

The  
Old English Sheepdog  
Breed Standard Extension

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**GENERAL APPEARANCE.** *A strong compact-looking dog of great symmetry; absolutely free of legginess; profusely coated all over. All round he is a thick-set, muscular, able-bodied dog, with a most intelligent expression, free of all Poodle or Deerhound characteristics.*

P1 **A STRONG COMPACT-LOOKING DOG** The word 'strong' is used in the Old English Sheepdog standard in relation to appearance, teeth, muzzle and gait and is a key word in any description of correct Old English Sheepdog type, and this is emphasised by the requirements for a dog to be thickset (having a short, thick, compact body) and muscular. Any raciness, narrowness or lightness of frame is incorrect.

P2 **OF GREAT SYMMETRY** A balanced dog with all parts in harmony - a breed without exaggeration. When viewed in profile the Old English Sheepdog should appear to measure approximately the same in height as it does in length. The OES is a square measured in length from point of shoulder to rear projection of the upper thigh and in height from the ground to the withers. This measurement refers to the body of the dog beneath the coat and allowance must be made for the appearance of extra length or height as a result of coat. At all times when judging the OES, the hands must be used to determine proportions, measurements, substance and angles.

P3 **"SYMMETRY"** is defined in canine terms as "a due proportion of the several parts of the body to each other; the union and conformity of the members of a work to the whole; harmony."

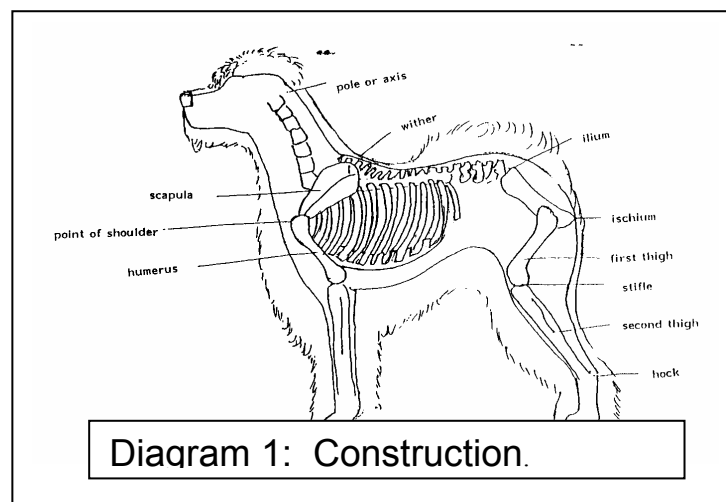
P4 **PROFUSELY COATED ALL OVER:** The OES is a substantial animal beneath the coat, without being coarse. The coat gives an illusion of considerable bulk and while an examination of the dog beneath the coat will reveal that the dog is smaller, both in height and substance, than by the eye, it nonetheless must be a substantial dog.

P5 **ABLE BODIED** defined in canine terms as "strong of body for work" is an excellent description of the correct OES. It should never be forgotten that it is a Working Dog and the strength and agility, the **OVERALL SOUNDNESS** and the **MOST INTELLIGENT EXPRESSION** are all of utmost importance in the OES. It must give the impression that it has the ability, both physical and mental, to fulfil a days work. On examination, anything which would reduce the stamina of the dog, including lack of muscle and hard condition, should be considered a deviation from the requirements of the standard.

P6 **FREE OF ALL POODLE OR DEERHOUND CHARACTERISTICS:** The Poodle is required to be an elegant dog with refinement of the skull and muzzle and a moderate stop. The Deerhound is racey, a rough coated Greyhound with a flattish topline, and a long, narrow head with no stop. No doubt this phrase was written into the standard to emphasise the requirement of the OES to be thickset and also to emphasise the unique head of the OES.

**CHARACTERISTICS.** *The dog stands lower at the shoulder than at the loin. When walking or trotting has a characteristic ambling or pacing movement. The bark should be loud, with a peculiar "pot casse" ring in it.*

P1 The correct OES topline is slightly lower at the withers than it is at the loin. The difference is not great and is due mainly to the strength of muscle in the loin which gives it a gentle arch. The croup of the OES is sloping and rounded. The "rising topline" should never be a result of a straight stifle pushing the topline upward over the croup, or due to the dog being down on pastern or short in foreleg.



P2 **A CHARACTERISTIC AMBLING OR PACING MOVEMENT** : Ambling and pacing are characteristics of the Old English Sheepdog. The 'amble' is not a 'pace'. The amble is like a fast rocking walk with an irregular four beat cadence in which the legs on either side move almost, but not quite, as a pair. Often seen as a transition movement between the walk and faster gaits, ambling should not be confused with pacing.

P3 The bark has a peculiar pot casse ring to it, i.e. a hollow ringing sound.

**TEMPERAMENT:** *The OES breed standard makes no allowance for one of the most important characteristics of the breed - its temperament. Biddable, ever reliable, lovable and loyal and possessing a definite sense of humour, the OES is just what he appears - a shaggy clown. Aggression toward people or dogs is uncharacteristic of the OES, as is timidity, and should be heavily penalised, both in the showing and breeding programs.*

**HEAD AND SKULL.** *Skull capacious and rather squarely formed, giving plenty of room for brain power. The parts over the eyes should be well arched and the whole well covered with hair. Jaw fairly long, strong, square, and truncated; the stop should be defined to avoid a Deerhound face. Nose always black, large and capacious.*

P1 Canine terms define “capacious” as “able to hold much; roomy, spacious”. The correct skull is rather square, that is, the distance from stop to occiput approximates the width between the ears. The width should be maintained so that the width at the ears is approximately the same right through to the front of the skull. The skull which is wider than it is long is as incorrect as that which is longer than it is wide.



P2 The correct OES skull has well developed frontal bones, i.e. well arched over the eyes. This arching is a pronounced bony brow - a triangular bony formation with the base behind the eyes and the apex extending approximately one third the way back up the skull. This arch is most

important as it holds the 'fall' (headcoat) up and away from the eyes enabling the dog to see through the coat. The skull should be level, or slightly rising from stop to occiput when viewed in profile, and the occiput is pronounced. A receding skull (sloping downwards from stop to occiput) with an indistinct occiput is untypical. Measured between the ears the OES skull is flat in the adult.

P3 The muzzle is strong and when viewed from above, it is wide with parallel sides, i.e. without taper. Viewed from the side, the muzzle is deep with a well developed underjaw, and the whole of the nose, upper jaw and underjaw giving the muzzle a cut-off appearance (truncated). The proportion of the muzzle to the skull is not given but it is generally accepted that the muzzle is slightly shorter than the skull. Viewed from the front it should appear as a square and the underjaw should be well defined. The planes of the muzzle and skull are parallel and separated by a well defined stop. The whole of the head must be in proportion to the size of the dog and should be considered as such. Emphasis must be placed on the shape, planes and arching as well as on the width of skull.

P4 The nose of the OES must always be black, although puppies are born with predominantly pink noses which pigment quickly. Perhaps the first thing which is noticed when looking at the head of an OES front on is its very large black nose. A correct muzzle will always have a large nose leather with wide apart nostrils and a blunt or square shape. A nose leather which is rounded or pointed and/or has nostrils which are narrow and pinched always accompanies a weak tapering muzzle. The OES head must give the impression of size and, to the hand, must feel strong and substantial.

**EYES.** *Dark or wall are to be preferred.*

P1 When viewed from the front, the OES eyes should be wide apart and look full forward. Eyes which are close together and/or obliquely set indicate a skull which is narrow, wedge shaped, round or otherwise untypical. In young puppies the correct eye placement is an indication that the skull will finish with sufficient width, squareness and arching in the adult.

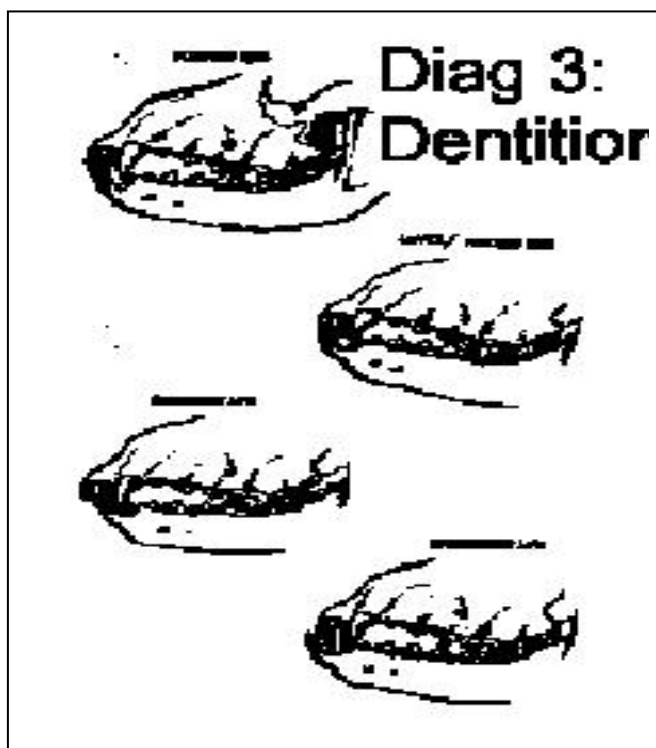
P2 The preferred eye colour is two dark brown, one dark brown/one blue (wall) or two blue.

**EARS.** *Small and carried flat to the side of the head, coated moderately.*

P1 The OES ear is triangular and small in comparison with the size of the dog. They are set in a line with the outer corner and when drawn forward reach approximately to the inner corner of the eye. They are carried flat to the side of the head but show mobility and a slight lifting at the base when the dog is alert. It is important to check the ear size and placement when judging as large ears are disguised by the coat, as are rose ears and ears which are carried well away from the skull giving an appearance of width to the skull. Occasionally ears are found which are set high on the skull and these too may give a deceptive appearance to the skull size.

P2 Puppies may be born with desirable small ears but at the age of 5 or 6 weeks the ears appear to grow out of all proportion to the size of the dog, sometimes reaching to the end of the muzzle when drawn forward.

Generally the puppy catches up with its ears by the age of nine months and until that age an OES should not be too heavily penalised for having too large ears providing they are still set correctly.



**MOUTH.** *Teeth strong and large, evenly placed and level.*

P1 The teeth on an OES should be formidable - strong and large to compliment the strength of its muzzle. They should be evenly spaced and the

incisors should be in a straight line, not curved. A curved bite accompanies a weak muzzle. A scissor bite or a level bite is equally acceptable.

**NECK.** *The neck should be fairly long, arched gracefully and well coated with hair.*

P1 The neck should be fairly long, sloping gently into the shoulders. The neck must be strong to support the substantial head of the Old English Sheepdog. Most important is the graceful arch which denotes strength and muscling.

**FOREQUARTERS.** *The forelegs should be dead straight, with plenty of bone, holding the dog well from the ground without approaching legginess, well coated all round. The shoulders sloping and narrow at the points, the dog standing lower at the shoulder than at the loin.*

P1 Viewed front the front the "**FORELEGS SHOULD BE DEAD Straight**". Again it is necessary to assess with the hands whether this is so, as careful trimming of foot hair can disguise feet which turn out, and as the whole of the leg is covered in profuse coat it is impossible to determine if there is any curve in the legs without running a hand down BOTH legs. To check whether the feet point straight ahead, lift the foot coat and check that the two centre nails on BOTH front feet point directly forward. OES have ticklish feet and will often move when this is being done, and it is best to complete the examination of the dog while the handler has it set up and then make the examination of the feet just before asking the dog to move.

P2 At an early age some growing puppies may turn their feet slightly outward while having an otherwise straight leg. Others may have a curve in the upper leg yet be straight from the knee down and the feet pointing straight ahead. These are growth patterns and one would expect to see them rectified by 6 months. In the adult the turning of the front feet slightly outward is a fault usually in the pastern, but the turning of the feet inward is indicative of serious problems in the forequarter placement on the ribcage usually due to an incorrect shaped ribcage.

P3 The OES has moderate angulation rather than excessive. Its shoulders should slope well back and the wither should blend gently into the back, with a slight depression immediately behind the wither.

P4 Viewed from the side, the OES with correct angulation of scapula and humerus should stand well over its forelegs. There should be a slight forechest and a line drawn from the heel pad (allow for the coat surrounding the leg) should when extended upward, pass through the wither.

If the line passes through the ear or the muzzle then the entire forequarter construction and/or head carriage is incorrect.

P5 **“FINE AT THE POINT OF SHOULDER”.**

The Old English Sheepdog is narrow at the point of shoulder. The point of shoulder is the junction of the scapula (shoulder blade) and humerus (upper arm) and the requirement of the standard was that when viewed from the front, the dog was not broad.

P6 The wither should be flat. Dogs with high withers may appear to have extra length of neck but the topline will slope to the rear which is totally uncharacteristic of the OES.

P7 The elbows fit close to the brisket, neither loose nor tied.

P8 **THE DOG TO STAND SLIGHTLY LOWER AT THE SHOULDER THAN THE LOIN.**

The correct OES topline is slightly lower at the withers than it is at the loin and rises gently to the loin. The difference is not great and is due mainly to the strength and muscling in the loin which gives it a gentle arch. The croup of the OES is sloping and rounded. The “rising topline” should never be a result of a straight stifle pushing the topline upward over the croup, or due to the dog being down on pastern or short in foreleg.

P9 The length of leg should be sufficient to hold the dog well from the ground without approaching leginess as stated in General Appearance. If the dog is too short in leg it will lose the “square look” and if it is too long it will lose the compactness that gives the “thickset”

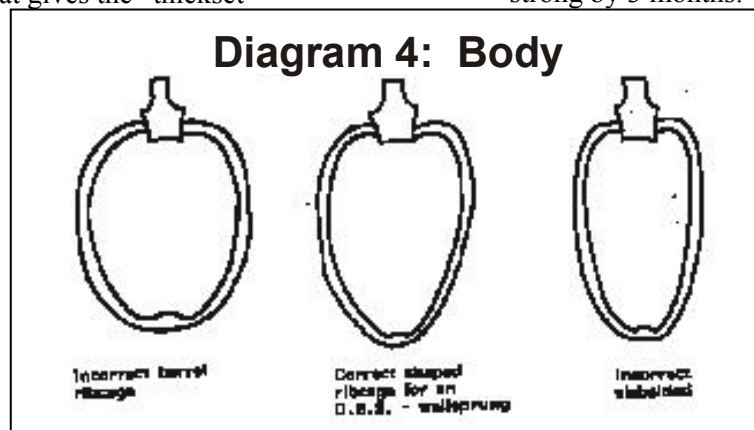
P10 Strength of bone is important in this breed. The bone must be clean, strong and carried right down to the feet.

**BODY. Rather short and very compact, ribs well sprung, and brisket deep and capacious. The loin should be very stout and gently arched.**

P1 The overall appearance of the OES calls for it to have a rather short and compact body. It is possible to find dogs which are actually long in body but measure approximately square due to a lack of angulation in the forequarter and hindquarter. A long body and correct angulation will make a dog appear both long and low on the leg. Some dogs are over square, i.e. they are too short in body and long in leg.

P2 The ribs should be well sprung, broad at the back and tapering in at the sternum to be pear shaped. A round or barrelled ribcage will give an incorrect broad front. A narrow ribcage (slab side) will not have the thickset body required by the standard. The ribcage should be deep reaching to the elbow in the mature dog. The last rib should be long and carried well back into the loin which should be short and strong. The OES has a gentle tuck up of the underline if it possesses the correct ribcage and loin.

P3 An OES with the correct ribcage and substance should possess a loin which is extremely strong, being broad and deep in the muscle. There is a gentle, but obvious to the hand, arching over the loin area. Any weakness of loin is most uncharacteristic of an OES and the loin muscling is apparent from an early age and should be quite strong by 3 months.



appearance. Once again, the dog may have very long coat on the belly which may make a dog with correct length of leg appear short on leg, or may make a leggy dog look correct on leg. Again it is necessary to check what the eye sees. Immature dogs may go through a leggy stage but height to length ratios should remain correct.

**HINDQUARTERS.** *The hindquarters should be round and muscular with hocks well let down and the hams densely coated with a thick long jacket in excess of that of any other part of the body.*

- P1 The Old English Sheepdog should be very broad and muscular across the hindquarters and through the stifles, with the croup also broad and gently sloping to give a well rounded appearance.
- P2 The second thigh should be broad and well muscled and approximately the same length as the first thigh. The OES is not an over angulated dog.
- P3 The hock joint should be set low and the rear pastern (from hock to ground) vertical to the ground when standing, the hock joint turning neither in nor out.
- P4 Viewed from the rear the OES should be very broad across the hindquarter and through the stifles. Coat again hides the conformation and as the coat on the hindquarters is more profuse than on other parts of the dog and is groomed to accentuate this, it is most important to examine the dog from hip to toe to determine whether the

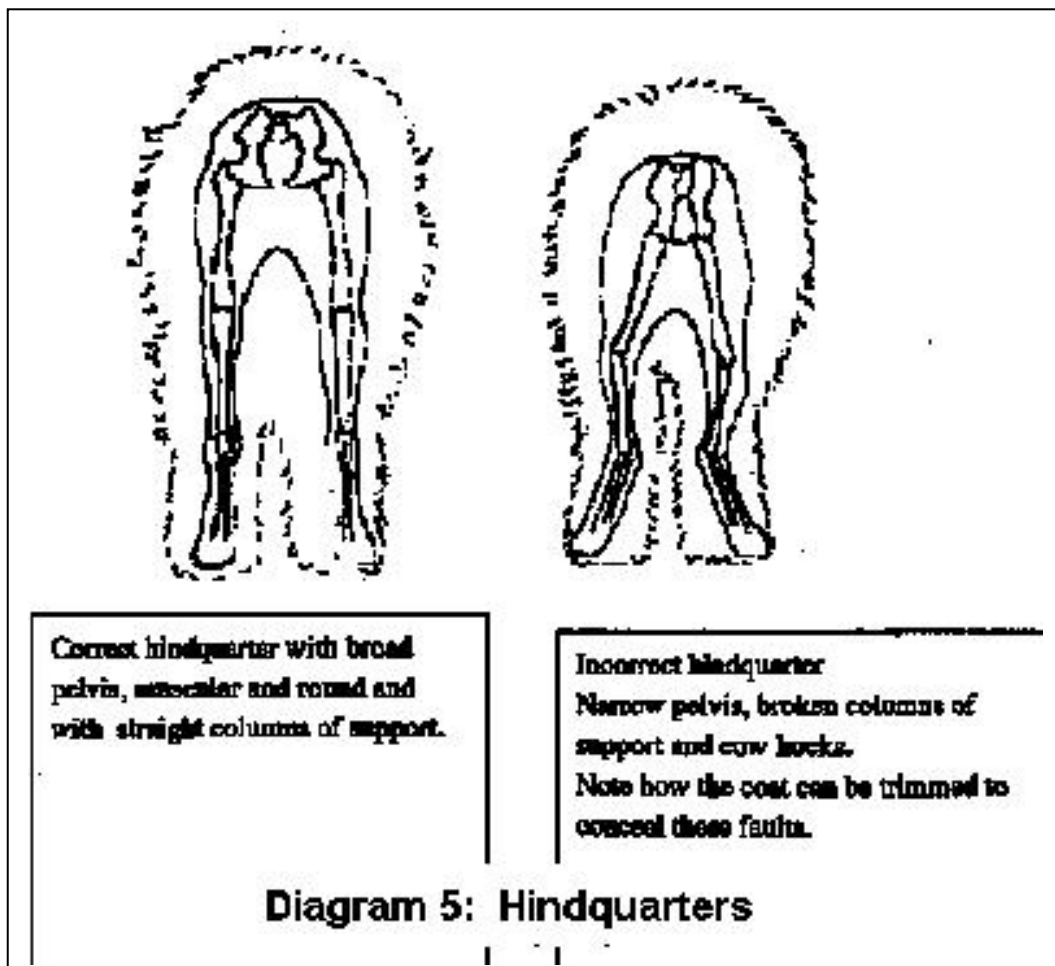
strength, muscle and angles are truly evident. Dogs who have a narrow pelvis converge at the stifles and turn the point of hock inward and the hind feet outward to broaden the base of support. Viewed from the rear the correct stance is with the feet slightly wider apart than the hip bones and with the hocks turning neither in nor out and the feet pointing directly forward. Viewed from the side the hocks should be vertical and only slightly behind the furthest part of the dog's hindquarter.

**FEET.** *Small, round; toes well arched, and pads thick and round.*

- P1 The Old English Sheepdog as a drover's or shepherd's dog would be expected to cover many miles in a day over varied terrain. Therefore a small, round foot, with well arched toes and thick round pads is essential for this breed. Feet should turn neither in nor out.

**TAILS.** *Puppies requiring docking should have the operation performed within a week from birth, preferably within four days.*

- P1 Preferably docked. Due to the profuse coat on the hindquarters of the OES it is definitely preferable for the dogs welfare and hygiene if it is a bobtail.



**Diagram 6: Pace, Walk and Amble.**

**Diagram 7: Coat.**

***GAIT/MOVEMENT. Very elastic in gallop but when walking or trotting has a characteristic ambling or pacing movement.***

- P1 There are those who believe than an OES must pace (i.e. move both legs on the same side in the same direction at the same time - parallel gait) to be a typical moving OES. This is a fallacy as it has always been that some of the most typical OES have never paced, and there have been others which have never trotted. There are many breeds which adopt a pace when moving slowly as it is a compensation made by the dog, especially if it is short-backed, to prevent it striking its foreleg with its hindleg if there is insufficient time to get it out of the way.
- P2 Ambling and pacing are characteristics of the Old English Sheepdog. The ‘amble’ is not a ‘pace’. The amble is like a fast rocking walk with an irregular four beat cadence in which the legs on either side move almost, but not quite, as a pair. Often seen as a transition movement between the walk and faster gaits, ambling should not be confused with pacing.
- P3 The OES gait when trotting is free and powerful, seemingly effortless with good reach and drive and covering maximum ground with minimum steps. It should appear that it could work all day. It takes a long low stride in the forequarter. The forefoot should strike the ground at the moment that the forward propulsion from the hindquarters has ceased and there should be no jarring or pounding of the foot on the ground. Viewed from the front, the feet will come in only slightly toward the centre line when trotting. The pacing dog will not converge toward the centre line at all. The foreleg must be an unbroken straight line from elbow to foot and curvature of the foreleg during movement is due to incorrect shoulder placement and incorrect ribcage.
- P4 The hindquarters must show the strength in movement which is expected from such strong well-muscled and correctly angulated hindquarters. Viewed from the side when trotting, the hindfoot should strike the ground at the exact spot from which the fore foot was picked up. A balanced and correctly angulated OES will not place the hindfoot beyond this spot, short of this spot, or inside nor outside of the forefoot. The hock should show flexion, straightening on the backward thrust of the hindleg, but without exaggerated lift. Viewed from behind the dog should move with the hocks approximately the same distance apart as the hip bones and turning neither in nor out. Close hind movement is a weakness, as is excessive width when moving. The faster the dog moves the closer it will bring its feet under the body so that at a walk, one would expect to see the dog move a little wider than in a trot, which results in the bear-like roll described in the standard. This roll is also present during the pace, but the pacing dog also rolls when viewed from the front. The roll is exaggerated by the movement of the coat.
- P5 The correctly moving Old English Sheepdog will lower its head during the trot, pace and amble and the faster it goes the closer its head will come to being on a level with its back. The Old English Sheepdog who moves at a trot with a high head carriage is often thought to be glamorous, but is in fact exhibiting an attitude untypical of a working sheepdog.
- P6 High/short stepping front action and/or a rear action which is ‘rotary’ (has a lot of lift and kick back) or over-reaching are untypical of the Old English Sheepdog.
- P7 It is unlikely in the show ring to see the gallop performed, but the correctly conformed OES should be able to manage a creditable gallop when given freedom off lead. It is remarkable quick for such a thickset breed and it should be able to “turn on sixpence”. For all its shortness of back, its spine is flexible and its very strong loin, broad hindquarters and narrower front see it, at full speed, almost bringing the hindlegs past the front legs on the outside. If the OES is correctly built and, if it shows power and freedom in its movement, one could hopefully assume that it was capable of an elastic gallop.
- COAT. Profuse and of good hard texture; not straight but shaggy and free from curl. The undercoat should be a waterproof pile when not removed by grooming.***
- P1 The coat of an OES is its most striking feature. It cannot be emphasised enough that the coat completely masks the conformation of the dog beneath, and that to correctly assess the dog requires careful examination with the hands to discover the make and shape. *Profuse* is described in canine terms as “lavish” or “liberal to excess” and such a description possibly leads to the misinterpretation of “the more coat the better”. The quality, texture and profusion is to be considered above mere length, however, it is possible to have a profuse coat which is not over long and yet still complete lacks characteristic texture.
- P2 The Old English Sheepdog has a double coat consisting of :
- an outer coat of crisp, strong harsh hairs which are neither straight nor curly, but have a slight wave (known as a break) which enables it to stand

- away from the body when supported by the correct undercoat.
- an undercoat of an extremely dense waterproof wool-like pile when not removed by grooming. Quality, texture and profusion to be considered above mere length.
- P3 The head and skull of the OES is completely covered with hair, the long hair over the eyes is known as the “fall”. The dog with the correct skull shape, with a well defined stop, and well arched over the eyes, will have the hair naturally lifted clear of the eyes enabling it to see through its veil. The ears are moderately coated. The coat on the ears should be an extension of the ear shape.
- P4 The neck is well coated and often disguises the true length of neck.
- P5 The forelegs are well coated all around with a profuse coat which gives the appearance of massive bone.
- P6 The coat on the hindquarters of the OES is more profuse than anywhere else on the body and it is here that the correct texture and the density of the undercoat is apparent. It is also the area where the coat is most likely to have been doctored with hairsprays, coat stiffeners etc. These are against kennel club rules and dogs should be penalised for their presence. The correct coat stands on its own.

**COLOUR.** *Any shade of grey, grizzle, blue or blue merle, with or without white markings; any shade of brown or sable to be considered distinctly objectionable and not to be encouraged.*

- P1 Any shade of grey, grizzle, blue or blue merle is correct - from the lightest silver grey through to deep navy blue but never black. A dog should not be given preference for its particular shade of grey or blue. Grizzle is a mixture of light and dark hairs which combined create a grey coat.
- P2 OES puppies are usually born black and turn grey progressively, commencing on the hocks, ears, around the eyes at about 10-12 weeks. Some puppies drop their black and fluffy undercoat rapidly and turn very grey over the shoulders and up the rear of the hindlegs. The new coat will exhibit the texture of a mature coat. Other puppies remain fluffy with puppy coat and slowly the new grey coat grows through and mixes with the puppy coat. Puppy coat often turns brown before dropping but the coat on a dog approaching 18 months should be a clear blue, grey, grizzle or merle. A tendency to brown ends on a puppy coat should be weighed up against its other virtues, rather than disregarding it

altogether. A brown coat in an adult is undesirable.

- P3 It is unfortunate that optical illusions occur as a result of markings in this breed, and the length of the shawl can influence the appearance of the length of the body and neck. The angle of the junction of the white shawl with the grey body coat also gives an illusion of shoulder angulation.
- P4 A correctly marked OES is one where white does not predominate over blue, grey, grizzle or merle, the body behind the wither is blue, grey, grizzle or merle and preferably unbroken by patches or stripes of white. The head and ears may be marked with blue, grey, grizzle or merle, the shoulders may be blue, grey, grizzle or merle, the white collar may have a patch or blue, grey, grizzle or merle, the legs may be white or only partly so. The dog need not have symmetrical markings.

**SIZE.** *56cm (22 inches and upwards for dogs, slightly less for bitches. Type, symmetry and character of the greatest importance and on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.*

- P1 The OES is one of the few breeds which has no upper height limitation and which allows for a bitch to be larger than the dog, although at all times a dog must appear masculine and a bitch feminine. The standard has always had the qualifier that type and symmetry are of the greatest importance and must not be sacrificed for size alone, and it should be kept in mind when assessing size that the standard requires the breed to be thickset, strong, able bodied, rather short and compact in body and absolutely free of legginess. A dog or bitch which is too small or too large will not meet these requirements.

**FAULTS.** *A long narrow head.*

Any departure from the standard should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

**NOTE:** *Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.*

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