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COMMENT TO THE MORPHOLOGICAL STANDARD

by Cesare Bonasegale

The English version of the comment to the morphological standard written
as Member of the Technical Committee of the breed

SABI Italy has asked me to write the comment to the morphological standard of the Bracco Italiano, concerning:

Brief notes of the breed origins

Colours of the coat

Height

Tail carriage

Here is the English version of the comment I produced

Brief notes on the Bracco Italiano's origins.

The History of the Bracco italiano is strictly linked to the development of the hunting techniques of flying game. Way back in the Middle Ages, flying game – pointed by dogs – was hunted with the use of a net (and actually the ancestor of the pointing dogs were called “cani da rete” – literally dog of the net). They were also employed to hunt at night and with the falcon. A fresco painted in 1337 (Allegory of good Government in the public Palace of Siena) actually shows dogs used with falcons who look quite like to-day's Bracco Italiano. There are many documents describing the breed through the centuries and the development of its behaviours in parallel to the advent of fire arms.

The modern Bracco Italiano was definitely fixed in mid 1800s and has since remained as it is to-day.

The Bracco italiano's coat

The Bracco italiano's coat has markings of two alternative colours (orange or brown), which appear on a background which can be of white hairs, or of white hairs mixed to hairs of the same colour of the markings. As a result, the coat can have 4 al

In practice, therefore, there are four coat colours:

- Roan base colour with brown markings (so-called brown roan)
- White base colour with brown markings (white and brown)
- Spotted base colour with orange markings (orange

roan coat, mistakenly called orange and white)

- White base colour with orange markings (correctly called orange and white).

This means that the coat of Bracco Italiano **must always have white hair**.

The colours of the coat are due to a pigment known as:
- *Pheomelanin* responsible for yellow shades (from pale cream to orange, to tan and to the mahogany). **The gene responsible for this pigment is recessive.**

- *Eumelanin* responsible for darker coat colours, namely brown. **The gene responsible for this pigment is dominant.**

The orange colour produced by Pheomelanin – as well as the brown colour due to Eumelanin – can be more or less dark due to the presence of a combination of genes. Please note that the darker orange is appreciated, whereas the preferred shade of brown is the so called “monk of frock” colour; the dark brown instead is not appreciated.

As mentioned above, the coat between the spots can be totally white or white mixed with coloured hair. The absence of coloured hair on the coat between the spots is due to a recessive gene. Any Bracco Italiano with “self-coloured” coat (i.e. without white hair) would be the obvious result of a first generation crossbred and consequently subject to disqualification. (Mind though that what could appear as a self coloured coat could not be so due to the presence of some white hair mixed to coloured hair on the legs or on the chest).

Having cleared the meaning of the “self coloured” coat, one must distinguish it from the “single colored” coats, as opposed to the bi-colour coats in which **undesirable** “tan points” or “brindles” can occasionally appear in brown roan Bracco Italiano due to a combination of recessive genes.

Note however that these faults are visible only in brown roan subjects, but can be genetically carried also by white and orange dogs.

It is worth noting that the epistatic genes responsible for fading the colours, thus producing a totally white coat, present in the breed until the end of 1800s, has disappeared. Consequently now there are no longer all white Bracchi Italiani.

Bracco italiano height

The breed standard indicates that a Bracco's height must be between a minimum of 55 centimeters and a maximum of 67 centimeters.

Specifically:

For males: 58 to 67 centimeters

For females: 55 to 62 centimeters.

More accurately, it should be said that the average height is: **For males cm. 62.5** centimetres +/- **4.5** centimetres **For females cm. 58.5** centimetres +/- **3.5** centimetres Bracco italiano is a long-distance-runner who must trot fast for many hours in a day, whose size must remain as close as possible to the average values. An increase of its height should therefore be discouraged whereas – being a low-dominance character – the average height would certainly increase as a result of the systematic use for breeding of dogs which are close to the maximum values of the standard.

Consequently, the morphological evaluation of a Bracco Italiano should prefer those subjects which – all other qualities being equal – are close to the average height (cm. 62,5 for males and cm. 58,5 for females).

Tail carriage

For pointing dogs the tail is a means by which it signals

what the nose is scenting. That's where comes from the expression “what gets in the nose, comes out the tail”. And this is especially true for the Bracco Italiano.

The horizontal wagging of the tail, in rhythm with the trot, is especially evident in this breed. It is an expression of style as well as a functional characteristic.

The wagging of the tail changes to a trembling movement as the dog detects a promising scent, and then becomes absolutely still when he points because he is sure of the presence of game.

However, in order to clearly communicate this vital information, the **tail must be carried horizontally**, that is parallel to the top-line of the dog, except for a slight curvature of the tip of the tail upward or – even better – downward.

If the tail is carried vertically, its ability to communicate this important information will be lacking. And this represents not only an aesthetic fault, but also a functional fault, since it doesn't allow the dog to properly express itself during the field search.

Vertical tail carriage must therefore be penalized in both the show ring and field trials.

Regarding tail carriage, the genetic mechanism for his transmission is as follows:

Vertical tail carriage is the expression of recessive genes, whereas the correct **horizontal tail carriage** is due to dominant genes, whose genotype can be homozygotic or heterozygotic. Actually when both parents have heterozygotic genes of horizontal tail carriage, there will be 25% chances that their direct descendant will have the undesirable vertical tail carriage.

In the show ring, dogs with vertical tail carriage should be penalized just as those who keep it down between the buttocks, the ideal being that while trotting in the ring the tail is wagged horizontally at the same rhythm of the trot.

Non docked tail

The above indications apply also to dog with non-docked tail, with a more tolerant judgment towards a less evident tail wagging while the dog is trotting.