

SAINT BERNARD

Official UKC Breed Standard

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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

In the 17th Century, the monks of the hospice of St. Bernard in Switzerland began to keep large, alpine farm dogs to serve as guardians, draft animals, turnspits, and bed warmers. The role that made them famous, however, was as finders and rescuers of lost travelers. The thousands of travelers who passed through the hospice made the breed famous but it was not until the middle of the 19th century that a breeder outside the hospice, Heinrich Schumacher, developed a standard and began to keep breeding records of the Saint Bernard. All modern Saints trace their ancestry to Schumacher's dogs. Saints were introduced to the United States in the late 18th Century.

The Saint Bernard was recognized by United Kennel Club in the 1920s.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Saint Bernard is a large, massive, athletic dog with a broad head, medium-sized drop ears and a natural tail carried level with the back or with a slight upward curve. The Saint Bernard is nearly square and proportionally tall. The breed comes in two coat varieties, shorthaired and longhaired. In evaluating a Saint Bernard, exaggerations or faults should be penalized in proportion to how much they interfere with the dog's ability to perform its historical task of alpine rescue.

CHARACTERISTICS

The Saint Bernard is noted for its large size, great substance, and friendly, eager-to-please temperament. The ideal Saint Bernard is a gentle giant, friendly with

strangers and affectionate with his family. This breed is typically not aggressive with other dogs, regardless of sex.

HEAD

The correct Saint Bernard head is large, imposing and well chiseled. The head is nearly as deep as it is long and is wider than long. Viewed from the side, the ratio of the length of skull to muzzle is 2:1. A median furrow extends from the occiput to the nose. The furrow deepens from occiput to stop where it is strongly marked, then becomes wider and shallow as it runs down the bridge of the muzzle.

Serious Fault: Absence of median furrow.

SKULL - The skull is massive, broad and gently arched laterally and longitudinally. The skull is broadest at the zygomatic arch, which is very prominent. The occiput is moderately developed. The supraorbital arches are strongly developed and form a nearly right angle with the horizontal axis of the head. When the dog is alert, the skin above the eyes will form wrinkles, which contribute to proper Saint Bernard expression.

Serious Fault: Excessive skin on the head.

MUZZLE - The muzzle is broad, blunt and deep, with no taper in any direction. The muzzle is relatively short, about one-half the length of the skull, and deeper than wide with a ratio of 11:8. The width of the muzzle is approximately equal to its length. Viewed in profile, the bridge of the muzzle is straight. Flews of the upper jaw are strongly developed and slightly overhanging, forming a gentle curve into the lower edge. Lips are black.

Faults: Roman nose, lumps on bridge of nose, folds of skin on top or sides of muzzle, curved bridge of muzzle.

Serious Faults: Absence of median groove on muzzle; flews hanging more than 1½ inches below the lower edge of the underjaw; flews too sharply cut back.

TEETH - The Saint Bernard has a complete set of evenly spaced, white teeth meeting in a scissors bite. A level bite is acceptable but not preferred. It is desirable for the roof of the mouth to be black.

Faults: Overshot or undershot bite.

Serious Fault: More than two missing teeth.

NOSE - The nose is broad with nostrils well open. Nose leather is black. In profile, the top of the nose does not rise above the bridge of the muzzle.

Fault: Incomplete nose pigment.

Disqualification: Nose color other than black.

EYES - Eyes are medium in size and dark brown in color. They are set moderately deep and more to the front of

the skull than the sides. Each eyelid has a slight fold, causing the eye to have a diamond-shaped appearance. Expression is kindly and intelligent.

Faults: Light eyes; very visible haw; exposed lachrymal glands.

Serious Faults: Functional abnormality of eyelids or eyelashes; bulging, round eyes.

Disqualification: Blue eyes.

EARS - Ears are drop, of medium-size, and set fairly high. The base of the ear is well developed so that the rear edge of the ear leather stands away from the skull while the front edge hangs close to the head. The earflap forms a rounded triangle, slightly elongated toward the point.

Serious Fault: Low-set ears.

NECK

The neck is extremely muscular and thick, slightly arched, rather high set, and blends smoothly into the shoulders. The neck is of moderate length but appears short due to its extreme thickness. There is an observable dewlap on the neck and throat.

Fault: Excessive dewlap on neck or throat.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders are muscular and moderately angulated. Shoulder blades are flat and approximately equal in length to the upper arms. The tips of the shoulder blades are fairly close together.

FORELEGS - Elbows are close to the body, with the point of elbow set under the withers. The forelegs are straight, heavy-boned, and very muscular. Viewed from the front, the forelegs are parallel and moderately wide. Viewed from the side, the pasterns are short, powerful and slightly sloping.

Faults: Excessive or lack of adequate angulation.

BODY

The body is massive and muscular but sufficiently agile to navigate mountainous terrain. A properly proportioned Saint Bernard is square with the length of body (measured from prosternum to point of buttocks) equal to height (measured from the withers to the ground). The length of the front leg (measured from point of elbow to the ground) is equal to half the dog's height.

The back is level to the haunches, then slopes slightly toward the rump. The loin is short, broad and so distinctly muscular that there is a well-defined break between the muscles of the loin and the belly below. The croup is slightly sloping.

The ribs extend well back and are well sprung out from the spine, then curving downward and inward. The ribs in the forward section of the rib cage are flatter to allow for efficient movement. Viewed from the side, the brisket extends to the elbow and the forechest extends

in a gentle curve slightly beyond the point of shoulder. Viewed from the front, the chest is well filled and is at least as wide as a man's closed hand. The belly is firm with very little tuck-up.

Faults: Slab-sidedness, narrow or shallow chest; sloping backline; roach, sway or long back; excessive tuck-up; flat or steep croup.

HINDQUARTERS

The angulation of the hindquarters is in balance with the angulation of the forequarters. Hindquarters are broad and thick.

HIND LEGS - The muscles in the upper thigh of an adult male should be so massive that an average man's two hands cannot span them. When the dog is standing, the short, thick rear pasterns are perpendicular to the ground and, viewed from the rear, parallel to each other.

Faults: Cow hocks; open hocks; sickle hocks.

Serious Fault: Lack of muscle mass.

FEET

The feet are large, round and compact with well-arched toes and thick, elastic pads. Feet do not turn in or out. Rear feet are just slightly longer than front feet. Rear dewclaws may be removed.

Serious Faults: Flat or splayed feet.

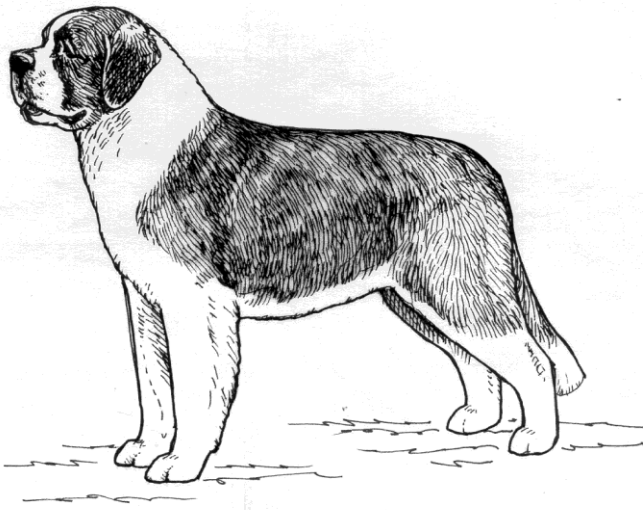
TAIL

The tail is set on as a natural extension of the topline. It is thick and muscular at the base and tapers to the tip. When the dog is in repose, the tail just reaches to the hock. It is acceptable for the bottom third of the tail to curve gently upward. When the dog is moving or alert, the tail is carried level with the back or with a slight upward curve. It is never vertical, curled, or tucked between the legs.

COAT

The Saint Bernard has a dense, insulating double coat. The outer coat is thick, close lying and resilient without being coarse. The outer coat is straight but some waviness over the loin and pelvis is acceptable. The undercoat is short, very dense, and soft. Saint Bernards come in two coat types, shorthaired and longhaired.

Shorthaired: The coat is short over the entire dog except that the hair on the thighs and tail is longer and thicker. The longer coat at the base of the tail gradually shortens toward the tip.



Longhaired: The coat is of medium length except that it is longer, but not abundant, on the ears, neck, back of legs, brisket and lower chest, back of thighs and tail. The coat forms a ruff around the head and neck. There is feathering on the forelegs and belly. The coat on the thighs and tail is very bushy.

Feet may be trimmed and stray hairs neatened, but neither the natural appearance of the coat nor the outline of the dog should be altered by trimming.

Faults: Open or standoff coat; excessive hair length; soft coat.

COLOR

All shades of red and white; brindle and white; or any shade of brown and white. The following white markings are required: white chest, white feet and tip of tail, white nose band, and white collar or white spot on the nape of the neck. The following white markings are highly desirable: white collar, white muzzle, white blaze between the eyes, white belly and legs, and white on the lower half of the tail. A dark mask around the eyes and dark color on the ears are highly desirable but their absence is not a fault. Black on any other part of the dog is a minor fault.

Fault: Black color anywhere but on the ears and mask around the eyes.

Disqualifications: Solid-colored dog; absence of white; black and white dog; albinism.

HEIGHT

The ideal height for an adult Saint Bernard male is 30 inches at the withers and for a female, 28 inches. A one-inch deviation from the ideal is acceptable. A Saint Bernard must be massive, powerful and well boned with hard, firm muscles and moderately dry skin.

Faults: Deviation from the ideal height by more than one inch but less than 2½ inches.

GAIT

When trotting, the gait is effortless, smooth, powerful and well coordinated, showing moderate reach in front and similar moderation behind. When moving, the dog's head moves slightly forward and downward. The topline remains level with only a slight flexing to indicate suppleness. Viewed from any position, legs turn neither in nor out, nor do feet cross or interfere with each other. As speed increases, feet tend to converge toward the centerline of balance. It is recommended that dogs be shown on a loose lead and moved at a moderate speed to reflect true gait.

ELIMINATING FAULTS

(An Eliminating Fault is a Fault serious enough that it eliminates the dog from obtaining any awards in a conformation event.)

Deviation from the ideal height by 2½ inches or more.

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 or extreme shyness.

Nose color other than black.

Blue eyes.

Solid-colored dog.

Absence of white.

Black and white dog.

Albinism.