

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

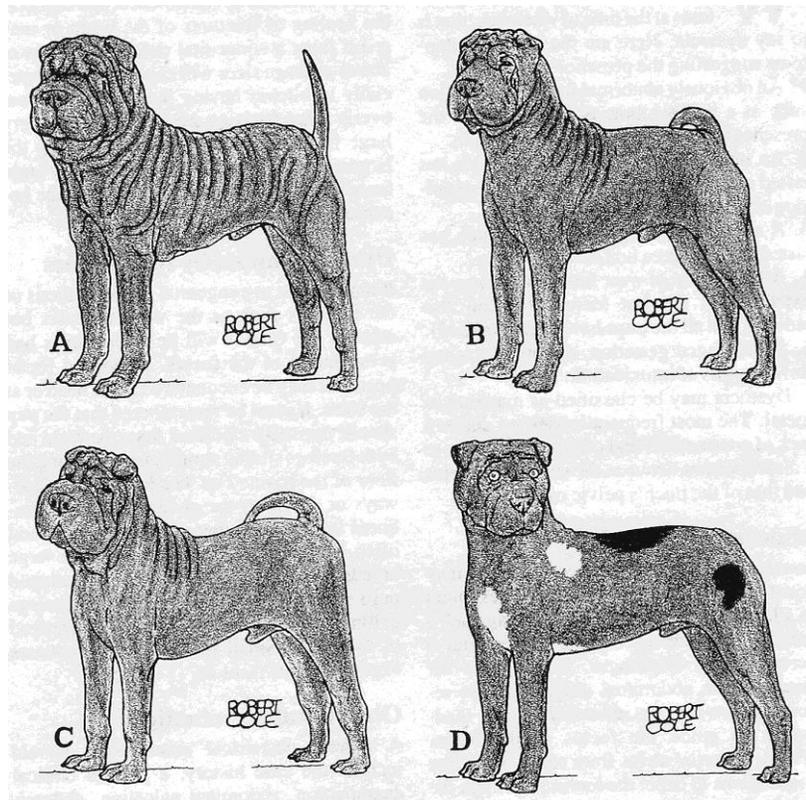
From *Dogs in Canada*, April 1988

THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI

One of these four Chinese Shar-Pei is intended to represent a sound, 55 pound, 20 inch tall, typical male (females are usually smaller, more towards 40 pounds and 18 inches). The other three examples possess virtues, but more important for the purpose of this discussion, they possess certain faults currently of breeder concern, faults that by the nature of their departure serve by comparison to strengthen appreciation for ideal Shar-Pei type.

The Shar-Pei is a head breed and the head will be discussed in detail. As part of the head all four examples have required scissors bite, deviation from a scissors bite being a major fault. All have solid bluish-black (solid lavender for dilutes) tongue, roof of mouth, gums and flews. (A spotted tongue is a major fault, a solid pink tongue is a disqualification.) Having compared them, which one of these four has the best head? Which has the correct amount of head wrinkle? How about ear size, shape and position? Eyes? Muzzle?

As for the body, which has the correct amount of skin fold? What kind of tail and tail-set are you looking for? Balance in terms of ratio of height to length is important to type – what ratio do you consider typical? Steep hind legs being a current problem in the breed, not only locate but determine the separate causes of the two steep departures I have illustrated.



DOG B

This example represents typical. He doesn't wholly exist in my experience. He is a composite of a number of competitive Shar-Pei. His head is large, but not overly large. Wrinkles are profuse on forehead continuing into side wrinkles framing face. Length of muzzle and skull are about equal. The ears are small, thick, triangular, set well apart and close to the skull, slightly rounded at the tips pointing towards and set well forward over the small, dark, almond-shaped eyes. The muzzle is broad, full (a major breed characteristic) and well padded causing a slight bulge at the base of the nose. Viewed head on the bottom jaw is made to appear wider than the top due to padding of lips. The lower lip is also padded but not to the degree that it interferes with bite. The nose is black, the eyes are dark, however lighter colour conforming to coat colour "in dilutes" is acceptable. You may be wondering what a Shar-Pei 'dilute' is. there is not space to include mention of colours but briefly a dilute Shar-Pei would be one having no black pigmentation anywhere on the dog. Dilutes do not receive mention in the British or Hong Kong standards.

The strong neck of medium length flows well into sloping shoulders. The body from breastbone to point of rump is the same length as height at withers. (Bitches can be less square-bodied than dogs yet still be balanced). The oval chest is broad, the elbow level with a deep brisket.

The straight forelegs are of 'moderate' length (slightly longer than depth of body) and the front pasterns are slightly bent, positioning the feet under centre of support complimenting rearward slope to the upper arm. The abdomen (tuck up) rises only slightly. There are loose folds of skin at the shoulders and abundant dewlap about the neck and throat. The coat is harsh, straight, off-standing and does not exceed 2 ½ cms (1 in.) at withers and generally lies somewhat flatter on limbs. No undercoat (not mentioned in Standard). No trimming.

The topline dips the required slight amount behind the withers then rises over a short, broad loin. The croup is flat – the croup not being the pelvis, the croup being the section of topline from hip bones to tail set. The tail is thick and round at the base, tapering to a fine point and curling over the side of back. The hind legs are moderately angulated at stifle and hock, the latter well let down. The hind dewclaws have been removed (a must).

DOG A

This dog's head is overdone; so is the body. Loose skin and wrinkles are superabundant in puppies but less exaggerated in the adult. No doubt the wrinkles and folds are a major Shar-Pei characteristic, however in the adult only the correct amount is required to set the breed apart.

Four additional departures disturb. The ears are too large and hang down the side of the head in Hound fashion. Secondly, the front pastern should slope only slightly – this dog is down in pastern, an all too common fault in this breed. Thirdly, the hind legs lack angulation. If there is one current cause for concern in this breed, it is the large number of straight-stifled Shar-Pei in competition. Breeders have voiced warning of luxating patellas, but this could be the result not the cause. Based on this drawing, you are invited to determine the cause of this particular Shar-Pei's straight stifles.

The tail provides a clue as to the cause of this dog's straight stifles (and straight hocks). The Shar-Pei's tail should set on high. This dog's tail sets on low because its pelvis is steep. The steep pelvis causes the bones of the leg to straighten at stifle and hock and to raise the hind end unnecessarily high.

The fourth departure is the tail itself. There are three ways the tail may be carried. The tail may be (1) curled in a double ring; (2) in a loose-ended ring over the back; (3) or gaily with a slight curve towards the head and to either side of the body ... not perpendicular in the manner of this tail.

DOG C

The head on this example departs from the typical in terms of balance between skull and muzzle. The characteristic Shar-Pei muzzle's been likened to that of a hippopotamus. The problem with this dog's head is that its skull is too small for this large type muzzle.

There are a further number of departures. The length of neck is one. The neck on this example is too short. The forelegs are also too short for a Shar-Pei. In all likelihood you have also noticed this dog's poor feet (a problem in this breed). Did you also notice the front pasterns lack the required slight slope? The dip behind the withers is exaggerated partly because of overly high hindquarters.

First let's discuss the cause of this Shar-Pei's lack of angulation at stifle and hock. If the hind end was not raised unnecessarily high the cause might be a short upper thigh, or more usually in this breed an overly short second thigh. But such is not the case and the clue to the cause can be found in the position or angle of the rump.

Notice that the point of rump is tilted up higher than on the typical example's because the pelvis is flat. A flat pelvis (not the required flat croup) forces the bones of the hind leg to straighten, raises the rear, reduces angulation at stifle and hock, and produces inferior action in profile at the trot (the hind leg extends rearward but cannot be brought fully forward).

The second reason for choosing this particular type of Shar-Pei hindquarters for discussion is the thickness, swelling, or bone formulation at hocks. In some breeds this verges on 'reverse hocks'. In Shar-Pei competition, this serious fault does not seem to cause the concern in this breed that it would in the Chow Chow ring, a breed with less hindquarter angulation requirement than the Shar-Pei.

DOG D

This example represents the sound non-entity, the Am. Staff. Type Shar-Pei, sound but lacking those characteristics that set the Shar-Pei apart. He serves to draw attention to nine more departures from type and two disqualifications.

The ears are small and triangular but they do not lie close to the skull. The eyes are round rather than almond-shaped, light rather than dark, staring rather than sunken. Required head wrinkle is lacking. The muzzle tapers and lacks characteristic fullness.

The Shar-Pei is a square dog; this example is too long in body for a Shar-Pei. Characteristic moderate folds of loose skin and abundant dewlap are missing from about the neck and throat. In addition the coat is smooth rather than extremely harsh, a distinguishing feature of the breed, a major fault when not present.

The absence of a complete tail disqualifies this Shar-Pei. This dog's spots also disqualify it. So would a solid pink tongue. As for colour, an albino or brindle would disqualify. The coat colour must be solid. A parti-colour; spotted (which in this breed includes ticks or roaning); or a tan-pointed pattern would disqualify. (A solid coloured dog may have shading, primarily darker down the back and ears).

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From *Dogs in Canada*, January 1994

THE CHINESE SHAR-PEI



A Second look: illuminating the breed's progress and its unique features.

Place these four real-life Chinese Shar-Pei in order of merit. Three made Champion in Canada or the United States at some point in the short show history of the breed. These four provide a small indication of differences in type within the breed. None represent ideal.

I chose these four Shar-Pei because they illustrate the spectacular progress the breed has made. They also draw attention to a number of features unique to the breed with which new judges sometimes have difficulty.

TWO HEAD TYPES

The Shar-Pei is a head breed. I have drawn two acceptable but quite different heads, the 'classic' (face-on) and the 'meatmouth' (three quarter angle), to illustrate the dignity and beauty desired in each type. A third, more difficult to find type is called the 'bonemouth'. The bonemouth is similar to the classic head but, with lighter padding, its strength of muzzle is based more on underlying bone structure, which does not diminish in power with age. One of the four stacked examples is bonemouth.

MUZZLES

The classic's muzzle is moderately heavy and full, with the same solid bone structure as the bonemouth. Padding is heavy and dense, rounding off the muzzle and contributing to the slightly large head. The amount of bulge where the nose joins the muzzle varies in this type. Viewed from the front, the bottom jaw appears wider than the top due to padding.

The meatmouth's underlying bone structure is the same as the classic's muzzle, but the padding over the bone is much heavier and the 'hippopotamus' effect more pronounced. The head is rather large, but never so large as to upset Shar-Pei balance.

SKULL, EYES, EARS

The skull is flat and broad and approximately the same length as muzzle. The ears are extremely small, rather thick, triangular in shape but slightly rounded at the tips (edges of ear may curl). They lie flat against the head, are set wide apart and forward on the skull, and point toward the eyes.

The Shar-Pei's dark, small (medium in the U.K.) almond-shaped eyes display a scowling expression. The British standard advises that "the function of the eyeball or lid is in no way disturbed by surrounding skin, folds or hair. Any sign of irritation of eyeball, conjunctiva or eyelids is highly undesirable. Free from entropion ..."

WRINKLE

The forehead is covered with profuse wrinkles, which continue into side wrinkles framing the face. The loose skin and wrinkles covering the head, neck and body are profuse in puppies but may be limited to the head, neck and withers in the adult. The British standard advises that excessive skin on the Shar-Pei's body when mature is highly undesirable. Canada and the U.S. do not officially spell this out.

TIGHT LIP

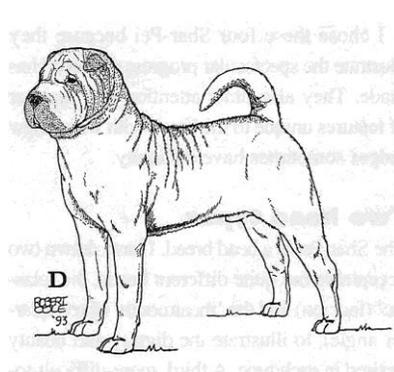
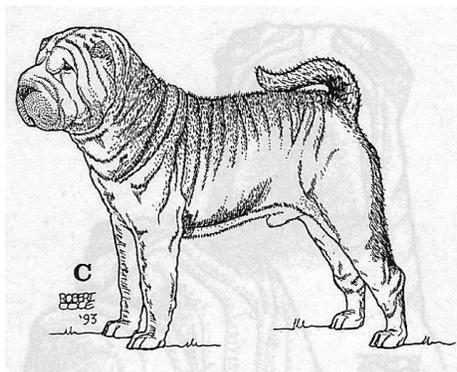
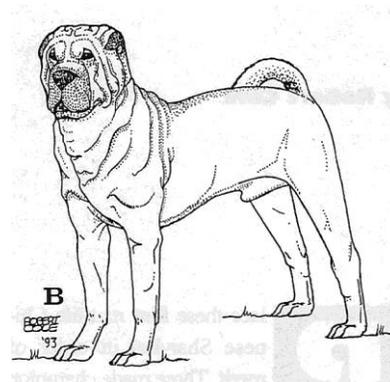
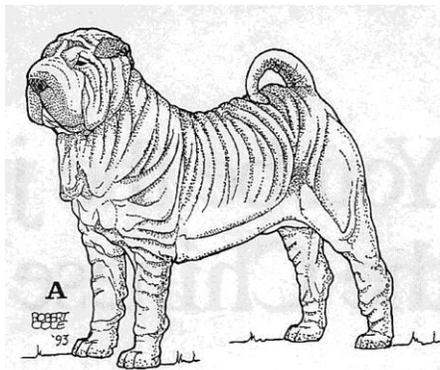
The Canadian and American standards (1990) require that the teeth meet in a scissors bite; they warn that deviation from this bite is a major fault. The 'tight lip' condition occurs when the lower lip rolls up and over the lower teeth. The lip is very tight and, in some instances, is impossible to roll downward to expose the bite. This can only make it difficult for the Shar-Pei to eat, but, in time, may push the lower teeth back, resulting in an overshot bite.

BODY

The Shar-Pei is square in profile; this is more evident in the male. The 45 to 51 centimeter height (18 to 20 inches) from ground to withers is approximately equal to length from the point of breastbone to the point of rump. The length of leg from elbow to ground is equal to depth of body; the elbow is level with the brisket. The chest is broad as well as deep.

TOPLINE AND TAIL

The topline dips slightly behind the withers, then rises over a short, broad loin. The croup is flat (AKC standard), with the base of the tail set extremely high, clearly exposing an up-tilted anus. A characteristic feature, the high-set tail is thick and round at the base, tapers to a point and curls over or to either side of the back. All four of the tails illustrated are correct.



COAT

The extremely harsh coat is another distinguishing feature of this breed. Coats are not to exceed 2 ½ centimeters (one inch). Two of the illustrated examples have the very short ‘horse coats’, one has the slightly longer ‘brush coat’ and one has an in-between coat. One coat should not be preferred over another.

PIGMENTATION

Each Shar-Pei has a solid blue-black tongue, roof of mouth, gums and flews; none are dilute colours, which have a solid lavender pigment. In dilutes, the tongue colours may lighten due to heat stress; care must be taken not to confuse dilute pigmentation with a solid pink tongue – a disqualification in Canada and the U.S.

DECISION TIME

The decision between first and second place dogs is not easy. Dog D and Dog C have different type heads, different coat lengths, degrees of loose skin and wrinkles, body shapes and neck lengths (medium length in Canada and the U.S.; the British standard specifies a short neck).

Nor is the decision between Dogs A and B for third and fourth place easy. Dog A has too much loose skin. He gained his breed club championship before the breed was officially recognized, when profuse wrinkle was in vogue. He is, however, sound. And, though large, his ears are correctly set.

Dog B has poor feet, a long loin, small but low set ears and is nearest to a bonemouth head. Less than sound, his weak front pasterns have too much slope, his steep forequarters have forced his body forward and up above his elbows and, in the rear, he has insufficient angulation at stifle and hock. The resulting pushed up assembly produces an incorrect topline. Have you placed him or the loosely skinned Shar-Pei as third?

1,2,3 and 4

First place goes to Dog D, second place to Dog C, third place to Dog A and fourth place to Dog B. The most difficult decision was between the specialty-winning Shar-Pei C and D; each excels in different areas.