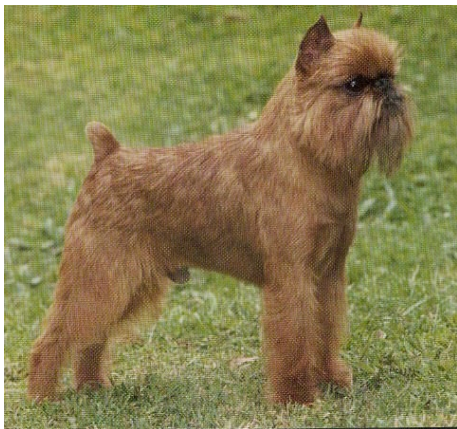


## Judging the Brussels Griffon by Lorene Vickers-Smith

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The Brussels Griffon is a delight to judge if you understand them. We begin every Judges' Education seminar with this mission statement: "The Brussels Griffon is a small, compact, double tracking Toy dog with normal structure and moderate angles front and rear. It should appear square, relatively thick set, cobby and well boned. The rib cage is well sprung; the loin short with no obvious tuck-up. The tail is set high and carried up."



This overall concept should easily be understood and visualized by both novice and experienced judges. The Brussels Griffon has 'normal structure' w/level topline - not like some sighthounds or bully breeds. Considering time and questions, we then move the focus to what sets our breed apart:

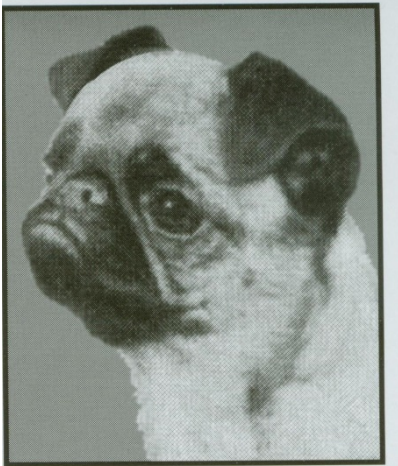
**BREED TYPE** which is concentrated in the head.

**I will quote the *ABGA Illustrated Standard* throughout in italics.**

The very essence of breed type is found in the unique



head. *"The very large eyes must be set wide apart and lined up horizontally with the nose. Lips must meet properly with a good upsweep to the jaw. The breed has borrowed heavily from the English Toy Spaniel forebears having a rounded topskull and domed forehead, large appealing eyes, wide nostrils, with a strong, wide turned-up underjaw and nose pad."* *"The almost human expression evolves from the proper placement and relationship of eyes, skull, nose, lips and jaw."* *"The position of the nose is important and a guidepost to judging the entire head. A correct layback will tilt the extremely short nose up and back, high between the eyes forming a deep stop which can be felt but is not*



*visible.* *"The upper lip should be plush and short."* This does not mean the lip is thick. There is width to the muzzle and fill (not hollow) under the eye. *"Our standard is very clear on the Griffon head and leaves no room for the exercise of personal preference by breeders or judges. The head is to be evaluated as a whole. It is the responsibility of all who breed and judge to see that the Brussels Griffon does not lose that which makes him unique."*

If we have great headed Smooths available for our seminars we prefer to use them to teach head type. I have attended many seminars of coated breeds that were clipped or shaved to more easily teach the judges. When judging the Brussels

Griffon one should NEVER give preference to coat type or color, but it IS easier to teach without the coat. It is our goal that every judge and breeder take away a clear picture of type and a better understanding of personality/temperament. To grasp both - you need a good grasp of the three main breeds of origin and their influence on today's Brussels Griffon.

It is generally accepted that the three main breeds of origin are the Pug, the English Toy Spaniel and a wirecoated Affenpinscher/terrier-type stable ratter of the day(which we will coin 'Affenpinscher type' for this article). It is suspected that other breeds may have played a minor roll but considering lack of definite documentation, our ABGA parent club upholds their current standing on the history of our breed found in our Illustrated Standard.

This breed is around 150 years old. That is young for an established canine breed. Some of our breeders that have closely linebred for a decade or more, have established a good degree of uniformity and a consistent type. However, it is still not unusual that uniformity is sporadic when breeding Brussels Griffons. Puppies within one litter can resemble the different types, sizes or temperaments of their ancestors. The genes tend to segregate back to the breeds of origin. **These different types must continually be bred together to maintain the Brussels Griffon characteristics that were intended when the Belgium standard was written in 1883 !**

Let us look closer at the **influence** of the three main breed types of origin: This article is meant to show how these breeds manifest in the Brussels Griffon, both positive and negatively.

[Note: English Toy Spaniel discussion. Those of you who were acquainted with the ETS or the Brussels Griffons of the 60's and 70's will remember that many were typey in head with large eyes, proper nose pad and jaws, but tended to be shy in temperament and ring presentation. Many "crawled around the ring" with S shaped toplines. My intention is not to show the ETS in a negative light, but to point out pitfalls in the evolution of both breeds throughout their development, no doubt from the common blood. Both the ETS and Griffons of today have largely overcome the problems listed below but as a judge you will see shadows from the past in your ring. ]

## ENGLISH TOY SPANIEL



#### Plus

over-all head type: domed forehead, well turned up jaw, large dark eyes,  
extremely short laid-back nose pad and deep stop  
brachycephalic head type, and breadth to skull and muzzle  
deep red color  
black and tan color  
compact, cobby, sturdy body

#### Minus

white spot or blaze anywhere on coat or chest (Disqualification)  
large feet  
temperament too soft  
low set ears  
poor topline, tail carriage and set on

Some lines of Griffons carry more ETS blood than others and often have puppies with webbed feet (fused center digits) and kinked tails or tailless. *"A kink at the base may prevent the tail from being carried high or may result in having to cut the tail on the short side. There should be no penalty for this although the lack of enough tail does affect the overall balance of the dog. These puppies are often the ones with the most desirable head properties."* Often these puppies are not our best showmen.



## **PUG**

### Plus

rich black color

brachycephalic head type, and breadth to skull and muzzle

large dark eyes

thickset, cobby body, and moderate angles at front and rear

smooth (or Brabancon) coat type

lack of obvious tuck-up

small, compact feet

steady, comic temperament

### Minus

blond or light color in our Reds

lack of layback to skull profile

lack of upsweep to bottom jaw

lack of dome to forehead

long or thick upper lip

vertical nose pad



We generally say that the black pug was used to create the BG. Whether they were fawn or black or both, the fawn color in Pugs is recessive and shows itself in our very poor colored light red or blond Griffons.





### **AFFENPINSCHER/TERRIER-TYPE STABLE RATTER**

Dogs of the **Affenpinscher** type have been known since about 1600. Today's Affenpinscher described by their parent club is a terrier-like toy breed. When we say "terrier type" in the Brussels Griffon we refer back to the Affenpinscher- a terrier like stable ratter. We glean much of our ancestry from this main breed of origin. In past decades, some properties that may be correct for the Affenpinscher but incorrect for the Brussels Griffon, have been inadvertently concentrated by some Griffon breeders desiring a more showy personality for the ring. This "terrier type" Griffon usually has a dead level topline, and a great tail carriage with a smarty attitude. However because the incorrect head type and slab sided ribcage can be somewhat disguised by clever grooming in the roughs, the showmanship of these dogs can easily mislead a judge who has not carefully studied our breed type. As of this 2019 writing, it is apparent that our breeders are making great strides to combine our breed type with the showiness of the terrier influence. While still evident, today we are seeing less "terrier type" in our rings.

#### Plus

black color

belge color

black and tan color

hard, wire coat of the rough

keen, extremely high intelligence

short body and moderate angles

small, round compact feet

#### Minus

protruding, vertical or low set nose pad

straight bottom jaw (lacking upsweep)

no lay-back from chin to forehead  
small or almond eyes  
high set or close set eyes  
flat forehead (no dome)  
lacking width of skull, muzzle and underjaw  
thinner body frame & bone  
high on leg  
straight shoulders and hackney like movement.



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I stated earlier that the genes seem to segregate back to the breeds of origin and stressed the need for the different types to continually be bred together to keep our breed as it is intended. We also see some incorrect results when the genes of origin do blend together. Sometimes a condition occurs to the bottom mandible



which Bulldog people call "shovel mouth". When this occurs in our breed, the bottom jaw is too long for the top jaw and it lacks depth of curve (upsweep), or it lacks curve altogether. In the adult this type of jaw, if slight, results only in the seal of the lips being broken and a few incisors peeping. When extreme a "shovel mouth" results in the bottom incisors and/or canines showing clearly when the mouth is closed. Often the tongue will also peek through this space in the center (this is not 'hanging tongue -DQ' or 'wry mouth-serious fault'). I've underlined adult because "When judging puppies it is important to remember that the jaws grow for almost a year and some teeth may show in puppyhood. A retained baby canine may cause the upper lip to get hung up and give the illusion of a wry mouth." The correct mouth has a rocker (upturn of



the bottom jaw) that 'folds' up as the pup ages and finishes just undershot of the top jaw. The lips form a 'seal' and the top lips show the chin, not overhanging it in front.



## COAT

*"Rough coats differ in harshness, color, and fullness of furnishings. The topcoat, if the dog is double coated, is generally much harsher than the undercoat. The topcoat should always be very harsh, wiry, and dense. The "classic" or ideal coat has an undercoat nearly as hard as the topcoat. This marvelous, hard-as-nails coat usually has scant leg furnishings and a short beard. This coat, while rarely seen, should be highly prized - not penalized in the ring. Do not be misled by excessive hair. The wiry fringe formed by the slightly longer facial hair should NOT flow into a long beard. Excessive hair on the forehead and skull should not be left to camouflage head faults. While thought impressive by some, a long, plush beard will distort proportional head balance. Soft, cottony furnishings indicate a coat that is too soft and fine. A correct hard wire coat will seldom, if ever, produce long profuse furnishings."*

Black and tan: *"A black dog with a red head or one with only tan legs in NOT a B/T. Neither is an airedale-like pattern. These incorrectly marked dogs should not be shown or bred if the breed is to maintain correct B/T genes."*

The Red Smooths tend have a natural rich red color.

The Red Roughts should be a natural rich, harsh red, and not blond or soft. (and not chalked, colored or sprayed)!

*"The rough hair is most harsh and wiry at the tip and, depending on the length of the coat, becomes finer and lighter in color near the root."*





## JUDGING

This is a HAND STRIPPED breed. The Brussels Griffon of either coat should never be clipped or shown with obvious product. The roughs(wire coats) in this breed should be presented to you natural and HAND STRIPPED not scissored.

DQ: White spot or blaze anywhere on coat and the mention that Any white hairs are a serious fault, except for "frost" on the muzzle of a mature dog, which is natural, pertains to ALL colors. Even though more obvious on the blacks and black/tan coats, white happens just as frequently with the reds.

The DQ for a nose that is not black "Dudley or butterfly nose", means that any dilute in our breed is a disqualification. When in doubt, check eye rims and foot pads that **must be black**.

## TEMPERAMENT

These dogs are extremely intelligent and sensitive. Because of this they may be watchful of your table examination; Do not confuse this 'concern' with shy behavior. It is characteristic for them to size you up before deciding you are OK but they should remain self-important.



They should be shown on a loose lead, moving freely without any exaggeration of gait; paddling, hackney or excessive rear drive. Our breed has MODERATE angles front and rear.

**Examine on the table / judge on the floor.**

When examining the bite, use the "T" (thumb method) with no part of your fingers or thumb going under the lips or in the mouth of the dog. This is executed by laying the pad of your thumb on the chin of the dog and tipping it toward (but not over) the nosepad. Your thumb should be at an angle showing the proper layback from chin to nose forming our "pout". Our standard does not call for full dentition, but the Brussels Griffon does have a DQ for overshot bite. **If you suspect wry (serious fault) or overshot (DQ) but are not certain** when applying the T exam - then please ask the handler to show the bite. If this does not prove satisfactory and you plan to use the dog, you may look yourself by flipping the top lips up. You must focus very quickly because this will be uncomfortable for the dog and shut his air off.

AKC standard: "TAIL - set and held high, docked to about one-third". Our Illustrated Standard further clarifies: *"Docking to about 1/3 is a guide to approximate tail length. Puppies can be born with tail kinks which may result in having to cut the tail on the short side. A kink at the base may prevent the tail from being carried high. Others may be born tailless or with naturally short tails. There should be no penalty for this although the lack of enough tail does affect the overall balance of the dog."* The tail left natural is not listed as a disqualification or a fault. The ABGA has approved the following statements regarding Tail length. **Judging the tail is left to each judge's discretion.** If the judge cannot determine proper balance of the dog with the tail left on [or kinks, no tail or improperly docked tail] or considers a natural tail a fault - then clearly that judge will leave that exhibit unplaced or at the back of the line. The judge is also completely within his/her rights to award honors to a Griffon with a natural tail, kink tail that cannot be carried up or to a tailless Griffon. I have been asked what the proper natural tail is. Until the ABGA takes a stand on this, I refer people to the language in the British Standard "High set, emerging at right angles from level topline: Of moderate length, curved gently over back when moving. "

When you judge this breed I'm not suggesting you put up a gorgeous head and typey body that has a poor topline and extremely shy temperament, over a sound more balanced specimen of lesser quality or type. These decisions are yours alone. I am asking you to please STUDY our breed so that you will recognize all of these attributes and pitfalls, not just the obvious ones. I'm asking you to STUDY so that you will understand where these properties came from and the degree of damage or strength they will convey to our breed - - a very young breed that is still

struggling to keep the blend of these influences in the middle ground. **Become familiar with and imprint the ideal on your brain.** Then judge as you would any breed: look at the whole picture, pull out and appreciate the positive, then penalize the faults to the degree that they detract from the whole.

Remember, the head sets breed type and **the head borrows heavily from the**



**English Toy Spaniel.**

The square body

is a picture of substance not elegance. We want a compact, thickset, cobby, small dog with a smart carriage, level topline and high set



tail.

One who is intelligent, alert, sensitive and full of self-importance.

When I judge a class of Griffons I stand a good distance from them as they enter the ring. I look for balance and body type; outline, topline and smooth movement. I walk past them and look for a head that "*borrows heavily from the ETS*". I examine them individually and then (quality and quantity permitting) - I sort out the most typical and pick the soundest from the most typical.

Have a gentle touch and enjoy judging this enchanting breed. If you have any questions as you judge, please contact any member of the Judges Education Committee listed on ABGA's web page.

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**Bio-Sketch,** Lorene Vickers-Smith  
Wisselwood, Reg.

Lorene has been "in dogs" all her life. Her parents and paternal grandparents bred and showed Boston Terriers. Lorene established the Wisselwood line of Pugs in 1964 and added Brussels Griffons about 15 years later. She has been dedicated to establishing and improving the black color in both of her breeds.

Lorene became an AKC judge in 1980. She is licensed to judge the Toy Group, BIS and part of Non Sporting. She is Judges' Education Chairman for the American Brussels Griffon Assoc. and she served

on that committee many years in the Pug Dog Club of America where she is a Life Member. She Chairs the ABGA Illustrated Standard Committee. She is a past director of the Pug Dog Club of America and also served on their Ethics Committee. She was long time President of the National Brussels Griffon Club. She founded the Mid Michigan Pug Club in 1979. She has judged many Brussels Griffon and Pug Specialties in this country as well as in Australia, France. She was also honored to judge specialties of other breeds in Russia and France. She was elected and judged both the Pug Dog Club of America National Specialty and the American Brussels Griffon Association's National Specialty three times. Lorene is past President of Ingham County K.C. and was a long time member of both her breed clubs in England.

When Lorene is not doing judges education, her time is divided between public education and breed rescue.



Lorene awarding Ch Treyacres Zorro BISS in 1990 at ABGA's 45<sup>th</sup> National, Tarrytown, NY. Pres Edith Nash Hellerman presenting trophy