

Cavalier

By Jeanie Montford, Elvenhome Cavaliers

Movement

C

avalier movement – is it something special? Is it something unique? ... by no means.

The Cavalier conformation is quite “normal” - one could almost say their structure and proportions are “generic”- there are no extremes of proportions or conformation such as we find in the Dachshund or the Pekingese or the Bulldog for example, which will dictate specialized and distinctive gaits.

How important is it to consider Cavalier movement? Where do we put movement in our list of priorities among head and expression, temperament, coat and markings etc?

Do all breeders consider good movement an essential goal of their breeding program or are they more concerned with pretty faces and lots of coat? Why do we

want our dogs to move well both in and out of the show ring?

Because if a dog is moving with all its bones and joints in proper proportion in relation to one another, it will move more efficiently with less wear and tear on the joints, expending less energy to get from A to B. Hopefully the dog will live well into a comfortable old age without developing arthritis or other joint inflammations.

Our Standards are mercifully clear and to the point when describing movement:

The country of origin UK Standard – “Free moving and elegant in action, plenty of drive from behind. Fore and hind limbs move parallel when viewed from in front and behind.”

USA Standard – “Free moving and elegant in action, with good reach in front and sound, driving rear action. When viewed from the side, the movement

exhibits a good length of stride and viewed from front and rear it is straight and true, resulting from straight boned fronts and properly made and muscled hindquarters.”

I do not believe there is any difference in essential meaning between these two standards. I interpret “move parallel” to be essentially the same as “straight and true”

Some of the factors which can affect movement are firstly structure and conformation – In order to produce the ideal movement described in the Standard, the dog needs to be well angulated in both fore and hind quarters. If the angulation is balanced front and rear, then ideally at the trot, the hind foot should step into the place of the forefoot as it is lifted.

Ideally in a well angulated front assembly, the point of the elbow will be directly beneath the highest point of the shoulder blade when the dog is standing. If a dog is



“Free moving and elegant in action.” This dog shows wonderful reach and drive, correct topline and tail carriage.

“Sound driving rear action” at another phase of the trot stride showing marvelous flexing of hocks and stifles and good reach of hind feet well forward under the body, correct topline.





Lack of drive, little flexion of stifles and hock

straight (upright shoulder blades and steep upper arm) in front assembly and is over angulated in the rear, the dog has too much “drive” behind and the hind feet will have to pass the front foot to the side (over reaching) leading the dog to move at an angle to the direction of movement – i.e. crabbing.

To move “true” the dog needs to move both feet on each side in the same plane. If the feet are tracking properly, then the dog will move “parallel” or “straight and true”.

I believe that if a dog is coming towards me, I should see only “two legs” as in a horse coming down the centre line in dressage.

Cavaliers should not single track when viewed from in front or behind – they have a low centre of gravity and as they should not be moved around the showing at great speed (!), there should not be any tendency for the feet to converge! The legs should provide a straight column of support under the dog. Any deviation such as cow hocks, bowed hocks, crooked fronts will lead to excessive strain on the joints and ligaments.

Conditioning and musculature should not be underestimated– no matter how perfect a dog’s bone structure might be, it will be unable to move as its structure would suggest, if it is unfit and lacking in strong and responsive muscles and liga-

Overreaching causing the dog to crab.



ments. It is these ligaments and muscles which enable a dog to move its bones from place to place! These begin to develop early in life and growing puppies, if given too little exercise or confined to a puppy pen, may never develop strong ligaments. Too much or prolonged exercise and encouraging fast development with high protein foods may lead to malformed bone growth and problems later in life. Steady growth gains, free exercise when, and for as long as the puppy wishes is best and will hopefully result in a good moving dog when mature.

Conditioning and the sensible development of fitness and muscles can make
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True and parallel movement in front with leg forming straight column of support under the body



True and parallel movement behind.



Cavalier Movement (Continued from page 23)

dramatic improvement to the movement of a dog with basically good structure but who is slack and soft in muscle tone.

And last but not least the dog's temperament and attitude and training. You can have the best constructed and best conditioned Cavalier but if the dog doesn't want to move with drive and enthusiasm, its virtues will never be revealed to the judge in the show ring. Some wonderful dogs drive their owners to distraction through active or passive noncooperation (I speak from experience here) while others show with flair and joie de vivre, demonstrating glorious easy ground covering and true movement. You know they will show this just as easily in parks and gardens as in the ring. Watching our Cavaliers move with joy and animation, forms a great part of the pleasure we derive from our dogs.

It is surely our responsibility to breed and develop the WHOLE Cavalier; the meltingly beautiful expression, the amenable loving temperament, the silky coated beauty but also one who can live a long and active life free from pain and discomfort because of its correct conformation and ease of movement...



Close movement behind

Here's to a Great 2008!!!

Best Wishes To ACKCSC for a Happy,
Healthy and Prosperous New Year From
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We thank you for the opportunity to
produce the Royal Dispatch in 2007,
and look forward to serving the
Club in 2008.

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