

LEONBERGERS-- 1-11

Natural Coat Essential to Breed Type

“Type” is what makes each breed unique. As a newly-recognized Working breed, the Leonberger comes to the party with lots of information to share with the AKC world of judges, handlers, owners and potential owners about just what makes the Leonberger distinctive. When defining Leonberger type as it relates to coat, the most important adjective to use should be “natural.”

Natural appearance of the coat is essential to breed type, as this excerpt from our standard underscores: *“Natural appearance of the coat is essential to breed type. Therefore, except for neatening of the feet, Leonbergers are to be presented naturally, with no alteration of the coat, to include sculpting, trimming of whiskers, or any other alterations whatsoever. NO RIBBON SHALL BE AWARDED TO A DOG WHOSE COAT APPEARS TO BE ALTERED, AND JUDGES ARE TO ERR ON THE SIDE OF WITHOLDING OF RIBBONS IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT.”* And yes, the emphatic capital letters are included in the standard document itself to further stress this point to judges and handlers.

Leonbergers carry a gorgeous double coat, with ample feathering on the backs of the forelegs, breeches and ears. The characteristic feathering and “ear fluff” are as much a part of breed type as its trademark black mask, and as such, should always remain in their natural state—clean, free from mats and tangles, but decidedly unchanged. While the Leonberger’s feet may be neatened, our breed is not one to be sculpted and re-drawn with tools from an overzealous groomer’s box.

The “no alteration of the coat” standard language cannot be overemphasized. To preserve breed type, no trimming, sculpting, feathering, thinning, coloring, or any other means of changing the natural fall of the coat, whether on the Leonberger’s copious foreleg, breech and ear feathering or the whiskers which are so important to the breed’s soft, kind expression shall be rewarded with ribbons. Indeed, as the breed standard clearly instructs, judges are to withhold ribbons from dogs whose coats even give the appearance of alteration. Strong words, perhaps, but the Leonberger Club of America insists that it is a point worth emphasizing.

To that end, the Leonberger Club of America is currently hosting breed seminars to give judges across the country the opportunity to learn more about the unique qualities that make up “Leonberger Type.” Copies of the LCA’s official Illustrated Standard, which devotes several pages to coat appearance, have been distributed to all Working and All-Breed judges. Additionally, the club’s “Judges Education” webpage contains excellent visual representations and further information about judging this magnificent breed. For more information about the Leonberger Standard, please visit the Leonberger Club of America’s Judges Education page at www.leonbergerclubofamerica.com/judgesed.aspx

Ultimately, it is up to the Leonberger fancy to remain committed to the preservation of breed type. Adherence to the standard by both judges and exhibitors will ensure that the

Leonberger of the future will remain unchanged in type and form from the Leonbergers who first strode into the breed ring as an officially recognized Working Group breed in July 2010.

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