

# Chihuahua Breed Standard with comments by Mr. Francesco Cochetti, Italy.



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ORIGIN : Mexico.

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UTILIZATION : Companion dog.

FCI-CLASSIFICATION F.C.I. :

Group 9 Companion and Toy Dogs.

Section 6 Chihuahueño. Without working trial.

## BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY :

The Chihuahua is regarded as the smallest pedigree dog in the world and carries the name of the largest state of the Mexican Republic (Chihuahua). One assumes that these dogs used to live in the wild and, at the time of the Toltec civilization, were captured and domesticated by the natives. Representations of a Toy dog called « Techichi » which lived in Tula, were used as decorations on town architecture. These statues are very similar to the present day Chihuahua.

*ORIGIN AND HISTORY: There are many theories about origin of the Chihuahua. There are claims that they were originally bred by the Mayan Indian tribe who inhabited the area now known as Mexico and relics as old as 2000 years which resemble Chihuahuas have been found there. The Mayans called them Techichi Dogs. The Toltecs and later the Aztecs, are also said to have bred similar small dogs and that some were bred for eating and others possibly for use in religion ceremonies, where they were sacrificed with the bodies of the dead to show them the way to life on the other side.*

*There have also been claims that the breed originated in Europe and that a painting by Botticelli in the Sistine Chapel in Rome depicts the head of a small Chihuahua type dog. But the truth of the matter is that we simply are not sure of the origin of this*

*breed. The modern-day Chihuahua originated from dogs brought to the United States by people who visited Mexico, during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1946, 3359 Chihuahuas were registered with the AKC.*

## GENERAL APPEARANCE :

This dog has a compact body. Of great importance is the fact that his skull is apple-shaped and that he carries his moderately long tail very high, either curved or forming the shape of a semicircle with the tip pointing towards the loin region.

*CHARACTERISTICS: Alert little dog, swift-moving with brisk, forceful action and saucy expression. They have to be bright and interested in everything, going on around them in the ring, confident and not aggressive, intelligent and at the same time sensitive. American standard says they have to be alert with terriers like qualities. Chihuahua should look like a big dog in the ring. They have to move with good driving and plenty of reach. This is very important for this breed, especially at this time. Many Chihuahuas have short movement and not sound construction.*

*Soundness is a consequence of a good movement, right shoulder angles and it gives elegance to the dog. Toys are small and elegant dogs. They must be swift and cover the ground as well. **Never they should be going***

*round with high stepping or with front and rear action like a trotting horse. Their saucy expression means also they have correct ears and eyes and length of muzzle.*

*IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS : Length of body slightly greater than height at withers. Desired, however, is an almost square body, especially in males. In bitches, because of the function of reproduction, a slightly longer body is permitted.*

## **BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT :**

Quick, alert, lively and very courageous.

*TEMPERAMENT: Sensitive, gay, spirited and intelligent. Judges have to be very gentle to them when they go through and do not cover the entire face and eyes when examining the mouth they are usually well behaved, some do have the habit of complaining when their mouth is being examined.*

*If they do attempt a snap it should not be laughed off just because they are tiny dogs, they should always be removed from the ring. Those that are snappy are generally like this because their owners have accepted it.*

## HEAD

### CRANIAL REGION :

Skull : Well rounded apple head (a characteristic of the breed).

Preferably without a fontanel although a very small one is allowed (about 0,2 inches). We can't forget that the fontanel has always been a characteristic of the breed.

Stop : Well marked, deep and broad as the forehead is rounded above the set-on of muzzle.

*HEAD AND SKULL: The head is a very important part for this breed. The ideal Chihuahua head is truly apple domed. It should be clearly rounded between the ears and from the very well defined stop to the occiput. The cheeks and muzzle should not be too full. Muzzle is moderately short and slightly pointed. Today you can easily see many too pointed muzzles and lacking in bottom jaw. On the other hand breeders and judges should be very careful not to look for broad ultra short muzzles and almost as much cushioning as a Tibetan Spaniel.*

*PIGMENTATION: There is no mention of pigmentation in the standard. Many judges comment about poor pigmentation in this breed. Of course, we all like to see dark pigment in light dogs and it helps to highlight the expression, but light pigmentation is not*

*a fault and should be not penalized. In some colours, like blue, chocolate, cream colours, the pigment is the same colour as the coat.*

#### FACIAL REGION :

Nose : Any colour permitted. Moderately short, pointing slightly upwards.

Muzzle : Short, straight seen from side, broad at set-on, tapering towards the tip.

Lips : Lean and close fitting.

Cheeks : Only slightly developed, very clean.

Jaws/Teeth : Scissor or pincer bite. Overshot, undershot, as well as any other anomaly in position of upper or lower jaw must be strictly penalized.

*TEETH: Missing one or two teeth is a fault but it is not a severe or eliminating fault. Unfortunately, some dogs loose incisors at a rather young age. Judges should value the dog's overall qualities, but of course not ignore the problem if we want to improve the mouths.*

Eyes : Large, roundish in shape, very expressive, not protruding, perfectly dark. Light eyes permissible, but not desired.

*EYES: Centre of the eye is on plane with lowest point of the ear and base of stop. Dark or ruby eyes. Today we can easily see too small eyes in the breed and it should be more penalized by judges.*

Ears : Large, upright, widely open, broad at set-on, gradually tapering towards their slightly rounded tip. In repose inclined laterally forming an angle of 45°.

*EARS: Small ears are unfortunately very common in the breed. Ears do need to fit the head.*

*The 45 degree angle causes a fair amount of confusion. When the Chihuahua is relaxed or on the judging table the ears are normally at about 45 degrees, but when alert the ears are much more erect than this but should still have breadth between them and should not be set high.*

*On the move they are often held back along the skull, if they put them up and use them when standing, they should not be penalized.*

*The ears have not to be too soft and this is a problem we can also find in the breed in this time.*

*The wrong set, carriage or use of ears, has a detrimental effect on expression.*

NECK : Upper profile slightly arched. Medium length. Thicker in dogs than in bitches. Without dewlap. In the long-haired variety, the presence of a neck-ruff with longer hair is highly desirable.

*NECK: A Chihuahua must have some length of neck for it to be slightly arched. The head has never to look like it is set on the shoulders.*

*A nicely arched neck is very important part of the desired elegant outline.*

BODY : Compact and well built.

Topline : Level.

Withers : Only slightly marked.

Back : Short and firm.

Loin : Strongly muscled.

*BODY: Soundness means to see a well carried head on a good arched neck, level back line and well-set tail. Chihuahua must move around the ring with plenty of scope.*

*The difference between height at withers and the length from withers to rear point of croup is very little. Body should have a feel of substance, it should not be tube shaped.*

Croup : Broad and strong; almost flat or slightly sloping.

Chest : Ribcage broad and deep, ribs well sprung. Seen from front, roomy but not exaggerated. Seen from side, reaching to elbows. Not barrel shaped.

Underline and belly : Formed by a clearly tucked up belly. Slack belly is permitted but not desired.

TAIL : Set on high, flat in appearance, of moderate length; broad at root, tapering gradually towards the tip. Tail carriage is an important characteristic of the breed : when the dog is moving it is carried either high in a curve or in a semicircle with tip towards the loin region, which gives balance to the body, it should never be carried between the hindlegs nor curled below the backline. The hair on the tail depends on the variety and is in harmony with the body coat. In the long haired variety, the tail coat forms a plume. Tail is pendant in repose and forms a slight hook.

*TAIL: The tail set and carriage are very important to the overall balance and outline of the Chihuahua, as it goes around the ring. Low set tails give the impression of the dog being too long in the back. Usually, it is a consequence of the wrong inclination of the croup and rear angles.*

*Tails slightly curled to one side, or curled down over the back, do not distract so much from the outline, but tails lying along the back like for example a Pomeranian or curled piggy-tail like, either on top of*

*or to the side of the back, certainly distract from the dog's outline.*

*The tail type is unique to the Chihuahua. It should feel quite broad and fattish with a positive broader area in the centre. Short tails look wrong, especially on a Smooth Coat.*

## LIMBS

### FOREQUARTERS :

General appearance : Forelegs seen from the front form a straight line with the elbows. Seen from the side, they are upright.

Shoulder : Clean and moderately muscled.

Upper arm : Good angulation between shoulder-blade and upper arm.

Elbow : Firm and fitting close to body, which ensures free movement.

Forearm : Straight and of good length.

Metacarpus (Pastern) : Slightly sloping, strong and flexible.

Forefeet : Very small and oval with toes well apart but not splayed (neither hare- nor cat-foot). Nails

particularly well arched and moderately long. Pads well developed and very elastic. Dewclaws are not desirable.

*FOREQUARTERS: A Chihuahua does not have a terrier-like front, there is more play at the elbows than in a terrier front.*

*The pasterns are finer and ankles much more obvious than in a terrier. The shoulders should be well up and sloping into a level back. Chihuahua has a good weight of bone, not too fine or too heavy.*

#### HINDQUARTERS :

General appearance : Hindlegs well muscled with long bones, vertical and parallel to each other with good angulation at hip, knee and hock joints, in harmony with angulation of forequarters.

Metatarsus (Rear pastern) : Short hocks with well developed Achilles' tendons; seen from rear, they are well apart straight and vertical.

Hind feet: Very small and oval with toes well apart but not splayed (neither hare- nor cat-foot). Nails particularly well arched and moderately long. Pads well developed and very elastic. Dewclaws are not desirable.

*HINDQUARTERS: Strong driving rear action.*

*FEET: Viewed from the front the pasterns should be straight but it is common to find Chihuahuas weak in the pasterns and turn out to a ten to two stance.*

#### GAIT / MOVEMENT :

Steps are long, springy, energetic and active with good reach and drive. Seen from rear, hind legs should move almost parallel to each other, so that the footprints of the hind feet fit directly into those of the front feet. With increasing speed, the limbs show a tendency to converge towards the median plane (single track). Movement remains free and springy without visible effort, head raised and back firm.

*GAIT/MOVEMENT: Topline should remain firm and level when moving. Coming and going you should see only two legs.*

SKIN : Smooth and elastic all over body.

#### COAT

Hair : In this breed there are two varieties of coat.

Smooth-haired : Coat is short, lying close all over body. If there is an undercoat, the hair is somewhat longer; sparse coat on throat and belly permissible; slightly longer on neck and tail, short on face and ears. Coat is glossy and its texture is soft. Hairless dogs are not tolerated.

Longed-haired : Coat should be fine and silky, smooth or slightly wavy. Not too thick undercoat desired. Coat is longer, forming feathering on ears, neck, rear of front and hind legs, on feet and on tail. Dogs with long billowing coat will not be accepted.

Colour : All colours in all possible shades and combinations are admitted, except merle colour.

*COAT: When looking at a Long Coat Chihuahua you should, in your mind's eye, be viewing it without its coat and asking yourself if it would really look like a good representative of the breed.*

*In Long coat you can find some with undercoat and a harsh outer coat, like to Pomeranian coat, which is a bad fault.*

*In Smooth Coat there are two types of coat and both are equally correct. You can find very soft textured close glossy coat and this rarely has an undercoat or ruff. The other type of coat is slightly longer and has an undercoat and displays obvious ruffs.*

*Blues often have problems with the hair on their ears when casting.*

SIZE AND WEIGHT : In this breed only the weight is taken into consideration, not the height.

Weight : Ideal weight : between 1.5 and 3 kgs. Weight between 500 gr. and 1.5 kgs tolerated.

Subjects weighing less than 500 gr and more than 3 kg shall be disqualified.

*Ideal weight: Between 1.8 and 3 kgs. Weight between 1 and 1.5 kgs tolerated. Subjects weighing less than 1 Kg and more than 3 kg shall be disqualified.*

FAULTS : Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

N.B. : Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

- Missing teeth.
- “Double teeth” (persistence of temporary teeth).
- Pointed ears.
- Short neck.
- Long body.
- Too fine bone
- Roach or hollow back (Lordosis or Kyphosis).
- Steep croup.
- Narrow chest, flat ribcage.
- Tail : incorrect set-on, short or twisted.
- Short limbs.
- Out at elbow.
- Too close behind.

## SEVERE FAULTS :

- Narrow skull
- Eyes small, deep set or protruding.
- Long muzzle.
- Under or overshot mouth.
- Unstable stifle.

## DISQUALIFYING FAULTS :

- Aggressive or overly shy.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities shall be disqualified
- Deer type dogs (dogs with an atypical or extremely stylized structure: refined head, long neck, slender body, long limbs).
- Dogs with an open fontanel.
- Dogs with a fontanel bigger than 0,2 inches.
- Drop ear or short ear.
- Deformed jaws.
- Extremely long body.
- Absence of tail.
- In the long-haired variety : Dogs with very long, fine and billowing coat. Pomeranian coat.
- In the smooth-haired variety : Bald patch (alopecia).
- Merle colour.
- Subjects weighing less than 500 gr and more than 3 kg.
- Subjects weighing less than 1 kg and more than 3 kg.