

Discussion regarding 'square muzzle objectionable'

This discussion took place on apsobreeder list, hosted by Dr. Catherine Marley

[apsobreeder] square muzzle objectionable
11/10/2009

How did we end up with two contradictory statements in our standard: A bite that requires a "blunt" or "square" muzzle, and a statement saying a square muzzle is objectionable? The evolution of this conundrum is a study in unintended consequences, or "How Not to Tinker With a Standard".

1901: Mouth quite level, but of the two a slightly overshot mouth is preferable to an undershot one. Fore face of fair length, strong in front of the eyes, the nose, large, prominent and pointed, not depressed; a square muzzle is objectionable. (The bite is compatible with the muzzle description.)

1935: Mouth and Muzzle - Mouth level, otherwise slightly undershot preferable. Muzzle of medium length; a square muzzle is objectionable. (Mouth to be level/under needs a square muzzle - mouth incompatible with muzzle)

1978: Mouth and Muzzle: The preferred bite is either level or slightly undershot. Muzzle of medium length; a square muzzle is objectionable. (Problem compounded - now the BITE has to be level or undershot, so mouth and bite are incompatible with muzzle)

Changing the description of the bite without changing the description of the muzzle which accompanies that bite introduced the contradiction we deal with today. Most everyone has settled the contradiction by simply ignoring the "square muzzle" language altogether. But guess what, folks, it's still there and part of our Standard! What should we do about it?

Regards, Cathy Marley
<http://www.lhasa-apsa.org>

Re: [apsobreeder] square muzzle objectionable
11/10/2009

Leslie Baumann wrote:

Hi,
I guess that is why I think of a square muzzle in three dimensional terms...squared up in profile but also short and broad across the front. I think of our muzzles as "blunt" rather than square but don't have Spira's book handy to see what that definition is. Leslie I think then you'd have to be calling it "cubic", since a square is only 2 dimensions. AKC defines the term "square muzzle" and equates it to "blunt muzzle".

If we use either of those two words in our standard we are committed to accepting the AKC definition. Face it: we are caught in a contradiction, and we can't use AKC words, while attaching our own meanings to them in an AKC standard document.

Regards, Cathy Marley
<http://www.lhasa-apsa.org>

Leslie Baumann wrote:

Hi Nancy,
Do we need to be careful about calling it a tapered muzzle? I believe that phrase can be found in other standards to describe a muzzle that is broader where it meets the skull and then becomes narrower/more pointed at the nose. In other words, the "viewpoint" is from the top looking down on the head rather than having it "tapered" from top to bottom in profile. Again there are words that are imprecise. If you say "tapered", and don't modify it with any other descriptors, you can taper is any way you like, up, down or sideways. Calling parts something new without reference to other parts is how we got here in the first place. We went from a dog with a fairly normal canine nose and mouth, to an "Oriental" mouth and an "end of nose" shape incompatible with that mouth. Maybe best not to say much and not get caught in the inconsistencies of our own making. If the 1901 Jacob standard had been left alone, we would be alright, In a different place vis a vis the "look" of the breed, but at least consistent. Now if one really reads the Standard, one must admit to deliberately not following either one part or the other.

Regards, Cathy Marley

11/11/2009
Subj: Re: [apsobreeder] square muzzle objectionable

Leslie Baumann wrote:

Hi Kerstin,

There were no western travelers in Tibet until after the Younghusband expedition. The Lionel Jacob standard was written before the Younghusband Expedition and described the dogs that were brought down by Tibetan traders to the foothills in India. There were differences between the dogs brought down to the Eastern foothills of India through Sikkim from those that came through Kashmir

but based on the early articles and photos, the differences appear to involve the overall size/balance/length of leg rather than head type and length of muzzle. Based on the geography and history I think it is much more likely that Jacob was comparing Lhasas to other Asian breeds like Pugs or other small British breeds like toy spaniels rather than short-faced Apsos from regions close to China. Trade routes from China to India were by sea, not overland. The record is too sketchy to know for sure either way and I'm not trying to provoke an argument but I think the overall historical context is relevant. Regards,Leslie

Jacob was an Englishman of the upper class - educated as a mechanical Engineer. H was a dog fancier evne in his youth and presumably was familiar with many breeds of dogs in England. When he was posted to the Himalayan foothills in his late twenties, he presumably compared the dogs he saw there with those he was familiar in England. And the area to which he was posted was near the present Dalai Lama's residence. I am told by my contacts in India that Lhasas are still numerous in that area and always have been - around Simla. The breed actually mentioned by Jacob is a Skye Terrier. The Lhasa Apso breed was thought to be a terrier for the next several decades at least, and not a relative of any Chinese breed.

Regards, Cathy Marley

RE: [apsobreeder] square muzzle objectionable 11/12/2009

Hi Nancy,

Thanks for this info! I am obviously not explaining myself well. I have not looked at the Jacob article for a long time but what I remember is that he was trying to describe the Lhasa Terrier to an audience who had never seen the breed. In so doing he referenced at least three other breeds. By saying a square muzzle is objectionable, he must have had in his mind a picture of what a square muzzle is...and he must have assumed his audience would understand his description or he would have cited another breed. So, was it the square muzzle of a Sealyham? Irish Setter? Pug? These are three very different muzzles in profile. I have no evidence he was referencing the Pug but I think it is common sense that people reading about this new breed from Asia might surmise that he meant not squared off like a Pug (rather than an Irish Setter.) On the other hand, since he also compared the Lhasa to the Skye Terrier at one point, he might have been thinking of a squared off terrier muzzle. Which returns us to Cathy's point, are we contradicting ourselves with this wording? My reply is that they didn't think so when they did the British Standard in 1934. Nor did the English think so when they did their standard revision in the early 70's. So, before we assume that everyone who has gone before us missed something this obvious, I have to ask...are we missing something? The British Standard underwent a significant revision in the early 1970's. Note the phrase "a square muzzle is objectionable" was removed."Straight foreface with medium stop. Nose black; Muzzle about 1 ½ inches long, but not square; the length from tip of nose to be roughly one-third the total length from nose to back of skull..."Frances Sefton's explanation for this change in her article on hallmarks of the breed is as follows:"In evolution as a breed, the Lhasa Apso is one of the group of small Asian dogs possessed of a form of the brachycephalic skull and foreface. Unlike the bigger working Asian breeds, the Lhasa developed many of its physical characteristics as a result of selection by man for appearance sake. Even though the Tibetans were not dog breeders in the true sense of the word, nevertheless in their small breeds their choice followed the lines of oriental taste for the shorter head."The Lhasa Apso does not have the pure brachycephalic skull, like the Pug or the Pekingese, or even the Shih Tzu. It is a modification, a partial adaptation. Here are the clues - and I quote from the standard - "straight foreface...length, from tip of nose to eye to be roughly about one third of the total length from nose to back of skull...mouth level, otherwise slightly undershot preferable..." All these are slight variations from the "norm."Great pains were taken in the early drawing up of the original standard to distinguish the breed from the Shih Tzu (which is why the skull and muzzle are described in some detail). Nevertheless, the listed characteristics reveal the presence of the brachycephalic skull in the Lhasa ancestry - and the breed's history supports this.

[Leslie's note...I believe Sefton refers here to the 1934 standard, not the Jacob standard, since Shih Tzus did not arrive in the UK until the late 1920's]"Not written into the standard but nevertheless part and parcel of the typical Lhasa head are the strong underjaw, the "lip," the blunted muzzle with the acute nose tip, the medium stop and the frontally placed eyes..."In this article, Frances Sefton uses "blunted muzzle" to describe the ideal Lhasa muzzle and apparently does not think "blunted" and "square" are contradictory. Why not? Kerstin, you wrote something about noses that were "tipped" a day or so ago. When I think of a tipped nose, I think of an upturned nose but I see Frances using the phrase "acute nose tip" here, too. Could you or Cathy explain what is meant by tipped.

Thanks,Leslie