

AKBASH DOG

Official UKC Breed Standard

Revised April 1, 1998

Guardian Dog Group

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The goals and purposes of this breed standard include: to furnish guidelines for breeders who wish to maintain the quality of their breed and to improve it; to advance this breed to a state of similarity throughout the world; and to act as a guide for judges.

Breeders and judges have the responsibility to avoid any conditions or exaggerations that are detrimental to the health, welfare, essence and soundness of this breed, and must take the responsibility to see that these are not perpetuated.

Any departure from the following should be considered a fault, and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

HISTORY

The Akbash Dog is a white livestock guardian breed native to the plains and mountains of western Turkey. While the origins of the breed are obscure, it is known to be an ancient pure breed. The Akbash Dog is the Turkish counterpart of the other white guardian breeds found around the northern Mediterranean Basin. However, only the Akbash Dog possesses its unique combination of Mastiff and gazehound characteristics.

In Turkey, Akbash Dogs are owned and bred by villagers and shepherds to protect their sheep from wolves and other predators. Recognition of these great white guardians as a distinct breed resulted from fieldwork done by Americans David and Judy Nelson who studied the dogs in Turkey beginning in the 1970s. The Nelsons have imported over 40 Akbash Dogs to the United States. These dogs became the foundation stock for the breed in the United States and Canada. In 1980, the U.S. Department of Agriculture introduced Akbash Dogs to its Predator Control Program where the dogs performed successfully.

The United Kennel Club recognized the Akbash Dog on January 1, 1998.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The white Akbash Dog is a long-legged, lean, muscular dog of imposing size and strength, great courage, and

stamina, with an alert, regal bearing. The Akbash Dog is slightly longer in proportion than tall, has a wedge-shaped head with pendant ears, and a long tail, usually carried in a curl over the back when the dog is moving or excited. The Akbash Dog represents a very rare and special mixture of Mastiff and gazehound characteristics that are important to maintain. The gazehound influence is apparent in the breed's long legs, deep chest, arched loin, shallow lower jaw, tucked up flank, speed, and agility, while the Mastiff's contributions can be seen in the breed's height, weight, broader head, and overall impression of power. When judging this breed, preference should be given to Akbash Dogs who exhibit a perfect balance between the two types.

Gender differences can be striking in this breed. Typically the dog is proportionately taller and heavier than the female. The bitch appears feminine in comparison to the dog. There is no difference in the ability of males or females to perform as guardians.

The breed is presented in a completely natural condition and should be evaluated equally for correct conformation, temperament, gait, and structural soundness. Honorable scars or other evidences of injury resulting from working in the field are not to be penalized.

CHARACTERISTICS

The essential characteristics of the Akbash Dog are those that enable it to perform successfully as a livestock guardian. Akbash Dogs have the size, strength, and courage to challenge large predators and the speed and agility to chase fleet predators. Their temperament is calm, quiet, and steady. They are independent and capable of correctly responding to changing circumstances without human direction.

The Akbash Dog is also highly suitable as a home companion or estate guardian. The Akbash Dog is loyal, gentle, and quietly affectionate with its own family, including children and family pets, but remains aloof and suspicious toward strangers. It is also by nature watchful of other dogs and may, on its own territory, react aggressively to intruding dogs. Although independent in nature, the Akbash Dog responds well to basic training. Properly socialized and trained, the Akbash Dog is an ideal family pet and home guardian.

Although its protective, guarding instincts are demonstrated at a young age, the breed matures slowly, both physically and temperamentally, with individuals requiring two to three years to reach their prime. Females tend to mature faster than males.

HEAD

In both sexes, the wedge-shaped head is proportionate to the size and build of the individual specimen. The male head is proportionally larger than the female head. Viewed from above, the head tapers gradually toward the tip of the nose forming a blunt wedge shape. Viewed from the side, the length of muzzle is approximately one-half the length of the head, measured from occiput to nose. The head is free of wrinkles.

SKULL - The skull is large, slightly domed, and broad between the ears. The skull is longer than broad and tapers gradually toward the muzzle. The stop is slightly to moderately defined. The cheeks are flat and smooth.

Faults: Skull too flat; skull too narrow.

MUZZLE - Viewed from the side, the topline of the muzzle is straight and roughly parallel to the top of the skull. The muzzle is broad where it joins the skull and tapers gradually toward the nose, forming a blunt wedge shape. The jaws are strong but the lower jaw is relatively shallow. Lips are black or dark brown, flews are tight, and whiskers are white.

Faults: Snipey muzzle.

Disqualification: Complete lack of pigmentation on lips.

TEETH - The Akbash Dog has a complete set of large, evenly spaced, white teeth. A scissors bite is preferred, but a level bite is acceptable. Broken teeth resulting from field work are not to be penalized.

Serious Faults: Over or undershot bite; more than two teeth missing

NOSE - Nose color may be either solid dark brown or solid black, with both colors being equally acceptable. Dogs displaying a slight seasonal fading of nose pigment should not be penalized. The skin pigmentation of the muzzle around the nose may be gray, spotted, or absent but preference should be given to the stronger pigmentation. In profile, the nose is on the same line as the top of the muzzle and extends somewhat beyond the lower jaw.

Serious Fault: Butterfly nose.

Disqualification: Complete lack of pigmentation on nose.

EYES - The eyes are medium-sized, almond-shaped, and set well apart. Eye color may range from golden brown to dark brown, with darker color preferred.

Expression is intelligent, alert, and kindly. Eye rims are tight and solidly colored either black or dark brown. Eyelashes are white.

Serious Faults: Very pale yellow eyes; loose eye rims.

Disqualifications: Blue eyes; complete lack of pigmentation on eye rims.

EARS - The ears are pendant, V-shaped, and slightly rounded at the tips. The ears are set rather high and lie flat to the skull. When alert, the ears are carried slightly higher; when the dog is disturbed, the ears are pulled back. When pulled toward the eye, the ear should extend at least to the outer edge of the eye and no farther than to the inner corner of the eye. In Turkey, the majority of Akbash Dogs have their ears cropped as puppies. Cropped ears on a dog imported from Turkey should not be penalized, but cropped ears on a domestic-bred dog are a disqualification.

Faults: Ears set too high or too low; ears too large or too small.

Disqualification: Cropped ears on a domestic-bred dog.

NECK

The neck is muscular, medium-long to long, arched at the crest, with little or no dewlap. A dog with some dewlap should not be penalized.

Fault: Excessive dewlap.

FOREQUARTERS

The shoulders are well muscled as expected in a working dog. The shoulder blade and upper arm are well angulated and nearly equal in length.

FORELEGS - The forearm is long, straight, and well boned in proportion to the overall build of the dog. The front legs are set moderately well apart with elbows close to sides. The strong pasterns are slightly sloping when viewed from the side. When viewed from the front, legs should be parallel with each other and perpendicular to the ground.

Faults: Bowed front legs; feet that turn in or out.

BODY

The chest is deep and moderately wide. The ribs are well sprung from the spine and then flatten to form a deep body extending almost to the elbows. The length of the ribs decreases fairly quickly from the lowest point of the chest toward the loin. The topline inclines very slightly downward from well-developed withers to a strong back with a slight but definite arch over the loin, which blends into a long, well-muscled, sloping croup. The flank is well tucked up giving evidence of the gazehound influence in the breed.

Fault: Barrel chest.

HINDQUARTERS

The hindquarters are powerful. Although more heavily muscled, the bone and angulation of the hindquarters balances that of the forequarters.

HIND LEGS - The upper thigh is both deep, from front to back, and long. Stifles are well bent; hocks are well let down. The long hind legs contribute to the graceful arch of the loin and the speed and agility of the breed. Viewed from the rear, the rear pasterns are parallel to each other; from the side, they should be slightly forward of the perpendicular when the dog is in a natural but alert position.

Faults: Cow hocks; sickle hocks.

FEET

Two types of feet appear in this breed: cat feet and hare feet. Both are acceptable; the cat foot is preferred. Regardless of shape, the feet are large and strong with well-arched toes. The pads are thick, hard, elastic, and may be either light or dark. Nails are gray, brown, or white and should be presented blunt. Dewclaws may be absent, single, or double and may be removed.

Faults: Splayed feet.

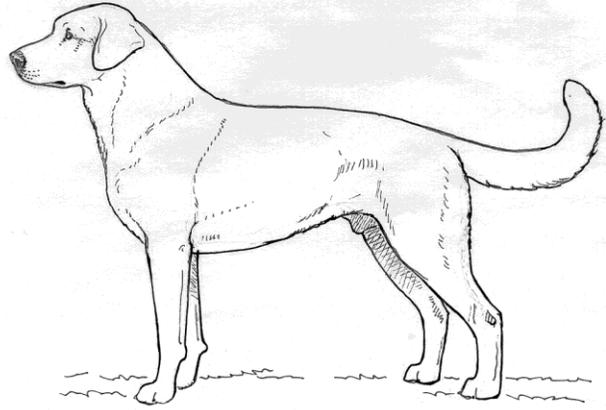
TAIL

The tail is uncut, thick at the base, and tapering to the tip. The tail is set low at the base of the croup. When the dog is relaxed, the tail is carried low, just reaching to the hock, with the bottom third of the tail frequently forming a hook. When the dog is moving or excited, the tail is usually carried in a curl over the back. The height and degree of curl depends on the degree of excitement and confidence. The tail may be slightly to heavily feathered in proportion to the coat length of the dog.

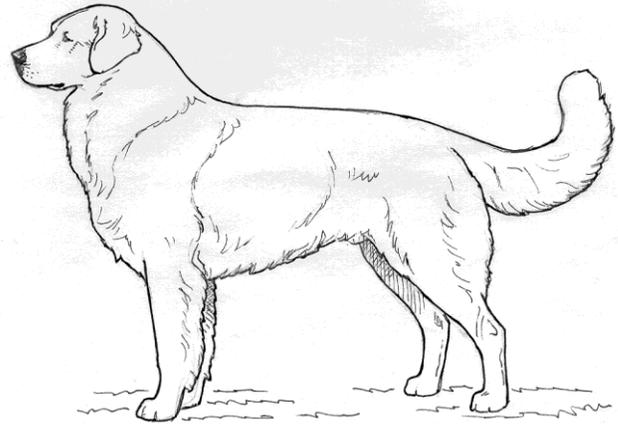
Faults: Docked or short tail; tail carried between the legs, which would indicate shyness or cowardliness.

COAT

The Akbash Dog has a double coat consisting of longer, coarse, outer guard hairs and dense undercoat made up of soft, fine hair. Thickness of the undercoat varies significantly with the climate and exposure of the dog to weather. The Akbash Dog normally sheds its undercoat annually. **There are two equally acceptable coat lengths. No preference is given to either type.** In both types of coat, the hair on the muzzle, ears, and paws is shorter than the body coat.



Medium Coat. The body hair is short to medium in length and lies flat giving a sleek, racy appearance to the dog. There is a slight ruff. There may be a slight feathering on the forelegs, thighs, and tail.



Long Coat. The body coat on the long-coated Akbash Dog is distinctly longer than on the medium-coated dog. The hair is often slightly wavy, but is never curled or matted. The long-coated Akbash Dog with full undercoat appears heavier than the medium-coated dog. There is a distinct ruff and profuse feathering on the forelegs, thighs, and tail. During the summer or in warm climates, the long-coated Akbash Dog appears significantly sleeker without the heavily developed undercoat.

COLOR

The Akbash Dog is always white. Light biscuit or gray shading around the ears or in the undercoat should never be penalized as long as the dog's overall appearance is white. Gray or silver-blue skin pigmentation, either solid or in spots, is desirable but not required provided the individual dog shows ample black or dark brown pigmentation on the eye rims, nose, and lips.

Disqualifications: Any overall color other than white; defined spots on the outer coat; black whiskers; black eyelashes; albinism.

HEIGHT & WEIGHT

For this flock-guarding breed, size, soundness, and the ability to move with speed and agility are equally important. Desirable height at maturity, measured at the withers, ranges from 30 to 34 inches for males and 28 to 32 inches for females. Weight should be in proportion to the height, giving a well-muscled, lean appearance without being too light or too heavy. The average weight for a male Akbash Dog in good condition is 120 pounds; for a female, 90 pounds.

Fault: Obese, soft condition.

Severe Fault: Dog or bitch varying more than one inch in height from the parameters above.

GAIT

The gait of the Akbash Dog is easy, free, and elastic. The feet travel close to the ground. From the front or rear, the legs do not travel parallel to each other but rather close together at the ground. As speed increases, the legs gradually angle more inward until the pads are almost single tracking. Viewed from the side, the hind legs reach far under, meeting or even passing the imprints of the front legs. Unless the dog is excited, the head is carried rather low at the level of the shoulders. When alert, the Akbash Dog moves with determination and purpose toward the object of interest.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

(A dog with a Disqualification must not be considered for placement in a conformation event, and must be reported to UKC.)

Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchid.

Viciousness, marked shyness, or cowardliness.

Cropped ears on a domestic-bred dog.

Complete lack of pigmentation on the nose, eye rims, or lips.

Blue eyes.

Any overall color other than white.

Defined spots on the outer coat.

Black whiskers.

Black eyelashes.

Albinism.