

That cute dog romping with great “Joy de Viv” around the Non-Sporting ring in a lion clip is a charmer! Known as a Löwchen, this breed is surprisingly one of dogdom greatest “tomboys”. Fun loving, energetic, hardy, yet elegant and pretty, this is a dog up for almost anything! They gladly sit on the couch all day basking in the attention and ministrations of their owners or exuberantly muck about in a field sniffing out something interesting to eat! They excel in the conformation, obedience or agility ring as well as in other performance events. Löwchen really are an all-round dog in a small package.



Löwchen trace their history to before the Renaissance times in Europe. The earliest sighting of the breed was a painting from 1422. Likely stemming out of a type of dog that came west from eastern lands like Tibet, this dog blended with local dogs in regions now known as Belgium, Germany & Holland. Spitz and terrier type dogs blended with these eastern dogs to create the feisty, intelligent and fun-loving dog we know today. The breed, for a long time was believed to descended out of the Bichon, but evidence does not strongly support this. One fact is the breed was already being acknowledged in scientific writings as early as 1555, way before the advent of the

Bichon. The breed has been credited by the FCI to be a French breed, due to the limited amount of information available at the time Madame Bennert, the woman who saved our breed from extinction, applied to have them admitted into the FCI stud books.



A trip through museums around the world yields a treasure trove of breed examples. A favorite of the 16th century artist Albrecht Dürer from Nuremberg who actually owned a Löwchen, Liesle, and many other German and Dutch Renaissance artists, there are many stunning examples of the breed to be found in art from many mediums. Also, not to be missed are the beautiful “Lady and the Unicorn” tapestries at the Cluny Museum in Paris, France. What’s so special is the dogs of today still resemble yesteryears Löwchen.

What makes this breed so special? Besides their charming personalities, they come packaged in a small athletic body with efficient ground covering movement with an elegant look. An important trait Löwchen must have is moderation in all things. This is not a breed of extremes, such as extreme

angulation, extreme trimming or coat length, or exaggerated heads. Casual observers of the breed may claim that the hair cut is what defines it. They could not be farther from the truth. An unclipped Löwchen to the untrained eye would indeed be difficult to identify. But, armed with an understanding of the qualities this breed possesses, it becomes easy! These are the traits judges must look for to make proper selections when judging Löwchen.



The head plays an important part in identifying the breed. The classic Löwchen head has a profuse coat framing the face, eyes sparkling with an upbeat personality reflecting a happiness to be there. As one puts their hands on the dog, they should feel a skull that is sturdy, well boned. One determines the correctness of the skull by answering the following questions; Is the muzzle shorter than the back skull? Is there width equal to length on the back skull? Does the dog have enough stop, without being too exaggerated? Is the muzzle broad? Nose prominent enough? Are the eyes dark and round? If the answer is yes to all, a just is off to a good start!

The back skull of this breed is broad, never narrow and long. The top of the skull is relatively flat, not rounding say, similar to a Chihuahua. Viewed from the front, the widest portion of the skull is between the ears. Frau Ostertag of the famous German

foundation Livland Kennel explained the skull should be square in appearance when looking down from overhead, being equal between the ears and from the occiput to the stop. Past the ears the head begins to round ever so gently. The stop is moderate; not too abrupt which creates a harsh boxy look, but also not gently sloping, which would result in a longer looking face. The muzzle is 2/3 of the length of the back skull. At one time the American standard was changed to allow for a muzzle equal in length to the back skull, not a pretty look for this breed! If the muzzle is too long the dog resembles the Poodle, too short and the dog begins to look like the Lhasa Apso. The muzzle should also have width and depth that allows for the larger than expected teeth this breed possesses. The desirable bite is scissors with complete dentition. It is not unusual for Löwchen to miss teeth, penalize according to the degree of missing teeth. Canines should always be there!

The nose is dark, but color depth is dependent on coat color. A brown Löwchen has a brown nose, never black. Nose pigment must be complete. Complete also is the pigment around the eye. This breed does not require a halo effect like the Bichon's. One of the Löwchen hallmarks is the round eye. They must be round. A round light eye is more preferable than a dark almond eye. Never chose the darker almond eye, even though this goes against what most of us have taught: that a dark eye is always preferable. In this breed it is not. Almond eyes are a strict no no. The round eye is a trait that can be lost quickly if breeders and judges do not observe this rule. In America, the eye size has grown to be much more prominent thanks to influence of foreign dogs in many American bloodlines. The larger eye is a pleasing effect and improvement. Protruding eyes are unpleasant and incorrect. Expect the ears to drop closely on the side of the head, slightly above eye level, with a heavy fringe of coating. If the ear is set too low the dog can

have a sullen look; too high creates a cute expression but is also equally incorrect.

Lastly the head will have a wonderful coat which softens all the angles and helps give the dog its pleasing appearance. The effect should be of a mane about the head. Some Löwchen have what is known as an open-face, less coat on the face in varying degrees. Some dogs could be a bit thin around the eye; to dogs with much less coat or shorter coat on its face compared to a full coated Löwchen. This is especially rare today in the show ring, due to the emphasis on heavier coats. A breed specialist is likely to not penalize this since they understand what it is, and they personally recognize its importance. Dogs with this effect are known as “smootchens” which is a variation of Löwchen coating that ranges from the extreme of a spaniel looking dog to a ruff coated terrier-like looking dog, to a fully coated Löwchen with thinning hair on the face and bracelets or fully coated dog that only grows to a certain length and has an open face. This term is not mentioned in any breed standard but is understood by those in the breed. An entire article can be written on this alone. Since the days of Madame Bennert, breeders have been told to preserve the correct coat textures, one needs to keep these smootchens in their breeding program.

The key traits to remember when judging the breed is look for a head with a broad, flat back-skull, muzzle 2/3 length of back-skull, large round eyes a must and hallmark of the breed, larger than normal nose and teeth for a dog this size, and the mane of hair crowning the head.

There is nothing more breathtaking than seeing a Löwchen in full show coat moving around the ring. The coat flows with each step. Löwchen show coats do not require the care other long coated breeds demand, due to the nature of the coat. If it is proper quality and regularly brushed and washed,

this coat will grow to a lovely length that flows when moving. Madame Bennert instructed Frau Ostertag that the breed has to have a long, wavy coat. Breed standards world over reflect her early instructions. The American standard calls for a long, rather dense coat that is moderately soft in texture. It also asks for a moderately wavy appearance. Even if blown out, a judge will find waves if there are any, in the underside of the ear since the moisture from the inner ear will reintroduce the natural wave back into the coat even if previously blow-dried straight. The coat should be healthy and shiny in appearance, not brittle or dry.



The Löwchen coat consists of two distinct diameters of coat hair mixed together. They should be of equal distribution. When examining the Löwchen, lift a stand of hair from the shoulder and lay across a finger and spread it out. You should be able to eyeball a 50/50 mix of wider diameter hairs to very soft fine diameter hairs. If there is an imbalance the coat will be too hard or too soft. The thick hairs provide the coat strength, the fine thin hairs - its volume. A proper mix of hair diameters and waviness of coat give it the volume and texture needed. It should never be limp, straight, kinky or Poodle/Bichon-like in texture. A tell-tale sign of incorrect coating is little movement of the hair when the dog is on the move. If the coats are too short or of incorrect texture, they don't move or flow in



an attractive way. Some claim that coat texture is color related. This is not so. Any color dog can have incorrect or correct texture. For example, there are cream colored dogs with fabulous texture and cream-colored dogs with horrific cottony coats, this applies to all colors in the breed. Note any color a dog can have is allowable in the Löwchen as well as all color patterns. There are parti-colors, tai-colored, solid colored Löwchen. We have even found domino's and and brindles-both being extremely rare. Many if not most Löwchen possess the fade factor, which has made clean solid colors a rarity. Hence a solid clean colored Löwchen is extremely unusual and valuable to the breed, when judging, one might consider that as a plus if all other things are equal.

The breed standard, in three places, puts much emphasis on the fact that the coat left unclipped should not be shaped or scissored. Sadly, this is currently being ignored and despite protestations to the contrary has come into vogue among some fanciers. So much so, there is talk of removing the disqualification from the breed standard that specifically forbids "shaping or scissoring of the coat". If a dog has a correct coat there is really no reason to do any of this forbidden grooming, since a long well-kept coat is extremely attractive. The DQ was included in the standard since the LCA members, at the time the standard was written, did not want the breed to become over-stylized and difficult to prepare for the show ring; so much so that a novice would have a difficult time competing against dogs that require professional level trimming to be considered by judges. At this point the breed is mostly owner handled with a few professional handlers showing dogs for clients. Many fanciers expect this to change should the breed standard drop the DQ. If the breed becomes severely trimmed, the texture of the coat can change to accommodate further sculpting, totally altering the appearance of the breed in slow

motion over a period of years. Woolly or somewhat soft/kinky coats are very undesirable and lend themselves nicely to sculpting. The fear of those early breeders that the breed become excessively sculpted would be borne out.

Puppy coats are an exception since they look very even, rounded and are not long enough to flow; all of which cause the untrained eye to think a puppy looks trimmed. A judge is unlikely to DQ a puppy due to suspicions of coat trimming. Also, while the breed standard frowns on artificial sculpting of coats, equally wrong is a coat treated in a way to grow to an excessive length. The breed is athletic and there is some coat breakage at action points, to a small degree. The emphasis here is that the coat not be grown out to reach the floor, because of being wrapped or a dog is living on wire.



The key traits to remember regarding coats are that first; the breed is clipped in a lion clip, there is a DQ for trimming/styling the long coat whether by scissor, stripping blade, stone or other means. The Löwchen coat comes in all colors and patterns, all colors are accepted, and the breed standard calls for no preference. All coats must be wavy. The desirable coat has an equal mix of hairs with two different diameters, one very fine - the other wider, and it is long enough to flow when moving. Puppies

should not be DQ'd for having coats that appear sculpted.

Viewing Löwchen from the side there should be enough neck to prevent the dog from looking squat or having the appearance of the head sprouting directly off the shoulders. This look was more common years ago and most Löwchen today have sufficient neck. There is such a thing as too much neck, so again moderation is key here. Do realize that a very profuse coat can create an illusion, so it is important to check length of neck when going over the dog. Note, long necks can make a dog look very short backed and no neck can make the dog look long backed, when they are neither!



As with many other small companion dogs, the Löwchen depended on being both pleasing to live with and look at, for its survival. Part of its pleasing look is that structurally the Löwchen is an athletic dog with good muscling. It should not be reedy or overdone in bone, again moderation is the key here. It must be solidly built and yet have

an elegant presence. This dog looks lighter than actually is! The Löwchen stands 12-13 inches at the shoulder. It should have a level top-line with the tail rising directly off the back into a teacup handle tail. Any deviation from this and the dog may have too low a tail set and resulting bad rear movement. A fold of skin in front of the tail might indicate one of two things; the dog is over-weight, or the tail is set slightly too low and when held in place, the fold reveals this. The tail must have a teacup handle shape, it should not be flagging or loosely held, both being considered very undesirable. Note, when standing still and relaxed, the tail is allowed to be dropped and should not be penalized for doing so.



The Löwchen should have a well sprung rib, not be round barreled and wide or slab-sided and narrow in the width of the chest. Their chest should be able to accommodate the lungs of an athletic dog on the go! The legs straight and medium boned. There should not be an extreme of angulation in the rear, whether either straight or over

angulated, moderation being key here. The movement of the breed should be effortless, with a firm top-line, and legs that do not cross, hackney or double track. Expect to see good reach and drive. The breed has lost much of the good movement it was so well known for when it was first being developed in this country. There are far too many dogs that have poor fronts, even some with weak rears. Please penalize accordingly, even if the dog has the most beautiful side movement. If it is crossing, or has any other incorrect movement coming and going this is a very undesirable trait. A good moving dog will age better and also be better suited to perform in performance events.



The key traits regarding the body; is they must have enough neck, a level top-line with a teacup handle tail, no excessive angulation, clean efficient movement. This is a breed with good muscle and moderate bone, that looks lighter than it really is.

The Löwchen is truly the tomboy of the small companion dogs. They are lively and up for anything. Most Löwchen are borne to become companion dogs. They need to be flexible and easy going in nature to be easy to live with. They are not a hyper dog and are appreciated by both show and pet owners for not being hyper, nervous creatures. Shyness should be severely penalized, in the show ring as well as the whelping box-don't breed Löwchen with unsuitable temperaments. Early English breeders liked

to say this is a bomb-proof breed. They are naturally confident and love being the center of attention. They just plain old love to have fun!



A truly great Löwchen is one that has all the right qualities, both physical and mental. When one of the “greats” walks into the ring, it’s hard to miss! It’s so important to understand what this breed is when judging them. There are so few Löwchen being shown, picking incorrect dogs can alter the breed in a direction that it should not be going in. This is a true partnership between judges and breeders to keep the breed as it always has been and to not allow it to drastically change. Consider that there are some paintings of Löwchen from hundreds of years ago, where if one of those dogs was put into the show ring today, they would be very competitive. Let’s keep it that way!