

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL



Extended Breed Standard of **THE MALTESE**

Produced by

Maltese Club of Victoria Inc
and
Maltese Club of NSW Inc
In Collaboration with
Australian National Kennel Council

Standard adopted by Kennel Club London pre 1987
FCI Standard No: 65
Standard adopted by ANKC pre 1987
Breed Standard Extension adopted by the Clubs and ANKC 1995
Breed Standard Extension reconfirmed by the Clubs and ANKC 2009
Copyright Australian National Kennel Council 2009
Country of Origin ~ United Kingdom

Extended Standards are compiled purely for the purpose of training Australian judges and students of the breed.

In order to comply with copyright requirements of authors, artists and photographers of material used, the contents must not be copied for commercial use or any other purpose. Under no circumstances may the Standard or Extended Standard be placed on the Internet without written permission of the ANKC.

HISTORY OF THE BREED

As an aristocrat of the canine world, this ancient breed has been known by a variety of names throughout the centuries. Originally called the “Melitaie Dog” he has also been known as “Ye Ancient Dogge of Malta”, the “Roman Ladies’ Dog,” the “Majestic Creature”, the “Comforter Dog,” and the “Maltese Terrier.” Sometime within the past century, he has come to simply be known as the “Maltese”. The breed’s history can be traced back many centuries. Some have placed its origin at two or three thousand years ago and Darwin placed the origin of the breed at 6000 BC.

There is also some evidence that the breed originated in Asia and is related to the Tibetan Terrier, the exact origin is unknown. Maltese are generally associated with the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea. The dogs probably made their way to Europe through the Middle East with the migration of nomadic tribes. The Isle of Malta (or Melitae as it was then known) was a geographic center of early trade, and explorers undoubtedly found ancestors of the tiny, white dogs left there as barter for necessities and supplies. The dogs were favoured by the wealthy and royalty alike and were bred over time to specifically be a companion animal. Some royals that purportedly owned Maltese were Mary Queen of Scots, Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Victoria, Josephine Bonaparte and Marie Antoinette. Some famous people that have owned Maltese dogs are Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra, Halle Berry, Mia Farrow, Liberace, Lee Remmick, Heather Locklear, Kristin Chenoweth and Torrie Wilson. In fact, the Maltese were so favoured by the Roman emperors, they chose to breed them to be pure white - something they considered a ‘sacred colour’.

During the first century, Publius, the Roman governor of Malta, had a Maltese named Issa (Issa translates as “Now” in the Maltese Language) of which he was very fond. The poet Marcus Valerius Martialis (Martial), born in 38BC at Bilbilis in Spain, made this attachment famous in one of his celebrated epigrams:

“Issa is more frolicsome than Catulla’s sparrow.”

“Issa is purer than a dove’s kiss.”

“Issa is gentler than a maiden.”

“Issa is more precious than Indian gems...”

“Lest the last days that she sees light”

“should snatch her from him forever,”

“Publius has had her picture painted.”

It is said that the painting of the dog was so life-like that one could not tell the dog from the picture.

During the Renaissance, the poet Ludovico Ariosto in a few lines of his literary masterpiece, "Orlando Furioso," describes a dog, that could possibly be a Maltese.

"The tiniest dog Nature has ever produced —"

"Her coat of long hair, whiter than ermine,"

"Her movements exquisitely graceful and"

"Matchless elegance of appearance."



Fig.1 Poetry in motion

● GENERAL APPEARANCE

Should be smart, lively and alert. The action must be free, without extended weaving.

The first impression a judge should have is of a Toy dog, covered from head to foot with long, silky, white hair. He should be well-balanced, smart, lively and alert. He should move freely without extended weaving in front, his hind legs moving in a straight line. A Maltese of correct type is a small dog, compact in build, with a firm level topline and proud demeanour. These features form the general impression of the breed. The Maltese is approximately square when measured from withers to root of tail and withers to ground. In full coat the dog will therefore appear longer than tall, when taking into account the pro sternum and point of buttock. Unlike many other Toy breeds the Maltese is not a ratter. It is a lap or sleeve dog a beautiful companion dog.

The Maltese is a well-angulated dog with an extended reach and drive and considering its size should cover a lot of ground. Longer legs or an excessively short back will force a well-angulated dog to crab. Be aware, Maltese with straight angulation and a short stride can sometimes be shorter in back and still move true but they are incorrect. Also be aware that a dog with this type of long stride will tend to single track at speed for kinetic balance and if in full coat on long grass, may trip up as the back feet catch the shoulder coat being drawn back by the long grass. Maltese with short strides will move better on long grass but they are not correct. If in doubt on a very bad surface of long spongy grass take the dogs to a paved area to check.

The Maltese is a well-angulated dog with a level topline and high tail set.

● CHARACTERISTICS

Sweet tempered and very intelligent.

A Maltese of correct type must never appear shy or timid. He should be self-confident and happy. A dog, which shows extreme reticence or cowardliness, should be considered untypical, yet a Maltese may show reservation towards strangers. On the other hand, an overly aggressive dog that displays viciousness is totally uncharacteristic of the breed.

● TEMPERAMENT

Sweet tempered and very intelligent.

For all his diminutive size, the Maltese seems to be without fear, but reserved of strangers. His trust and affectionate responsiveness is always appealing. He is amongst the gentlest mannered of all Toy dogs, yet he is lively and playful as well as vigorous. The personality is unique among the Toy breeds and is one of the most outstanding characteristics. A good temperament is a most important factor in judging whether a Maltese is of good breed type. The stressed Maltese possessing a withdrawn personality or one that is “feisty” to the point of viciousness should be penalised severely when weighing a dog’s merits against those of other specimens.

● HEAD AND SKULL

From stop to centre of skull (centre between forepart of ears) and stop to tip of nose should be equally balanced. Stop should be defined. Nose should be pure black.

Proportion of muzzle to skull is one to two. From the nose to the stop – one part; from the stop to the occiput - 2 parts. There is a defined stop, the angle at which the muzzle blends into the skull is moderate rather than abrupt. The skull rises up from the definite stop and arches towards the top of the skull in a gentle, rounded shape. The skull itself is slightly rounded. This in no way indicates an apple-shaped or excessively rounded skull. It is slightly rounded, coming up from the stop, rounding out and flattening slightly, with the sides of the skull rounding down from the crown.

The skull is not too broad, nor too narrow. The bridge of the muzzle is straight and parallel to the skull. The width of the muzzle should be in balance and proportion with that of the skull, tapering slightly to the nose leather (never snipty) with a well developed underjaw. The nose is black. Size should be in keeping with size of the head, neither too coarse nor too small.

The expression is made up by correct skull dimensions, and, colour, size, shape and placement of the eyes. The correct Maltese expression is soft. The skull is almost as wide as long and the muzzle is balanced with the measurement from stop to centre of skull (centre between forepart of ears). This means if the skull is longer and wider, so must the muzzle be longer for correct balance.

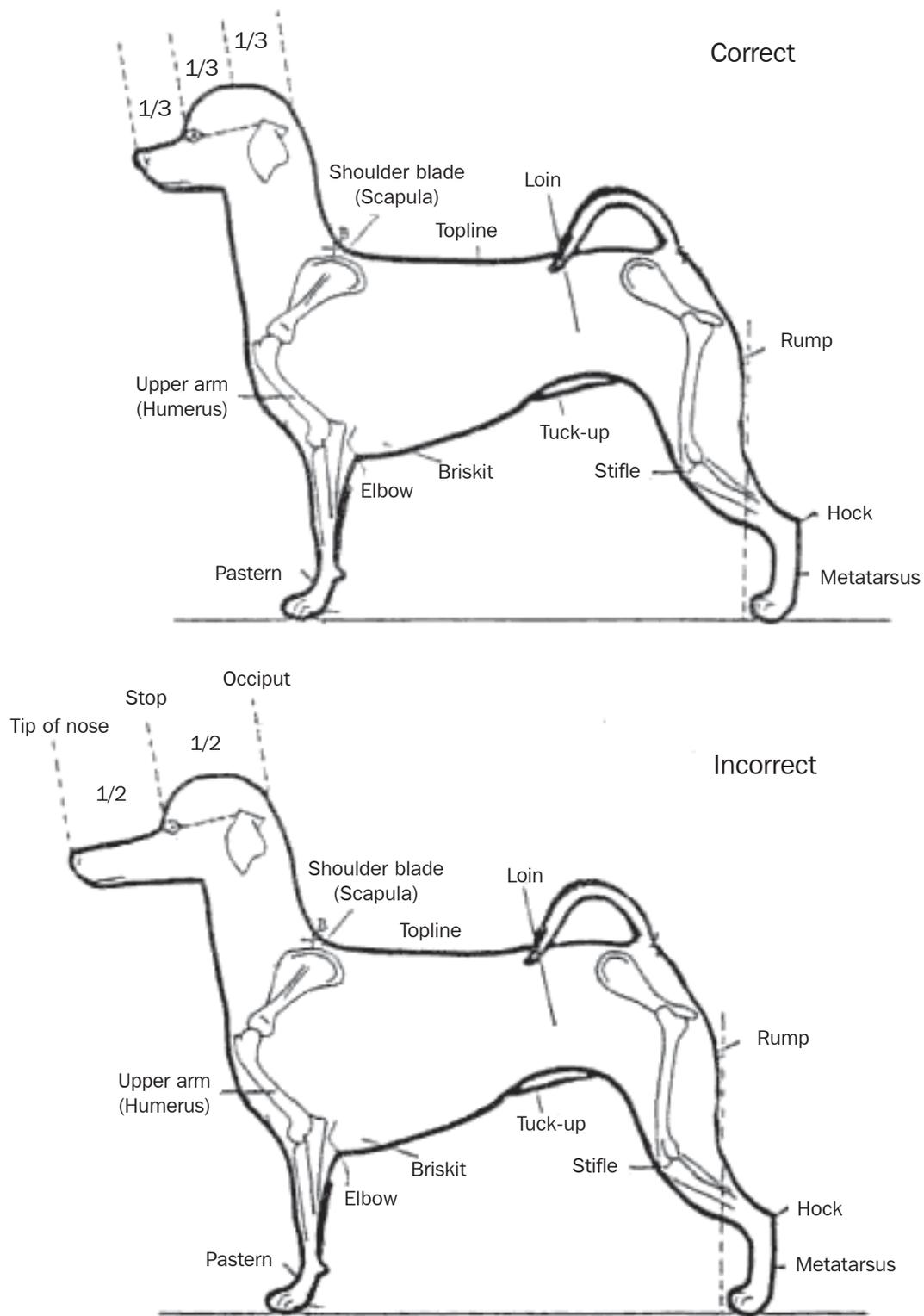


Fig. 2 Correct and incorrect head proportions.



Fig. 3 Correct muzzle and skull balance



Fig.4 Down faced



Fig. 5 Tilted up



Fig. 6 Too short



Fig. 7 Too long

● EYES

Oval, not bulging, dark brown, black eye-rims.

The shape of the Maltese eye must be oval and very dark, to the point of appearing black. Yellow or amber eyes are a fault. The eyes should be set in the centre of the cheeks (not too close and not too far apart) and should not be obliquely set. An eye that is squinty or beady, being too small, is highly undesirable, as is a bulging or protruding eye. The Maltese should possess an eye that in size is in proper balance to the rest of the head. The eye-rims must be black and shading on the skin around the eyes accentuates and enhances the expression (this is referred to as “haloes” or shadows). Absence of the pigment on the eye-rims gives the Maltese a blank expression. Lines drawn between the centre of the eyes and the nose will create a near equilateral triangle.

Fig 8. Correct



Dark, oval, not bulging, soft expression

Fig 9. Incorrect



Light and bulging, hard expression

● EARS

Should be long and well feathered and hanging close to the side of the head, the hair to be mingled with the coat at the shoulders.

The ear leathers are triangular in shape, soft and pendulous. They are set reasonably forward and low (rather than -high) approximately level with the eyes at the side of the head. They should lay flat and close to the head. Folded or “button” ears are quite incorrect, as are high set “Terrier-like” ears. The ears should be heavily feathered with the long hair that hangs close to the head. A “fly-away” look may be seen when puppies from 4-8 months are teething, which should not be penalised.

● MOUTH

Level or scissor bite with teeth even.

In a level bite, the upper row of teeth touches the lower row of teeth, edge to edge. In a scissor bite, the upper row of teeth closely overlaps and touches the lower row of the teeth and is set square to the jaw. The upper and lower jaws should be sufficiently broad to accommodate all 6 incisors evenly. The mouth should never be snipey and the under-jaw should be well developed. A snipey under-jaw contributes to crowded dentition. The teeth should be even. A muzzle that is either too short or too narrow will not provide sufficient bone for the teeth to be seated correctly. The lips are black.

● NECK

Of medium length, set on well-sloped shoulders.

The neck should be of sufficient length as to promote a high carriage of the head and to give a regal appearance. It should be gracefully arched, without exaggeration. A Maltese should never appear “stuffy” in the neck. Good shoulder layback contributes to the reach of the neck and correct head carriage. The layback of the shoulder will also provide a pleasing transition of the neck-line into the withers and topline. If there is poor shoulder layback, the muscles will be poorly developed. Such a neck will join the withers abruptly and the neck will appear short.

● FOREQUARTERS

Legs should be short and straight. Shoulders well sloped.

The forelegs should be straight with well-knit pasterns so that the pads are under the centre of gravity. The pasterns should be free of appreciable bend. The dog should stand with well laid-back shoulders, the elbows held close to the side of the body. The Maltese should move effortlessly in the front and cover ground with no extended weaving or high stepping.

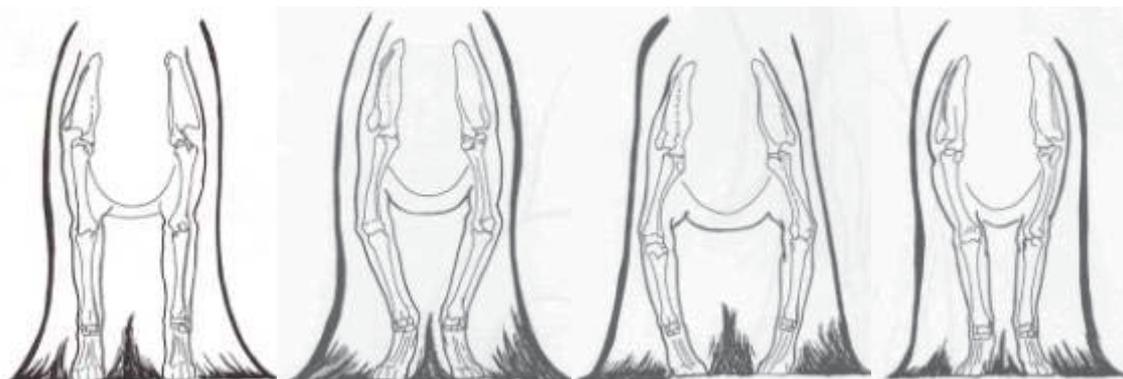


Fig 10. Correct

Fig 11. Fiddle front

Fig 12. Out at elbow

Fig 13. Narrow

● BODY

Should be in every way well balanced and essentially short and cobby, with good rib spring and the back should be straight from the tip of the shoulders to the tail.

Since the actual body length extends somewhat forward from the withers line to the point of the shoulders, the Maltese is slightly longer than it is tall. The back should be level in topline, the same height from the ground at the withers (highest point of the shoulders), as it is at the root of the tail. Remember, this is a balanced dog. Too short a leg will result in a long low appearance. Correct proportions are essential.

Ribs well sprung with chest fairly deep to or just below the elbows. Loins taut and strong without excessive tuck-up. The elbows held close to the body, still allowing the legs to reach out in front. The line down the back following the spine should be dead level, devoid of any humps or depressions in the level line.

There are several incorrect toplines found in Maltese. These include roached backs that may be slight or rather severe, which usually occurs over the area of the loin of the dog, just behind the ribs. It is commonly found in slab-sided dogs with a length of back. The “soft back” is the opposite condition of the roached back, creating a depression downward in the topline, behind the withers, in comparison to the upward curve of the roached back. Soft backs are not firm during movement, as a good topline should always be. They may be inherited or the result of poor muscle tone due to lack of exercise. A topline such as this will sag permanently as the dog grows older. A sloping topline is one which is devoid of a roach or dip, but which slopes downwards from the tail to the withers, usually caused by lack of angulation in the hindquarters, or slopes from withers to tail and may be caused by over angulation of the hindquarters or straight shoulders.

In considering a Maltese, one needs to bear in mind that both front and rear construction are “in balance” and the topline level.

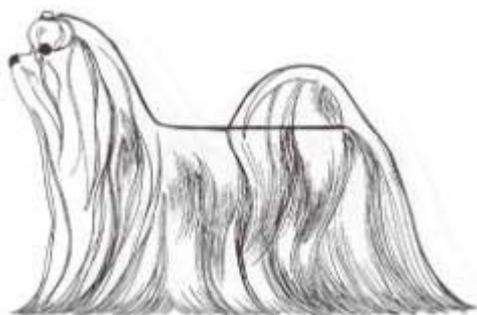


Fig 14. Correct



Fig 15. Roached



Fig 16. Sloping



Fig 17. Dipped

● HINDQUARTERS

Legs should be short and nicely angulated.

The hindquarters must be strong with well-turned stifles and well let down hocks. Rear pastern to be parallel when viewed from behind. When standing, the feet will be slightly behind the rear quarters.

Fig 18. Correct



Fig 19. Too straight



Fig 20. Correct



Fig 21. Narrow

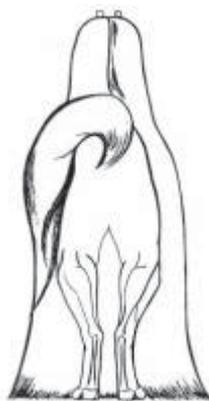


Fig 22. Cow hocked



● FEET

Should be round and the pads of the feet should be black.

The feet should be small and round with black toe pads. Black toenails are not a requirement but are sometimes seen. The feet should be of sufficient size to carry the dog.

● TAIL

Should be well arched over the back and feathered.

The tail of the Maltese must be carried well up and over the back with the tip resting on the hindquarter on either side. The tail should not sit as high as to be on the same level as the head, but at a lower level, slightly arching over the back. A low set tail will tend to give a longer look to the back, thus destroying the compact or cobby look desired. The tail should be well feathered so as to complement the body coat.

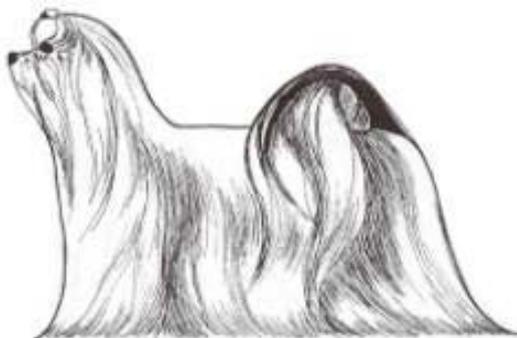


Fig 23. Correct tail



Fig 24. Flag tail



Fig 25. Pig tail



Fig 26. Low-set tail

● **GAIT/MOVEMENT**

The action must be free, without extended weaving.

The Maltese moves with a smooth, flowing gait. The forelegs reach straight and free from the shoulders with the elbows close. The hind legs move in a straight line, driving from behind. Front movement is most obvious when a Maltese gaits as the coat separates and the leg movement may be observed. The reach of the leg is straight out in front - there should be no outward swing. Such action is caused by poor front construction- a “harp” or “cabriole” front will be out at elbow. The legs will be excessively curved in bone, coming together towards the centre of gravity under the dog. Usually the feet will toe out in opposite directions. There will be an actual outward swing of the front legs as the dog propels itself forward. This front usually comes from a straight shoulder and lack of reach of neck and prevents the dog from covering ground freely.

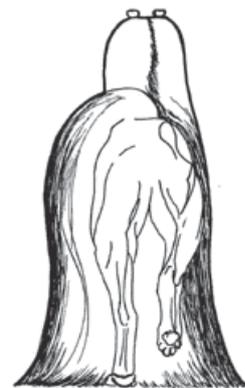
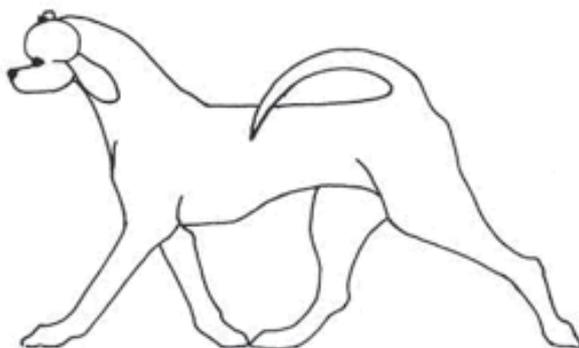


Fig 27. Gait and movement

Poor rear movement can be concealed by the coat of an adult dog but is still obvious by the lack of drive and appearing to go up and down rather than covering ground. An excessive swivel type action accompanies a poor rear assembly. The Maltese propels itself along quite rapidly on its own and should be walked -never run- in the show ring. The Maltese possesses a lively, animated, self-confident and regal demeanour while being gaited. Skipping or high-stepping is undesirable. Correct movement is true with reach and drive, head held up and slightly forward. On the move the topline should remain steady and not bob up and down. At speed legs may converge for kinetic balance.

● COAT

Should be good length, but not impeding action, of silky texture, not in any way woolly and should be straight. It should not be crimped and there should be no woolly undercoat.

The Maltese coat should be of good length, but not so long as to impede the front or hind action. It should be of a silky texture, hanging straight and free from the sides of the dog (a growth wave line in a young dog up to maturity an exception). There should be no undercoat or any hint of woolliness. On a fully matured adult we generally assume that a coat touching the ground is desirable. There is no reason, however, that a coat not touching the ground should be considered less desirable. An over-coated dog will detract from the height, size and shape of the dog.

The standard only requires that the coat be of good length. It is predominantly white (and there are many shades of white) and light lemon or champagne markings are allowed on the ears and on young puppies under 12 months. The standard describes in its own way what are objectionable faults. They are; undercoat or a double coat; a frizzy, kinky or crimped coat (crinkle cut chips or tight zigzag movement in the coat); and, a woolly coat. Judges should part the coat to the skin on the side to check for crimps in the coat. Although ironing and stretch blow drying can remove most of the crimps, they will be visible right next to the skin. A correct coat moves with the dog and is cold to the touch. Trimming is allowed on the feet and on the length of coat to facilitate movement. Dogs may be exhibited with or without bows. One or two bows may be used.

Fig 28 (a) (b). Correct coat (coarse silk preferred)



Adult (coarse silk)



Adult (finer silk)



Fig 29(a). Puppy (medium silk)



Fig 29(b). Double coat (not allowed)

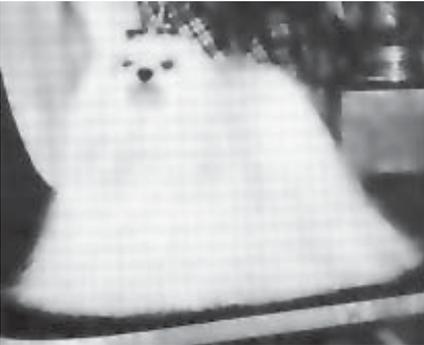


Fig 30. Stand out or Bouffant coat (not allowed)



Fig 31 (a). Crimped coat (not allowed)



Fig 31 (b). Crimped coat (not allowed)



Fig 32. Woolly coat (incorrect)



Fig 33. Curly coat (fault)Curly coat is a fault, but it is preferred to a crimped coat which is not allowed at all



Fig 34. *Too fine fragile coat (allowed, however, coarser silk preferred). Both these dogs are over 12 months of age, they are not puppies.*

● COLOUR

Pure white, but slight lemon markings should not penalise.

Most Maltese are born with biscuit coloured ears, as in the Samoyed or white Poodle, and may have some slight markings on the body coat. These usually fade at the adult age of 2 years. The colour may remain on the ears under the topcoat and is not a penalty. Black pigmentation is so vital to the Maltese for expression and difficult to retain in a pure white dog, therefore, some coat colour is permissible. The coat may sometimes appear slightly cream in a heavily pigmented dog.

● SIZE

Not over 25.5 cm (10 ins) from ground to top of shoulder.

The Standard remains clear and firm. Overall quality is to be favoured over size. Many have interpreted this to mean larger specimens are to be favoured over smaller ones. No such preferential treatment was ever intended. Rather, all Maltese should be considered equally, within the maximum height limit.

● FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points 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.

Brown nose. Pink eye rims. Bad mouth, over or undershot. Gay tail. Curly or woolly coat. Unsound in any way.

● NOTE

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The United Kingdom Maltese Club Newsletter 1989, The Breed Standard by Chris Ripsher, p10-11

The Illustrated Guide to The Maltese Standard 1998, American Maltese Association, Inc

The assistance of Miss Glenyse Acreman Melbourne Victoria Australia.