The FCI Poodle Standard

AN IN-DEPTH STUDY ON THE FCI POODLE STANDARD

The Standard is a BLUE PRINT, a guideline that has been set to establish and maintain consistancy within the breed. It’s a guideline for breeders and also judges, but is the FCI standard TRUE to the breed? BY STEPHEN WHEELER

I could not count the number of times I have entered into discussions with fellow breeders about the Standard. It is always discussed with passion, strong feelings and makes for a great debate. Whether one talks with a breeder from Europe, Scandinavia or the UK, most breeders agree on one thing, the differences between our breed standard and why this is the case. The Poodle is truly a universal breed, all countries, all over the world have heavily relied on imports from other countries, the Poodle is without doubt an International breed. So, why are the breed standards so different?

I would like to discuss ALL the standards, do a comparison, involve some of our TOP breeder/judges from various parts of the globe and here what they have to say on this topic, and finally, a conclusion.

Is the standard for breeders or judges, does anyone know? Depending on your country of residence, determines which breed standard you must adhere too.

If you live in the UK, it’s the Poodle standard adopted by the English Kennel Club, first printed in 1876 and prepared by the Poodle Club. The KC took over all standards in the 1950’s and then standardised them in the 1980’s. Very few changes have been made to this standard over the past 100 years. The UK standard is very clear, precise and has sufficient explanations for each part of the Poodle. One has a clear picture in your mind when reading the UK standard as to how the Poodle should look.

The American standard was first adopted in 1938, this was for the Toy Poodle. In 1940 a standard was drawn up for the Miniature and Standard Poodle. In the 1950’s all three standards were combined and refined to adhere to one Poodle. Then in 1978 some very minor changes were made, the standard has not been changed since then. In 1990, as with all standards in the US, they were reformed to help and assist judges, but no wording was altered. This Poodle standard is very clear, it excels in breed detail, it is easy to read and easy to understand, one also has a clear picture in the mind of what this standard requests.

The Australian/New Zealand Poodle breeders, breed to the UK breed standard. The Canadian breeders adhere to the U.S Standard.
Scandinavia/Europe come under the auspicious of the FCI, the largest Kennel Club organization in the world. The Poodle breeders in this part of the world follow the standard set by its country of origin, France. The French Poodle Club adopted the first standard in 1955. But Germany had the first Poodle standard of ANY country. The German Poodle club first formed in 1896 also adopted the first Poodle standard in the same year. It was not until the early fifties that a struggle between Germany and France developed for the country of origin. Their is no doubt, the Poodle has been associated with France, hence, The French Poodle. Sadly, unlike all other countries, the FCI standard is very different in its description and requirements as to how the FCI Poodle should look. It is a very confusing standard, full of measurements and poorly phrased and worded sections. Sadly, this standard is reworded into many, many languages and the translation from one country to another varies considerably.

The FCI standard has recently been amended and the changes have now become enforced. These changes were made by the French Poodle Club without any consultation to a single breed club within Scandinavia or Europe. Changing any of the content to a breed standard is a very serious matter and one would think that it would require a lot of thought and co-operation with breed clubs, sadly, this is not the case in France. I’m fully aware that in other parts of the world when changes are to be made to any breed standard, acknowledgement and co-operation is required from the breed clubs or breed councils. This manner of approval from the breed clubs is a matter of necessity, if for no other reason than to approve the correct alterations, after all, the breed standard is for the breeders, or is it? It is impossible for me to list all the changes that have been made to the FCI Poodle standard, the list is so long and covers many areas of the poodle. But from my records, the FCI standard has been changes more than several times, actually it is close to a dozen times in recent years.

Judges in this part of the world, Scandinavia/Europe also judge to the same breed standard. It is no wonder we see the many strange and bizarre awards in this part of the world. If so many breeders are confused by the wording, and they know and understand the breed, how in heavens name are non breeder judges to know what is right from wrong, apart from the huge list of disqualifications, that many of the Europeans follow as a guide line to judge the breed. I know that Australia, the US, Canada and as the UK have a breed study or interpretation of the standard. These are wonderful illustrated brochures. They contain many wonderful drawings to help illustrate right from wrong, they also contain lengthy descriptive phrases to help explain all the elements of a good and bad Poodle. But mostly, they discuss the Poodle in a positive manner, not highlighting and enforcing the bad elements. Sadly, this type of material is not available in Scandinavia or Europe. I’ll come back to judging the Poodle later in this article, so back to the standard.

This article on the standard is directed more towards the FCI breed standard, so I have decided to have input from Poodle Breeder/Judges from Scandinavia and Europe only. I know we all think of the FCI Poodle standard does not compare in quality, detail or clear descriptive text as the other Poodle standards. I do not have a problem with the French Poodle Club being the custodian of our standard, this is governed by the FCI and we must adhere to this rule. But let’s be honest here, we as breeders are all governed by this standard and to say it is old fashioned, out of date and does not apply to the current Poodle, IS FACT, not fiction.

The FCI covers many countries, far to many for me to name. The Baltic and Eastern Europe as well as Russia are now all governed by FCI, they are not Europe, but stand on their own as independant countries. These countries are producing some amazing Poodle breeders, with many producing outstanding Poodles that could compete in any country, most are fast becoming known to the rest of the Poodle world. The breeders from these countries have based their breeding programs on imported stock, mostly from Scandinavia and Europe, but also from the US, UK and other countries. The country of France does not have a major influence on our breed, it is rare to see any breeder looking to France for future breeding stock, hence the lack of imports from France over the past twenty years to any country.

It is my intention to be positive and forward thinking with this article. I have sat on many committee’s over the years, worked extremely hard for breed clubs and always tried to have a positive attitude and think of the breed first and foremost. I have always said, that change is inevitable, although many would prefer that things stay the same, it’s not possible in this fast pace lifestyle that we live in. Our dogs are part of this scenario, take a look at the dogs that surround you now, and then head for your photo album and check out your dogs of some twenty years ago, do a comparison, you’ll clearly see the difference. Yes, they are all Poodles and some maybe be able to come forward and stand among the best of today, but most would be incapable of this. Keep in mind, your dogs of twenty years ago and those that are surrounding you now are all breed from the same standard. The difference being you, the breeders have different views now to what you had several years ago. You have moved forward and taken advantage of changing times or trends, hopefully in the right direction, but still following the same breed standard.

So, you are probably thinking, where is this heading. We are now in the year 2007, the new millennium, a new century. Change is all around us, most things in our lives are moving fast, moving forward and we as dog breeders need to move with this pace. It is time to move forward with our breed standard, the breed in many parts of Scandinavia and Europe is suffering badly, very badly. Please, I’m not trying to create a riot, nor a revolution, just state some facts and hope that common sense will finally prevail.

The FCI Poodle standard does not compare in quality, detail or clear descriptive text as the other Poodle standards. I do not have a problem with the French Poodle Club being the custodian of our standard, this is governed by the FCI and we must adhere to this rule. But let’s be honest here, we as breeders are all governed by this standard and to say it is old fashioned, out of date and does not apply to the current Poodle, IS FACT, not fiction.
I have been breeding pure bred dogs for over 35 years, I have seen some rather dramatic changes in many breeds, but NOT THE POODLE.

Yes, it has changed over the years, but it still resembles A POODLE and this has not changed, the same cannot be said for many other breeds. Credit for this must go to the many breeders who have worked to improve the quality, import new breeding stock, and move forward with our breed, looking towards the future.

**BRING THE FCI STANDARD INTO OUR CURRENT TIME**

Or, what’s good for the goose is good for the gander. I doubt that most in Scandinavia would understand this statement. It is a widely used statement in English, it means, what is good for one, is good for another.

The French Poodle Club have just amended text within our standard, it applies to some 40 countries, they have amended rules that apply to ALL these countries, except their own. It is now a disqualifying trait to place a Poodle with a tail that is to curled or falls to one side. We as breeders have no control over this, we do not dock, the tail is natural and sits where it likes and goes where it likes. One only needs to look at all the other breeds that are no longer able to dock, tails are carried in a wide variety of fashions. In France they dock, eliminating this problem. It is extremely rare to see a docked Poodle tail fall anywhere, the tail is short and is normally carried in a upward manner, it is impossible for a docked tail to fall over the back and down the side.

What does one do with a quality Poodle that has this problem? The tail is only one section of a whole dog. It is common practice for breeders in this part of the world to sell puppies at 8 weeks of age. It is impossible to determine how the tail will end up on any puppy at 8 weeks of age. The tail does not settle until the puppy has gone through the puppy growth period which is normally around 6/7 months of age.

So, we as breeders sell what we consider a promising show prospect to see this Poodle dismissed from the ring because the tail might happen to fall in the wrong direction. Where does this leave us as responsible breeders, are we now expected to replace this Poodle, or refund money because it has developed a serious and disqualifying fault, according to the FCI standard.

**A NEW ADDED RULE ABOUT MISSING TEETH**

The new amendments to the FCI standard cover teeth in all possible detail. The new wording in the standard, demands that any Poodle should be disqualified and not awarded if they are missing the following Teeth.

- Absence of 1 incisor or 1 canine or 1 carnassial (P4 upper jaw, M1 lower jaw)
- Absence of one PM 3 or of one PM
- Absence of three or more PM (except PM)

Just like the tail scenario, where do we go as breeders when our puppy buyers who have purchased a show puppy are thrown out of the ring because their Poodle has missing teeth. Like the tail, teeth are only one part of the whole dog. Surely it is more important to have a Poodle of outstanding breed type, rather than an average Poodle that may, or may not have all its teeth. A correct bite with canines is a must for a breed that was bred to catch and retrieve, but one or two missing pre molars, give me a break. We sell our puppies long before the adult teeth are through, are we now expected to keep our promising show puppies until ALL teeth are through and the tail has finally settled. I doubt that any breeder will run on puppies to ensure that both these elements are correct, it will mean to hold a number of puppies from each litter until they are around 6/7 months of age. On a personal note, Anders and I have recently had a litter of Standard puppies. We were aware of the new disqualifying rule with teeth, so we decided that we would have just three of the puppies x-rayed to check if the adult teeth were present under the puppy teeth. We decided to do this as we had serious show homes booked for these puppies and did not want to sell them incase all teeth were not present. As breeders, we felt it our obligation to ensure that these people were not purchasing a show puppy that would have a disqualifying fault. We are aware that nothing is guaranteed when people purchase a puppy, but now that it is major issue, we wanted the teeth confirmed. As it turned out, our pick bitch, a truly outstanding puppy had one missing, now listed in the FCI standard as a disqualifying point. She was placed in a pet home and will never be shown. And, if any other breeder goes down this path, think about this, the cost for each puppy was 2000 krona, not to mention the fact that is was necessary to have these puppies placed under anestetic at just 8 weeks of age.

**THE APPROVAL OF THE COLOUR RED, BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL OTHER SOLID COLOURS?**

The colour Red has been approved by the French Poodle Club. This is a good move but what about the other solid colours that are accepted in all other countries. Cream and Blue are solid colours also and should be adopted and accepted in the FCI standard. Grey is mentioned but this is their meaning for SILVER, which is far removed from Grey. I do not need to tell you, most whites shown in this part of the world are not white, they are CREAM.

**CLEAR DEFINITION OF SHOW TRIMS**

Show clips as listed in the FCI standard, are nothing like any other standard, and are worded very badly, and lack any clear definition, nor show any illustrations as ALL the other standards do. The trims listed are, Lion Clip, Modern Clip, Shortened coat and Neatened coat. The correct wording for trims should be, Puppy trim, English Saddle, Puppy Lion trim, Corded trim or Lamb trim.
HEAD AND SKULL
Please note that I have not mentioned nose colour for any standard.

The UK standard
Long and fine with slight peak. Skull not broad. Moderate stop. Fore face strong well chiselled, not falling away under the eyes. Cheekbones and muscles flat. Lips tight fitting. Chin well defined but not protruding. Head in proportion to size of dog. Eyes, almond shaped, dark, not set too close together, full of fire and intelligence. Ears. Leathers long and wide, set low, hanging close to the face. Mouth. Jaws strong with perfect, regular, complete scissor bite. i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws. A full set of 42 teeth is desirable.

The US standard
Eyes, very dark, oval in shape and set far enough apart and positioned to create an alert intelligent expression. Ears, hanging close to the head, set at slightly below eye level. The ear leather is long, wide and thickly feathered. However, the ear fringe should not be of excessive length. Skull, moderately rounded, with a slight but definite stop. Cheekbones and muscles flat. Length from occiput to stop to about the same length of muzzle.

The FCI standard
Head, distinguished, rectilinear and in proportion to the body. The head must be well chiselled and neither heavy nor excessively fine. Cranial region. The skull width is less than half the length of the head. The entire skull, seen from above, appears oval and seen from the side slightly convex. The axes of the skull and muzzle are slightly divergent. Superciliary arches. Moderately pronounced and covered with long hair. Frontal Furrow. Wide between the eyes, narrowing towards the occiput, which is very pronounced. (In miniatures it can be slightly less pronounced). Stop. Only slightly pronounced. Facial region. Nose, developed, vertical profile, open nostrils. Muzzle. Upper profile is perfectly straight, it’s length is approximately 9/10ths of that of the skull. The branches of the lower jaw are almost parallel. The muzzle is determined by the lower jaw and not by the edge of the upper lip. Lips. Moderately developed, rather tight, of medium thickness with the upper lip resting on the lower lip without hanging over it. The corner of the lip must not be pronounced. Jaws/Teeth, Scissor bite, strong teeth. Cheeks. Not prominent, shaped on the bones. The sub-orbital regions are chiselled and very slightly filled. Zigomatic arches very slightly pronounced. Eyes. Keen expression, placed at the level of the stop and slightly oblique. Almond shaped. Black or dark brown in colour. Ears. Rather long, falling along the cheeks, set on in the prolongation of a line going from the top of the nose and passing under the outer corner of the eye. Flat, widening after the attachment and rounded at the tip, they are covered with very long, wavy hair. The leather should reach the corner of the lips.

NOTE! Well, apart from the fact that both the UK and USA standard are clear in description, easy to read, easy to follow and understand, they clearly define the correct proportions and balance of the poodle head. The FCI description, is far from clear, very badly worded which makes little if no sense at all.

BODY

The UK standard

The US standard
The topline is level, neither sloping nor roached, from the highest point of the shoulder blade to the base of the tail, with the exception of a slight hollow just behind the shoulder. Body. Chest deep and moderately wide with well sprung ribs. The loin is short, broad and muscular.

The FCI standard
Body, well proportioned. The length is slightly superior to height at the withers. Withers, moderately developed. Back, short. Topline harmonious and taut. The height at the withers is practically equal to the height from the top of the croup to the ground. Lion, firm and muscled. Croup, rounded but not falling away. Forechest. The point of the sternum should be slightly prominent and set rather high. Forechest. The point of the sternum should be slightly prominent and set rather high. Chest reaching the elbow, its width is equal to 2/3 rds of depth. In standards the perimeter of the thorax, measured behind the shoulder, should be superior by 10 cm’s to the height at withers. Oval cross section, broad at dorsal part. Belly and Flanks. Tucked up but not excessively so.

NOTE! I’m afraid to be repetitive, but here goes. Both the UK and USA standards are clear and easy to follow. I would like to see more detail within the UK standard, but the US standard is spot on with its description of the body, it gives a clear image of the poodle body. What can I say about the FCI standard, way to much about nothing. One should never view a dog in measurements, it’s the whole dog as a whole, not bits and pieces that should go together. Also, from a judge’s point of view, one should never have to measure sections in order to understand balance, it’s the entire dog in balance, not just a section, one part must balance with the other. Once again, this section is very badly worded, makes little sense if any.
**HINDQUARTERS**

**The UK standard**
Thighs well developed and muscular, well bent stifles, hocks well let down, hindlegs turning neither neither in nor out.

**The US standard**
The angulation of the hindquarters balances that of the forequarters. Hind legs straight and parallel when viewed from the rear, muscular with width in the region of the stifles which are well bent. Femur and Tibia are about equal length, hock to heel short and perpendicular to the ground. When standing, the rear toes are only slightly behind the point of the rump.

**The FCI standard**
Hind legs parallel seen from behind. Muscles developed and very apparent. The hock joint is relatively well angulated. The coxal-femoral, tibial-femoral and tibial-tarsal angles should be pronounced. Upper thigh well muscled and strong. Metatarsus rather short and upright. The poodle should be born without dewclaws on the hind legs. Hind feet, see front feet. It reads. Rather small, firm, of short oval shape. Toes well arched and tight fitting. It then continues to describe the colour of the nails.

**NOTE!** Both the UK and US standards cover feet in a separate heading under feet. The UK standard states, tight, proportionately small, oval in shape, turning neither in nor out, toes arched, pads thick and hard, well cushioned. Patterns strong. The US standard states, The feet are rather small, oval in shape, with toes well arched and cushioned on thick pads. Nails short but not excessively shortened. The feet turn neither in nor out.

I feel the UK standard is rather generic, the description of the hindquarters could suit a wide range of breeds and is lacking some finer detail related to the poodle. Once again, the US description relating to hindquarters is well worded, clear and easy to follow. It gives an accurate description of the poodle rear. The FCI standard is once more, worded rather poorly. The descriptive content is not necessary and is lacking a firm and positive picture of the hindquarters.

**GAIT**

**The UK standard**
Sound, free and light movement essential with plenty of drive.

**The US standard**
A straight forward trot with light springy action and strong hindquarters drive. Head and tail carried up. Sound effortless movement is essential.

**The FCI standard**
The poodle has a light and springy gait.

**NOTE!** The UK standard covers most elements here. The US standard has far more descriptive content and truly relates to a moving poodle. The FCI standard, is lacking any detail or descriptive phrases for the movement of a poodle.

**TEMPERAMENT**

**The UK standard**
Gay spirited and good tempered.

**The US standard**
Carrying himself proudly, very active. Intelligent, the poodle has about him an air of distinction and dignity peculiar to himself.

**The FCI standard**
A dog renowned for it’s loyalty, capable of learning and being trained thus making it a particularly pleasant companion dog.

**NOTE!** Here is a great example of how the poodle standard could be combined into one. The UK and US standard state pretty much the same, the difference being that the US standard clearly states how the poodle should be in all areas, both conformation and otherwise. The FCI standard does not relate to show stock but a poodle as a companion, which they are highly suited for, but the content is greatly lacking any descriptive wording for show poodle and should be amended.

**FAULTS**

**The UK standard**
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.

**The US standard**
A dog over or under height limits specified shall be disqualified. A dog in any type of clip other than those listed under coat shall be disqualified. The coat of a parti coloured dog is not an even solid colour at the skin but of two or more colours. Parti coloured dogs shall be disqualified.

**The FCI standard**
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.

Roach or sway back
Tail set on too low
Too restless subject
Teeth:
- Absence of 2PM1 is not taken into account.
- Absence of one or two PM2, if symmetrical.
- Absence of M3 is not taken into account.

Severe Faults
- Partially depigmented nose
- Snipey nose
- Pointed muzzle
- Arched bridge of nose
- Teeth:
  - Absence of two PM if not symmetrical
  - Eyes too big or sunken, not dark enough
  - Ears too short
  - Croup falling away
  - Tail curved over the back
  - Rear angulations too straight.
  - Flowing or extended gait.
  - Sparse, soft or harsh hair.
  - Colour not clearly defined or not uniform. Blackish grey or whitish grey, washed out fawn, cream, beige in browns or very dark brown.

**Eliminating faults**
- Aggressive or overly shy.
- Nose completely depigmented
- Lack of type, particularly in head.
- Overshot or undershot.
- Teeth
  - Absence of 1 incisor or 1 canine or 1 carnassial (P4 upper jaw, M1 lower jaw).
  - Absence of one PM3 or of one PM4
Absence of three or more PM (except PM1)

Absence of tail or naturally short tail.
Dewclaws or evidence of dewclaws on rear limbs.
Coat which is not solid colour
White marks.
White hairs on feet.
Height exceeding 62 cm in Standards and inferior to 23 cm in toys.
Any subject displaying signs of dwarfism, globulous skull, absence of occipital protuberance, very pronounced stop, prominent eyes, muzzle too short and turned up, receding chin.
Median furrow practically inexistent.
Very light bone in toys.
Tail curled with the tip falling over the flank or the croup.
Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified.

NOTE! The UK standard is clear, depart from the written word of the standard is a fault. But judge one part in harmony with the other before making a decision. The US standard is clear with its points. Although not listed under faults, the next section to follow in this standard is called VALUE OF POINTS. It breaks the standard down into 5 areas, which clearly shows the important areas of the poodle, it presents a much better picture of the poodle, rather than pointing out 50 areas that one does not wish to see.

The FCI standard. Listing almost every part and every point of the poodle as listed in this standard is foolish. It is quite obvious to any breeder, any judge, that the elements that are listed go against the written word of the standard. If white is called for and it is black, then of course it is going to be wrong. It would benefit ALL breeders, ALL judges to remove 90% of these faults and move towards a list of desirable qualities as opposed to negative qualities. A list of the correct detail, the important elements of the breed will draw attention to a more positive image rather than the negative list that this standard now has. It would help both breeders and judges to look and reward

MY CONCLUSION...

In a dream world, it would be wonderful to have just ONE standard. The benefits for this would be advantages to all, it would truly bring the breed, in all sizes to a more uniform and balanced medium. But, I know this will never happen and if I lived in any other part of the world, I would probably fight tooth and nail to keep my standard. I have given clear examples of just some of the areas in the three standards. It is clear to me that the US standard covers the breed in more detail, more fact and is set in such a manner that it flows and clearly gives a desirable picture of how the breed should look. Both the US and UK standards are governed by the breed council/parent club. Changes, although very few in some 60 years in both countries have not occurred without a great deal of discussion and thought, prior to any change being instigated. It is the breeders, the backbone of the breed that have agreed for change.

We in Scandinavia, Europe, Russia and the Baltic countries have no say over our standard, it is governed by a few who sit on a committee within the FRENCH POODLE CLUB. I have stated, I do not have a problem with the French being the custodian of our standard but I do object to the way the standard has and is continually changed without any consultation beyond France. The rules in this part of the world are many, and most seem to have no logic or sense but I think times are changing.

One of the major problems with this standard is the fact that it needs to be translated into many different languages and through the translations, the text is changed quite dramatically. If the FCI standard was formulated in a different manner with easy to read, clear and precise descriptive words it would translate much easier into different languages and therefore not have so many different meanings.

If the two longest running standards allow certain things, then so should the FCI standard.

Our breed is universal, a Poodle from one country MUST be able to go to another and not be different, it is the same breed, weather this Poodle lives in Sweden, France, Germany or the US, it is a poodle and must conform to a universal LOOK. There should be no difference from one country to another, it should not be possible.

One of the major faults with the FCI standard is COLL OUR. This standard MUST allow cream and blue to be recognised, they are true solid Poodle colours. WHY NOT LIST THEM? There is no reason to not accept these true Poodle colours. Where do they go for judging, simple, creams with the whites, where they are at present and blue with the silver, were many are now.

The terms used for sizes is clearly incorrect, this must be bought into line with other breed standards.

I think it is time for a serious debate on the FCI standard and there is no better time than now!

I do not wish to see any dramatic changes or alterations made to the FCI standard, my suggestion is to bring the standard into the year 2007.

I have studied the FCI standard until I have almost passed out, I have read and reread, done comparisons with the other standards and this is what I have come up with, how the FCI Breed Standard could be translated into a clear and easy to understand declaration of the breed.
**General Appearance**

Dog of medium proportions with a characteristic frizzy coat. The Poodle is a very active, intelligent and elegant appearing dog, harmoniously built giving an impression of elegance and pride, he has about him an air of distinction.

**Important Proportions**

The Poodle is neither short nor long but moderately square. The length of the body when measured from the brestbone to the point of the rump should be approximately the height from the highest point of shoulder to the ground.

Bone and muscle of both forelegs and hindlegs are in proportion to size of the dog.

**Head:** Skull: moderately rounded with a slight but definite stop. Occiput is pronounced. Length from Occiput to stop is about the same from stop to nose.

**Muzzle:** long, straight with slight chiselling under the eyes. Foreface strong, cheek bones and muscle flat. Lips tight fitting. Chin well defined but not protruding. Head in proportion to body.

**Nose:** well developed with open nostrils. Black being the desired colour, nose may blend with body colour in some poodles.

**Eyes:** keen expression, almond shaped and set far enough apart and positioned to create an alert and intelligent expression. Dark brown to black.

**Ears:** hanging close to the head, set at eye level. Leather is long, wide and thickly feathered and should reach the corner of the mouth.

**Teeth:** strong and white with a correct scissor bite. It is desirable to have all teeth present.

**Neck:** strong, well proportioned, of good length, carried high and with dignity. The neck rises from strong, smoothly muscled shoulders.

**Body:** chest deep and moderately wide, ribs well sprung and rounded. Back short. Topline level, neither sloping nor roached, from the highest point of the shoulder blade to the base of the tail, with the exception of a slight hollow just behind the shoulder. The point of the sternum should be slightly prominent and set rather high. Loin, firm and muscled.

**Forequarters:** strong, smoothly well muscled shoulders. The shoulder blade is well laid back and approximately the same length as the upper foreleg. Legs set straight and parallel from the shoulders and muscled. When viewed from the side the elbow is directly below the highest point of the shoulder. Pasterns are strong.

**Feet:** rather small, oval in shape with toes well arched on thick firm pads. The feet turn neither in nor out. Colour of nails should complement colour of dog.

**Hindquarters:** the angulation of the hindquarters should balance that of the forequarters. Hindlegs parallel when viewed from the rear. Muscles well developed and very apparent. Femur and Tibia are about of equal length. Hock to heel short perpendicular to the ground. When standing, the rear toes are only slightly behind the point of the rump.

**Tail:** set on rather high, carried in an upward fashion and thick at the root. It is undesirable for the tail to bounce on the back.

**Movement:** a straightforward trot with a light springy action and strong hindquarter drive. Head and tail carried up. Sound effortless movement is essential.

**Coat:** very profuse and dence, resistant to pressure of the hand. Coat is naturally curly, texture should be harsh on body, head and mane slightly softer. Corded, hanging in tight even cords of varying length. A small amount of spray is allowed to enhance the topknot. Excess spray should not be tolerated.

**Temperament:** Rather active, alert and highly intelligent. Never sharp or shy.

**Size**

- Standard: Over 45 cm and up to 62 cm
- Miniature: Over 35 cm and up to 45 cm.
- Dwarf: Over 28 cm and up to 35 cm.
- Toy: Over 24 cm and up to 28 cm

The height of all varieties should be taken into account with the overall balance and proportion of the dog. All sizes must resemble the same image, but an excellent specimen slightly over or under the height limit should be judged in accordance with balance and the degree of competition.

**Show Trims**

Puppy Trim, Scandinavian T Trim, Continental, English Saddle, Corded.

**Value of Points**

- General appearance, temperament, carriage and condition... 30
- Head, expression, ears, eyes and teeth... 20
- Body, neck, legs, feet and tail... 20
- Gait... 20
- Coat, colour and texture... 10

**Faults**

Any distinct deviation from the desired characteristics described in the breed standard should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to it’s degree.

- Missing teeth.
- Over shot or undershot.
- White marks.
- Over or under size
- Plainness or coarseness
- Very light bone
- Coat which is not a solid colour
- Any dog showing shyness or aggression
- Excessive use of hairspray
We asked some of Scandinavia’s and Europe’s top breeder/judges their thoughts on the FCI standard. We asked for their comments on the current standard, the list of faults, the way in which the standard is worded, colours within the breed and what changes they would like to see within the standard. All these breeders are well known to you all, they are extremely dedicated and talented breeders. They speak quite openly and clearly from the heart. It is clear, their passion for the breed runs deep and we at SPM appreciate their honesty and thank them for sharing their opinion with us all.

CARLOS FERNANDEZ-RENAU
Del Zarzoso, Spain

I think that the current FCI (French) standard is mostly full of nonsense. You can clearly see that it wasn’t written by dog people and certainly not by Poodle breeders. In my opinion, the best standard is the Illustrated Study of the Poodle based on the Standard of the Poodle Club of America because it is so easy to understand. I also like the British standard very much, it is also clear, easy to read and understand. Both the US and UK standards are true standards, they only refer to the Poodle covering ALL parts giving a clear picture in the mind and do not cover the many unnecessary faults as in the FCI standard. All the faults currently listed in the FCI standard, way to many to mention only cause confusion so we see most European judges fault the dogs and not judge the dog as a whole dog as they should be judged.

When you have no idea of what you are looking at, you need to measure the height of the dog, the length of the ears, count the teeth, etc. Anyone can do that, one does not require a judges license to find faults but you need a little more knowledge to appreciate type and quality, sadly, the FCI standard does not list virtues which would be far more beneficial for both breeders and judges.

I have no respect at all for the new alterations of the standard and I hope no judge or breeder tries to follow it. Do you know of any good breeders who have gone to France to get a new dog? All the good dogs in France are first or second generation imports from the U.S.A., Scandinavia or the U.K.

I also feel very strong about the colours of our breed and feel that any sold colour stated in OTHER breed standards should be acceptable and approved in the FCI standard.

Another issue and one that may cause a riot, I do not agree with easy champions and, therefore, think that all colours should compete together for the CAC. After all, the standard is the same for all colours and colour is a secondary thing when compared to correct type and overall quality of a Poodle.

To be perfectly honest, I would like to see everyone follow the U.S.A. standard, which is very clear and in line with current times with our breed. Another issue is hairspray, can in some countries, cannot in others. Surely the standard could state a small amount on the head, it enhances and shows the Poodle head as it should be, fanned around the frame of the head.

DAVID ALLAN & JAVIER BLANCO
Shikarah, Spain

We feel that the French FCI standard leaves a lot to be desired too complicated and not transparent enough; a new beginner to the breed would be totally lost trying to decipher it. We much prefer the UK and US standards which are straight to the point, easy to understand and gives a clearer picture as to what the breed is all about.

We feel that it has been worded upside down and clearly for judges that only look for faults; it does not give a clear picture as to what we are supposed to be looking for.

Take for example the list of faults, the list is endless; we feel that they should have put more effort into trying to explain what a good dog should look like as a whole and not crucify an animal because it lacks a few teeth or a few white hairs here or there. For example; imagine awarding a very good rating to an otherwise fabulous exhibit because it lacks two P1’s and then turning around and awarding a CC or CACIB to a mediocre dog that moves awful just because it has 42 teeth!!! It does not make sense. Let’s stick to the UK and US standard and judge a dog as a WHOLE and not in bits and bobs….Which we call Fault judging!!!

The Red colour has recently been added to the FCI standard, a positive move. But this breed has two other colours that can be seen all around the world and these colours should be acknowledged. We must not forget that many of the first exhibits were BLUE’S and CREAM’S and we can not forget one of the TOP producers Ch. Summercourt Squaredancer, he was a CREAM and sire of a multitude of Champions and he is behind many of the great winners. We have waited umpteen years for the Red to be recognized so we fear that it will be another umpteen years before any other colour gets recognized!!!!

We feel that it would be beneficial to the breed if we could ALL get closer to the UK or US standard and perhaps unify criteria’s, that way people would have a better understanding as to what the standard calls for, and it would certainly be easier for the newcomer to understand.

We would also like to change the paragraphs about teeth and movement, way too drastic. The standard mentions strong drive, surely that goes with REACH! Seems to have forgotten to mention front action!! Why can’t a Poodle have drive and reach and
cover ground without being disqualified! Why does a Standard Poodle have to have a prominent occipital bone and a Miniature can get away with less? Are they not both Poodles? We would also like to see changes in the description of colours, instead of all those fancy words, (fawn etc) why can’t they just use the words, Red and Apricot as in the rest of the world?!? Also include: All solid colours as in UK and US. The trimming side is quite confusing also, why can’t they just have English saddle, Continental and Puppy trim, and we would love to see the Scandinavian T Clip (that many people adore) included as an official trim. We can not imagine an English saddle trim WITHOUT the definition lines to the rear quarters!! The minute you leave out the definition lines, you don’t have a Saddle Trim do you? And what about the Continental with full coated front legs?! I mean, really, makes it sound like a Portuguese water dog!!! Last but not least, as breeders/judges, we would love and we want to see the Poodle as it used to be, with Hairspray, there's nothing worse than a large floppy topknot, and contrary to what we hear, hairspray does not damage the dogs health neither does it fool a judge re texture, all that it does do is; frame that beautiful Poodle head and brings out the true Poodle look we all look for in a show dog. (Why should the Poodle be so discriminated when there are many other breeds out there that constantly use hairspray, coloured chalks etc and not just to enhance the expression but to change texture and colour etc).

TIINA TAULOS
Canmoy’s Finland

I found your topic very interesting and look forward to reading this article. I have been breeding Poodles for 30 years and appreciate the opportunity to speak openly about the FCI standard. At home we speak English but I had to use the Collins Coburn Dictionary to understand what the FCI standard is really talking about. One can only wonder how the beginners interpret the FCI standard when us professionals have such difficulties to understand the wording.

The AKC and UK breed standards are much more easy to understand how a Poodle should really look and conform. The FCI standard is an endless list of faults. Is this what we really want? To judge our wonderful breed by its faults and not by its virtues? And then the list of eliminating faults! If I place 42 teeth on the table do I know those belong to a Poodle? Of course not, but when I watch a poodle moving with a very SPECIAL kind of dancing gait with head up and proud carriage I know, THAT'S THE POODLE I want to breed and judge, but the FCI standard does not list the virtues nor really explain the correct gait of the poodle. Why such important detail of the breed is not mentioned at all in the FCI standard is a mystery to me. Shouldn’t a Poodle have a light and springy gait with suitable reach and drive? At least that is what almost all judges are seeking in the show rings.

FCI accepted a new colour in April. In the English translation it talks about orange fawn and red fawn. According to the dictionary fawn means pale yellowish brown colour! In French it is fauve and that means red. So why does the FCI standard have to say it in such difficult way? I know many people will not like what I am going to say about blues and creams to be accepted, but to me, most of them are bad colour specimens of blacks and whites. So let’s do it right, ALL colours should be accepted in the FCI standard as listed in both the US and UK standards. How can the FCI standard be so different?

It seems that every country has different names for sizes. If I remember the history correct, everything started from Miniatures. Now FCI has changed the name to a Medium size Poodle and the European size Dwarf or Zwerg is now called a Miniatures!!! Thank God Toys are still Toys and Standards are Standards. There is a great deal of misunderstanding when entering dog shows throughout Europe. Many people enter their Poodles in wrong classes. Shouldn’t the varieties be equal to AKC and the UK?

What about the FCI guidance for clipping? Why with so many words? I have always thought that there are 4 official clips: Continental (with shaved legs), English Saddle, Puppy trim and Scandinavian T-clip also known as Modern clip. I find it extremely difficult to look for the correct head piece and expression if the face is covered with moustache! Actually, I cannot remember the last time I judged a poodle with a moustache, certainly not in Scandinavia. I also remember the good old days when we were allowed the use of hairspray, the FCI standard should add a clause in coat that states a small amount is allowed on the head only. It really makes the head more correct and shows a wonderful expression when the hair falls around the face correctly, it is impossible to really show off the poodle head without the use of spray, after all, they use it in France.

Now when I have this great opportunity to express my opinion I would like to ask, is the quality of the breed getting better when in many European countries the CC’s is offered for all colours? Easy champions are certainly not doing any good for the breed! Isn’t the quality better is Scandinavian countries and in Russia? Shouldn’t there be a real competition in the breed like in the UK, Sweden, Norway and Denmark where only the best dog and bitch get CC unless they are already champions? I have to say, I kind of like the Finnish system also where the CC is awarded the same way as Cacibs: one for best dog and bitch in blacks, browns and whites as well as one for the best dog and bitch in apricots, reds and silvers. Equal rules for each FCI country shouldn’t be so difficult to accomplish?

We are not getting any younger but hopefully a little wiser. I think we should finally do something about our FCI standard, it’s better late than never and now seems to be the right time. With a new revised standard it can only help our beloved breed, the quality of our poodles depends on a strong easy to read and clear standard. Why not mention the breeds virtues, pages of faults has helped to set the breed back in quality.

MIKAEL NILSSON
Kudos, Sweden

I do think a breed standard should clearly tell the reader how a breed should look instead of telling how it should not look! The English standard is excellent because it describes the breed and then “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.” Isn’t it clear? Isn’t it enough? The list of teeth problems is just ridiculous. Should judging really be about counting the number of teeth and checking to the standard! I think judging dogs is something much more complex than that. As a judge one must take everything into account and surely, judging for good points not looking for a list of faults is what judging is all about.

The wording of any standard is very important, I think the British and the American standards are much more clear and easy to understand. The FCI standard is more about measuring, rather than providing an impression of what is correct and typical. It would be great to see the FCI standard a little more modern and up to date.

In regards to the colour of our breed, I can see no reason why creams and blues cannot be accepted and approved within our FCI standard. It seems to me that most breeders and judges today take very little notice of the standard and do their own thing. I wonder why that is? Perhaps one reason is that the FCI standard is too difficult to understand, with some sections really not well written. Another is the lack of common sense. Think about a super standard male that is 63 cm’s and should be disqualified and a bitch of 62 cm’s that can be BOB. It would be nice to have bet-
I have stated that the FCI standard needs re wording, here is a good example of how it should NOT be worded. “When standing the tail is low”. Who would say that about our breed? I think about a flat coat retriever when I read this, never a poodle.

I have explained the basics of our breed to many people and I always start by saying “The poodle should be elegant, short in back and always have head and tail up” This is the way I see the poodle and I don’t think this new standard will ever change my impression about the breed. I’m sorry to say, but when a standard lacks some common sense it starts to lose the value of what a standard is all about and people doesn’t care about it anymore.

If I could change the standard I would write it in a more simpler manner and care more about the impression of the overall dog and less about the measurements. I would like to add more about the temperament which is so unique for our breed.

“Sound, free and light movement essential with plenty of drive” is from the English standard and “A straight forward trot with light springy action and strong hindquarters drive. Head and tail carried up. Sound effortless movement is essential” is from the US standard. Both these standards describe the typical movement better than the FCI “it should be light and springy” and it is a severe fault to have “flowing or extended gait”.

Colour should be “all solid colours” and trims should be “any trim”. At the shows in Europe you see all different trims on the dogs and why shouldn’t the standard allow that? Anyway, if the French poodle club feels like there should be regulations about the trims they need to rewrite the standard so that everyone understands it not the way it is currently worded. What should we do with the second puppy trim or the puppy trim? I am so sorry more and more countries don’t allow hairspray. It just makes the trim nicer and helps the groomer. It can’t do much harm.

It is also time to give up the height limitations on standards. The reason is not that I want bigger dogs, but once in a while you see a beautiful dog that is over 62 cm’s. I have a hard time to disqualify my best dog in the ring! However, most often the bigger dog looses his balance, movement or elegance. This is the reason why “my ideal standard” wouldn’t make the average size any bigger.

HenniK Hannelius
Hannelhill Finland

The FCI, UK and US standards are in some parts similar but especially for the novice breeder I do prefer the UK and US standards. It is clear to me that one gets a better and more precise and positive idea of what a poodle should be like.

In the new FCI standard there are some points I would like to comment on. One is the new idea about tail carriage in the standing poodle. The idea that it should be down when standing is not a good one and in my opinion not correct for a poodle. I think it is a merit if the poodle carries the tail well in movement and in standing in the same position. A poodle is not a fox!

The new names introduced for apricots and reds, orange fawn and red fawn are unacceptable. The terms apricot and red have been internationally used for at least 120 years, so why change them without reason! The dew claw topic is one that could be omitted from a modern standard. Even traces of removed dew claws are listed as a disqualifying fault. I think it is a reminiscence from the past when superstitious people thought that a poodle born with dew claws must be a mongrel.

To include the history of the breed in the standard is not necessary especially when the history and origin of the breed is much more complex and diverse than the presence of the undocked tails. The standard is a corner stone for the breed, so the poodle people need a good standard as a guidance. In the old days in REC I got the impression that it was not possible to discuss with the French authorities, it was a kind of arrogant dictatorship. That’s why I am so glad that the petition from breeders worldwide for the recognition of the red poodle was so well received by the French Poodle Club. I hope in the future it will be possible to work together also internationally and hopefully bring the different breed standards more together, everybody would benefit.

I also hope the future FCI standard will be one that is far more simple and precise and does not need to be changed to often. It should not be necessary to go into details like one missing premolar here or there, a removed dew claw and so on. The FCI standard should give guidance, what a poodle should look like, and not get lost in a large list of faults. Lets talk more about the good points. In my opinion it would be a good idea to accept all solid colours. I wish the people in the French Poodle Club who are responsible for the FCI standard good luck in their important mission in providing us with a quality Poodle standard.

BRUNO NODALLI
Osmanthus, Italy

If the merits of a poodle are the opposite of the faults, I think that they have to be taken into account in the right consideration. I mean, that in the case of having 2 dogs one with a perfect long tail and the other one with the tail over the back, surely it is more beautiful for the first one, but this doesn’t mean that we have to penalise the second one without giving the ticket for the title. In years back the old standard stated that the tail was cropped and that an undocked tail if well handled was not a fault. We’re no longer allowed to crop the tail and sadly we do not know how the tail will be carried until the dog is reaching maturity.

If we have a general view of all other breeds with undocked tails practically all of them have a curled tail or the tail is carried over the back. So, as we as breeders have no history of undocked tails within the pedigree we cannot say that it is a fault. Surely it will be the aim and work of the breeders to try to better the tails, but it will take a long time. Anyway as far as I understand, faults have a personal interpretation and maybe more direction should be placed on the finer points of the breed rather than worry about a tail that we as breeders have no control over. Lets pay more attention to things such as the texture and uni colour of the coat, pigmentation, movement and size. It was very good and correct to give a limit to the size of the toys to 24 cm, I will never go under this limit. For me a dog of 23 cm in not a good one if you lose everything of the breed, you can never have the typical head and expression and of course you will surely have no movement. Are we breeding poodles or Chihuahuas?

I think that the FCI standard is adequate and is well worded in a way easy to understand. As I said before perhaps I would add some drawing to complete it.

I am not agreeable in recognising other colours such as cream and blues. We have to concentrate our work as breeders in the colours we have. At the moment we see Reds, Apricots, Whites, Browns, Blacks and Silvers of all different shades, some really far too light, or too dark, not homogeneous. After years of mixing colours we have ruined the coat colour, I think that judges should pay attention to that when judging. For example it is very rare and strange to see a brown of 3 years without white hairs, it is practically impossible or very rare to have a dark chocolate brown at a certain age. It is not natural and not normal to see a dark brown in the entire coat and than light in face and shaved parts. That is not a natural colour and is not correct.

First of all I must say that I am a member of the French Poodle Club for 20 years. I have to say that I was at a club meeting and the president of the Club, Mr Jean Jacques Dupas, was “softer” about the undocked tails. He said that it is a fault if it totally touches the back or is totally curved on the side. So a different position than in the comment that was published on the Europudel the most important European magazine. I was very happy about that and I think most of the people as well. I mean as I said before we cannot penalise a wonderful dog with the
entire poodle characteristic and don’t give the certificate just for the tail.

Perhaps it would have been a better idea before changing the old standard to have a general meeting with all REC (Réunion Européenne de Caniche) members discussing the breed. Now it is too late, but we can keep this idea for the future. The French Poodle Club would like to organise a World Championship Poodle show in the following years in Paris, maybe this would be the perfect time.

When it comes to changes in our standard I would add drawings of the head, movement, proportions and clipping. I would surely add again the proportion of the ears, we have to remember that the poodle was a hunting dog and all hunting dogs had to have long ears for repairing the nose during the hunt. I will not put it as a must, but I would add that if the ear goes to the canine it is great, if it goes to the nose its fantastic.

I would surely add the Scandinavian T trim or Scandinavian Modern clip, as you prefer to call it, I just love that clip, if the dog is very well built, it looks fantastic!! Surely I will not recognise Party colour dogs.

I am not agreeable in banning the use of the hair spray, for me a poodle in puppy, continental or English saddle must have hair spray without exaggerating. Instead of giving a penalty to dogs with hair spray I will be very strong in penalising dogs with died coat as they do in Scandinavia.

I think that is normal and correct that a breed standard can be modified but I cannot accept to modify our breed standard just for commercial interest and modify the typicalness. We should breed according to the breed standard and not adapt the standard to the trend of fashion. It is like if we change the eye form of a poodle in puppy, continental or English saddle must have hair spray without exaggerating.

What comes to my mind next is tail carriage. In my opinion a gay tail should not be considered a major fault. Tails that are high set and not docked are bending towards the head! This is clear common sense, why should the tail of the poodle be any different to any other non docked breed. Curled tails are absolutely unattractive and should be considered within the general picture, but not considered as a disqualification. How on earth does a Club that still allows docking dare to tell the rest of the world how an undocked tail has to be carried?

There are more changes I would like to see: No upper size limit for Standards; colour descriptions; measurements for example: 9/10 - muzzle/skull, in other words all the current descriptions you need a calculator to check the right proportions; length of ear leather, all these rather foolish and outdated requirements do not help as breeders and they certainly turn many judges into FAULT judges, I can only hope that we can get it right and before it is too late, our breed is suffering badly at present and the FCI standard is not helping.

The terminology of our standard is more than pitiful, actually not professional at all! A good standard should be brief yet comprehensive.

I also think that all solid colours should be accepted, regardless to the consequences to our present show system, which would be rather painful to all colour breeders.

In regards to changing our FCI standard I’m sure that we all hoped that the new presidency would sweep away the spider webs of the past. I am more than disappointed by the changes made to our Poodle standard heading into the wrong direction. I had hoped optimistically for a “round table” decision. Unfortunately the Réunion Européenne du Club du Caniche (REC), an association of all European Poodle Clubs as a useful tool, was not involved in revising the standard.

I have been breeding and showing for longer than I would like to say. Poodles and my love of our breed does draw quite a lot of emotions at times. Having said this, more than anything I would like to see a revised standard and clearly make many changes. More fitting to our breed and also to help the non breeder judges. Since Poodles do not belong to the working breeds any more, I would like to see that the number of teeth is no longer the centre of attention. Still, the bite is a major concern. I’d be happy with the wording of the British standard: A full set of 42 teeth is desirable.

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**Georg Walther**

**Dorian Gray, Germany**

There are three major standards for our breed. First the FCI standard, to which we are breeding and showing to. Further on the British and the American standards.

The FCI standard is by far the most detailed one. To my knowledge it is the oldest of the three, going back to the German pre-FCI standard. Obviously the English language is much more condensed, compared to German or French. You can tell by reading the FCI standard, that it was never really revised or modernized. It is actually quite old fashioned, anyway it should have been simplified and modernized finally when the last changes were made. I see the main difference between our standard and the English standards in the approach to look at a poodle. Our standard takes the dog apart and then looks at the single components, while the other two look at the dog as a whole first and then go into detail, clearly, the best way to read and follow a standard.

I agree to and accept all the faults listed! We all aim for the perfect dog, no question about that! What I do not agree with, is dividing the different faults into minor and major faults. The degree of the fault should be taken into consideration clearly.

I think that it is much smarter the way the English standards are phrasing faults: “Any distinct deviation from the desired characteristics described in the Breed Standard”.

As everybody will probably agree on, is that our breed has changed and obviously quite a bit over the decades, but mostly in exterior. As well has changed our perspective and attitude towards our Poodles. For example, the different regulations about number of teeth, or the size limit of Standards, or gay tails are definitely to be reconsidered!

The perfect time.

Please let us know your opinion about the new FCI Breed standard; www.scanpoomag.com