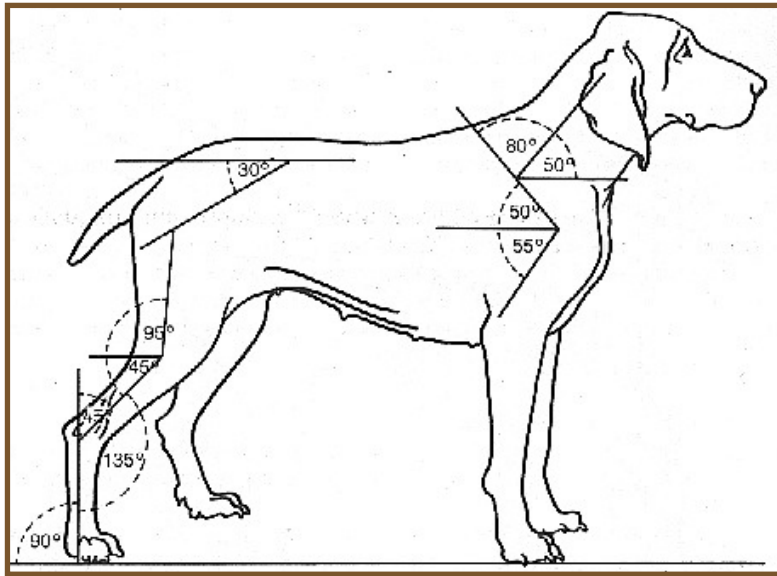


# Illustrated Standard of the Bracco Italiano

by Amanda Inman, DVM



## *Brief Historical Summary*

The Bracco Italiano has been called the oldest European pointer, and its history reaches back to the fourth or fifth century BC. While the exact ancestral origins are unknown, it is generally accepted that the Bracco Italiano descended from the Segugio Italiano and the Asiatic Mastiff, which has since become extinct. The breed was developed in northern Italy with two distinct varieties known to Piedmont and Lombardy, respectively.

By the medieval period, the breed was well established and the Italian aristocracy exported the Bracco across the Old World. This dissemination of dogs during the fifteenth century gave rise to new sporting breeds as the Italian Pointers cross-bred with local dogs, especially in France where similar breeds did not yet exist. The English Pointer, Brittany, German Shorthaired Pointer, and Portuguese Pointer have all been speculated to be descendants of the Bracco Italiano.

The breed's popularity peaked during the Renaissance, when they were bred by the Medici family of Florence and the Gonzaga family in Mantua. During this time, they were known as "bracchi of the net," for the practice of hunters throwing a large net over a covey of birds. The Bracco remained at healthy numbers until the turn of the twentieth century, when they faced a sharp decline.

By the end of the 1800s, the Bracco Italiano faced extinction. Over the years, crossing with hounds and poor breeding resulted in dogs that were too heavily built to perform their work, and the breed suffered from various health problems. At this time, Ferdinando Delor de Ferrabouc headed a reconstitution effort through diligent breeding selection and care. In the 1920s, it was decided to unify the two variations of the breed in order to preserve genetic diversity. In order to fully understand the history of the breed, and to be able to appreciate the

Bracco Italiano's conformation and hunting ability, one has to have a strong understanding of the two types of dogs that contributed to its ultimate composition.

First, the Piedmontese Pointer was a dog of lighter construction and color, and it originated in the Piedmont region of Italy. This dog was used for work in the mountains, which its conformation and temperament reflected. The Piedmontese dog was smaller than its counterpart in Lombardy, and its hunting style was reminiscent of some western European pointers in that it traveled with a jaunty gallop. One notable breeder of the Bracco Piedmontese was the Aschieri family. This dog was primarily white, with or without orange markings.

On the other hand, the Lombard Pointer was a rich brown roan and had a heavier body type. This dog was used for hunting in the marshy lowlands, and it was a trotting breed. These big dogs were bred both for their eye appeal and natural hunting ability. The Ranza family from Piacenza, whose dogs exhibited a most elegant and efficient trot in the field, were marked breeders of the Bracco Lombardo in the early 1900s.

Let it be noted, however, that the breeding of two "light" Bracchi could produce "heavy" dogs, and vice versa. Also, "light" and "heavy" refer strictly to the dogs' morphological characteristics, and not to height, as it was not uncommon for Piedmontese dogs to be as tall as those bred from Lombardic stock. Therefore, when the types were merged, the height chosen in the new standard spanned from the minimum height of the "light" Bracco to the maximum height of the "heavy" Bracco.

In 1923, a committee, aided by Guiseppe Solaro, compiled the breed's morphologic description into a written standard. The information in this standard had been passed down by word of mouth for over one hundred years. The Societa Amatori Bracco Italiano was founded and the official breed standard was published in Italy in 1949. When the Italian conformation standard was published, it incorporated aspects of both breed types, resulting in noted variability within the standard.

The Bracco Italiano was brought to the United Kingdom in the late 1980s, however United States did not experience the Italian Pointer until approximately 1994. In 2001 the Bracco was accepted into the AKC Foundation Stock Service. In 2005 the first national "Gathering" was held, and the Bracco Italiano Club of America was founded in 2007.

The Bracco Italiano is bred primarily for the field. The standard as set out hereunder must be interpreted chiefly from this point of view and all Judges at Bench Shows must be encouraged to judge the exhibits chiefly from the working standpoint.

### ***Essence of the Bracco Italiano***

*The key to the Bracco Italiano is its adaptability as a working, versatile sporting breed. The Italian Pointer is used to track, point, and retrieve a variety of game animals and fowl from both land and water. The breed's hunting style is methodical and efficient, characterized by an elegant, extended trot. These dogs are tireless in the field. The Bracco Italiano's conformation is intrinsically tied to its function, and to preserve this breed as a using dog, this must be in the forefront of any judging decision.*

## *the Bracco Italiano Standard*

The Bracco Italiano is bred primarily for the field. The standard as set out hereunder must be interpreted chiefly from this point of view and all Judges at Bench Shows must be encouraged to judge the exhibits chiefly from the working standpoint.

### **I. General Appearance**

Of strong and harmonious construction, powerful appearance. The preferred subjects are smooth coated, with lean limbs, well- developed muscles, well defined lines, and a markedly sculpted head with very obvious chiseling under the eyes. These elements all contribute to give distinction to this breed. The Bracco is tough and adapted to all types of hunting, reliable, docile, and easy to train.

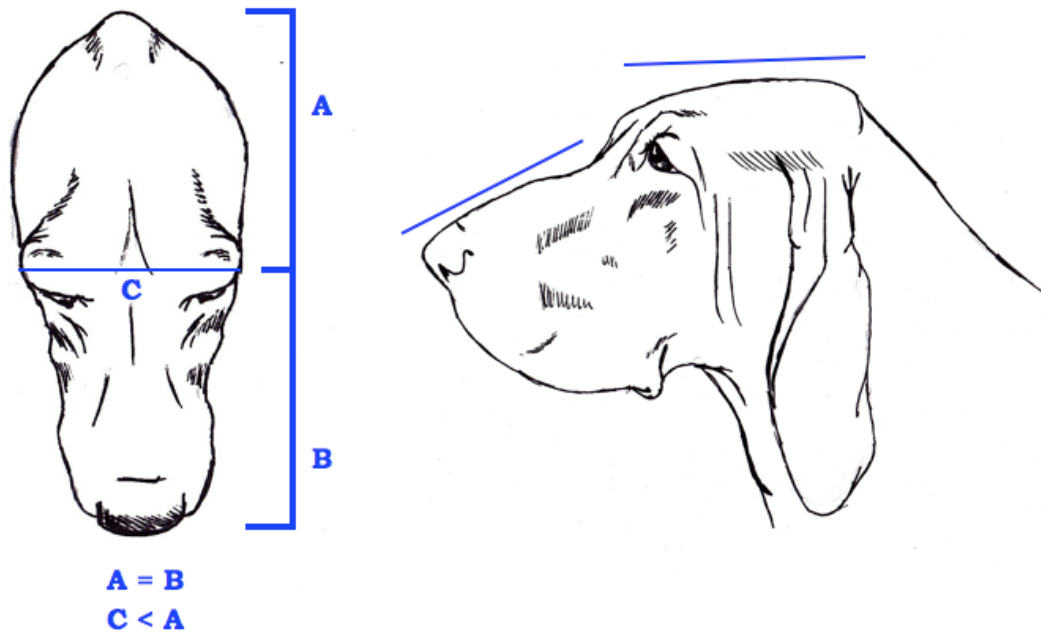
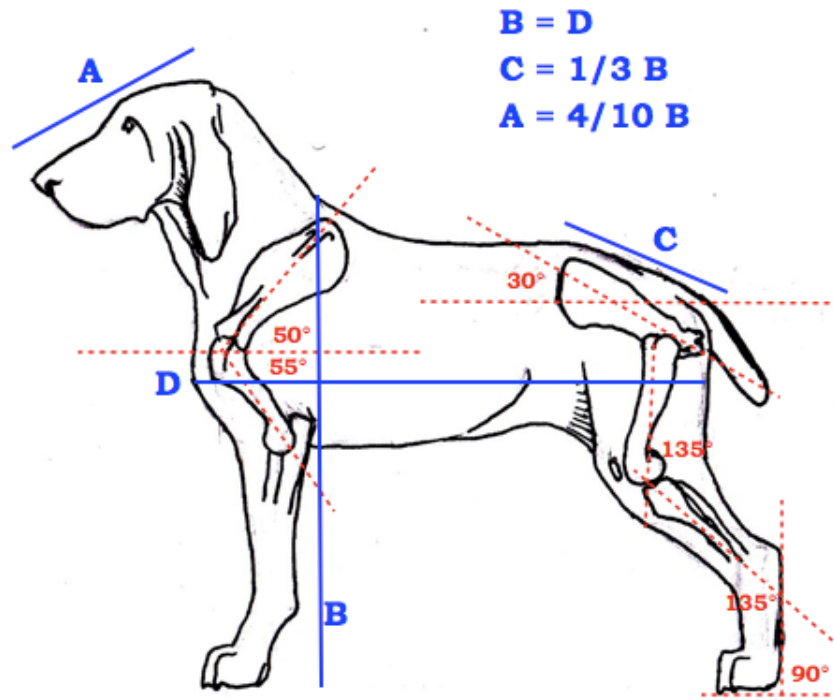
*The Bracco's heavier substance is unusual for a pointing breed. Despite this, these dogs should not be lumbering, and they should not be coarse as to detract from their unique elegance. Sexual dimorphism is highly valued: dogs should be "masculine," and bitches should be "feminine." Ideally, the Bracco should be an image of balance and strength, with a distinctly sculpted head.*

### **II. Size, Substance, Proportion**

Height at the withers between 21 to 27 inches. Preferred size for males: 23-27 inches; preferred size for females: 21-25 inches. Weight between 55 to 90 pounds, depending on height. **Height at the withers less than 21 inches after 12 months of age is a disqualification. Height greater than 27 inches is a disqualification.**

The Bracco is a solidly built dog with powerful bone, but without lumber, and without sacrificing balance and harmonious appearance. A dog in hard and lean field condition is not to be penalized.

Important Proportions: The body is square or slightly longer than tall. Length of head is equal to two-fifths (40%) of the height at the withers; its width, measured at the level of the zygomatic arches, is less than half its length. Skull and muzzle are of equal length.



### III. Head

**Head:** Angular and narrow at the level of the zygomatic arches, its length corresponds to two-fifths (40%) of the height at the withers; the middle of its length is at the level of a line that unites the inner angles of both eyes. The upper planes of the skull and muzzle are divergent, i.e.: if extended, the top line of the muzzle emerges in front of the occiput, ideally at mid-length of

the skull (down-faced).

***Dish face (convergence of the planes of the skull and muzzle) is a disqualification.***

The head and neck are moderate in skin. The head should have a soft fold of skin from the outer corner of the eye, falling down the cheek. When the head is down and relaxed, there is a skin fold across the skull from ear to ear.

*The head creates breed type and distinction and thus cannot be compromised. The divergent upper longitudinal craniofacial axes allow the Bracco to catch scent while trotting with his head held high. The construction of the head is characteristic of a trotting dog, while parallel or convergent facial lines are typical of galloping breeds, such as the English Pointer. A dish face or parallel lines of the skull and muzzle are serious faults for the Bracco Italiano. The head of the Bracco should be “bony” with marked chiseling and only covered by skin and a thin layer of muscle.*

**Eyes:** Semi-lateral position, neither deep set nor prominent. Eyes fairly large, eyelids oval-shaped and close-fitting (no entropion or ectropion). The iris is a dark amber to orange or brown color depending on the color of the coat. ***Wall eye is a disqualification.*** Expression is soft, gentle and intelligent.

*Eyes that are too large or protruding are susceptible to injury in the field, and thus should be faulted. Likewise, very loose, ectropic eyelids can collect dirt and become irritated, being not only painful but also reducing the dog’s productivity and efficiency as a working animal. The expression of the Bracco should never be “hard,” but rather kind and submissive. “If there is a dog who has the prerogative of the sweetness of the look, this is the Bracco” (Solaro, 1932).*

**Ears:** Well developed. In length they should, without being stretched, reach the tip of the nose. Their width is at least equal to half their length; raised only very slightly; base rather narrow, set at level of zygomatic arches. A supple ear with a front rim well-turned inwards to frame the face; the lower extremity of the ear ends in a slightly rounded tip.

**Skull Region:** Seen in profile, the skull shape is a very open arch. Seen from the top, it forms lengthwise an elongated oval. The width of the skull measured at the level of the zygomatic arches should not exceed half the length of the head. Cheeks are lean, the bulge of the forehead and the supra-orbital ridges are perceptible. The stop is not pronounced. The frontal groove is visible and ends at mid-length of the skull. The sagittal crest is short and not very prominent. The occiput is pronounced.

**Muzzle:** Fore-face is either straight or slightly arched. Its length is equal to half of the length of the head and its depth measures four-fifths (80%) of its length. Seen from the front,

the lateral sides of the muzzle converge slightly, still presenting a fore-face of good width. The chin is not very apparent.

*From the front, the lateral sides of the muzzle should be nearly parallel. The proper length of the muzzle should be equal to back-skull (from the stop to occiput). A muzzle that is longer than the skull indicates a "catching" dog, while a short muzzle indicates less olfactory development.*

**Nose:** Voluminous, with large well-opened nostrils, protrudes slightly over the lips with which it forms an angle. Color brown or from pale pink to more or less deep fleshy red depending on the color of the coat. *A split nose is a disqualification.*

**Lips:** Upper lips well developed, thin and floppy without being flaccid, covering the jaw; seen in profile, they overlap the lower jaw slightly, seen from the front, they form an inverted "V" below the nose; the corner of the lips must be marked without being droopy.

*Seen in profile, the outer curve of the upper lip should not fall directly perpendicular to the muzzle (as with the Pointer, having a very square muzzle), but should be somewhat set back.*

**Teeth:** Dental arches well adapted, with the teeth square to the jaw. Bite: scissor or level. Any deviation (overbite or underbite) should be faulted in accordance to its severity.

*Overbite and underbite are both faulted, as they can affect the dog's ability to properly handle and retrieve game.*

#### **IV. Neck, Top-line, Body**

**Neck:** Powerful, in truncated cone shape. Length of the neck is at least two-thirds but not greater than the length of the head. Well detached from the nape. The throat shows a soft double dewlap. Excessive skin with exaggerated wrinkling or single dewlap is faulted.

*A muscular, well-developed neck is essential for the dog to carry heavy game. A long neck (equal to or longer than the head) is typical of galloping dogs. A shorter neck, as in the Bracco, is typical of trotting dogs.*

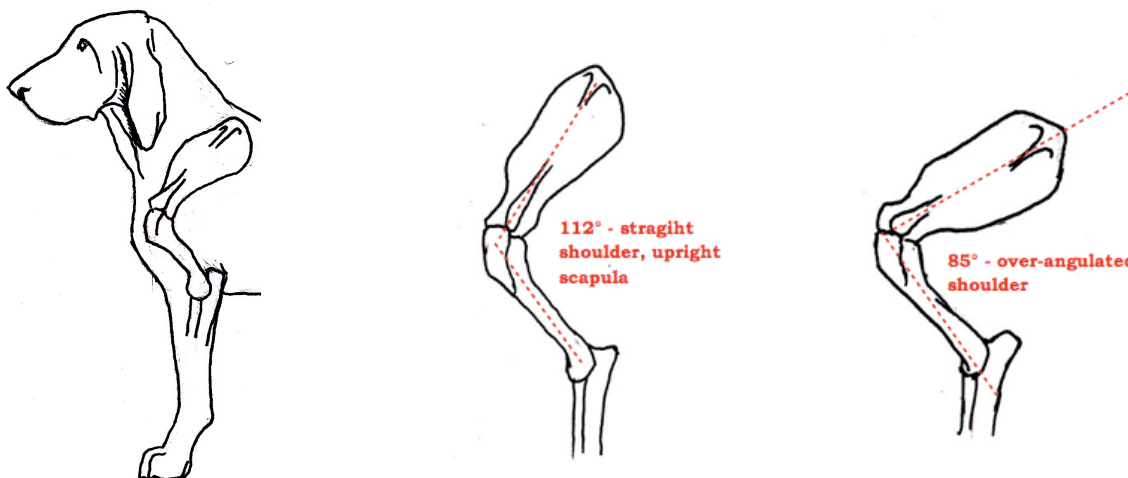
**Top-line:** The upper profile of the back is made up of two lines: one, almost straight, slopes from the withers to the 11th dorsal vertebrae (mid-back); the other is slightly arched, joining with the line of the croup.

**Body:** Chest is broad, deep and well down to level of the elbows, without forming a keel. Ribs well sprung, particularly in their lower part, and sloping. Wide lumbar region. Loin is well muscled, short and slightly convex. Croup is long (about one-third of the height at the withers), wide and well-muscled; the pelvic angulation (angle formed by the pelvic girdle with a horizontal line) is 30°.

**Underline:** Lower profile almost horizontal in its rib cage part, rising slightly in its abdominal part.

**Tail:** Thick at the base, straight, with a slight tendency to taper, hair short. When the dog is in action and especially when questing, is carried horizontally or nearly. Docked: Should be docked 6 to 10 inches from the root. Undocked: Carried horizontally; length of the undocked tail is to the hock. May be slightly curved but never held high or carried bent over the back.

## V. Forequarters



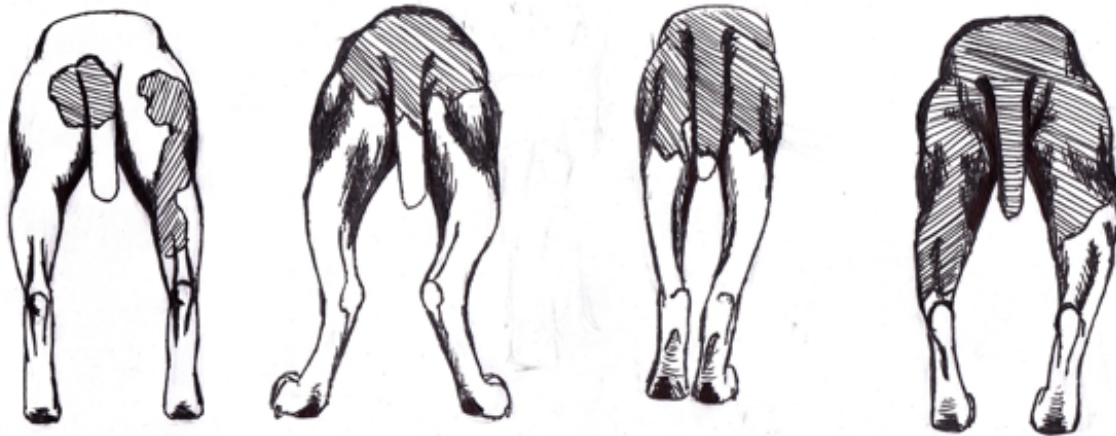
**Above: (Left)** Correct shoulder conformation. The angle of the shoulder is 105 degrees. **(Center) and (Right)** Incorrect shoulder conformation.



**Above: (Left)** Correct front. Strong, straight construction and a deep chest of good width. Large paws. **(Center)** Lacking power, very narrow chested, lacking muscular definition in the shoulder; severely crooked legs with long and weak pasterns. The east-west forequarter conformation is more likely to experience impact and twisting injury in the field. **(Right)** Too wide and lumbering, out at the elbows, pigeon-toed, chest too rounded. This conformation does not properly carry the dog's weight and will predispose it to injury while hunting.

Withers are well defined, with the points of the shoulder blades well separated. Shoulder strong, well-muscled, long, sloping, and well laid back, very free in its movement. The upper arm sloping, fitting to the rib cage. Forearm strong, straight, with well-marked sinews; the point of the elbows should be on a perpendicular line from the rear point of the shoulder blade to the ground. Metacarpus (pastern) well proportioned, lean, of good length and slightly sloping. Feet strong, slightly oval shaped, well arched and closed toes with strong nails well curved towards the ground. Color of nails is white, yellow or brown, of a more or less dark shade depending on the color of the coat. Foot pads elastic and lean.

## VI. Hindquarters



- (From Left) 1:** *Correct hindquarter, straight construction with good muscular definition. There is clear distinction between the upper and lower thigh, and the hocks are wide.*
- 2:** *Weak rear, both sickle-hocked and cow-hocked. Lacking muscular distinction between the upper and lower thigh.*
- 3:** *Very narrow, weak hindquarter. Lacking width and substance. Poor muscle, down in the hocks, tail set too high.*
- 4:** *Too bulky, bow-legged, slightly down in the hocks, pigeon-toed, tail set too low.*

In balance with the forequarters. Thigh long, parallel, muscular, with the rear edge almost straight when viewed from the side. Strong limbs; hocks wide, metatarsals (rear pasterns) relatively short and lean. The feet, with all the characteristics of the front feet, have dewclaws, the absence of which is not a fault. Double dewclaws are tolerated.

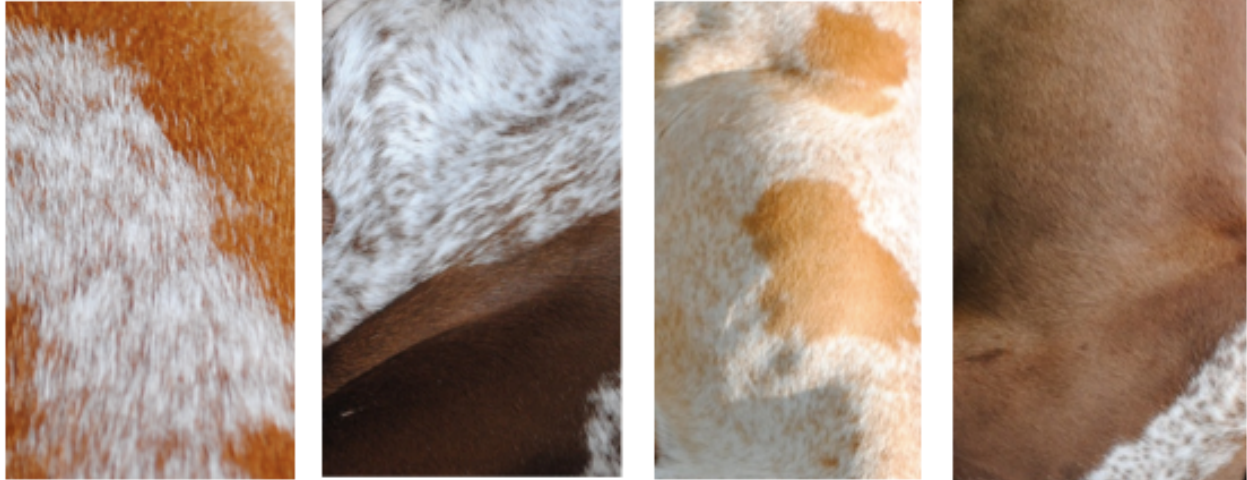
## VII. Skin and Coat

**Skin:** Ample skin, tough but elastic, well separated from the tissues underneath; fine on the head, the throat, inside the elbows, and on lower part of the body. The visible mucous membranes must be a corresponding color with the coat, but never show black spots. The mucous membranes of the mouth are pink; sometimes with light brown spotting.



**Coat:** Short, dense and glossy, fine and shorter on the head, the ears, front part of the legs and feet.

### VIII. Color



*Correct Coat Colors: (Left to Right) white with orange markings, white with brown markings, white with orange markings, white with brown markings.*

The base color is white. The colors acceptable in this breed are: solid white, white with orange markings, or white with brown markings. The markings are of varied sizes (patches, ticking, or roan). A symmetrical face mask is preferred, but the absence of a mask is tolerated.

The orange color can range from a dark amber to rich orange. It is not lemon or yellow.

The brown color is a warm shade that recalls the color of a monk's frock (Crayola Brown); it is not liver. A metallic sheen is appreciated in brown and white dogs.

***Disqualifying colors: Tricolor, or with tan markings, fawn, hazel. Any trace of black on coat or mucous membranes. Any solid color other than white. Albinism.***

**IX. Gait and Movement:** Extended and fast trot, with powerful reach and drive. Head raised, nose held high in such a way that, when hunting, the nose is higher than the top-line as if the dog is being "pulled along by the nose." The fluid, powerful, and extended trot is hallmark of this breed.

**X. Temperament:** The Bracco is tough and adapted to all types of hunting, reliable, docile, and intelligent. Friendly, not shy, never aggressive, and readily make eye contact. Extreme shyness is a fault. ***Aggressiveness is a disqualification.***

**XI. Faults:** Any departure from the foregoing constitutes a fault which when judging must

be penalized according to its seriousness and its extension.

**Disqualifications:**

- Above or below the height in the standard after 12 months of age.
- Split nose
- Wall eye
- Tricolor, tan markings, fawn or hazel color.
- Any trace of black on coat or mucous membranes.
- Any solid color other than white.
- Albinism.
- Dish face (convergence of the planes of the skull and muzzle).
- Aggressiveness.