

Choosing a Show Puppy

an article by Eileen Spavin-Harrison (originally published in "The World of Toy Dogs"
Volume 1, No. 3 - Lafford Publishing, England

I have always been a little sceptical when people say, "Oh, I can pick a Champion out while they are still wet".

Right, so what do we look for...? First of all, watching is a keyword; observe your puppies in all situations, running, playing and even eating. A potential show puppy must be an extrovert, a character, if you like. The puppy who hangs back in a corner is not going to be much use to you in the show ring, no matter how pretty it is. That is another thing, all puppies are pretty so be objective.

Heads are a very important feature of a Lowchen and I always think it is the first thing a judge sees on the table, so make sure you have a good one. Look for width in skull, good ear placement (ears that are set high on the head will always be high). A round eye is a must but the eyes of all young puppies are dark and lighten as they grow older, but you can usually tell if you are going to get a "Yellow" eye, which is highly undesirable. Complete eye rims are now a must in parti-colored dogs and a full pink eye rim doesn't stand much chance of filling in, but a rim with little blackspecks of pigment will sometimes complete.

A long muzzle will get longer and an undershot jaw rarely rights itself as the lower jaw generally grows on longer than the top. Width is desirable across the muzzle, without it you will have a "snipey" look and without a defined stop you will get a "Collie" head.

Length of neck and a well laid shoulder will give you a proud head carriage and a good front assembly. Straight front legs, not out at the elbows (again a fault that rarely comes right). Remember the standard

calls for a short backed, sturdy little dog and a long backed puppy will be an even longer backed adult. Long backs don't shorten.

The Lowchen is really a "Head and Bottom" breed and a well rounded rear end is an essential and should give you good angulation. A narrow rear end usually goes with "slab sidedness", over angulation and close rear movement, just what you must not look for in your show puppy.

A high tail set is a must - a puppy with a low tail set will always have one and even on the move will generally "flag" its tail when really what we want to see is a tail carried well over the back.

Look for a level topline as a roach back is highly undesirable and untypical of the breed.

Check that the puppies toes are not long, flat to the floor or splayed. Feet can tighten but it is better for a puppy to have a neat tight foot to begin with.

It isn't easy to pick a puppy, but be critical. No one yet has bred a dog without a fault but so long as it is not a totally unacceptable thing or one that hits you in the eye as soon as you look at the pup then just take everything into consideration. Look for true type, balance, a pleasing outline and personality plus.

Remember, if it is put together right it will stand right. If it stands right, it will move right. I really don't know who said that but it's not far off the truth.