

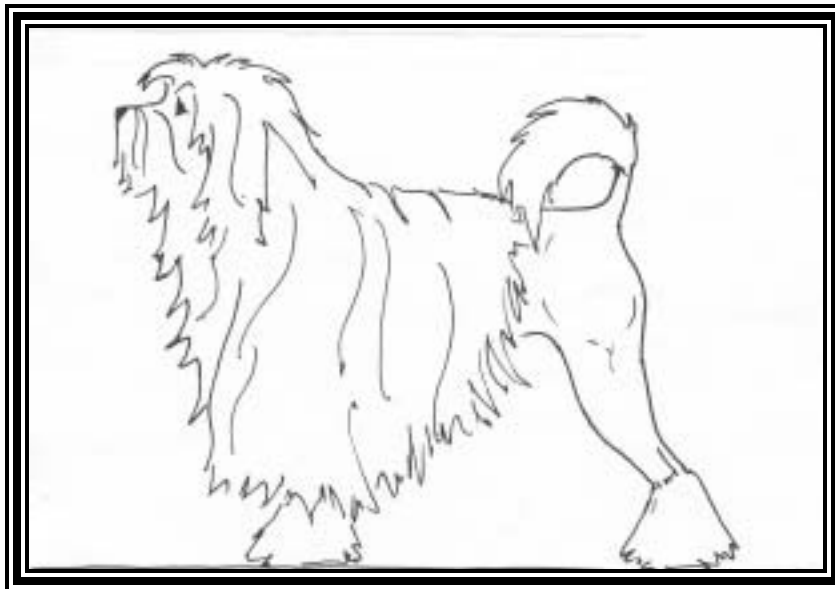
# **THE ILLUSTRATED DISCUSSION OF THE LOWCHEN STANDARD**

By  
The Lowchen Club of Canada  
2002

## PREFACE

This Judge's guide is intended to provide the reader with visual assistance in interpreting the Official Canadian Standard of the Lowchen. Each section of the standard is stated and then elaborated to provide direction to correct Lowchen type.

We would like to thank the owners and breeders who kindly provided us with photographs of their Lowchen. These photos give strong examples of correct type and they are greatly appreciated.



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## I. HISTORY OF THE BREED

The Lowchen origin is obscure. However, it is acknowledged that they are of European descent and the 'country of origin' is listed as France.

The Lowchen is thought to have Mediterranean beginnings. It has traditionally been included in the Bichon family of dogs as 'Bichon' translates from French as "Lap dog with long silky hair". By this definition, the Lowchen was grouped with other small breeds such as the Bichon Frise, Bichon Maltese, Bichon Havanese and Bichon Bolognese.

We know the breed had strong roots in central Europe for many centuries. The Lowchen is featured in tapestries from France, woodcuts from Germany, and paintings from Belgium that help place the breed throughout Europe from the 14th century. The Lowchen has always been a relatively rare breed throughout its history but by the mid-twentieth century, it was nearly extinct.

In 1945, Madame Bennert of Brussels realized that there were no longer any active Lowchen breeders. In an effort to save the breed, she searched the Belgium registry to find people who had been involved with the Lowchen in the early part of the century. Over the next three years, she managed to locate three Lowchen - two females and a male that met her standards. In 1957, she was able to locate a third female Lowchen to add to her small dog kennel. Over the next twenty years, she devoted herself to the task of rebuilding the breed from this foundation of four Lowchen. Her friend, Dr. Hans Rickert of Germany, carried on her work, carefully breeding and promoting the Lowchen after her death.

All of the modern day Lowchen can trace their roots back to the dogs bred by Dr. Rickert. His 'Von den Drei' Lowchen were exported to many other European countries and to England where new kennels were founded. A few dedicated English breeders became an integral part of the history of the breed through the exporting of their quality stock to kennels worldwide. This happened within five years of first importing the Lowchen to the UK. In 1969, the Guinness Book of Records listed the Lowchen as the rarest breed of dog in the world with only 40 in existence.

Canada imported British bred Lowchen as their foundation stock in the 1970's. The first Lowchen imported into Canada was in 1975 by Mr. J.R. Russel but the establishment of the breed in Canada is credited to Mrs. Gwen Appell. Between 1977 and 1983, Mrs. Gwen Appell imported three English Lowchen, a female and two males. In the mid 1980's, Mrs. Kim Schmidt acquired two Lowchen females from Mrs. Appell's newly founded Canadian stock. Mrs. Schmidt then brought in four more English imports (two males plus two females in whelp) to augment the gene pool and thus firmly fixed the foundation of the Lowchen in Canada. It was from Mrs. Schmidt that the majority of early Canadian Lowchen breeders obtained their dogs in the late 1980's and early 1990's. While these early beginnings were

happening in western Canada, Mrs. Ardis Shurtleff of Ontario imported a female Lowchen in 1991 from the U.S.A. These early imported dogs and the new Canadian bred Lowchen created a foundation that was sufficient to seek recognition of the Breed by the Canadian Kennel Club."

The Canadian Kennel Club recognized the Lowchen in 1994 and in January 1, 1995 the Lowchen officially entered the Canadian show rings. Also in 1995, the Lowchen Club of Canada (L.C.C.) was founded and recognized by the C.K.C. The Club works diligently in promoting the breed by holding Sanction Matches, Boosters, National Specialties and Breed seminars. Our Club newsletter, "The Lion's Roar", is published four times a year and contains a wealth of information for Lowchen fanciers.



Detail...

Albrecht Dürer

Knight and Foot Soldier

Circa 1496-97, woodprint

## I. CANADIAN KENNEL CLUB BREED STANDARD

**GENERAL APPEARANCE** -Strongly built, active, well-balanced and alert little dog whose presentation (that is, coat and tail clipped in traditional lion clip) gives the "little lion" appearance.

**CHARACTERISTICS** -Intelligent and affectionate showing no signs of aggression.

**HEAD AND SKULL** - Short. Skull wide in proportion, flat between the ears, head carried proud and high. Well-defined stop. Short, strong muzzle.

**EYES** -Round, large and intelligent, dark in colour. Unbroken pigmentation of eye rims. Pigment to be in accordance with coat colour.

**EARS** -Pendant, long and well fringed, set on level with the eye, close hanging.

**MOUTH** - Jaws strong with perfect, regular and complete scissors bite (that is, the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaw).

**NOSE** -Black or brown according to coat colour.

**NECK** -Good length proudly arched.

**FOREQUARTERS** -Forelegs straight and fine boned. Shoulder well laid.

**BODY** -Short, strong, well proportioned. Level top line. Ribs well sprung, strong loin with moderate tuck up.

**HINDQUARTERS** - Hind legs well muscled with good turn of stifle, straight when viewed from the rear.

**FEET** -Small, round.

**TAIL** -Of medium length, clipped with a tuft of hair to resemble a plume. Carried gaily on the move.

**GAIT/MOVEMENT** -Free, parallel movement fore and aft, no hackneyed action.

**COAT** - Fairly long and wavy but not curly. Fine and silky. Clipped in the traditional lion clip.

**COLOUR** - Any colour or combination of colours permissible.

**SIZE** -Height 25 -33 cm. (10 -13 in.) at the withers.

(**FAULTS** - Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault is regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.)

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

### III. EXPANSION OF THE STANDARD

***A. GENERAL APPEARANCE - Strongly built, active, well-balanced and alert little dog whose presentation (that is, coat and tail clipped in traditional lion clip) gives the "little lion" appearance.***

This description is critical for maintaining breed type. The Lowchen is sometimes a surprise when you get your hands on them. Under the fluffy 'do', they are well built and muscular but never coarse, overdone or exaggerated. A balanced little dog, it should appear almost square. They are bright and alert, and active loving to participate in all activities as a good companion should!

The most obvious defining feature of the breed is the lion clip in which we show the Lowchen. Although our standard does not specify the details of the clip, it is important to state that the head and body coat is left natural; that is, there is no trimming or sculpting of the coat. The coat is clipped off of the feet, forelegs, and the rear from the last rib back and halfway up the tail. The trim leaves a plume on the tail and bracelets on all four legs.

Other than the distinctive hair cut, the notion of moderation guides us in all things in understanding the breed. Nothing is exaggerated. It is an assemblage of its well-balanced parts. The Lowchen type is defined by its 'head and butt' - correct type is immediately recognized when you see a broad head with large round dark eyes holding a 'soft' expression, carried on a proud neck that flows into a level top line finished with a gaily carried tail! A saucy rounded bare butt showing off well developed muscles says Lowchen!



**Picture 1: an excellent example of the general appearance of the Lowchen.**

***B. CHARACTERISTICS - Intelligent and affectionate showing no signs of aggression.***

The Lowchen is a bright happy outgoing dog. Aggression and shyness are untypical traits in a well-socialized Lowchen. Picture 2 shows the natural sassy attitude of the Lowchen. A staid working demeanor is not typical of the Lowchen – a typical Lowchen might just be a little naughty.



Picture 2: This dog shows the “sassy” attitude typical of a bright happy outgoing Lowchen.

***C. HEAD AND SKULL – Short. Skull wide in proportion, flat between the ears, head carried proud and high. Well-defined stop. Short, strong muzzle.***

A 'typey' Lowchen must have the correct head. The length of muzzle and its' proportion to the length of skull is often discussed but it is clearly directed in the Standard. The first word in this section says it all: 'Short!' The desired proportions are that the length of the muzzle should be about half the length of the top skull. The Lowchen has a short, strong muzzle. A 'strong' muzzle means that it has width in balance to its length as well as depth from the top of the nose to under the jaw creating something like a box shape. This description would, perforce, eliminate longer muzzles.

A well-defined stop leads into a well-balanced top skull that is 'wide and flat'. The top skull is roughly square with equal length (from stop to occiput) to its width (from ear to ear)... and you have the basis of the proper Lowchen head.



**Picture 3 & 4: These are examples of 'typey' Lowchen heads. Note the broad flat skull and well position ears. Both have well defined stops and round large eyes. The black halo around the eyes further accentuates the correct round shape. They have broad short level muzzles of good depth with good sized noses with large nostrils.**

***D. EYES - round, large and intelligent, dark in colour. Unbroken pigmentation of eye rims. Pigment to be in accordance with coat colour.***

The first word again is the key; that is, the Lowchen must have round eyes. They should be large and as dark as possible. As in all else, the eye must be in proportion to the size of the head. The Lowchen eye is not bulging. The unbroken pigment, particularly when it is dark, creates a halo around the eyes that adds to the look of a large round eye creating the correct Lowchen expression. Liver pigmented Lowchen may have slightly lighter eyes but it is still to be as dark as is the halo around the eye; that is, the halo is black on black pigmented dogs and dark brown on liver pigmented Lowchen.

***E. EARS - Pendant, long and well fringed, set on level with the eye, close hanging.***

The set of the ears can influence the shape of the head and is often an element that can throw off the look of the Lowchen! The ear is at eye level or just slightly above which contributes to the broad flat topskull...when the ear is too low, it results in more of a domed skull. The ear leather is close set on the head and of a triangular



shape hanging to only the jaw line. “Long and well fringed” refers to the hair that flows into the mane of the Lowchen.



Picture 5 shows the ear fringes flowing into the Lowchen mane.

**F. MOUTH – Jaws strong with perfect, regular and complete scissors bite (that is, the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaw).**

A ‘strong’ jaw implies that the Lowchen has some depth to the jaw giving balance to the rest of the broad muzzle. A properly set up mouth has straight evenly spaced incisors and canines in perfect overlap. The Lowchen can and should have full dentition in a correct muzzle.

**G. NOSE - Black or brown according to coat colour.**

This description is self-explanatory. As in the preceding descriptions of the Lowchen, darker is always more desirable than lighter. Even in a Liver pigmented Lowchen, we are looking for deeply coloured browns on the nose. The Lowchen has a strong nose with open nostrils

**H. NECK - Good length, proudly arched.**

The Lowchen in side view should have a head carried well up over the level of the top line. The reach of neck should not be out of proportion to the size of the dog! The neck should be ‘well set on’; that is, there is a smooth transition of the neckline into the withers and top line. Good head carriage completes the general description of an ‘alert little dog’.



Picture 6 is a classic example of a lovely neck on a Lowchen.

***I. FOREQUARTERS - Forelegs straight and fine boned. Shoulder well laid.***

There is often a sense of conflict in a description calling for a 'strongly built' dog that is also 'fine boned' but the intent is for the Lowchen to be a well muscled dog that is still a small companion dog. A Lowchen should have a slender, straight, rounded bone in the foreleg. A "good shoulder layback" allows more area for muscle attachment lending strength and substance to the dog's appearance and good reach on the move. The scapula is almost the same length as the humerus (upper arm). The humerus is long enough to set the elbow back under the highest point of the shoulder blade. There is moderate breadth to the chest with close well fitting elbows. The distance from the point of withers to elbow is slightly shorter than the distance from the elbow to the ground.



Pictures 7 and 8 show the Lowchen front and rear. The tail may be down when the dog is at rest.

**J. BODY - Short, strong, well proportioned. Level top line. Ribs well sprung, strong loin with moderate tuck up.**

This description seems so simple and yet more problems arise from not having a specific set of measurements for 'well proportioned'! Although the term is a little vague, the intention is clear.



**Picture 9: This male 2 year old Lowchen has lovely proportions.**

The first directive we are given is that the body is 'short' and old time breeders direct us that overall length should be shortened out of the loin rather than out of the ribcage. The goal, however, is not to get the most short backed dog. Lowchen must have enough length of body to allow free movement; that is, the length of leg must be in balance with the length of the body. Think 'well balanced' and picture a compact Lowchen with an overall body length from sternum to back of pelvis being slightly longer than the height from withers to ground.

The strongly built appearance comes from a well-sprung ribcage, never barrel shaped, that extends well back. The chest (brisket/sternum) has good depth and extends to almost the elbow. A strong ribcage goes hand in hand with a strong middle piece. The Loin on a Lowchen is strong and short with only a moderate tucked up. A view of the Lowchen from above as well as the side should show that there is good width across the loin giving the impression of being thick in the waist. The loin ties into a rounded well-muscled butt. The top line should remain level standing and moving.

***K. HINDQUARTERS – Hind legs well muscled with good turn of stifle, straight when viewed from the rear.***

A well-rounded rear is an essential look to the correct Lowchen. There should be some butt behind the tail; that is, the lower end of the pelvis (ischium) extends well behind the base of the tail indicating good breadth to the hindquarters and contributing to a strong top line. The Lowchen should have well-muscled upper and lower thighs. Seen from the rear, the Lowchen's legs should stand parallel to each other and straight from the hip through the stifle and hock to the pads. The rear should neither look wish boned nor cow hocked. The angulations of the rear should be balance with the angulations of the front assembly. Good angulations require breadth at the turn of the stifle making a Lowchen with a narrow straight rear leg incorrect. The turn of stifle should not be over exaggerated.



**Picture 10 shows a beautiful rear on a Lowchen. She has a lovely rounded butt with a good turn of stifle.**

***L. TAIL - of medium length, clipped with a tuft of hair to resemble a plume. Carried gaily on the move.***

The Lowchen tail is a great indicator of the 'General Appearance' of the dog as well as an expression of its 'Character'. It is held strongly aloft and curves gently over the top line as the plume hangs down to create a 'teacup' handle, leaving lots of air space between the curve of the tail and the top of the back. A dropped tail when standing should not be penalized. Ideally, the Lowchen tail rises smoothly off the top line without a drop off at the croup.



Picture 11 is of a Lowchen with a tail shaped in a perfect “teacup handle” rising from the top line to high above the back with a lovely plume to complete the arc.

***M. FEET - Small, round.***

The Lowchen foot is tight with well-raised knuckles and good pads.

***N. GAIT/MOVEMENT - Free, parallel movement fore and aft, no hackneyed action.***



Picture 12 shows a well balanced lowchen on the move with head held high using good reach and drive. His tail is held gaily on the move.

If all the structural elements described in the Standard are found together, then the Lowchen will have a free and easy ground-covering gait. Although not excessively angulated, they must still have balanced angulations to move with an effortless stride. It should be a totally unexaggerated movement, with good forward stride and rear drive. A Lowchen is fast moving (never to be raced but moving out freely), gay and lively in nature.

The top line is strong and level when the Lowchen is on the move with the tail held gaily. The front assembly swings through smoothly with elbows neatly at the side. The rear legs move parallel to each other although the action naturally narrows towards the center line as the pace quickens.

The Lowchen moves with grace and charm showing a lively attitude and enthusiasm. It is hoped but not expected that you will have an opportunity to see all four feet of a young Lowchen moving in the same direction and on the ground as the breed is inclined to leap and bound rather than smoothly trot. They are natural clowns and always ready to play.

***O. COAT - Fairly long and wavy but not curly. Fine and silky. Clipped in the traditional lion clip.***

The Lowchen coat is silky to the touch with a slight wave. A correct Lowchen coat is so light it floats when the Lowchen is on the move. The coat on a young puppy coat may be denser than it will be at maturity. No scissoring or shaping of the body coat is acceptable. An uneven appearance to the coat is natural.



**Picture 13: The fine and silky coat of an adult (4 yr old) Lowchen coat shows a slight wave.**

**P. COLOUR – Any colour or combination of colours permissible.**

The Lowchen comes in all colors and shades. The liver pigment is acceptable in the breed. The most common color combination for the Lowchen is bi-coloured (either black & cream or brown & cream) as seen in pictures 12, 13 and 14. There are self coloured (cream bitch in picture 9) with little or no white as well as white patterned Lowchen (see the Parti-coloured in pictures 7, 8 and 11). The breed often carries a graying factor resulting in a young Lowchen dramatically changing coat colours. At maturity, they usually return to a dark-but-not-quite-the-same coat colour as when they were pups (see the same dog as a 14 month old puppy in picture 14, a couple of months later in picture 2, at two years old in picture 1 and then as a four year old adult in picture 13). On rare occasions, there will be Lowchen that hold their colour without fading throughout their lifetimes. No preference is given to any colour or combination.



**Picture 14: A 14 month old black and cream Lowchen**



**Picture 15: A 4 year old brown and cream Lowchen**

**Q. *SIZE - Height 25 -33 cm. (10 -13 in.) at the withers.***

The height of the Lowchen is self explanatory. The measurement is taken at the point of the withers to the floor. No preference is given to one size over another. Even now, the range allows for a significantly different looking Lowchen from a relatively tiny dog at 10" to a fairly substantial one at 13". It is important that the height of the dog is always in proportion to its body length.

In the 1950's, the re-founding of the breed was done with limited numbers of dogs. Height was a lower priority and the standards allowed for a greater size range (originally from 8" to 15"). However, efforts were made to re-establish the breed as a compact lap dog, and breeders often sacrificed proportions leaving the Lowchen with too little leg for its body length. For the most part, the breed has now stabilized within the 10" to 13" height range while maintaining balanced little dogs... but it is a concern of which we must remain conscious.

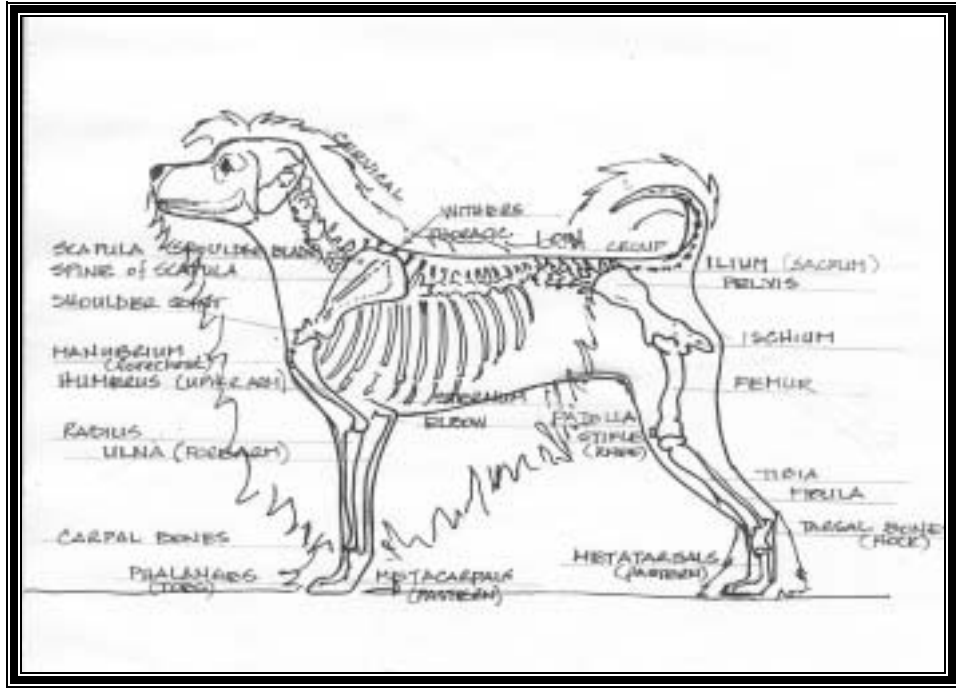


**Picture 16 shows Lowchen varying in size.**

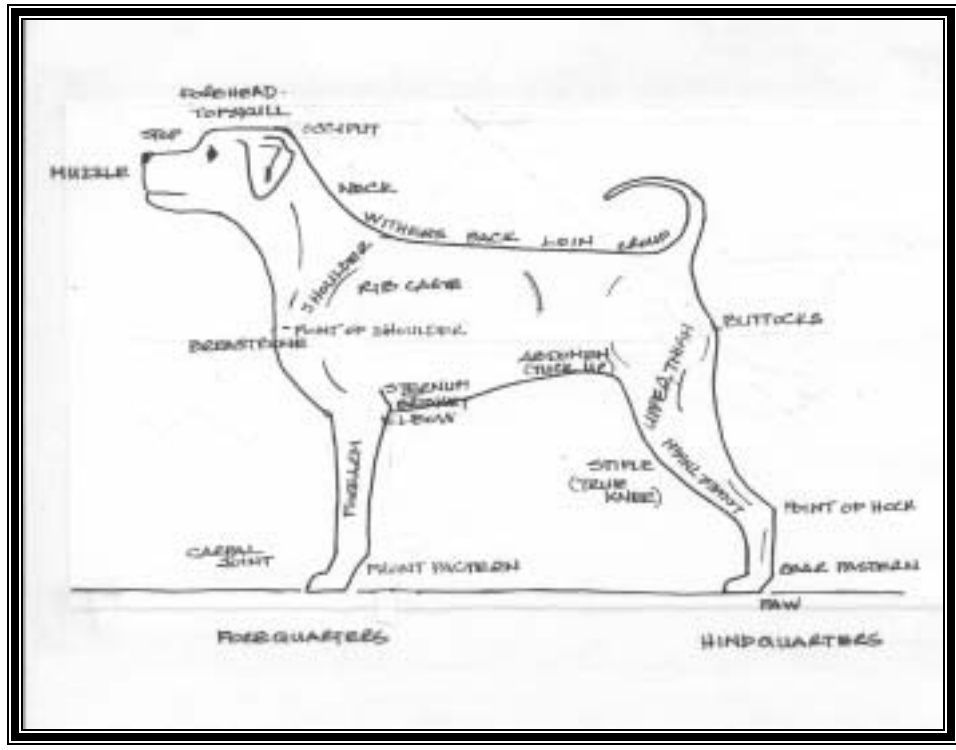


### APPENDIX I. ANATOMY OF A LOWCHEN

(NOTE: drawings are not intended to be precise anatomical drawings of a Lowchen.)



Drawing 1: Anatomical descriptors.



Drawing 2: Common Terms used in describing Lowchen appearance.

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