



Hrvatski kinološki savez • Croatian Kennel Club

# Croatian Shepherd Dog

Hrvatski ovčar

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# Croatian Shepherd Dog

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# FCI group I.

## Standard No. 277



# Origin: Croatia

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICIAL VALID STANDARD:** 03.11.2014.

**UTILIZATION:** The Croatian Shepherd Dog is a breed with combined habits, which means it can be used for herding of livestock as well as a guard dog or companion dog.

One hundred years of breeding the Croatian Shepherd Dog in the valley of east Slavonic, near house and yard, have formed a dog well adjusted to all conditions.

**FCI-CLASSIFICATION:** Group 1 Sheepdogs and Cattle Dogs (except Swiss Cattle Dogs).  
Section 1 Sheepdogs - Without working trial.



# BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY



# Breed History



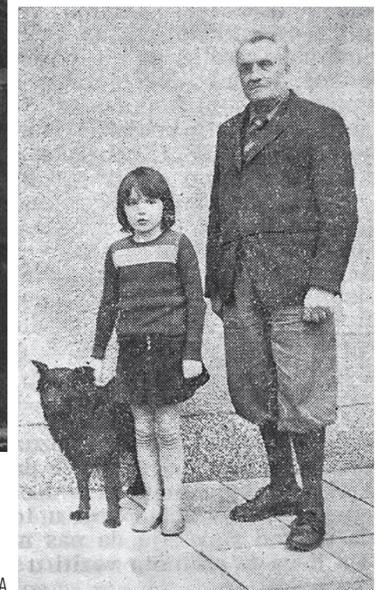
his breed was most probably developed over several centuries out of the descendants of so-called "Pfaflbauhund" (*Canis Familiaris Palustris*) in the area of eastern Slavonic, which is a part of the Republic of Croatia.



According to the hypothesis in the manuscript of Bishop Petar Bakić in the year 1719, which again refers to an earlier manuscript of the

Bishop Petar of the year 1374, immigrants brought this breed into the homeland. Prof. Stjepan Romić started the systematic breeding of the Croatian Shepherd Dog in the year 1935.

The breed was first publicly presented at the first state dog show on 29th and 30th of October, 1949, in Zagreb. Dr. Otto Rohr wrote the first breed standard in the year 1951. The standard was published by the FCI on 31st of January, 1969.



PROF. ROMIĆ AND HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER MAJA WITH GRUDICA



# Croatian Shepherd Dog

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**CROATIAN**

**SHEPHERD DOG**

**BREED STANDARD**

**WITH COMMENTARY**

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Male



Female



# General Appearance

The Croatian Shepherd Dog is a medium sized dog with a spitz-type, rustic appearance and a head with a fox-like expression with a characteristic coat and colour. He gives the impression of a proud, agile, strong, compact but on no accounts coarse dog.

## IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS:

Rectangular body; length to exceed height at the withers.

Females can be slightly longer than males.

Height to the elbow is 50% of the height at the withers.

The length of skull to slightly exceed the length of muzzle.

## BEHAVIOUR AND TEMPERAMENT:

The Croatian Shepherd Dog has a lively temperament and balanced disposition; it is fond of and devoted to his owner. He must neither be aggressive nor nervous and has to be interested in everything that happens in his surroundings. This breed has an inherited sense for the work with domestic animals. The characteristics of this breed are astuteness, courage, liveliness, endurance, patience and level-headedness during work. The breed is easy to train.





### COMMENTARY

*Participants in making of the final text  
of the comment were:*

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## Head

The head shape like a blunt wedge. The skull and muzzle lines are parallel.

### CRANIAL REGION:

**Skull:** Seen from all sides it is harmoniously rounded. The width of the skull is not more than half of the whole length of the head. The oval shape of the skull is characteristic. The frontal furrow is not very pronounced. The superciliary arches are not pronounced. Occipital protuberance slightly pronounced.

**Stop:** Moderately developed in depth and length.

### FACIAL REGION:

**Nose:** Must not be set higher or lower than the nose bridge. The tip of the nose is rounded. The nostrils have to be well open but not too pronounced. The nose and the inside of the nostrils have to be completely black pigmented.

**Muzzle:** Tapers towards the nose in the shape of a wedge. The nose bridge is straight and parallel with the line of the skull. The lower jaw has to be strong and harmoniously developed.



### COMMENTARY

Croatian Shepherd Dog is not typical because of his wedge head, scissor bite, rectangular body, or straight front legs. These are all characteristics of most Spitz breeds. Croatian Shepherd Dog according to its formation place belongs to the group of "South - European Spitzes" for which stands: Lighter "lupus-like type" dog, head shape like a blunt wedge, ears carried either pricked or semi-pricked but folded down, body rectangular in shape with characteristic coat and color.

When the premise says that Croatian Shepherd Dog is "lupoid", then it means that his body is of rectangular shape, body length slightly exceeds the height at the withers, approximately by 8-12%, head of parallel lines, pronounced stop, almond-shaped eyes, high-set of pricked or semi-pricked ears with folded tip and harmonious movement.



*Muzzle too heavy,  
Thick, too pronounced lips*



*Muzzle too light,  
Weak underjaw*



*Roman nose*



*Convergent lines of head*

**Lips:** Of medium thickness, tight fitting to the jaw; the visible parts are pigmented black. The labial commissure is not visible.

**Jaws/Teeth:** The jaws are strong well developed and the teeth are white and placed evenly in the jaw. Scissor bite but a pincer bite is tolerated. The incisors are placed vertically into the jaws. A complete bite is desirable (42 teeth in accordance with the dental formula). The missing of premolars PM1 and molars M3 is not taken into account. The missing of other teeth is undesirable.

**Cheeks:** Not very pronounced but lean, rounded and well muscled.

**Eyes:** Of medium size, oval shaped, set in an angle of 30–40 degrees. The eyeball is neither bulging nor placed deeply. The eye colour varies from black to dark chestnut brown. The eyelids must not be loose and not show any signs of Entropion or Ectropion. The eyelids have to be completely black-pigmented. The expression has to be intelligent, lively and inquisitive.

**Ears:** Of an even triangular shape with slightly rounded tips. They are set on a line, which follows from the tip of the nose and the inner eye corner. The size of the ears must be well proportioned to the size of the head. The ears can be carried either pricked or semi-pricked. The semi-pricked ear should be erect to 3/5th of the length and the tip, the upper 2/5th should be folded down. Asymmetrically carried ears is a fault; the same applies to inadequate firm ears which bend more or less during action.

**NECK:** Of medium length, muscular, tapers towards the head, well connected with the body. Its upper and lower lines are straight. It is carried in an angle of 45 degrees to the horizontal line and has to be without wrinkles. The neck appears to be stronger due to the profuse mane, which is especially distinctive in males.

*Muzzle too long**Correct head**Ears too small  
and set too high**Ears too large  
and set too low*

## COMMENTARY OF THE STANDARD

### GENERAL APPEARANCE

When judging Croatian Shepherd Dog, as well as some other breeds, “breed code” should be emphasized. It implies typical proportions of head and body, movement, characteristic coat and colour. Gender difference should be expressed. Specimens whose substance is “too light” or “too heavy” have to be penalized according to degree of deviation. Those whose movement, head shape, coat texture or colour (pop-up style) is more reminiscent of some other breed groups or breeds have to be disqualified!

### Behaviour/Temperament

Croatian Shepherd Dog is a breed with combined habits, which means it can be used for herding of livestock as well as a guard dog or companion dog. In the last decade breed proved to be very successful in the agility and similar canine sports.

It is very agile, talented, brave and hardy dog, must be interested in everything that happens around him, but on no accounts coarse or shy dog.

### Head

In proportion to body, length of about 42% of the height at the withers, the skull is not to be too wide, the length of the skull (from the occiput to the stop) is approximately 5% longer than the muzzle (from stop to nose). Lines of skull and muzzle are parallel to each other, which is characteristic of spitz breeds. Slightly divergent head lines can be tolerated as a minor error, while more pronounced divergence should be severely punished. Converging lines of the head are atypical for the breed, as well as for the entire group, so it needs to be disqualified.

The skull is flat with a slight lateral rounding.

**COMMENTARY**

Chewing muscles and zygomatic arches should not be too pronounced, because it damages the harmony of head. The skin on the entire head should be wrinkle free. The presence of any folds should be severely penalized. Stop should be pronounced, but not extreme, or too long. Muzzle with well-developed jaws, they should not be too narrow and/or short. Nose bridge must be straight. Slightly pronounced nose bridge is one of the heavier faults, while very pronounced concave or convex nose bridge leads to disqualification! The lips are firm and tight fitting to the jaw, with no pronounced or open labial commissure. Lip edges must be continuously pigmented black, even the smallest non-pigmentation leads to disqualification.

**Muzzle** - nose is extensive, with wide-open nostrils, should be fully pigmented black (even inside of the nostrils). Lack of max. 20% pigmentation on muzzle is allowed, but very unwelcome. It should be severely penalized when judging which means that such specimens can not get an excellent grade!

When working with farm animals some injuries in the area of muzzle may occur, which leaves dogs without pigmentation on that area. Such things should not be penalized when judging.

**Jaws/Teeth**

Scissor or rarely pincer bite. Both bites are of equal value. A complete set of teeth (42 teeth) is desired, as described in standard. Undershot, overshot, cross bite are disqualifying faults. Based on the FCI decision for all breeds, the missing of premolars PM1 and molars M3 is not taken into account. Lack of other premolars (P2, P3, P4) should be penalized in accordance to the severity of fault. Lack of any teeth - incisor, canine or molar (with the exception of M3) - must result in disqualification.

Double P1 (usually in lower jaw) appeared in older breeding lines but it didn't disturb teeth line in the jaw. Therefore such an occurrence (if it doesn't disturb

the line) is recommended to be tolerated while the phenomenon of double P1 which disrupts the teeth line should be punished.

**Eyes**

Almond shaped, placed at an angle of 20-30°. The eye colour (iris) is black or dark brown coloured. Light eye is a fault which should be penalized in accordance with its degree. Horizontal eye set of round shape, walleye or deep-set are faults that should be severely punished!

Eyelids tightly fitting to the eyeball. Loose or twisted eyelids should be severely penalized. Eye rims are completely black pigmented. Full pigmentation of eye rims is requested by standard, while even the slightest non-pigmentation must result in disqualification.

**Ears**

Ears reach till stop with length of around 42% of head length. The ears have the shape of an isosceles triangle. They have short hair on the outside. The ears can be carried either pricked or semi-pricked. The semi-pricked ear should be erect to 3/5th of the length and the tip, the upper 2/5th should be folded down. Disproportional (too long or too short) ear should be penalized in accordance with severity. In semi-pricked ears when folded part is about 50% of total length of ear, it should be considered as error and this should be penalized. More pronounced ear folding (when hanging part is over 50%) should be severely punished! Totally hanging ears are severe error that should result in disqualification!

Asymmetrically carried ears (one pricked and one semi-pricked or semi-pricked ears with tip not proportionally folded) are a fault; the same applies to inadequate firm ears which bend more or less during action. This should be penalized.

**Neck**

The neck should be strong, long enough (around 42% of height at withers) carried at an angle of 45°, without excess skin on throat or lower part of neck (no dewlap), whose pronounced presence should be penalized.





Croatian Shepherd Dog • Крватски овчар



## Ears Comparison

### TOP ROW

1. Pricked Ears
2. Semi-pricked ears
3. Asymmetrically carried ears - fault

### BOTTOM ROW

1. Ears too small
2. Ears too big
3. Hanging ears  
- disqualifying fault

Croatian Shepherd Dog • Крватски овчар



# Body

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**BODY:** Strong, harmoniously developed still elegant. The body outline is of rectangular shape, which means that body length slightly exceeds the height at the withers, in males by 8-10% and in females by 8-12%.

**Withers:** Slightly prominent with a gradual transition to the neck.

**Back:** Straight, horizontal, well muscled. When moving the back should be firm.

**Loin:** Short, well muscled, well connected to the back and the croup, the transition to the top line is hardly visible. In females the loin is slightly longer than in males.

**Croup:** Well muscled, strong, broad, slightly rounded and slightly oblique.

**Chest:** Deep, broad, capacious but not barrelled. The ribcage to reach down to the elbow. The ribs are well sprung.

**Underline and belly:** Underline has a slight rise from sternum to belly, which has a slight tuck up.



## COMMENTARY

**Body:** As already stated, the body has a rectangular shape whose length in relation to the height at the withers is 108-110% for males and for females 110-115%.

A bit shorter body (105-108%) or longer (116-120%) can be tolerated while really long body (over 120%) should be severely punished.

Topline needs to be straight and horizontal. Sloping topline from withers to croup should be punished according to degree of fault. Saddle or roach topline is not desirable and should be severely penalized. Loins should be short and muscular, with a muscular croup inclined at an angle of 20-30°.

Height of croup equals the height at withers. Somewhat lower height of croup can be tolerated while higher croup should be penalized in accordance to severity of expression.

The depth of the chest should reach elbows. Slightly shallow chest (up to 2 cm) is recommended to be tolerated without penalty. The scope of the chest is an average 120-125% of the height of the withers as it is mentioned in standard.

Chest must not be too broad or barrel-shaped. The distance from the ground to the elbow is equal to the distance from the elbow to the withers, ratio is 1:1.

Occurrence of shorter legs (forearm-lower leg) should be severely punished.

*Tail set and carried correctly**Tail-less specimen**Tail carried low*

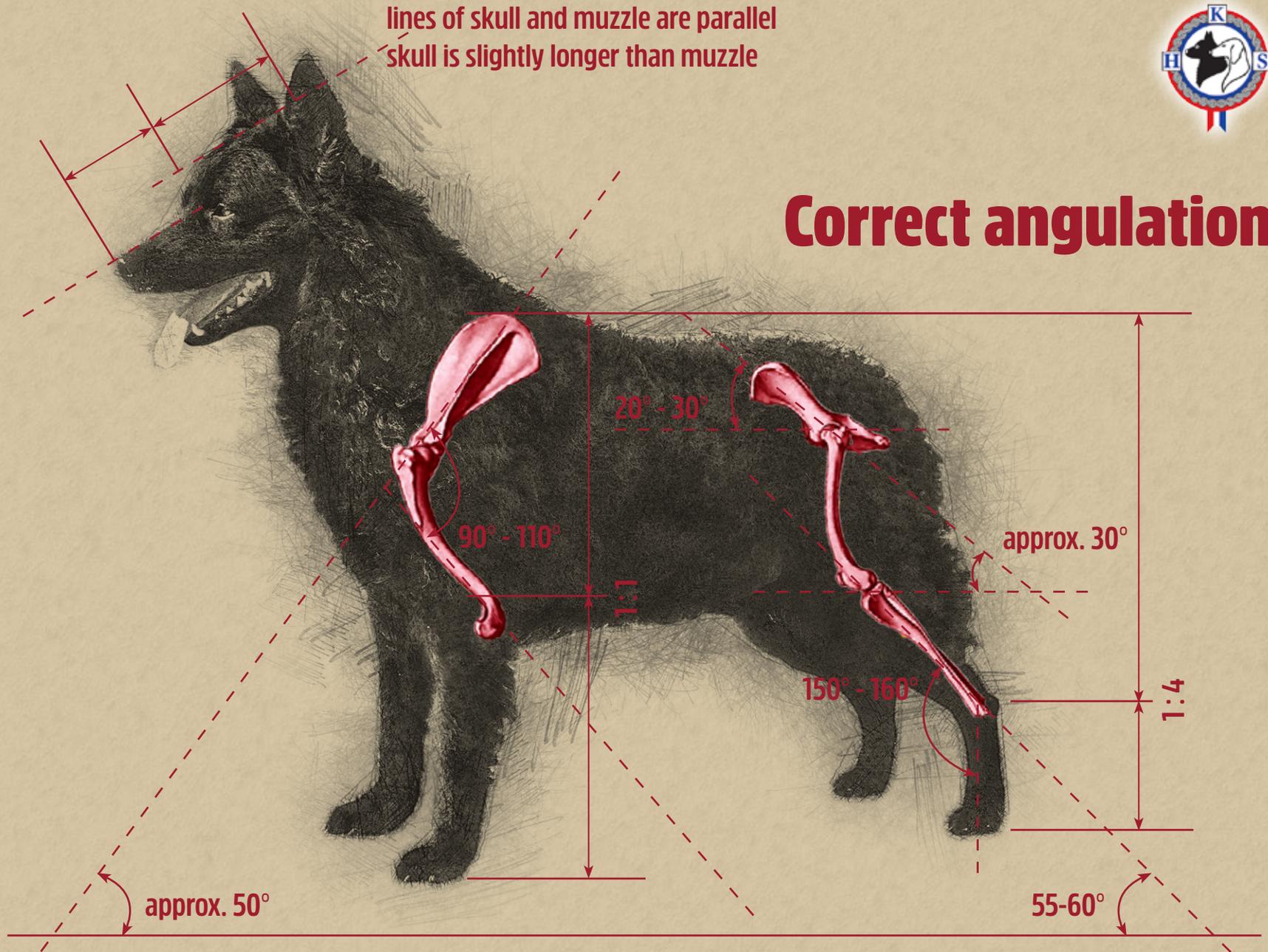
**TAIL:** The tail is a continuation of the line of the croup, strong at the root, gradually tapering towards the tip of the tail, set moderately high. Stretched downwards it should reach the hock joint or be slightly longer, cca. 2–3 cm longer. At rest it is carried below the topline and usually in the shape of a sabre or hook. When the dog is alert the tail is carried above the topline, either in a sickle shape, ring or rolled, in case of the latter it may lean on to the back. It is profusely covered with hair. There are also dogs, which are born tail-less or with a short tail, which is permitted.

#### Tail

Tail can be naturally long, set on at the extension of the croup. Reaching approximately to the hock or slightly longer. It must not be too thick but in proportion to the body, carried sabre-shaped, sickle shaped or ring shaped. Tail rolled on back (ring shaped, once or twice rolled) is characteristic for Spitz group, so it must not be punished. There are also dogs, which are born tail less or with a short tail (up to 1/3 of naturally long tail), which is permitted. All three shapes and lengths of tail are of equal value.



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## LIMBS

### FOREQUARTERS:

**General appearance:** In good proportion to the body. The height of the forearms from the ground to the elbow is cca. 50% of the height to the withers. The bone is strong but not coarse and with strong musculature. The imagine line which goes through the shoulders, the elbows, the axis of the forearm and the foot is parallel with the middle body axis of the dog and vertical to the ground.

**Shoulder:** Of medium length, rounded at the top, well fitted to the body, forming an angle of 90–110 degrees with the upper arm, which allows the elbow normal movements. The muscle tone is strongly developed.

**Upper arm:** Well connected to the body, well muscled and strong, sloping in an angle of 50 degrees to the horizontal line. Parallel seen from front.

**Elbow:** Well fitting to the body.

**Forearm:** Vertical and muscular. The elbow is placed on a parallel line with the middle axis of the body. Parallel seen from front. The bone is strong and has to be in proportion to the body.

**Carpus (Wrist):** In extension of the vertical forearm line, elastic; the pisiform bone should be well pronounced.

**Metacarpus (Pastern):** Short and elastic. Seen from the front, it should be on the same line as the forearm axis. In profile it is slightly sloping.

**Forefeet:** Oval in shape and with tight and well arched toes. The pads are firm, elastic and black pigmented. The nails are strong, curved and also black pigmented.

### HINDQUARTERS:

**General appearance:** Strong but not too heavy, elastic in action, with medium angulations.

**Thigh:** Long, broad, well muscled. The backside is slightly rounded.

**Lower thigh:** Muscular. It forms an angle of 55–60 degrees to the horizontal line.

**Hock joint:** Strong, firm and broad. The imagined vertical lines, which go through the tip of the hocks, have to be parallel.

**Metatarsus (Rear pastern):** Strong, elastic. In an angle of 80–90 degrees towards the ground.

**Hind feet:** Oval in shape but slightly longer than the forefeet. The pads are firm, elastic and black pigmented. The nails are strong, curved and also black pigmented. There might be single or double dewclaws. With or without, either is permitted and of the same value.





*Correct stance  
of front legs*



*French stance  
of front legs*



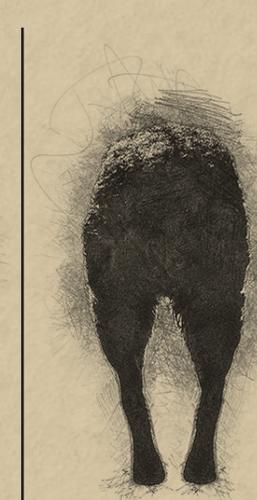
*Elbows turned out and  
paws facing inward*



*Correct stance  
of rear legs*



*Cow hocks*



*Hock joints  
facing outward*

## LIMBS

**FOREQUARTERS:** In good proportion to the body. The height of the forearms from the ground to the elbow is cca. 50% of the height to the withers. As stated above, this ratio should be controlled, in order not to produce dogs with short forearms, what should be severely punished. Very short legs disproportionate to length of the body lead to disqualification of the specimen!

Shoulder blade makes an angle of 90–110 degrees with the upper arm. Forearm is vertical, the bone is strong and have to be in proportion to the body, legs straight.

Elbows well fit to body, they should not be turned out neither twisted in. If these kind of faults occur they should be severely punished.

Fore feet with tight and well arched toes, oval in shape. The nails are pigmented, stronger dispigmentation must be penalized.

**HINDQUARTERS:** Must be in proportion to body. Well muscled and developed.

Lower thigh forms an angle of 55–60 degrees to the horizontal line. Angle of hock joint is around 150–160 degrees. Height of hock joint is around 25% of height at withers.

Hind legs are parallel. They should not be nor open nor cow legs, which should be significantly penalized. Open angles are big fault which must be severely penalized.

Hind feet are oval in shape but slightly longer than the forefeet, with pigmented nails. There might be dogs without dewclaws, but also single or double dewclaws.

With or without either is permitted and of the same value. The dewclaws should not be removed.





Croatian Shepherd Dog • HRVATSKI OVČAR



# Gait / Movement



**GAIT/MOVEMENT:** The reach is substantial and with a strong drive. The movement has to be harmonious; there must be no twitching. During action the back has to keep preferably still. The limbs neither to cross over nor be lifted high. The trot is the preferred gait, as it tires the dog the least when working with livestock.



*Correct movement*



*Incorrect movement*

**GAIT/MOVEMENT:**

The movement has to be harmonious; there must be no twitching. Walk, trot and gallop have to be long and consistent. Short step of insufficient length, crossing limbs when walking, and “camel walk” should be extremely punished as any other anomaly in the movement.



**SKIN:** The skin on head has to be tight and must not show any wrinkles. Elastic and thin, especially in the area of the ears and the forearms. The skin has to be well fitting to the body and pigmented in a slate colour. The eyelids, the nose leather, the inside of the nostrils, the outer area of the lips, the pads, the nails, the area of the anus, in females also the part of the vulva have to be pigmented black. The inside of the lips must also be well pigmented as well as the gum, the darker the better.

### COAT

**Hair:** Profuse, dense and relatively soft of good quality, this means that it is neither woolly nor harsh to the touch. It consists of a top coat and an undercoat. The topcoat is wavy to curly with a length of 6–14 cm; it is a stand off and elastic coat. There must be no parting on the back. The undercoat is dense, compact and soft; together with the topcoat it forms an excellent protecting cover for the dog. Long hair to be found on the neck (mane), on the back, on the croup, the rib area, on the back part of the forearms (fringes), trousers on the hind legs (culottes) as well as on the tail (flag), unless the tail is short. The longest coat is at the culottes and near the root of the tail. At the parting between the short hair on forehead and the longer hair on back of skull, length is around 3.5 cm. The short hair is straight with a length of 1-1.7 cm. It is on the muzzle, the forehead, on the ears, around the eyes, on the cheeks, on the front part of the forelegs and also on Carpus and Metacarpus. On the hind legs the hair is short on the feet and from the Metatarsus to the hock. Females usually have slightly shorter hair and less profuse coat than males.

**Colour:** The colour is black. A few white hairs, evenly spread over the basic colour (provided they are hardly visible) are allowed. White strands as well as body or leg coat, which is completely interweaved with white hair is not permitted. White marking on the chest is permitted, provided it is small (maximum 5 cm). White markings on any other body parts are not allowed. The undercoat is definitely black. During the shedding of the coat, the undercoat often goes greyish or sometimes even shows a brown tinge, which is not a fault.

**SKIN:** The skin has to be well fitting to the body and pigmented in a slate colour. It has to be tight and must not show any wrinkles. Whether it is loose and has wrinkles it should be penalized. Any non-pigmented skin should be punished according to the degree of severity. All visible mucous membranes must be continuously pigmented black while non-pigmentation leads to disqualification. Lack of max. 20% pigmentation on muzzle is allowed, but very unwelcome. It should be severely penalized when judging which means that such specimens can not get an excellent grade!

**COAT:** Hair needs to be profuse, dense, wavy to curly, with shine. The coat on body is with a length of 6-14 cm (neck, saddle, croup, ribs, back side of front and hind legs, tail). Short hair has a length of about 1-2 cm, located on the head (muzzle, forehead, ears, cheeks, front side of legs, front sides of pasterns and on the feet). A slightly longer hair about 3.5 cm is on the top of the head! The undercoat is soft and together with a top coat must form a good protective cover.

The occurrence of extremely long woolly hair, as well as certain coarse hair has to be severely penalized. If the hair formed "braids" (as in Pulis) or if it is too short (shorter than 4 cm at the withers) it leads to disqualification. Straight hair fit to body is not typical of the breed, and such specimens should also be disqualified.

**Colour:** Evenly tone of glossy black. A few white or grey hairs are allowed. White strands or coat completely interweaved with white or grey hair, is not permissible and must be severely penalized. White hairs that appear first on the muzzle and later on the rest of the body of an old dog are not to be punished. Graying begins to appear in some specimens after only two years of age.

White marking on the chest is permitted, provided it is small (maximum 5 cm). If the white marks stretch to the stomach it is very undesirable and it should be penalized according to severity! White markings on the chest, a width of between 5-8 cm need to be punished, while markings wider than 8 cm lead to disqualification.

White markings on any other body parts are not allowed and lead to disqualification.

The same is with occurrence of any other colour such as grey or brown on head or body.

The undercoat is definitely black. During the shedding of the coat, the undercoat and top coat often go greyish or sometimes even shows a brown tinge, which is not a fault.



**SIZE AND WEIGHT:**

**Height at the withers**

Males: 45-50 cm;

Females: 43-48 cm.

Height difference of +/- 3 cm in males and females of excellent type and conformation is tolerated.

**Height**

Height at withers with allowed tolerance is prescribed in standard. Nowadays there are many dogs (especially males) which are at the highest point of tolerance.

What we specifically strive for is the appropriate type of Croatian shepherd dog, with the desired elegance and movement.

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.



**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 and its ability to perform its traditional work.

**DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:**

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.
- Skull shorter than muzzle.
- Untypically short muzzle.
- Nose-bridge very concave or convex.
- Loose or short lips. Lips that are not covering the teeth when the mouth is closed.
- Un-pigmented nose (more than 20%) - except in case of temporary or permanent loss due to injury while working.
- Undershot or overshot mouth, wry mouth.
- Any form of strabismus. Blue eyes.
- Unpigmented eyelids (even when only slightly unpigmented)
- Completely dropped ears or signs of ear corrections.
- Body length shorter than the height at the withers.
- Low legged dog of achondroplastic type.
- Completely unpigmented skin.
- Hair on the withers shorter than 4 cm.
- Completely straight hair, woolly hair.
- Long coat, felted hair over the whole body (corded-like coat).
- White markings or strands on any other part of the body than the chest.
- With white completely interweaved hair on the body and the limbs.
- White markings on the chest which are larger than 8 cm.
- Height at the withers outside the standard.

**N.B.:**

- Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.
- Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

# CROATIAN SHEPHERD DOG • Faults



## Top row:

1. not correct body proportions, angulation too open, too steep croup, ears too long, hair too short, disqualifying coat colour.
2. disallowed white markings on head, chest and legs - disqualifying fault.
3. disallowed longer hair on the head - disqualifying fault.



## Bottom row:

1. missing the substance, ears laid back, angulation too open, body too short, coat not dense enough.
2. missing the substance, arched topline, too steep croup, angulation too open, bones too light.
3. overall appearance too heavy, legs too short, head too massive, lacks elegance.
4. disqualifying colour.

## CROATIAN SHEPHERD DOG Faults and Qualities

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### Top Left:

croup too steep,  
not enough length in body.



### Top Right:

correct head, good bone structure,  
correct angulation front and back,  
excellent type.



### Bottom Left:

not correct body proportions,  
lacks substance (lighter bone structure),  
not correct movement.



### Bottom Right:

correct body proportions and size of  
the dog, very elegant movement,  
excellent type.



**Croatian Shepherd Dog**  
 Хрватски овчар

# CROATIAN SHEPHERD DOG

## Breed Ambassadors



Excellent Type and Quality Male



Excellent Type and Quality Female





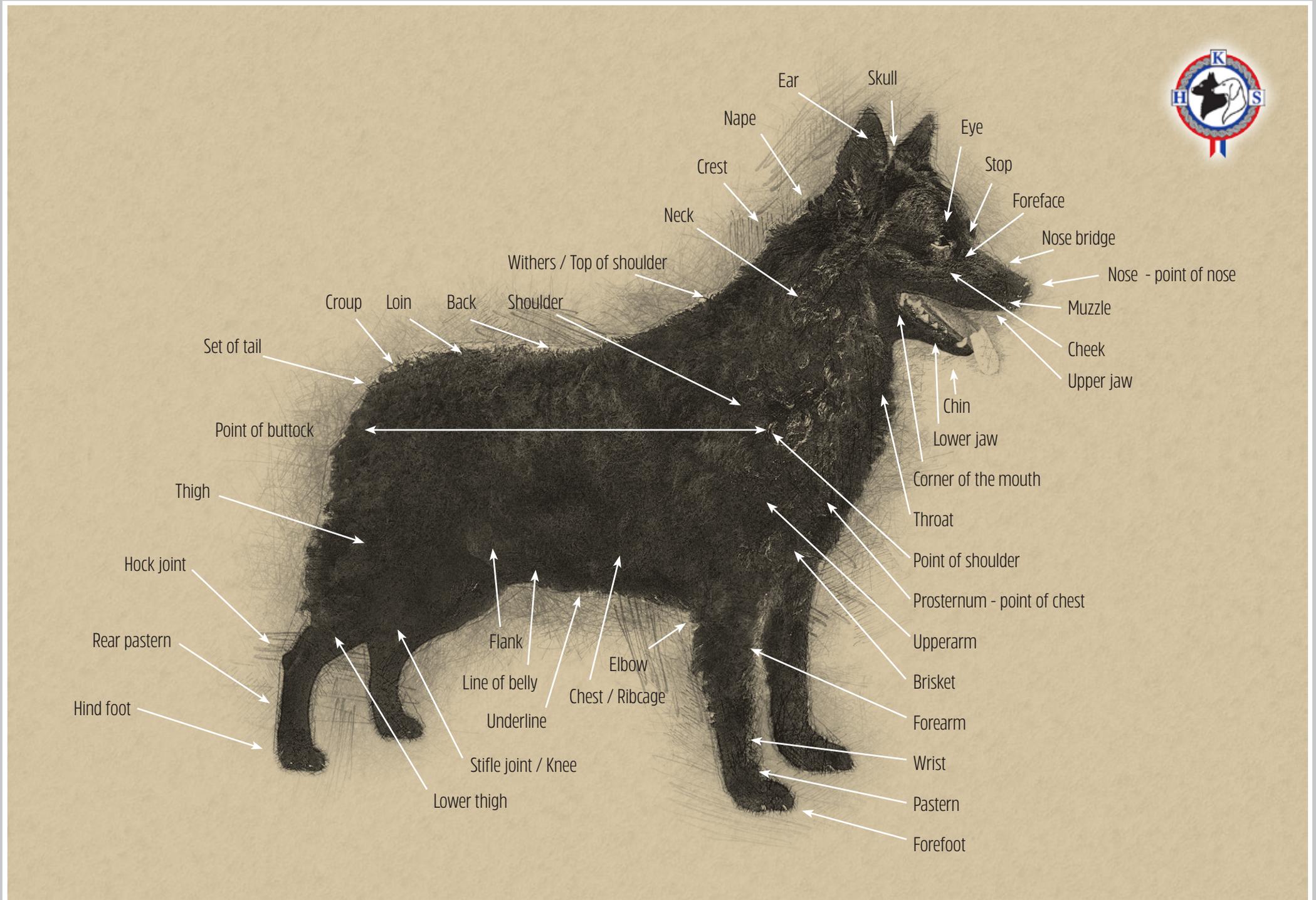














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