

Pyrenean Shepherd – June 2009 Gazette
UNCOIFFED & UNSCISSORED

In many breeds the coat is a very important breed characteristic. The same is true for the Pyrenean Shepherd, but in a different way than you may expect.

An important, yet easy to miss, word found in the General Appearance section of the breed standard is “uncoiffed”. “Uncoiffed” means to have unstyled, uncombed, or unarranged hair. While many breeds may be described as “natural” or “rustic”, this is an important point that should not be missed for the Pyrenean Shepherd. The dogs should appear as a rustic herding breed that would look no more out of place if found working in the High Pyrenees of France, than it would in the conformation ring.

Another vital element is that the breed should also be “unscissored”. The natural look that is traditional for the breed allows for no trimming being allowed anywhere on the dogs, except to neaten the feet. The breed standard even goes so far as to say that no ribbon should be awarded to any dog that has been scissored, especially on the face.

The Pyrenean Shepherd should never be presented in the breed ring fluffed, puffed, over brushed, with sculpted feet, a trimmed head, or a part down its back. To do so is to distract from its unique breed characteristics and history. Unlike many modern breeds, many of the earliest photos of the Pyrenean Shepherd in the late 19th and early 20th century look essentially the same in both coat and type to the National Specialty winners of today, because of the extreme care in maintaining these important breed characteristics.

In addition to being “uncoiffed” and “unscissored”, another unique characteristic of the breed’s coat is its great diversity. The breed is found in two varieties: Smooth-Faced and Rough-Faced. As is clear from the name, Smooth-Faced dogs have short hairs on the muzzle, as well as on the fronts of their legs, and have a moderate length body coat. Rough-Faced dogs have naturally short hairs on the end of the muzzle which progressively lengthen, giving the dogs a unique windswept look that is not the result of grooming or trimming. The head should never have excessive hair and the eyes should be clearly visible. (Neither a moustache or a beard is characteristic of the breed.) Within the Rough-Faced are found two distinct coat types as well: long and demi-long. Additionally, Rough-Faced dogs with long coats may also be allowed to cord on the elbows, crop and thighs. In all coat types the quality is more important than the quantity.

No matter what coat type a Pyrenean Shepherd possesses, it should be a utilitarian coat that, while clean and well kept, would be equally as useful on the farm as it is in the show ring.

An “uncoiffed” and “unscissored” Pyrenean Shepherd of outstanding type is a sight to behold. May we all as breeders, judges, handlers, and fanciers help maintain this classic traditional look.

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