STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Body proportions of a trotter

The commentary frames the Newfoundland as a rectangular, heavy mesomorph.

Body length over height	+10–12%
Elbow height / withers height	about 50%
Chest descends beyond elbow	>50%
Metacarpus inclination	25–30° from vertical



A very tall dog is not necessarily correct if height comes from excessive limb length.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Shoulder and arm

The front assembly must support weight and allow extension.

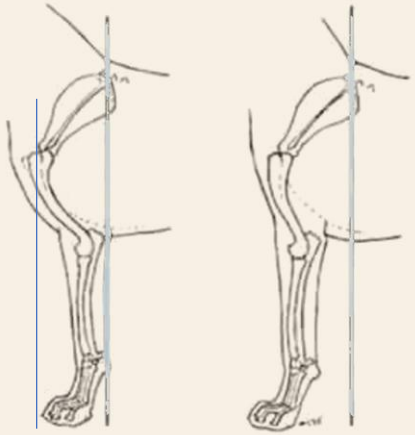
The scapula is a flat triangular bone held by muscles because the dog has no clavicle.

Correctly long and inclined shoulder blades create high, long and harmonious withers.

Modern analysis places the scapula around 60° to the horizontal, not the older 45° ideal.

The humerus is also about 60° to the horizontal and slightly longer than the scapula.

In a balanced front, the elbow falls on the perpendicular from the caudal scapular tip.



Correct

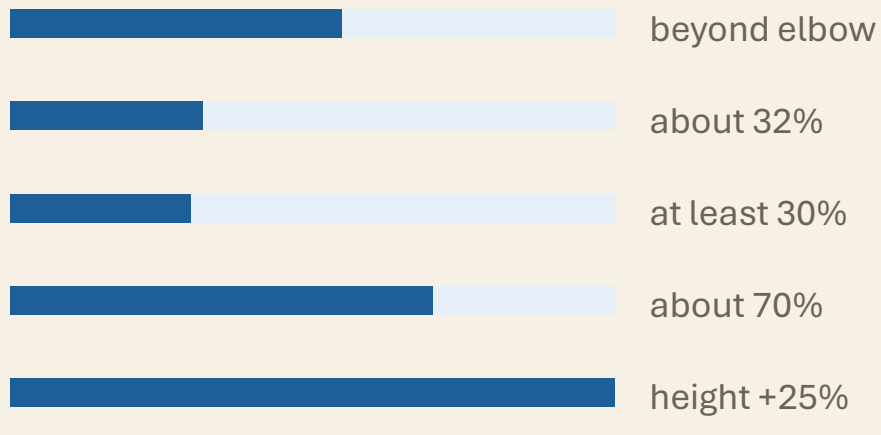
Not correct

The shoulder is judged by how it places the neck, withers, elbow and stride.

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Chest: the engine room

The thorax must be large in all dimensions for a working athlete.



Deficient thoracic diameters produce narrow, flat, insufficiently descended chests.
These dogs often look more like long-limbed retrievers than Newfoundlands.
Barrel chest is also faulty because it displaces the arm and causes elbow swing.

A deep, broad thorax is the engine room of the working dog.

Power starts with rib, lung and chest volume — not with coat alone.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Topline, loin and underline

The spine is the bridge that transmits rear impulse.

After the withers, the dorsal line should be straight and horizontal until the rump curve.

The back is broad and muscular; the loin is strong, slightly convex to touch and resistant to pressure.

A long loin reduces the power of the “lumbar bridge”; a weak loin disperses rear impulse.

Roach back reduces flexibility; sway back is more widespread and compromises function.

The belly should be clean, toned and only slightly raised; tucked-up underline is serious.

FUNCTIONAL METAPHOR

If the loin is a bridge, softness or sagging makes propulsion leak away before it reaches the front.



A solid topline is a working requirement, not a static pose.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Croup and pelvic girdle

The rear train begins with a powerful lever system.

The croup is described as never long, and wide enough for the breed's function.

It should be broad, powerful and in harmony with the musculoskeletal scaffold.

Length is vital, because lever action improves as the lever becomes longer.

The croup is about 30–32% of height at withers and inclined around 30° to the horizontal.

Flat or too-sloping/receding croups lose length, alter tail set and reduce muscular leverage.

The croup is both type and propulsion.



MOVEMENT CHAIN

Hock impulse passes through knee, hip, pelvis, sacrum and lumbar spine; weakness anywhere reduces the chain and efficiency.



Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, "Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland"

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Thigh, leg and hock

Hindquarter power depends on long levers and low, strong joints.

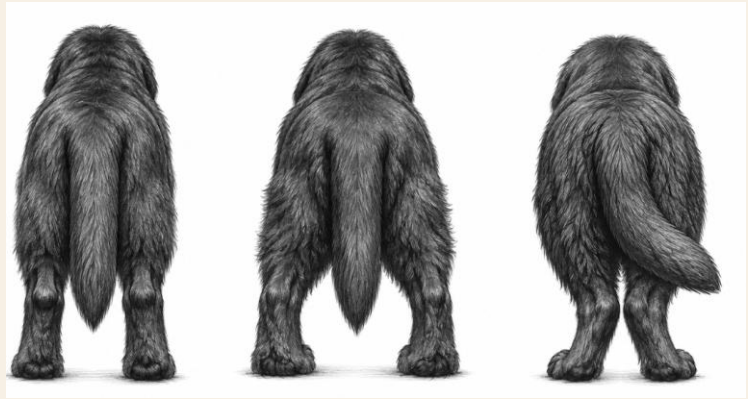
The femur should articulate with the pelvis at about 100°, favorable for an extended trot.

The thigh must be long and wide, supporting towing and swimming musculature.

The tibia/leg is always longer than the thigh and particularly important in this breed.

A short leg is a very serious defect because it opens the angle and shortens stride.

The hock is broad, powerful, close to the ground and followed by a short, strong metatarsus.



Croup, thigh, tibia and hock form the rear power chain.

The rear should look capable of power even before the dog moves.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Rear aplomb and hindquarter soundness

The hindquarters function as one indivisible mechanism.

Aplomb from profile/behind

Profile: buttock-point vertical should fall near the fingertips.

Too far forward is “beside himself” behind.

Inside or behind the foot is “under himself” in the rear.

From behind, the buttock-point vertical should divide every limb region equally.

Feet inside lines means closed behind; outside means open behind.

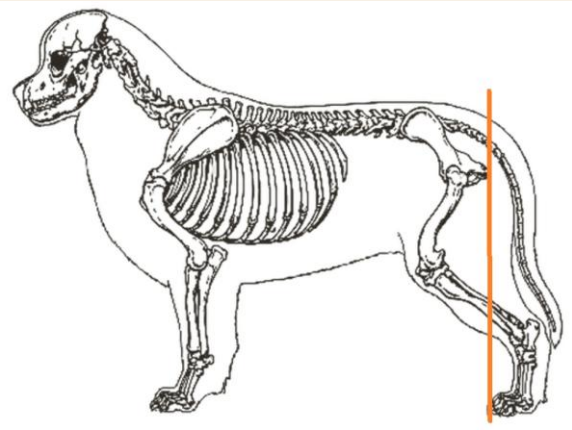
Soundness principle

Long, wide croup should lead into long thigh, flexed knee, long leg and short powerful hock.

Short receding croup often continues into narrow, weak, contracted hindquarters.

Mild imperfections matter by how much they disturb harmony and movement.

Cow hocks can be common; severe cases handicap movement.



Soundness is the balanced set of front, rear, neck, withers and body.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STRUCTURE & BALANCE

Tail: length, set and control

Tail evaluation links directly to croup structure.

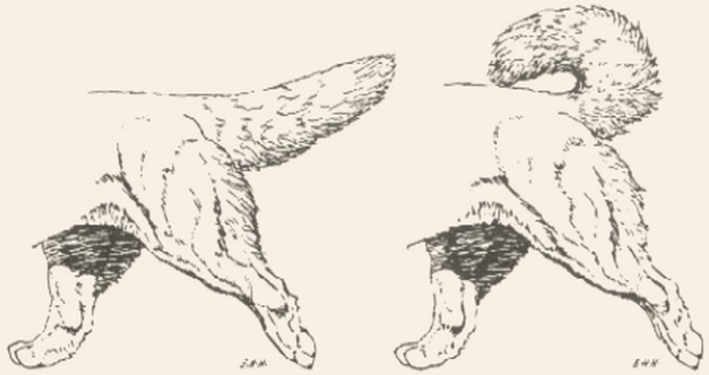
The tail should reach the point of the hock.

It is strong and broad at the root, narrowing toward the tip.

High insertion follows a horizontal croup and may create a high or rolled carriage in movement.

Low insertion follows an elusive croup and may be carried too low.

Kinks are congenital folds of caudal vertebrae and must be checked by hand, especially when hidden by coat.



Typical Tail Carriage

Poor Tail Carriage

Tail faults often reveal deeper croup faults.

PRACTICAL CUE

Coat can mask shortness, deviation or kinks; tactile examination is necessary when the tail looks suspicious.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

SECTION

MOVEMENT & WORK

At the trot, merits become visible and masked faults reappear.

M

TROT • SINGLE TRACKING • GAIT FAULTS • LAND • WATER

MOVEMENT & WORK

Movement is the proof of structure

A Newfoundland is built mainly for trot, not gallop.

Rectangular structure, broad support base, moderate foreleg length and angled hindquarters all suit a profitable trot.

Movement judging has become more rigorous because harmony and function are inseparable.

The dog is examined from the side, coming and going, to read all projections.

The maxim applies: “the better a dog moves, the better it is built.”

Standing beauty cannot compensate for gait that reveals structural insufficiency.

RINGSIDE TRAP

Size and coat may impress the novice, but movement exposes construction and confirms or denies type.



At the trot, merits become visible and masked faults reappear.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

MOVEMENT & WORK

The trot: diagonal, smooth, efficient

The desired gait is powerful, smooth and effortless rather than fast.

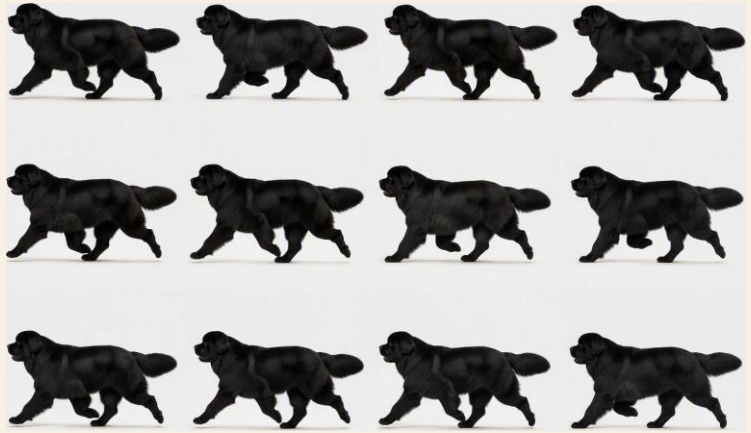
Trot is a two-time gait with diagonal sequence: right front with left rear, then left front with right rear.

At faster trot, a suspension phase appears; in ordinary trot it is nearly imperceptible.

Impulse begins in the hind limb, passes through hip, sacrum and lumbar bridge, then reaches the front.

The neck lowers as speed increases, helping stiffen the spine and move the center of gravity.

The front foot becomes a pivot as the body projects forward.



The trot should look smooth, diagonal and economical.

Effortlessness is the visible sign of correct mechanical economy.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

MOVEMENT & WORK

Single tracking vs toeing-in

The commentary warns against confusing normal convergence with rotation.

Single tracking

Broad-bodied dogs bring feet toward the longitudinal median line as speed increases.

This reduces lateral displacement of the center of gravity.

At maximum speed, footprints may be nearly on a single track.

The limbs incline toward the midline without rotating.

This should not be penalized in the author's view.

Toeing-in

A foot/hand rotates inward rather than merely converging.

Often linked to straight shoulder, vertical humerus or rounded chest.

Elbow swing may be the real origin of the visible deviation.

Mild toeing-in is tolerated by standards; severe forms are faults.

Handler posture can exaggerate the problem by preventing normal neck lowering.

Look for rotation, not just convergence.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, "Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland"

MOVEMENT & WORK

Working capacity: land and water

The same structure that produces good trot also enables towing and swimming.

Historical work included towing small carts or heavy weights, alone or in packs.

Modern public identity centers on water work and rescue instinct.

Many breeds swim well, but the Newfoundland combines swimming inclination, retrieving instinct and sufficient strength to pull a person from water.

Swimming motive force is developed by the hind train, so weak pelvic limbs reduce suitability.

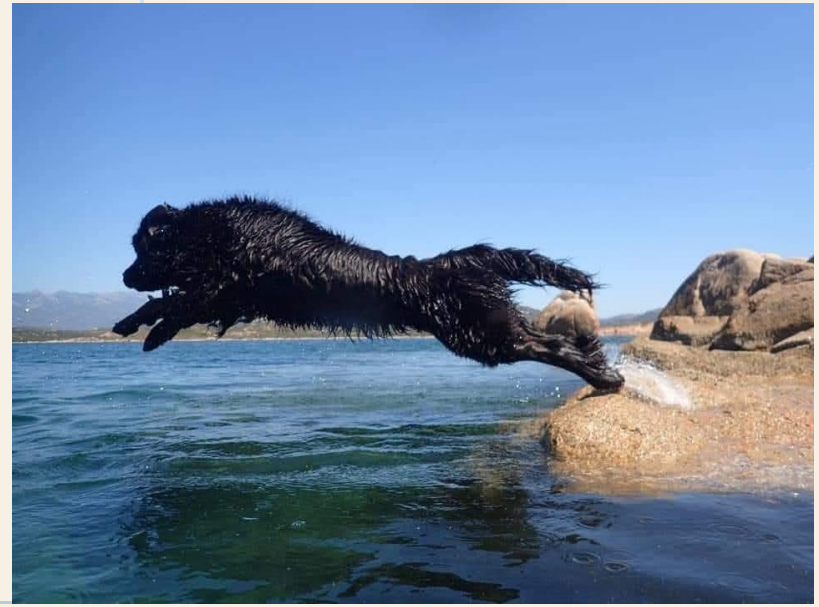
The athlete is first evaluated standing and in motion on land, then confirmed in water.

Water rescue ability depends on structure, not legend.



FUNCTION TEST

A dog unable to move with joy, dynamism and endurance should not be favored for a working breed.



Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

MOVEMENT & WORK

Gait defects from the Canadian list

Each named gait fault points to a structural or conditioning cause.

Fault	Meaning	Likely cause / implication
Mincing	Short, non-covering step.	Short bone radii and insufficient angulation.
Shuffling	Sluggish, dragging movement.	May reflect obesity or poor training.
Crabbing	Body travels oblique to line of motion.	Often rear angles exceed front angles with short back; handler attention can contribute.
Too close	Limbs tighten toward each other.	Often insufficient transverse diameters or cow-hock structure.
Weaving	Swaying front with elbow oscillation and carpus crossing.	Serious defect.
Hackney / pacing	Exaggerated lift or ambling gait replacing trot.	Not typical; persistent pacing suggests structural problem.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

SECTION

COAT & COLOR

C

The dog comes first; color comes last.

TEXTURE • UNDERCOAT • MARKINGS • COLOR VARIETIES

COAT & COLOR

Coat as weather protection

The double coat is a functional natural shield, not decoration.

The coat protects the dog in inclement weather and freezing waters of the native island.

The dog should show longer, thick, fairly straight covering hair and a soft, dense, woolly undercoat.

Undercoat is especially abundant on chest, rump and culottes.

When combed against the grain, hair should return naturally to place, showing strong elastic texture.

The coat is closed and heavy rather than shooting outward like a Spitz coat.



Dense double coat protects in weather and cold water.

Coat should amplify substance while remaining tidy and functional.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

COAT & COLOR

Coat defects and presentation

A beautiful coat is dense, ordered and breed-typical.

Desired finish

Moderate to abundant length.

Fringes on forelimbs, culottes on thighs and full tail contribute to finish.

Abundance can enhance the bear-like, imposing impression.

Excess hair may be groomed for tidiness, especially around ears, front and rear.

Undesirable qualities

Short coat is a defect.

Shaggy, disheveled appearance is not typical.

Curly, woolly, silky or markedly wavy hair is undesirable and transmissible.

Flat, inconsistent coat is serious because it fails to protect from elements.

A tidy dense coat supports type; an extravagant or weak coat misleads judgment.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

COAT & COLOR

Solid black and white markings

Black is not simply glossy black: undercoat and light create nuance.

The solid black coat often appears dull overall because the abundant undercoat is grayish-brown rather than black.

Gloss is stronger on the head, with chiaroscuro from hair direction over bone and muscle relief.

Slight burnt shade on chest and buttocks is common, especially after summer sun.

White may occur on chest, toes/fingers, tail tip and, in the U.S. standard, chin.

White on feet, limb or face is a minor deviation; tan markings in a solid coat are disqualifying.

HISTORICAL NOTE

White markings are not anomalous; they historically and genetically relate to the white-black variety.

Do not over-penalize typical markings that do not harm type.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

COAT & COLOR

Landseer, brown and gray

Color must never outrank type, structure and harmony.

The Landseer*** variety has a pure white background with black markings; ideal pattern includes black head, possible blaze, black saddle and black tail set.

Marking symmetry and beauty matter, but only after type and construction are equal.

Brown, also called bronze, is recognized by FCI and AKC but not by the country of origin; it is recessive to black.

Brown eyes are lighter in harmony with coat, but frankly yellow eyes spoil expression.

Gray is admitted only in the United States; elsewhere it is a ground for disqualification.

***Unfortunately, the term 'Landseer' causes confusion in the FCI, because the name was hijacked by a new, so-called, breed that appeared in the 60s and took it for themselves. So today we are forced to call them by their color, that is, black and white.



Color is judged after type, structure and harmony.

> **The dog comes first; color comes last.**

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

COMMENTARY TO THE STANDARD

Newfoundland

A detailed slide companion to Dr. Manlio Massa's commentary on breed type, structure, movement, coat and color.

Designed as a judge's technical reading guide ***by Ilaria De Bernardi***

PART ONE

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Core thesis

The Newfoundland is not merely large, black and coated. It is a balanced working dog whose every part must serve strength, water work and effortless trot.



Working type: calm power, substance and function.

What a breed standard is

> *A breed standard is a verbal drawing of the ideal model: how the dog should appear, behave and move.*

It fixes the characteristics that let the dog fulfill its function with least physical and moral effort.

It is not a collection of isolated preferences; it is a functional description of type.

The experienced reader should be able to visualize the complete dog from nose to tail.

The standard is best read as a functional blueprint, not as a beauty checklist.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STANDARD & PURPOSE

Why standards evolve

Revisions codify functional progress rather than fashion.

Modern standards ask for more precision than would have been imaginable decades earlier.

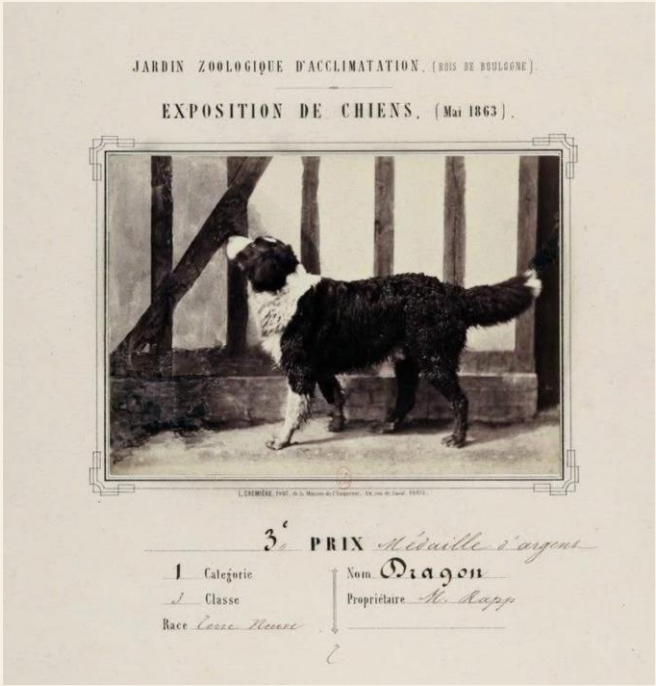
Technical commissions evaluate traits that strengthen function and type before adding them.

The American standard revised in 1990 and Canadian/FCI approach of 1996 made the Newfoundland more clearly defined.

The older English standard is described as too brief, contributing to European confusion about type.



Boatswain



A precise standard protects the breed from drifting into generic giant-dog appearance.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STANDARD & PURPOSE

The working identity of the Newfoundland

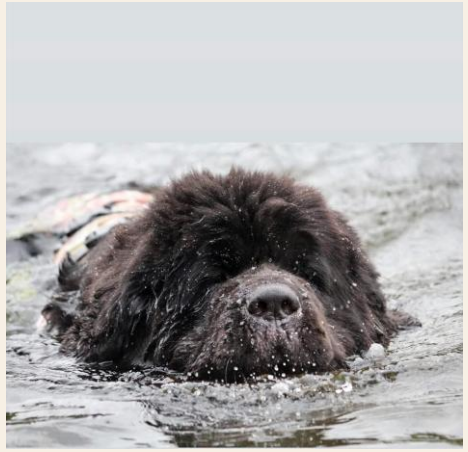
The breed is specialized for heavy towing and work in water.

The ideal dog must give an impression of strength, grandeur and serene confidence.

Its ancestors worked on land and at sea in close contact with people.

Good-natured expression, benevolent character, heavy bone and powerful musculature all support that function.

The standard asks for power without harshness and size without disproportion.



Every structural point should be judged by how it contributes to work.

FUNCTION FIRST

Water work and towing require power over time, not short bursts of speed. The body must be built for effortlessness.



Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

STANDARD & PURPOSE

Harmony is the central criterion

No excellent feature compensates for imbalance elsewhere.

A correct head loses value if attached to an inadequate body.

Well-angled hindquarters do not harmonize with a straight shoulder.

Height obtained through excessive limb length creates a “tall” dog, not a “big” Newfoundland.

A mature judgment evaluates the whole dog: head, bone, angles, movement and their interaction.



Example of a typey, harmonious and balanced dog in all its parts

JUDGING WARNING

The author cautions against privileging one glamorous part over the global balance that produces true type.

Type is the harmony of parts; structure is verified by movement.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

Head as the breed's signature

Expression is built from anatomy, not from sentiment.

The Newfoundland's sweet, benevolent "eternal puppy" expression is linked to neotenic traits retained in adulthood.

Key contributors: rounded head shapes, absence of angularity, small drooping ears, small sunken eyes, and a full short muzzle.

The head must be powerful and broad while preserving softness and kindness.

Harshness, hound expression or mastiff expression all move away from type.



Rounded head, short full muzzle and deep eyes shape expression.

The head is judged as a system: proportion, planes and expression must agree.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, "Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland"

SECTION

FINAL JUDGMENT

F

Reward the dog whose beauty is inseparable from working efficiency.

TYPE • HARMONY • SUBSTANCE • SOUNDNESS • FUNCTION

FINAL JUDGMENT

How to read the whole dog

A concluding hierarchy for judging or studying the Newfoundland standard.

01

Type

Does the dog read as a powerful, benevolent, working Newfoundland rather than a generic giant?

02

Harmony

Do head, body, limbs, angles, coat and tail support one another without disproportion?

03

Substance

Are bone, chest, muscle and breadth sufficient for heavy towing and water work?

04

Soundness

Does the construction hold together when the dog moves at a trot?

05

Function

Can the animal plausibly perform the exhausting tasks for which the breed was selected?

Final principle: reward the dog whose beauty is inseparable from working efficiency.

Source: Dr. Manlio Massa, “Commentary to the Standard — Newfoundland”

At the end of this presentation, I would like to reiterate some key points and remind, once again, that our dog should be evaluated as a whole.

A dog without any defect hasn’t been born yet, and our skill lies in determining the importance of its faults in relation to its qualities.

We have seen that the characteristics that make it truly unique are the combination of the sweet and benevolent expression from puppyhood that persists into adulthood, the conformation that conveys strength and power no matter how you look at it (bone structure, transverse diameters, size), and the functional beauty expressed through the harmony of its build.

In each of our minds, these points should be considered inalienable and indivisible; the closer they come to the ideal model we have dreamed of, the more we will have achieved our goal as breeders and lovers of this beautiful breed.

In judging, the ability to weigh the combination of qualities and faults makes one justice to the efforts of those who breed seriously.

So, when judging, the first thing is to choose in our ring the specimen with the best breed type. Then we award the most harmonious among those with the best type.

And finally, I would like to recall two other points.

1- Giving high scores just to keep a good relationship with the exhibitor harms the dignity of the breed and disrespects those who dedicate part of their lives every day to serious work. A judge who is too generous harms dog breeding and hasn't understood their true role.

2- Show dogs should be trained for the ring from puppyhood. A great judge, Anne Rogers Clark, used to say: "Exceptional dogs are born that way; many never even set foot in a Best in Show ring, because exceptional dogs not only have to be bred to be exceptional, but they also have to be raised in a way that allows them to become so."

Thank you all for your attention