

**COMMENTS ON THE BREED STANDARD  
PUBLISHED BY THE SWEDISH SHIH TZU CLUB (SST)  
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**BRIEFLY ABOUT THE SHIH TZUS DEVELOPMENT IN SWEDEN**

Up until the mid 1970's the breed was very varied in type and size. Small heads, narrow jaws, lack of chin and scissor bites were not unusual, even if most dogs were undershot ( In those days scissor bites was permitted according to the standard, before that desirable even).

It was not uncommon to see leggy dogs with flat ribcages. Coat quality was very varied. Black, grey or gold-brindle with white markings were common colours. Solid coloured dogs were rarely seen.

Good points were correct pigmentation, big round eyes and a good temperament. Movement was often free and flowing with the typical "flick-up".

From the mid 1970's the breed has become more uniform in type and size. Heads have improved with wider jaws and stronger chins. But we still see too many dogs with narrow jaws with no room for 6 incisors in a straight line.

Eyes today are often big and round, giving the correct expression, but we sometimes still see small and almond shaped eyes.

With breeders being more aware and with the help of good breeding stock, the narrow, leggy type of dog now is less common, instead we see a tendency towards a short sternum and ribcage.

Coat qualities of today are still varied, but with improved grooming and coat care and careful breeding, coats are better and more uniform.

**Colours:**

**Solids:** Without white markings, often dark red with black mask.  
More frequent in the 1980's than today.

**Black-white:** Black with a varied amount of white markings.  
The black and whites are generally nicely marked with pure colours. This colour was more common during the 1960's and 70's.

**Grey-white:** From dark grey to pale silver with white markings.  
This colour is rarely seen.

**Gold-white:** Gold, yellow or red of all shades with white markings.  
This colour has increased since the 1960's and 70's.  
The most common colour today.

**Pale gold/ cream and**

**other pale shades:** Usually pale gold/honey with a varied amount of white markings. This is the most increasing colour of today. Pigmentation of eyes, nose and paws are very good in this colour.

Today the most common colours of the Shih Tzu have changed, this is probably due to the genetic background of the breeding material and not deliberate breeding for certain colours.

Movement has improved. Today the Shih Tzu has overall good firm movement and nice balance between front- and rear movement. The typical “flick-up”, i.e. showing full pad in hind movement is now evident in most Shih Tzus, but could be more powerful in some.

Breeders are working hard to breed a Shih Tzu that both physically and mentally is as close to the standard as possible. The same standard we are now going to look closer into.

## **GENERAL APPEARANCE**

*Sturdy, abundantly coated dog with distinctly arrogant carriage and chrysanthemum-like face*

*Characteristics: Intelligent, active and alert*

*Temperament: Friendly and independent*

The Shih Tzu is distinctly rectangular in shape, a square or leggy dog is incorrect.

The high set “teapot handle” tail with the top of the tail carried level with the top of the head, gives the true overall balance. Body solid and low to the ground, chest broad and deep, all combined with elegance and flowing movement.

The standard allows great variation in size. This is acceptable as long as breed type and correct proportions are intact.

Femininity and masculinity are important but are not defined by the size of the dog.

The temperament is a very important part of the general appearance. The Shih Tzu is friendly and confident towards strangers. Under no circumstances can shyness or aggressiveness be accepted. The proud head carriage and the arrogant expression are important ingredients in a Shih Tzu.

Further comments from SST

The Shih Tzu should be longer in body than height at withers. **If the overall picture gives the impression of a square and short dog, this should lead to a lower grading. A leggy dog is a serious fault.**

## **HEAD AND SKULL**

Head broad, round, wide between eyes. Shock-headed with hair falling well over eyes. Good beard and whiskers, hair growing upwards on the nose giving a distinctly chrysanthemum-like effect. Muzzle of ample width, square, short, not wrinkled, flat and hairy. Nose black but dark liver in liver or liver marked dogs and about one inch from tip to definite stop. Nose level or slightly tip-tilted. Top of nose leather should be on line with or slightly below lower eye rim. Wide open nostrils. Downpointed nose highly undesirable, as are pinched nostrils. Pigmentation on muzzle as unbroken as possible.

The size of the head should be in proportion to the body. Fore-head high, broad and domed, stop deep and definite. From the stop to the base of the skull and from ear to ear, the skull should be round. Cheeks well padded. Face broad and open, eyes set wide apart. Eyes are set frontal in a Shih Tzu – as in a human – this will give the observer instant eye contact.

The muzzle should be square, broad and well padded. Strong and wide chin, in balance with the muzzle, giving the correct profile with a straight line from the top of the nose to the chin. Lips level. Short nose, length in proportion to the rest of the head.

Nose leather big and set high, this gives the oriental, arrogant expression.

Pinched nostrils highly undesirable. A falling, downpointing nose is untypical and gives the dog a “foolish” look.

Pigmentation should be unbroken, also on lips and eye rims. The chrysanthemum-like effect is only seen in puppies.

Faults: A narrow or conical head. Narrow and pointed muzzle. Flat fore-head and lack of stop. Pay attention to weak chins, this is a common fault.

When examining the head, it is important to look well beyond the hair and use the hands to determine what is actually for real. Grooming and stylish top-knots can completely alter the expression.

Please note that you should be able to determine if you are looking at a dog or a bitch just by looking at the head and expression.

Further comments from SST

Pinched nostrils are an **abnormality**.

## **EYES**

*Large, dark, round, placed well apart but not prominent. Warm expression. In liver or liver marked dogs, lighter eye colour permissible. No white of eye showing.*

Expression should be warm and friendly. Preferably no white of the eye showing when the dog looks straight ahead.

Pigmentation should be unbroken on eye rims. In liver or liver marked dogs, lighter eye colour and pigmentation permissible.

Small, close-set, almond shaped eyes as well as a nervous look is not typical for a Shih Tzu.

Further comments from SST

**Eyes showing excessive eye white should lead to a lower grading.**

## **EARS**

*Large, with long leathers, carried drooping. Set slightly below crown of skull, so heavily coated they appear to blend into hair of neck.*

High set ears spoil the round shape of the head.

## **MOUTH**

*Wide, slightly undershot or level. Lips level.*

A wide jaw is very important, with plenty of space for 6 front teeth. Strong chin.

One missing front tooth is acceptable provided that the jaw is wide.

Today most Shih Tzus are undershot. Ideally a Shih Tzu is slightly undershot, but quite large undershot bites can be accepted as long as the teeth and tongue does not protrude when the mouth is closed. Scissor bite or overshot bite are not permissible.

Pay attention to small or wry canine teeth.

The difference in size between the canines and the incisors should be distinct. Missing canines are not acceptable.

Further comments from SST

Lack of one incisor is a mild fault. **Lacking 2 incisors or more should lead to a lower grading. A missing canine tooth, wry jaw and tongue showing when mouth is closed are not acceptable and should lead to grading 0. Underdeveloped canine teeth (canines the size of the incisors) or wry jaws should lead to lower grading.**

## NECK

*Well proportioned, nicely arched. Sufficient length to carry head proudly.*

The length of the neck should be in balance with the height of the tail, this giving the correct overall silhouette.

An excessively long neck is not desirable, but the shape of the neck is important. The breed has a big head and therefore the neck should be strong, deep and muscular, well set on, fore-chest well developed, shoulder and upper arm well laid back.

The neck should not form a sharp angle to the top line – like a chimney – but flow smoothly into shoulders.

## BODY

*Longer between withers and root of tail than height of withers, well coupled and sturdy, chest broad and deep, shoulders firm, back level.*

The distance between height at withers and the lowest point of the ribcage should amount to more than the distance between the lowest point of the ribcage and the ground. The loin (the distance between the last rib and the hipbone) should be strong and muscular. Fore-chest well developed. Well angulated fore and aft.

Ribcage should be rounded – not round or barrel shaped. It should be deep and reach just below the elbows. A flat or shallow ribcage is wrong.

The ribcage should be of sufficient length, this also includes the sternum.

No visible waist or tuck-up.

The Shih Tzu is an active and agile breed, and in order to be able to move with the powerful, flowing gait the standard asks for, it is important that it is well muscled.

Further comments from SST

Be observant of short ribcages. **Ribcages where the last rib is short and protruding should be observed when grading and be noted in the critique. V-shaped (flat) ribcages should lead to a lower grading.**

## **FOREQUARTERS AND HINDQUARTERS**

*Forequarters: Shoulders laid back. Legs short and muscular with ample bone, as straight as possible consistent with broad chest being well let down.*

*Hindquarters: Legs short and muscular with ample bone. Straight when viewed from the rear. Thighs well rounded and muscular. Legs looking massive on account of wealth of hair.*

Legs should be short but still long enough to allow the dog to move in a typical way. Upper arm and shoulder blade of equal length, firmly attached to the body. To accommodate the width of the ribcage, a slight curve in the upper arm is allowed. Elbows firmly attached to body.

Not too weak in pastern. This is best seen when the dog is moving. Some dogs have very bowed front legs with heavily curved forearms and weak pasterns, this is definitely not acceptable.

Hindquarters straight with ample bone. Hind angulation in balance with front angulation.

Croup wide and fairly level.

Stifle joint well bent, hock low set and rear pastern short.

The standard asks for “legs looking massive on account of wealth of hair”. As the Shih Tzu in proportion to its size is a solid, heavy little dog, the conclusion must be that legs should be strong and muscular.

Front legs firmly placed well under the body. Feet pointing straight forward, standing well on the whole foot and not on the toes.

Legginess in a Shih Tzu is a serious fault.

Straight, upright shoulders and too short upper arm is a fault.

N.B. If the upper arm and elbow is not firmly attached to the body, the reason could be an undeveloped ribcage. Out at elbow is a fault.

A steep croup together with a low set tail and tripping gait is a serious fault.

Narrow hindquarters is a fault. Combined with poor hind angulation and long rear pasterns it is a serious fault.

Further comments from SST

Short legged breeds have bowed legs to give them strength. A bowed upper arm is acceptable, to accommodate the width and depth of the ribcage. A slight curve in the forearm is allowed.

A Shih Tzu with too straight front legs should be carefully examined as the reason for it could be a flat and underdeveloped ribcage.

**Too weak pasterns should lead to a lower grading.**

**The construction of the forequarters should always be mentioned in the critique.**

The angulation of the croup should be 15-20 degrees. This is important as it gives the breed its characteristic hind movement, the “flick-up”.

**A steep croup together with a low set tail and tripping movement should lead to a lower grading.**

Be observant on muscular condition.

**A high set hock is a serious fault.**

## **FEET**

*Rounded, firm and well padded, appearing big on account of wealth of hair.*

Five fully developed toes on front- and back feet can occur and are permitted. Feet big and firm, pointing straight forward. Unbroken pigmentation on pads desirable.

Faults: Flat feet and feet spread like a chicken.

## **TAIL**

*Heavily plumed, carried gaily well over back. Set on high. Height approximately level with that of skull to give a balanced outline.*

Tail should be long, high set and rise upward – forward. It must not protrude behind the dogs vertical line. Top of the tail should be carried about level with the top of the skull, thus giving the correct overall balance.

Low set, flat or curly tail is incorrect.

Puppies and youngsters often carry their tail like a flag, sometimes straight up in the air. This should not be penalized as these tails often becomes the most correct on the adult dog.

Further comments from SST

The tail should be long, the tip of tail should reach to the middle of the back..

A flat or/and curly tail should be regarded when grading.

## **GAIT/MOVEMENT**

*Arrogant, smooth-flowing, front legs reaching well forward, strong rear action and showing full pad.*

The Shih Tzu moves flowingly and powerfully, with a driving hind action, the “flick-up”. Head carried proudly, even on a loose lead. Gait is smooth and effortless, steps long with good front reach and equally strong rear drive. At a higher pace the legs converge.

Topline level and firm while moving.

Faulty movement usually originates from constructional faults or incorrect angulation.

Faults: Stilted, tripping or heavy and rolling movement.

## **COAT**

*Long, dense, not curly with good undercoat. Slight wave permitted. Strongly recommended that hair on head tied up.*

The Shih Tzu has a double coat. There should be a clearly detectable difference between the topcoat and the undercoat.

On the adult dog the length of the coat should not be decisive in grading or placing. It is of greater importance that the coat is double, shiny and healthy and as straight as possible.

The puppy coat is often soft and woolly, this is not desirable in the adult dog.

A heavily coated Shih Tzu is a beautiful sight, but please remember that the type and conformation of the Shih Tzu is of greater importance than the length of the coat.

Further comments from SST

The Shih Tzu is an abundantly coated breed and the quantity and quality of the coat should be regarded when grading. Do not accept a woolly coat on an adult dog.

## **COLOUR**

*All colours permissible, white blaze on forehead and white tip to tail highly desirable in parti-colours.*

As all colours are permitted, they shall be judged equally.

The dogs colour or markings must not be decisive when grading.

Solid dogs or dogs with uneven head markings must be carefully studied, as the proportions of the face and the expression can be difficult to see at first sight.

## **WEIGHT AND SIZE**

*4.6 to 8.1 kg (10 to 18 lbs). Ideal weight 4.5 to 7.3 kg (10 to 16 lbs). Height at withers not more than 26.7 cm (10.5 ins). Type and breed characteristics of the utmost importance and on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.*

Since large variations in weight and size are allowed, it is important to put them in relation to each other when judging a Shih Tzu.

A larger Shih Tzu, close to the maximum size, should also be equivalent in weight in order to keep the correct proportions. A 4.5 kg dog equally should be small in size.

Even if we in Sweden have had problems with light and leggy Shih Tzus, it must be clear that the dogs must not be so heavy and low to the ground that it makes them clumsy and immobile.

N.B. Determination of the sex is not defined by the size of the dog.

Further comments from SST

Ideal height at withers male 24 cm (9.4 ins.) bitch 22 cm (8.7 ins.) .

A maximum sized dog should exceed the maximum weight in order to fulfil the constructional demands in the standard.

Type and breed characteristics of the utmost importance and on no account to be sacrificed to size alone.

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