocker Spaniel's silky, straight coat should allow easy escape from brambles and brush in the field.
quality	refers to the condition of the coat and the way it reflects the health and well-being of the dog. In the past, when dogs worked in the field, matted, dirty coats were the norm – the only consideration being how the dog could work and be protected from harsh elements. Nowadays, one wouldn't dream of showing a dog with a matted coat and the level of grooming has ensured longer coats in better condition.
amount	refers to the proper amount of coat as prescribed by the breed standard – no more, no less. Ironically, what we consider these days to be an inadequate amount of coat was, in the past, considered too much!
distribution	refers to the specific location of different coat types on the dog's body, also historically connected to functionality. For instance, a Rough Collie is expected to have a full mane of hair – originally to protect the vital organs in the chest during the dog's herding activities.
colour	in some breeds, colour is relatively irrelevant, such as the Chihuahua, which is available in all colours, while in other breeds colour is essential, often because deviation leads to health problems, eg. white Boxers, which show a high incidence of congenital deafness.
markings / pattern	a dog is usually described by its colour first, followed by its pattern and markings (if any). Patterns such as colour patches can cause illusions, if unfortunately positioned, and depth of colour in the markings can make or break a dog's expression. In some breeds, the positions of markings are essential to determine breed type, eg the Rottweiler.
trim	refers to the trimming permitted on certain breeds, such as scissoring on a Poodle or Bichon Frise, or stripping on a Miniature Schnauzer or Airedale Terrier. In some breeds, trimming is not permitted, such as on the Afghan Hound. It is up to the judge not to be misled by clever scissor work and sneaky "tricks of the trade".



stand-off coat



smooth coat



curly coat



combination coat



wire coat

Coat textures

Based on texture and length, some of the coat descriptions you will encounter in the breed standards may include:

- **bristle coat:** short, harsh and bristly, straight and stand-offish, without undercoat. eg. Shar Pei.
- **broken coat (wire coat):** a harsh and wiry outer coat with a soft, dense undercoat. The outer coat texture often resembles coconut matting. Periodically, this kind of coat 'blows', in other words, it softens and loosens, and must be stripped out so that new coat can grow, eg. Airedale Terrier.
- **combination coat:** this kind of coat has both short, smooth hairs and long, silky feathering, eg. Saluki.
- **corded coat:** the top coat and undercoat naturally intertwines into cords, varying in width from quite narrow to broad, always completely separate, eg. Hungarian Puli.
- **curly coat:** comprises a mass of thick, tight curls, which trap air and protect the dog from water or cold, eg. Irish Water Spaniel.
- **hairless:** as the description implies, the coat is without hair, the skin typically warm to the touch, but prone to blemishes and sunburn, eg. Xoloitzcuintle.
- **harsh coat:** hard, wiry and rough in texture, usually stripped to lie flat against the body, eg. Miniature Schnauzer.
- **heavy coat:** characterised by long, thick coat together with short, smooth coat, requiring regular brushing, eg. Newfoundland.
- **hypoallergenic coat:** often claimed to be allergic free, this type of coat is less allergic (not free of allergens) because they shed very little, eg Poodle.
- **linty coat:** a soft, downy-textured coat, typical of the Bedlington Terrier.
- **long coat:** hair that is longer than about 3cm, eg. Afghan Hound.
- **open coat:** sparsely coated – the hairs are quite widely separated from each other, lacking undercoat and often off-standing. The opposite of compact, flat coats.
- **out of coat:** used to describe a dog that has moulted its coat due to seasonal changes, heat seasons, illness or stress.
- **short coat:** hair that is shorter than about 3cm, eg. Pointer.
- **silky coat:** softest in texture, a silky coat feels heavy and 'cold' to the touch and falls easily back into place, usually long, eg. Yorkshire Terrier
- **smooth coat:** short, close-lying hair, eg. Whippet.
- **stand-off coat:** a characteristic of all spitz-type breeds, the coat stands away from the body as opposed to lying flat, usually also supported by a dense undercoat, eg. Pomeranian
- **pily coat:** crisp in texture with a harsh outer coat and a soft, fur-like undercoat that lies close to the skin, particularly used to describe the coats of the Dandie Dinmont Terrier and the Border Collie.
- **weather-proof coat:** usually double-coated, the outer coat often quite harsh in texture and coated with natural oils to provide good weather-proofing, eg. Labrador Retriever.

Coat distribution

Different breeds have hair growing in different places. Let's look at a few specific descriptions of coat distribution:

- **beard:** thick, longish, often stand-off, longer hair around the cheeks, lower jaw and on the chin, it sometimes contains wiry guard hairs, the length varying according to the requirements of the breed standard, eg. Miniature Schnauzer
- **bloom:** the sheen of a coat in good condition
- **bracelets:** the unshaven hair pompons on the ankles and pasterns of Poodles cut in the Continental clip.
- **breeches / trousering / culotte:** longish hair at the rear of the upper thigh region, eg. Australian Shepherd.
- **brush:** a synonym for tail, often mentioned in breed standards of dogs with bushy tails, eg. Siberian Husky
- **cape:** a profuse collar of hair that covers the shoulder region, usually blending into a ruff or jabot, eg. Schipperke.
- **fall of hair / topknot:** a fringe or shock of hair on the forehead of long-coated breeds, sometimes tied up, as in a Shih Tzu, or left to form a veil, as in a Briard.
- **feathering / fringing:** longish, usually softer, silkier hair compared to the rest of the coat that appears on the legs, ears, tail, eg. Saluki, and, in some breeds under the belly.
- **frill:** a raised ridge of long or short hair formed by the junction of the mane from above and the apron from below usually extends down the sides of the neck. In long-coated dogs it is known as the chest frill, eg. Shetland Sheepdog.
- **furnishings:** an abundance of coat as required in specified areas according to the breed standard, eg. the eyebrows of Schnauzers, the moustache of the Bouvier des Flandres, the ears of the Long-haired Dachshund, etc.
- **jabot:** the name given to the longer-coated apron of the Schipperke
- **mane / shawl:** longish, usually fairly coarse hair growing on the neck to resemble the mane of a lion, eg. Pekingese
- **ridge and crowns:** The crowns are the circular hair-growth patterns on either side of the start of a ridge at the withers, typical of a Rhodesian Ridgeback.

Coat colours

During your study of the breed standards, you will encounter many varied descriptions and names of coat colours. Essentially, these will include variants of the following:

- **brown:** (including liver, chocolate, sedge, Blenheim) eg. a chocolate Labrador Retriever
- **red:** (including mahogany, cherry, chestnut, orange, roan, red-gold, reddish-brown, russet, cinnamon, tan, and ruby) eg. a red Irish Setter.
- **gold:** (including fawn, apricot, wheaten, deadgrass, fallow, lion-coloured, isabella, tawny, straw, sandy) eg. a Golden Retriever
- **yellow:** (including blonde, lemon, and yellowish-gold) eg. a yellow Labrador Retriever
- **cream:** (including broken white, ivory, pale crème, gold-cream) eg. a cream French Bulldog
- **white:** (distinct from albino dogs in that the pigment is dark) eg. a Bichon Frisé
- **grey:** (including pale to dark grey, silver, pepper, slate, blue-black, lavender, steel blue) eg. a steel grey Weimaraner
- **blue:** (including dark metallic grey) eg. a Kerry Blue
- **black:** (including self-black or black with another colour) eg. a black Newfoundland

Coat patterns

Having established the coat colour, there may also be a prescribed pattern option. The same pattern may be referred to differently in different breeds:

- **badger / beaver:** an admixture of white, grey, brown and black hairs in varying intensity, often occurring in patches on a white background, as in badger-pied Pyrenean Mountain Dogs
- **bicolour / Irish-marked / flashy:** any colour couple with white, the main colour covering most of the dog. The pattern can be symmetrical or asymmetrical, but usually comprises a white chest, white belly, white feet and sometimes a full or partial white collar around the neck, eg. a flashy Boxer.
- **black and tan / liver and tan / blue and tan:** the coat contains both colours in clearly-defined and separated areas, as described in the relevant breed standard, some of which are very specific about the correct positioning of such patterns and the richness of colours, eg. the Dobermann. Usually, the darker colour fills most of the body with tan at the points.
- **blanket / mantle:** a different colour (usually darker) over the centre of the back, part of the neck, head, tail and, sometimes, the legs, eg. Airedale Terrier
- **brindle:** fine black stripes on a brown, tan, red, gold, grey or fawn coat, eg. Bulldog. Most standards call for the stripes to be clearly marked.
- **flecking / ticking / speckling / mottling:** flecks or dots of dark-coloured hair on a white background. Flecking can be heavily distributed as in an Australian Cattle Dog or lightly ticked as in a ticked parti-colour Saluki. In English Setters, the flecking is termed belton.
- **grizzle:** an admixture of black or grey hairs together with the base colour, usually covering the upper parts of the body, gradually becoming less prominent towards the base colour only covering the under parts.
- **harlequin:** torn patches of black or dark grey on white – a distinctive coat pattern of the Great Dane.
- **hound-marked:** usually a white coat with tan and/or black patches on the head, back, legs and tail.
- **merle:** a marbled coat with patches of a darker shade of the specified colour, such as a blue merle or red merle Australian Shepherd. In Dachshunds, this pattern is called dapple.
- **particolour / pied / piebald:** patched of colour, usually on a white coat, appearing in irregular patches, well-defined. The breed standard may or may not allow it to be accompanied by the ticking gene. eg. a parti-colour Whippet.
- **peppering:** an admixture of white and black hairs, giving the appearance of pepper and salt, eg. a Miniature Schnauzer.
- **roan:** a fine mixture of white hairs with another colour, usually blue roan, orange roan, lemon roan, etc. eg. a blue roan Cocker Spaniel.
- **sable:** black-tipped hairs against a background of any lighter colour, eg. a sabled red Rough Collie. The darkness of the sabling depends on the length of the black tips. Sabled dogs often have dark or black masks on the face.
- **spotted:** dark spots on a white background, eg. the Dalmatian.
- **tricolour:** three distinct colours, usually black or liver or blue with tan and white, the white usually covering the under parts and the dark colour blanketed or patched on the upper parts, with tan at the borders, eg. a Bernese Mountain Dog
- **tuxedo:** a solid-coloured coat (usually black) with a clear white patch or shirt front on the chest and chin and usually white on the feet and face, eg. Boston Terrier

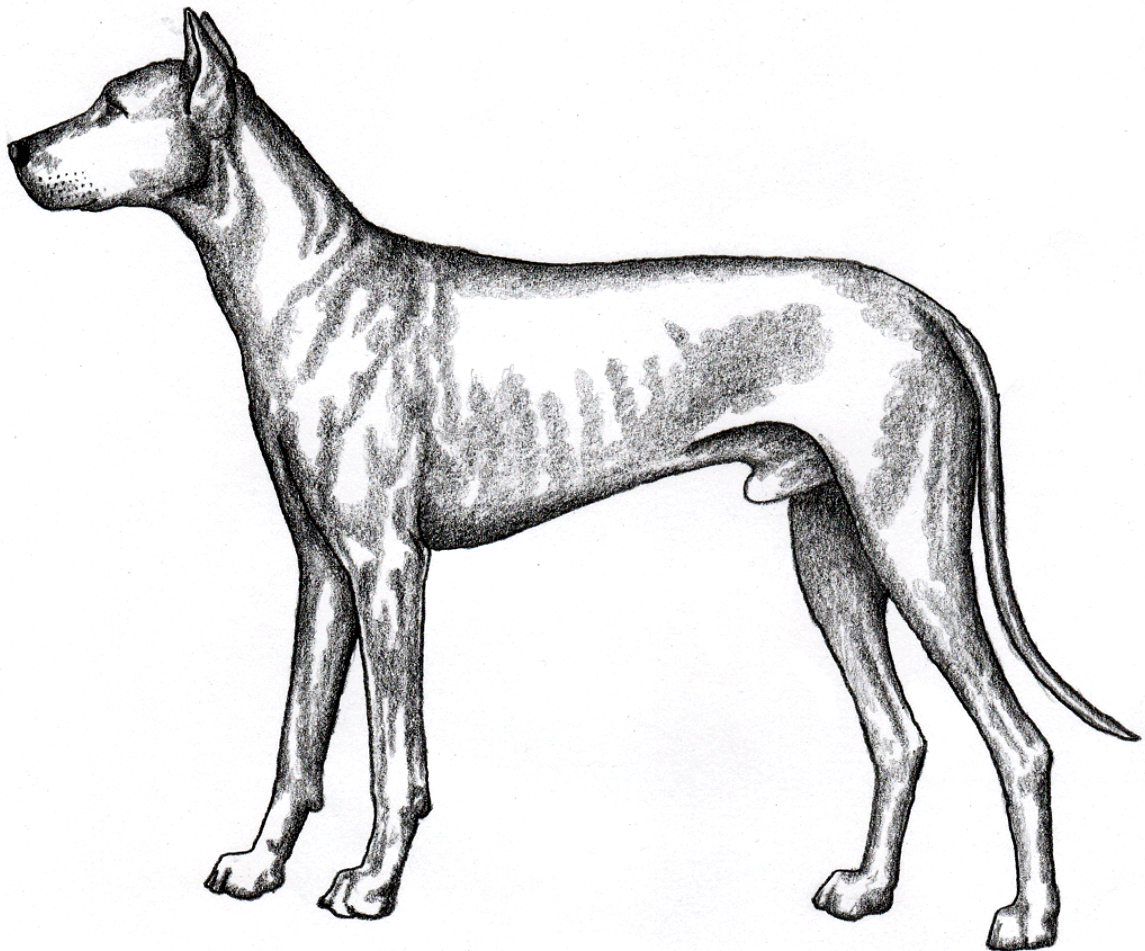
Coat markings

In addition to specific colours and patterns, a breed may have required markings such as the following:

- **blaze:** a white strip running up the centre of the face between the eyes. In some breeds, such as the Papillon, this is a hallmark of the butterfly-shaped expression. If the blaze broadens towards the top of the skull, it is known as a flare.
- **frosting:** similar to greying in humans, frosting can occur on the face of aging dogs, also an option in the Belgian Shepherd Dog breed standard.
- **lozenge:** a distinct spot of colour surrounded by white, which may be found on the foreheads of Blenheim Cavalier King Charles Spaniels. A similar spot of a lighter colour against a darker background on a Saluki's forehead is called the "Kiss of Allah". The dark black mark on the forehead of a fawn Pug is called a diamond.
- **mask:** dark or black shading on the muzzle up to the eyebrows, eg. Pekingese)
- **pencilling:** distinctive black lines that divide the tan on the toes, eg. Manchester Terrier
- **points:** the standard may mention the tan on black-and-tan dogs to appear on the points, namely the cheeks, muzzle, throat, chest, legs, over the eyes and under the base of the tail.
- **rosettes:** the small tan patches on each side of the chest above the front legs in black or brown and tan dogs, eg. Dobermann
- **spectacles:** shadings or dark markings around the eyes, often including a line from the eyes to the ears, eg. a Keeshond.
- **trace:** a dark stripe down the back of a Pug.
- **vent:** tan-coloured marking under the base of the tail, usually apparent in black-and-tan dogs, eg. Dobermann
- **widow's peak / cap:** the darkly-shaded colour pattern on the skull of some breeds, it usually extends in a point towards the stop and encircles the eyes towards the cheeks, eg. Alaskan Malamute. In an Afghan Hound, this pattern is called domino.

Tip: Judging the coat

When you evaluate coat type and condition, make sure you know exactly what type of coat to expect according to the breed standard. As you run your hands over the dog, feel the texture with the palms of your hands. Is it smooth to the touch, or harsh? Check texture by feeling a few hairs between thumb and fingers. Check for undercoat by parting the coat with your hands on the side of the chest. Make a note of correct length of coat in the required areas, eg. short coat on muzzle, feathering on legs, etc.



Beneath the coat, the skin is the dog's largest organ, covering its entire body to hold water, ions and microscopic molecules inside and to protect the body from bacteria, water and other invasions from outside. Dogs, unlike humans do not have sweat glands in their skin and thus do not sweat. To regulate their body heat, dogs lose moisture from the pads of their feet and by panting.

Some breeds do not grow hair on parts of their bodies and may be referred to as hairless, such as the Xoloitzcuintli, the Peruvian Hairless Dog and the Chinese Crested. The skin on these dogs is remarkably warm to the touch with a soft, chamois-like texture.

Very few breed standards specify skin characteristics, but on most dogs, skin is meant to be pliable and, often, well-pigmented. The Basenji calls for "very pliant" skin and the Boxer specifies "dry, elastic skin without any wrinkles". In contrast to the usual tight-fitting skin covering, some breeds have loose to very loose-fitting skin over body and head, some also with a marked dewlap on the neck, eg. Basset Hounds, Neapolitan Mastiffs.