

BACK TO BASICS...

IT'S TIME

BY JACQUELINE L. STACY



Near perfection for head and expression; Eye shape, color, set, nose, lower lip line. Neat but shaggy appearance.



Eyes, round, full, medium size, not prominent.

Time? Yes, it's time to step back and take a good, long, hard look at the Affenpinschers that are being shown in the rings today. What is being bred, shown, promoted, and rewarded today will influence the direction the breed takes tomorrow. We must, as breed preservationists, objectively evaluate that direction. All breeders, exhibitors (handlers included), and judges must have the strength and courage to maintain *BREED TYPE* and reverse the direction the breed is currently taking. We are moving away from moderation and forward to exaggeration. We must ensure that "Affens" stay looking like Affens, not caricatures of Affens.

MODERATION is repeatedly stated—seven times, actually—in the AKC breed Standard, approved June 12, 2000, and the descriptions provided in the Standard sets the breed type. References made include forequarters, hindquarters, chest, and front/rear angulation. The tuck-up is described as "slight." Exaggeration is now seen frequently in these areas and is, unfortunately, being rewarded. It is erroneous and detrimental to this breed to promote exaggeration as this corrupts breed type.

Here are just a few examples to illustrate this point regarding moderation as referenced in the Standard:

Chest: Is moderately broad and deep; ribs are moderately sprung.

Forequarters: Front angulation is moderate. Shoulders—with moderate layback.

Hindquarters: Rear angulation is moderate to match the front. Hind legs straight when viewed from behind. From the side, hind legs are set under the body to maintain a square appearance. Hocks—moderately angulated.

From this, one should deduce that this makes for a short LEVEL back, which can still have a barely perceptible curve at the croup.

In an over-angulated front (more than moderate layback of shoulders), the whole front assembly moves away from Affen type. Choosing exaggerated angles and layback for the breed allows for a longer neck while bringing the humerus further back under the body. This puts the elbows in conflict with the rib cage, and can lead to a wider front and elbows that must move out to avoid the ribs, making for unsound gate. The longer neck, coupled with exaggerated shoulder angles, prevents the presence of the "short vertical neck" as described in the Standard.

“Remember, movement is to be light and free, sometimes described as jaunty. Neither excessive reach and drive nor hackneyed gaits are called for in the Standard.”

When hindquarters are exaggerated, the dog will have a sloping topline, standing with the hindlegs stretched out behind the rear. Or they may appear to be standing on their hocks rather than on their feet, moving with hocks so over-angulated they look as if sickled. When this exaggerated rear angulation is coupled with a moderate front, the rear must swing around to avoid interference with the front legs when the dog is in motion.

Remember, movement is to be light and free, sometimes described as jaunty. Neither excessive reach and drive nor hackneyed gaits are called for in the Standard. Assessing movement matters. Affens can and should be SOUND. When they are bred to the Standard they will have “light, free, sound, balanced, confident [movement]...legs move parallel to each other [and]...converge toward a midline as speed increases. Unsound gait is to be heavily penalized.” A fast, ground-covering gait is not compatible with breed type, and should not be rewarded.

Connecting the dots from the Standard thus far, we have a “squarish” appearing, sturdy, compact Toy dog with medium bone, with MODERATION asked for seven times. Not once is an attribute described as exaggerated.

Now, onto coat and presentation. Yes, style is style and may well be just a current fad, BUT when is enough *enough*? NOW! We know the hair should be dense, rough, and harsh on the body and shoulders, about an inch long, and somewhat shorter on the tail and rear, with furnishings longer and less harsh. According to the Standard, which sets the breed type, in the mature adult a cape or mane of strong hair is to blend into the back coat at the WITHERS. This is where the current problem with breed type in grooming begins. Where does the Standard speak to building up a long-arched neck starting at the middle of the back; backcombing, spraying up much like a Poodle all the way to the back of the skull? I have looked and looked and can't find it anywhere. So, back to my point about Back to Basics—the Affen itself (and in its appearance) should be MODERATE in every way. I agree that this presentation is somewhat attractive, but what it creates in the overall view and outline is in direct conflict with the Standard. It may give the appearance of a short back, but also promotes a ski sloped topline, a long neck, and great exaggeration.

On a positive note, coat color, tails, and ears have improved. It's so nice to have the essence of the monkey-like expression present and rewarded very often. The distance between the eyes is to be approximately the length of the muzzle; a well-defined stop, finishing-off to a blunt nose, with open nares set straight and tipping neither up nor down. The nose and eye rims must be BLACK. To achieve the monkey-like expression, the eyes themselves must be medium in size, round, dark and brilliant, and set in the middle of the skull without corners or set obliquely. A prominent lower lip line is the icing on the cake. Color is a near non-issue now. Breeders are more interested in color and

AFFENPINSCHER

Priorities of Type

- Monkey like expression
- Preferred height
9 1/2 inches-11 1/2 inches
- Square appearance, bitches may be longer
- Hindlegs set under the body
- Substance - must be sturdy
- Temperament is comical, inquisitive
- Gait is sound, tracking 4 square converging with speed
- Coat is harsh, neat but shaggy



Illustration by Anne M. Hier



Proper profile as shown in the Affenpinscher Club of America, Inc. Illustrated Standard. Illustration by Anne M. Hier

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Left: An example of good body-length to leg-length to depth-of-body. Right: A bitch with a well maintained shaggy but neat appearance. This correct coat needs little grooming to blend the various lengths of hair.



No. This is exaggerated in many ways. Excessive rear angulation, sloping topline; front assembly far too forward; groomed to excess



Less than ideal; over-angulated rear; severe underline; short on leg; front heavy; over-groomed.



No. Such an appealing image. Correct? No, note exaggerated rear angulation

accept that color continues to change on the “dogs of color” over their lifetime. Most judges have accepted color, as well they should, since the Standard does not discriminate against it.

The grooming of heads on most is really improving; there is less backcombing, hair spray and product used. Leaving the hair more natural rather than so “done up” does help get to the oxymoron in the Standard that says they should have a “neat but shaggy appearance.”

Don't be misled with what I have written. When I judge, I must see the entire outline of the dog, its shape, make, head

and expression, and groomed—but not over-groomed to the point that it affects breed type. I agree that “fancy” is very, very appealing, but it is wrong, wrong, wrong for an Affen. Let's revert a bit so the unique features of the Affenpinscher will prevail. This breed is amazing and, if we leave well enough alone, it should flourish for many, many years to come. Please jump on this train!

One of the great beauties of the breed is its unique features. Please help us to preserve them. ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jacqueline Stacy has been involved in purebred dogs for over 50 years, starting as an exhibitor, then breeder, then all-breed professional handler and, ultimately, as a much sought after AKC All-Breed judge. Under the Tamarin Kennel, reg prefix, she and her husband, Terry, have bred and shown Affenpinschers since 1998 and have produced over 100 champions and multiple Best in Show winners & National Specialty winners, including the top-winning BIS American-Bred Champion, Ch. Tamarin Tug, who also became America's Top Toy Dog. Their dogs have been the foundation for several successful Affenpinscher Kennels that are active today.

She has been a member of the ACA since 1998, has served as their Newsletter Editor, Board Director and President of the Club for six years. She and her committee authored the ACA Illustrated Standard that was prepared and published by the Club in 2011. She is a member of the committee to create Judges Education for the Canine College. She is passionate about Affenpinschers and preserving Breed Type.

