

# · BREED PRIORITIES · SALUKIS

BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

*The* Saluki is considered one of the oldest breeds. Sighthound-type dogs have been pictured in tombs, including carvings in the ancient Sumerian empire that strongly resemble Salukis. The breed was used by nomadic tribes to hunt animals by sight. Salukis come in two coat types – smooth and feathered. Looking at pictures and drawings of Salukis over the past hundred years or more, one sees that the breed has changed little—unlike many other breeds—and the good ones would be competitive today.

The Saluki standard is fairly old, as well. The breed was recognized by AKC in 1927. I thought the standard was last approved in 1935, but I couldn't find verification. The standard on AKC's website and the parent club's website do not list an approval date at the end of it as most standards do. I've been told that Saluki people don't all tend to agree (think of herding cats) so that opening the standard to revision might be opening a can of worms.

Saluki breeder-judges were invited to participate in a survey on their breed's priorities. Twenty surveys were returned. This group has been in the breed for over thirty-two years on average and have judged them for more than twelve years on average. Some have judged their National, and most have judged other Saluki specialties.

The Saluki breeder-judges were quite consistent in their opinions. They were responsive and added more comments to their surveys than most other breed surveys I have done.

## Saluki Virtues

The survey included a list of virtues taken from the standard for the breeder-judges to rank in sequence by its importance to the breed. Since the Saluki standard is one of the shorter ones, most characteristics were able to be included. Here is the list in sequence by average rank, with 1 being the most important.

1. Shoulders sloping, set well back, well muscled
2. Grace, symmetry
3. Back fairly broad, muscles slightly arched over loin

*continued on page 244*

*This article is not intended to promote fault or part judging. Nor is it to imply that any characteristic called for in the standard is unimportant. Judging, and breeding, is about prioritizing and about what the judge or breeder will forgive. Discussing priorities can help in learning how to better evaluate a breed.*

*Questions, Comments, or Concerns? Contact AKC Judge Ms. Nikki Riggsbee at this email address: [Nriggsbee@aol.com](mailto:Nriggsbee@aol.com)*



4. Chest deep and moderately narrow
5. Neck long, supple, well muscled
6. Great speed, endurance
7. Hipbones set well apart
8. Forelegs straight
9. Toes long and well arched
10. Hocks low to the ground
11. Head long and narrow, skull moderately wide between the ears
12. Teeth strong and level
13. Expression dignified, gentle, with deep, faithful, far-seeing eyes
14. Tail long, set on low, carried naturally in a curve
15. Eyes dark to hazel, large and oval
16. Ears long, hanging close to the skull, mobile

Thirteen of the virtues had majority opinions. Eighteen of the breeder-judges formed the largest majority by placing, "Neck long, supple, well muscled" (5<sup>th</sup>) between four and seven, with half the group ranking it seventh. Seventeen surveys had "Ears long, hanging close to the skull, mobile" (16<sup>th</sup>) in the last quartile.

Eighty percent of the experts agreed on the importance of the top two virtues: "Shoulders sloping, set well back, well muscled" (1<sup>st</sup>) and "Grace, symmetry" (2<sup>nd</sup>). One fewer concurred on "Chest deep and moderately narrow" (4<sup>th</sup>) and "Eyes dark to hazel, large and oval" (15<sup>th</sup>). "Back fairly broad, muscles slightly arched over loin" (3<sup>rd</sup>) was placed from 2 to 5 by fourteen breeder-judges.

The following virtues were similarly valued on thirteen surveys: "Teeth strong and level" (12<sup>th</sup>), "Expression dignified, gentle, with deep, faithful, far-seeing eyes" (13<sup>th</sup>), and "Tail long, set on low, carried naturally in a curve" (14<sup>th</sup>). The smallest majority agreed on "Hipbones set well apart" (7<sup>th</sup>), "Toes long and well arched" (9<sup>th</sup>), and "Hocks low to the ground" (10<sup>th</sup>).

Half the group clustered at mid-point or lower on "Forelegs straight" (8<sup>th</sup>). Nine had "Head long and narrow, skull moderately wide between the ears" (11<sup>th</sup>) in approximately the same range, but the remaining opinions varied all over. "Great speed, endurance" (6<sup>th</sup>) was in the top quartile for ten and the bottom quartile for five.

Some averages were close enough that additional input might change the relative ranks. "Neck" (5<sup>th</sup>) and "Speed, endurance" (6<sup>th</sup>) were less than one-tenth of a point apart. "Toes" (9<sup>th</sup>) "Low Hocks" (10<sup>th</sup>) were also close.

#### Saluki Faults

The survey also included a list of faults from or derived from the Saluki standard. The breeder-judges ranked these from most serious to least serious. Below is the list in sequence by the averaged placements, with 1 being the most serious and 16 being the least.

1. Chest lacking depth

2. Lacking muscles slightly arched over loin
3. Stifles more than moderately bent
4. Forelegs not straight
5. Toes splayed
6. Chest wide
7. Long hocks
8. Cat-footed feet
9. Skull domed
10. Prominent eyes
11. Stop pronounced
12. Bitches bigger than standard height range
13. Dogs smaller than standard height range
14. Bushy tail
15. Not well-feathered between toes
15. Color other than one named in standard

The breeder-judges were even more consistent with the faults, with fourteen having majority opinions. Again, the biggest majority was not at the top or bottom of the list; eighteen of the group ranked "Stop pronounced" (11<sup>th</sup>) between ten and thirteen. Seventeen surveys concurred on "Bitches bigger than standard height range" (12<sup>th</sup>) and on "Not well-feathered between toes" and "Color other than one named in standard" which were tied at fifteenth.

Color is interesting with Salukis. The standard says "Colors: White, cream, fawn, golden, red, grizzle and tan, tricolor (white, black and tan) and black and tan." It doesn't list several other colors that are seen in the ring, including some other patterns. And yet they don't mean "Color immaterial" as some other standards say. There are big disagreements about the brindle color/pattern. One respondent said that, "Color other than specified" wasn't really a fault at all.

Three faults had eighty percent agreeing: "Long hocks" (7<sup>th</sup>), "Dogs smaller than standard height range" (13<sup>th</sup>), and "Bushy tail" (14<sup>th</sup>). Interesting that big dogs are less faulty than big bitches; in many breeds, it is the reverse. Fourteen surveys similarly valued "Chest lacking depth" (1<sup>st</sup>) and "Lacking muscles slightly arched over loin" (2<sup>nd</sup>). "Stifles more than moderately bent" (3<sup>rd</sup>) and "Skull domed" (9<sup>th</sup>) had thirteen of the group in agreement.

Twelve breeder-judges had "Forelegs not straight" (4<sup>th</sup>) and "Toes splayed" (5<sup>th</sup>) fairly serious. "Chest wide" (6<sup>th</sup>) was ranked 3 through 6 by eleven.

"Prominent eyes" (10<sup>th</sup>) was mid-point or below for ten, with the rest ranging from two to fifteen. "Cat-footed feet" (8<sup>th</sup>) was around the second quartile for nine, but the rest were all over.

There was a tie at fifteen that additional input would break. "Long hocks" (7<sup>th</sup>) and "Cat feet" (8<sup>th</sup>) were just one-tenth of a point apart, so they might also change positions in the list with more surveys.

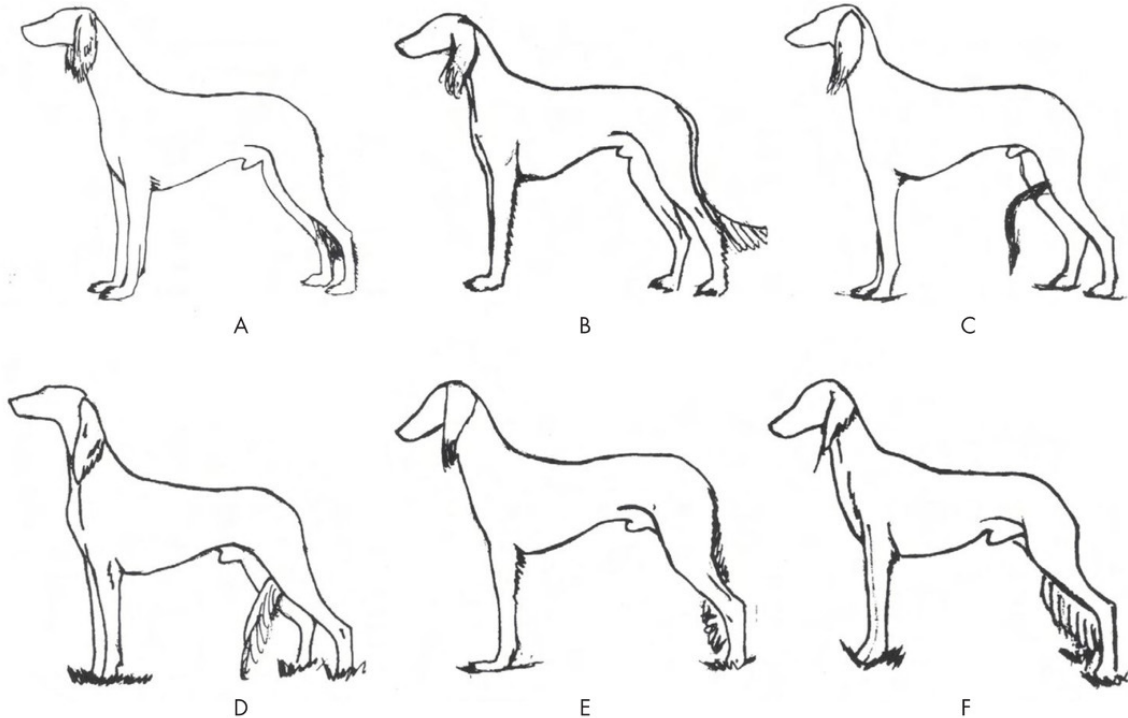
The averages of "Cat feet" (8<sup>th</sup>) and "Skull domed" (9<sup>th</sup>) were two points apart, confirming the first eight as more serious. "Prominent eyes" (10<sup>th</sup>) and "Pronounced stop" (11<sup>th</sup>) had a split nearly as big, suggesting that the bottom six faults are definitely less serious.



## Saluki Outlines

*Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex*

### DOGS



### Movement and Underline

The Saluki standard doesn't specify movement, underline, and proportion. The breeder-judges were asked to comment on those. Below are some of their responses.

#### Movement

- "Great speed" is movement. Look for an easy, light, lifting gait. Penalize pounding, overreaching, hyper-extending, and overstepping.
- Clean, straight movement down and back, and openness on side gait should be valued very highly.
- Light and effortless
- Balanced movement is very important.
- Maintain balance and outline when moving.
- Extremely important; not great reach and drive

#### Underline

- Deep chest, back fairly broad, muscles slightly arched over the loin – if you have these, you have an underline.

- Ribs carrying back to a small waist – very important to type and function
- Most important; deep chest and brisket
- "S"-shaped curve

#### Proportion

*There were differences in opinions on this one.*

- Proportion is symmetry and balance.
- Moderate is the key.
- A touch longer, almost square
- High on leg; square or taller than long, ever so slightly longer okay
- Not taller than long
- Two-thirds of the dog from the back of the ribs forward; one-third behind it.

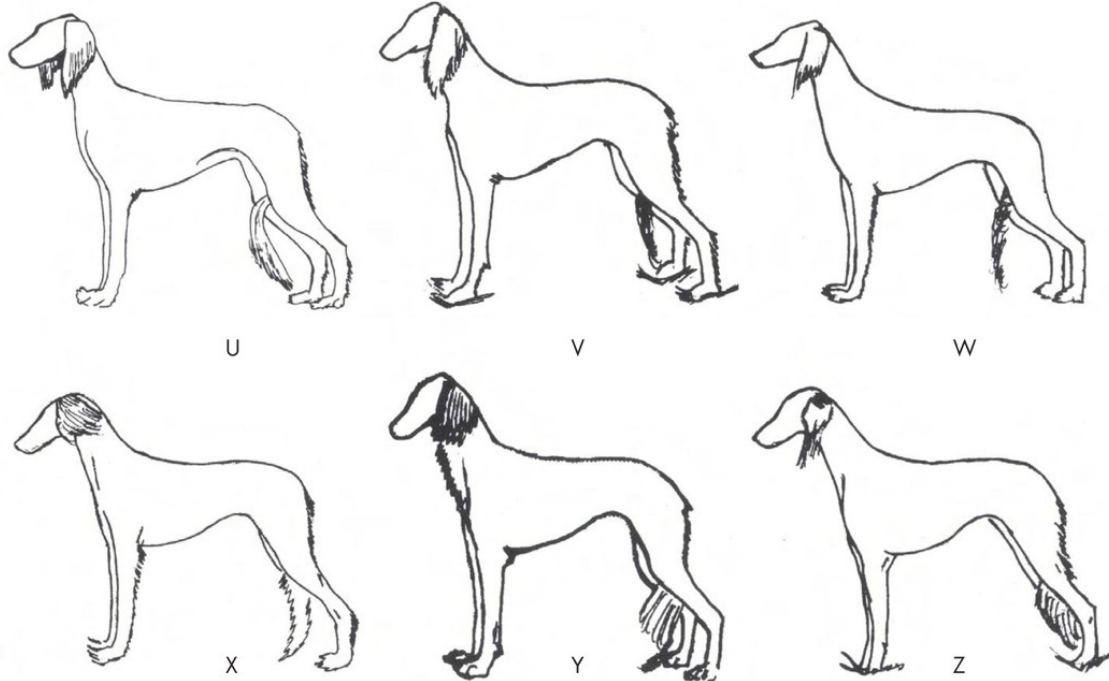
#### Essential Characteristics

The breeder-judges listed those features they consider critical in a quality Saluki. They emphasized proportion, balance, and

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### BITCHES



symmetry most often. Following those was movement, both up and back and side gait. Next most often mentioned were outline and feet. Shoulders, condition, breed type, and moderation were also listed.

### Outlines

The Saluki breeder-judges evaluated two groups of outlines – six dogs and six bitches. Thank you to Sue Ann Pietros for permission to use her outlines here, which were earlier printed in the magazine *The Classic Saluki*.

The Saluki dog with the best average placement and most first placements among the dogs was Saluki “B”. Those who liked him said he had “good outline and balance, nice shoulders and rear angulation,” “moderate, front returns under dog,” “pleasing head,” “correct topline with rise over loin, and does not fall away over croup,” and “short-coupled, moderate rear.” One said he was down in pasterns, another that he was too straight in pastern.

Next favorite male was Saluki “A.” Those who placed him first claimed he had “good balance, back line, body length, good neckset and shoulder, good forelegs, feet, and low hocks, pleasing head planes and underjaw,” “symmetric with good type, good

front, and chest,” “closest to ideal – level back, strong loin, deep chest, ‘S’ curve,” “moderate, power in rear,” “wider upper thigh,” and “smooth outline.”

The favorite bitch was Saluki “Z” with the best placement average and the most first placements among all twelve outlines. The breeder-judges who chose her said she had “overall nice outline, feminine head,” “balance, good shoulder layback and upper arm return, deep chest with nice topline,” “moderation,” “better neck into shoulders,” “long neck,” and “power in rear.”

A distant second was Saluki “X.” Those who liked her said she had “good front construction, well laid shoulder,” “topline with rise over loin, gentle slope to croup,” “sufficient depth, length of brisket, good tuck-up,” and “good angulation, low set hocks, and good feet.”

Best of Breed Saluki was bitch “Z,” with dog “B” as Best of Opposite. Bitch “Z” was named BOB by seven breeder-judges, more than any other. “B” was BOB on four surveys.

Top Saluki “Z” got more than half of the bitch first placements and was never left out of the ribbons. Dog “B” was placed first by half of the group. Two of the dogs – “E” and “F” – and bitch “Y” were never placed first. All outlines were unplaced by at least one expert except bitch “Z.” Saluki “F” was out of the ribbons

on twenty surveys, “W” on twelve, and “E” on eleven.

#### **Additional Notes**

Below are some of the comments we received from the Saluki breeder-judges:

- Balance, balance, balance – a balanced dog can properly use himself.
- A dog with a “sighthound outline” does not have to have an extreme tuck up.
- A dog should be fit, not fat; thin is okay if there is muscle.
- Two extremes to watch out for – one overangulated and one with too little angulation.
- Some variation permitted in proportion of height to length, but very long bodies and short forelegs are faulty.
- Movement is a very important characteristic of the breed.
- Penalize a soft body.
- The “S” curve is the essence of Saluki type.
- Moderation is mentioned four times in the standard.
- Sloping topline (sloping to the rear) should be the most serious fault.
- All colors and patterns are acceptable.
- Outline and head define the breed
- Salukis are a hunting breed; condition and structure are important.
- Look for an athletic hound of good balance and substance.
- Judge the complete package, not on faults.
- Strive to find quality individuals.
- Too much attention is given to color, tail carriage, feathering, handling, grooming, and not enough attention to balance, strength, or carriage on a loose lead at a slow speed.
- Strong, moderate, symmetrical; you should be able to tell it is a Saluki even without the head and tail.

We extend our thanks to the Saluki breeder-judges for contributing to this project.

