

Judging the Boykin Spaniel

The Boykin Spaniel was bred as a flushing spaniel on the swamp hammocks of the South Carolina Low Country. Size and weight were essential in development of the breed: the long standing breed motto is “the dog that doesn’t rock the boat”. This came into being because they needed to be lighter and smaller than their larger sporting dog cousins so that they could fit into the compact swamp boats used by hunting guides in the time period.

The Boykin is a practical breed used for sporting as well as a family pet. A friendly temperament and correct physical structure are equally important. Honest scarring on an individual should never be penalized.

Boykin Spaniels were formed from a complex variety of gun dogs. This has produced a vast array of coat lengths, thickness, degree of straightness or waviness and a variety of shades of brown. These differences should not play an important part in judging the dog since they are all correct. Individuals may display a lighter shading or “sun bleaching” on the ears and feathering. This should not be penalized.

The breed should remain low maintenance. Trimming and scissoring for design purposes should be kept at minimal to none, with trimming around the sanitary regions and ears allowed. The exception is for dogs in hunt training may be completely stripped of all trappings on head, neck, body, and legs for ease of maintenance; however, for the safety and wellbeing of the dog a sufficient amount of body coat should be left to pad the dog’s skin against underbrush and weather.

The breed is should be examined on a table, ramp or ground. Care should be taken to examine the soundness of the structure, especially the legs, to ensure this is a breed that will physically endure a day’s hunt in difficult terrain.

A balanced, solid working dog should be the first impression when viewing the breed. Judges should be met friendly disposition when approaching the dog. Shyness is to be severely penalized. His tail should never be clamped. His gaze shows intelligence and willingness to please with a touch of humor.

Size and substance are historically important traits in this breed. Care should be taken to balance the physical traits that ensure this breed continues as a working field breed yet also respects the historical importance of their medium spaniel size in both height and substance.

While examining the dog the judge should keep in mind the breed’s ability to work which includes retrieving larger birds on land and in water. The head and muzzle should not be coarse yet be broad enough to do its job. It is essential that the dog’s bite be correct since damage to dentition adversely effects a dog’s working ability. The neck should be moderate and sturdy to balance a level topline. Without such a flushing spaniel will tire quickly or be unable to adequately retrieve game.

The handler should move the dog on a loose lead. The gait should present a picture of an efficient gait that will carry a dog in the field all day with great endurance. It should never be flashy or clumsy. The dog should move with an air of high spirits and controlled energy, as if ready to confidently take on whatever jobs its master requests of him next. The dog should be judged in equal thirds of the side gait, the rear movement while going away and the front movement while coming back to the judge; no single portion of the gait should take priority.