

## **THE BRITTANY STANDARD**

**BY: DOROTHY MACDONALD**

The Brittany-Standard has been written and updated over the years to verbalize the ideal Brittany in looks and function. So, it behooves everyone with a love of the breed to know the standard. Let's look more closely.

The ideal Brittany is a great bird dog, therefore, he is intelligent and independent, characteristics not always easy to live with and seldom useful in static obedience work, but as essential to any good bird dog as is an alert, eager attitude. The Brittany standard says, "*a happy, alert dog, neither mean nor shy*".

The Brittany is the smallest of the pointing breeds. Big enough to handle any upland game birds and to cover all terrain, but still an easy fit in a car, on your lap or on the saddle. The Brittany standard says, "*17-1/2" to 20-1/2", over or under to disqualify.*"

Agility is very important for a breed originally designed by the poachers of Brittany to get in and get out quickly and neatly. The standard says, "*compact, closely knit, leggy, agile, energetic and quick of movement.*" Covering ground with ease and fluidity is another essential for a bird dog. The standard says, "*most important is side gait; which is smooth, efficient and ground covering*" What contributes to this gait? Well, structure, e.g., good angulation and powerful muscles. The standard says, "*shoulders, sloping and muscular. Blade and upper arm should form nearly a 90 degree angle. Hindquarters -broad*

*strong and muscular with powerful thighs and well bent stifles giving the angulation necessary for powerful drive*". Note that according to this same standard, rear angulation should be evaluated in motion from the side, not standing still.

All running dogs need good quality feet with the depth of a cat foot for cushioning and the length of a hare foot for ground gripping. The standard says, "*ideal foot is halfway between the hare and the cat foot.*" Covering rugged and hilly ground requires cushioning. So besides the front and rear angulation already mentioned, the standard says, "*Pasterns slightly sloped*".

Working long hours in varying weather requires strength and endurance. The standard says, "*ruggedness without clumsiness. Strong, Vigorous*". Running also requires heart and lung capacity. The standard says, "*chest deep - ribs well sprung. Adequate heart room provided by depth as well as width*". Remember this does not mean so wide as to disturb the placement of shoulders and elbows.

Protection from the heavy cover that a bird dog must go over or through in a day's work needs a skin that is loose enough to diminish punctures, yet not too loose so as to form pouches. The standard says, "*Skin - fine and fairly loose (so as) to roll with briars and sticks thus diminishing punctures or tearing. A skin so loose as to form pouches is undesirable*".

While the Brittany is not a so called "Head Breed", any dog's head should give you an instant identification as to breed. So, realistically all breeds are head breeds. All features of a Brittany head help protect him in the field. The standard says, *"eyes well set in head protected by heavy, expressive eyebrow. No pocket or haw to catch seeds. Ears short and triangular, lying flat and close to the head. Nostrils well open to permit deep breathing and adequate scenting. Lips tight and dry so feathers will not stick"*.

The Brittany coat is designed to give him maximum protection for upland game work and minimum interference. A woolly coat collects trouble. Long feathering catches on briars. Some length and density protects against scratches. The standard says, *"Coat dense, flat or wavy. Ears should carry little fringe. Some feathering on legs, but too little is preferable to too much."*

While coloring is not all important, the standard says, *"orange and white or liver and white in standard parti-color or piebald patterns."* Clear or roan is equally acceptable and the roan is a definite plus in keeping pigmentation in any breeding program.

The Brittany standard was written for the ideal bird dog with his work in mind. Sure, it is true that a Brittany with very bad conformation could be an outstanding bird dog, if he had the heart and desire. Heart and desire are as essential as conformation, and need to be bred for with just as much care. Conformation does not make a dog run

and hunt, but it sure does make it easier for him to do so. Our standard was designed to help our dogs perform better at less physical cost. So, field trialers and hunters, don't think of the standard as for the show people. It was written to help all Brittanys in their single minded purpose of finding birds. Equally, show people, remember that the restrictions in the standard are there to keep the breed forever one breed. Excessive coat is the ultimate in dividing a breed. So also is fat. Extra weight can make a dog's outline look smoother, but is not desirable in a working animal. Muscle, on the other hand, while not necessary in getting around a 50 foot ring, allows a dog to run and perform the way he wants to throughout his life.

Field Trialers, Hunters and Show Exhibitors, in the case of the Brittany, let's remain one and the same. **One Standard - One Purpose - One Breed.**

