

Suomenlapinkoira (Finnish Lapponian Dog)

FCI-Standard N° 189 ~ Group 5 Spitz and Primitive types ~ Section 3.4 Nordic Watchdogs and Herders

Judges' Guide

The Lapphund Club of Finland 2017



Photos by Taru Vallius, Petra Palukka, Petra Österberg, Minna Väänänen, Minna Suihkonen, Paula Martiskainen, Päivi Riihimäki, Eija Kimmo, Johanna Lämsä, Juho Perttola & Markku Jokinen

Translation by Petra Palukka

History of the Finnish Lapponian Dog

As an actual registered breed, the Finnish Lapponian Dog is young, with its present type of breed standard dating back to 1975. Both the Finnish Lapponian Dog and the Lapponian Herder descend from the diverse canine stock of Lapland. The two breeds were split from each other primarily based on the length of coat rather than their functional type or conformation. There were even litter siblings some of which were registered as Finnish Lapponian Dogs while others were registered as Lapponian Herders, and long-haired Lapponian Herders often changed registers later on and became Finnish Lapponian Dogs. Whether or not the split was a success we do not want to comment on: the stock could have very well been registered as one single breed, while on the other hand it was varied enough to make, say, five different breeds.

After the stock was split into two breeds, the Lapponian Herder was often advertised as a working dog while the Finnish Lapponian Dog was described as a companion dog. This had impact on the Finnish Lapponian Dog breed standard: features appealing to people's emotions, such as a teddybear-like face, became desirable. Dogs registered as Finnish Lapponian Dogs were mainly house pets, or dogs no longer used for herding, while Lapponian Herders were and have all along been more closely linked to their original task. Even though the Finnish Lapponian Dog has mainly been bred outside the scope of reindeer husbandry, the breed's capability to perform its original reindeer herding tasks is an important factor to evaluate in the show ring, and when making breeding plans.

History of the Finnish Lapponian Dog (continued)

After the split, a Finnish Lapponian Dog resembling a Lapponian Herder was penalized more severely in the show ring than a Finnish Lapponian Dog resembling some other breed. Yet bearing in mind the two breeds' common background and shared ancestors, Lapponian Herder-like features should not be considered as serious a fault as features pointing to some other breed.



General appearance and proportions

Smaller than medium sized. Strongly built for his size, slightly longer than the height at the withers. The coat is long and dense. The depth of chest is approximately half of the height at the withers. Ideal height: males 49 cm and females 44 cm with a tolerance of ± 3 cm. The type is more important than the size.

The Finnish Lapponian Dog is a herding dog with a soft expression, low carriage and no sharp features. Exaggeration of any kind does not belong to this breed.

It is not necessary to measure every single dog in the ring, however, clearly too small or too tall specimens can be measured at the judge's discretion. If a Finnish Lapponian Dog is significantly smaller or taller than the size range mentioned in the breed standard, it usually has a negative impact on the dog's general appearance.

The Finnish Lapponian Dog is moderately strong. Even though considered a strong breed, the strongness should mainly manifest itself in the head and bone structure. The abundant coat makes the Finnish Lapponian Dog appear stronger than it really is. Even though certain strongness is called for in the breed standard, the Finnish Lapponian Dog should never be heavy; it should be capable of moving in a durable, effortless and agile manner. Judges must always get their hands on the dogs, because the coat can be deceiving.

While the Lapponian Herder is an example of a pure unexaggerated trotter type, the Finnish Lapponian Dog is more inclined to be a mixture of the different functional types.

General appearance and proportions (continued)

The Finnish Laponian Dog must be slightly longer than its height at the withers. Considering the history of the breed, correct proportions have been a topic of controversy throughout the years. More variation in proportions is tolerated these days, however, either extreme should not be considered acceptable. In other words, the Finnish Laponian Dog is neither long nor short. The most common mistakes in proportions are too short bodies and, on the other hand, too long loins.

The leg length of the Finnish Laponian Dog is approximately half of the height at the withers. The elbow is positioned at the lower edge of the rib cage or slightly below it. A Finnish Laponian Dog must be high-legged enough to work effortlessly in deep snow. A Finnish Laponian Dog shown in a good coat inevitably looks longer in body and lower in leg than it really is.



Males of excellent type and proportions



Males of excellent type and proportions (continued)



Females of excellent type and proportions



Females of excellent type and proportions (continued)



Same bitch as a youngster and adult



Tail's impact on general appearance



Faulty proportions



Faulty proportions (continued)



Behaviour/temperament

Intelligent, courageous, calm and docile. Friendly and faithful.

The Finnish Laponian Dog's behaviour, temperament and appearance together embody an essence of a herding dog. Always friendly towards people, this is a breed that is easy for a judge to go over in the show ring. It can also be aloof with strangers. Males do not always get along with each other, but they are expected to tolerate each other in the show ring. There should be no barking in the ring. Sometimes one comes across nervous dogs showing restless tendencies.

Head

The muzzle is slightly shorter than the skull. The skull is slightly longer than its width, the depth is the same as the width.

Skull: Broad, the skull is slightly convex. The forehead is rather domed. The frontal furrow is clearly defined.

Stop: Clearly defined.

Cheeks: The zygomatic arches are well pronounced.

Muzzle: Strong, broad and straight; viewed from above and in profile evenly, but only slightly tapering.

Nose: Black or brown, according to coat colour.

Lips: Tight.

Jaws/teeth: The jaws are strong. Scissors bite.

Eyes: Oval shaped, dark brown, according to coat colour. The expression is soft and friendly.

Ears: Medium sized, carried erect or semi-erect, set rather apart, rather broad at the base, triangular in shape and very mobile, also the inner side is covered with hair. It is equally acceptable that one ear is erect and the other semi-erect.

A correct Finnish Lapponian Dog expression is an important trait of the breed. Lines of the skull and muzzle must be parallel, and a stop and frontal furrow visible. While a clearly defined frontal furrow is desirable, a clearly defined stop is even more important. The foreface must not be too prominent nor the skull too domed. The skull is always broader than the muzzle and they are distinctly two separate parts (i.e. the head is not oval-shaped). The muzzle is well cushioned and always narrower than the skull. One comes across both too heavy and too light heads in this breed, as well as too short, too long or snipey muzzles.

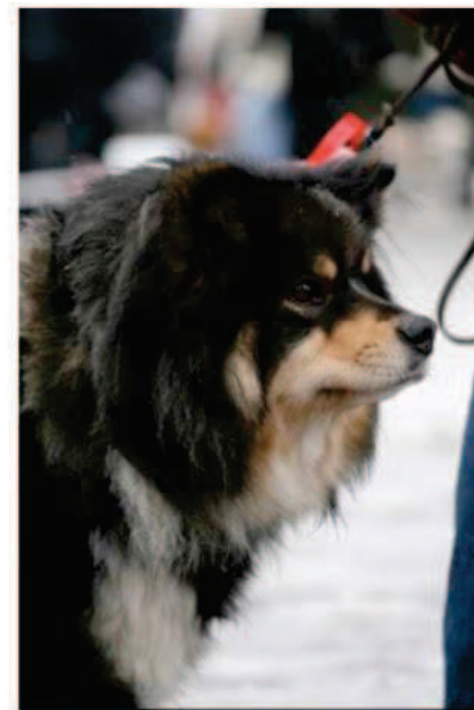
Head (continued)

A level bite is acceptable, especially on older dogs. Broad jaws are desirable, although rarely seen.

Eyes should be as dark as possible, yet harmonize with the coat colour. Round or light eyes are a common fault. They should be mentioned in the written critique, however, not penalized too heavily.

Ideal ears are small and very hairy. Such ears are less prone to freezing and better protected from mosquitoes and black flies. First and foremost, the ear set should never be high. Pointed ears are not desirable, whereas relatively rounded ears are quite acceptable. Long, pointed, high-set ears spoil the expression. Pricked and tipped ears, as well as one ear pricked and the other tipped, are all equally acceptable. Tipped ears used to be desired in Lapland as they were considered a sign of a skilful reindeer herder.

Excellent male heads and expressions



Excellent female heads and expressions



Excellent female heads and expressions (continued)



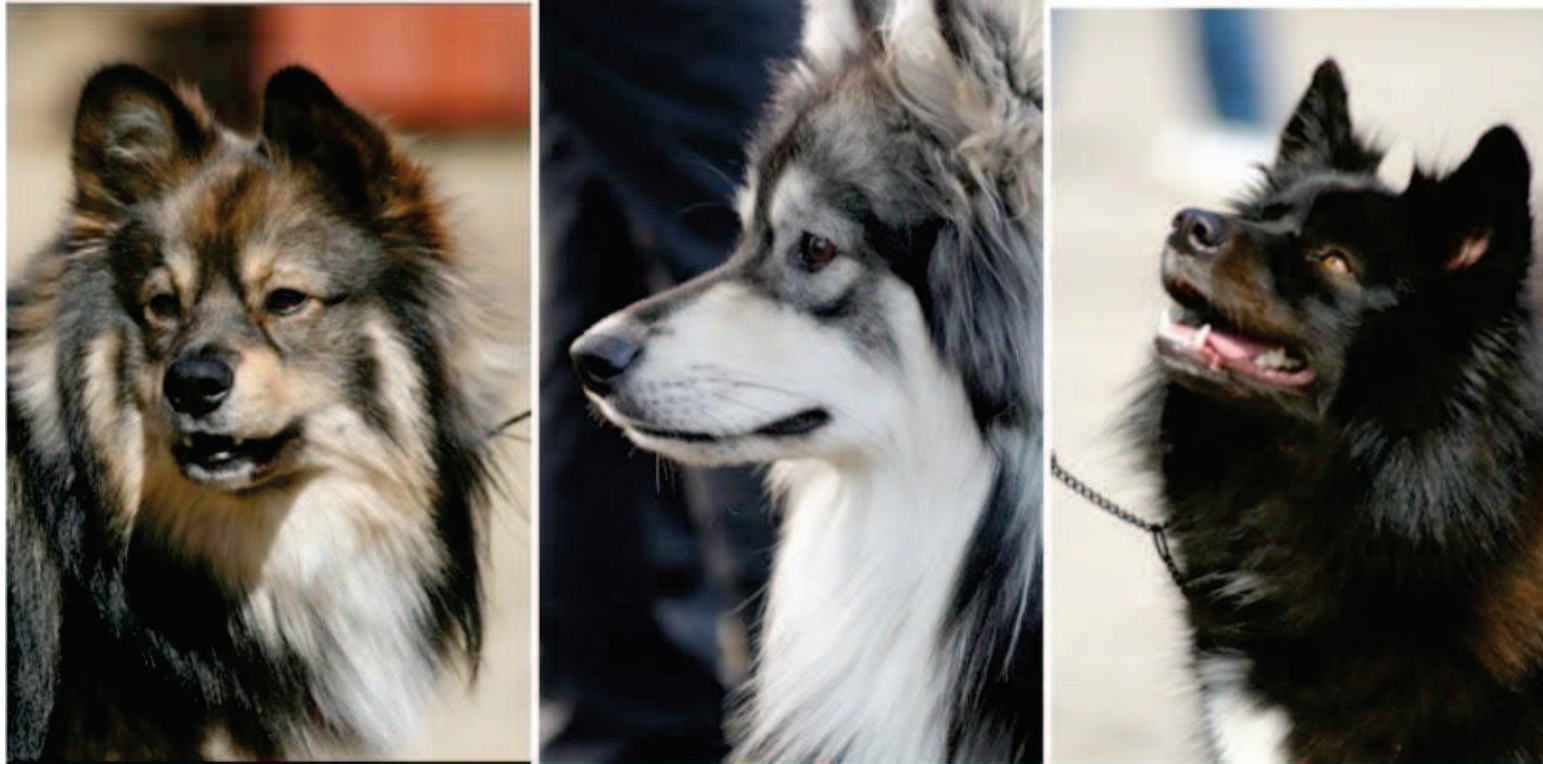
Excellent ear sets



Incorrect heads and expressions



Incorrect heads and expressions (continued)



Incorrect heads and expressions (continued)



Body

Withers: Muscular and broad, only slightly pronounced.

Back: Strong and straight.

Loin: Short and muscular.

Croup: Of medium length, well developed, only very slightly sloping.

Chest: Deep, rather long, reaching almost to the elbows, not very broad. The ribs are slightly arched; the fore chest clearly visible, not very strong.

Underline and belly: Only slightly tucked up.

It is not uncommon to come across a Finnish Lapponian Dog with an overly pronounced tuck-up, which is often coupled with a short rib cage and especially short sternum, while at the same time the loin is too long. The rib cage should not be as long as that of the Lapponian Herder's. Modern-day rib cages are often too wide and overly heavy. Today, judges make a point of mentioning low legs in their critiques, however, the fault is not so much the low legs but instead the heavy and exaggerated bodies. The lower edge of the rib cage must be at the level of the elbows, never lower. Many of the dogs in the ring today are overweight. Always keep in mind the breed's original task and how it should perform in it.

Steep croups are a common mistake in this breed. Dogs with steep croups tend to move with a short step, lacking reach in their hindquarters. You are also likely to see some long loins, a trait that compromises the dog's ability to work tirelessly for a long period of time. Often dogs with long loins tend to appear unfit.

Neck & Tail

NECK

Medium in length, strong and covered with profuse hair.

Carried low especially when gaiting, never too long or short.

TAIL

Set rather high, medium in length, covered with profuse and long hair. The tip of the tail may have a J-formed hook. When moving the tail is curved over the back or side, in rest it may hang.

An ideal tail is soft, expressive and lively. It should not be too tightly curved. Usually a poorly carried tail implies a faulty croup rather than a faulty tail set. A J-shaped hook is equally acceptable as a straight tip of the tail. Judges should go through the tail by hand, vertebra by vertebra, to spot possible kinks. When a dog is standing still, the tail either hangs or is curved over the back or side.

Limbs

FOREQUARTERS

General appearance: Powerful with strong bones. Viewed from the front straight and parallel.

Shoulders: Slightly oblique.

Upper arms: As long as the shoulder blades. The angle between shoulder and upper arm is rather open.

Elbows: Approximately at the level of the lower edge of the ribcage, pointing straight backwards.

Forearms: Rather strong, vertical.

Carpus: Flexible.

Pasterns: Of medium length, slightly oblique.

Forefeet: Well arched, oval rather than round, covered with dense hair. The pads are elastic. Dense hair between the pads.

HINDQUARTERS

General appearance: Strong boned, powerful, viewed from behind straight and parallel. The angulation is clearly marked with no exaggeration.

Upper thigh: Of medium length, rather broad with well-developed muscles.

Stifle: Parallel, rather well angulated.

Second thigh: Relatively long and sinewy.

Hocks: Moderately low, rather well angulated but not excessively.

Metatarsus: Rather short, strong and vertical.

Hind feet: As front feet.

Limbs (continued)

The Finnish Lapponian Dog is not as strongly angulated as the Lapponian Herder. Although the angulation is clearly marked, it should not be exaggerated. In addition, sound angulation is called for, i.e. the front and rear should be equally well angulated in relation to each other.

It is not uncommon to meet a Finnish Lapponian Dog with upright upper arms. Too strongly angulated dogs are a minority, while dogs with poor angulation are a more common sight. Knee angulation is clearly marked. Loose, slipped hocks are a definite no-no. While you may come across too upright pasterns every now and then, a more common mistake is weak pasterns. Often this is not a fault in the dog's anatomy per se, but instead the dog is too unfit and heavily built. Proper leg furnishings create an illusion of more clearly marked angulation than it is in reality.

Movement

Effortless. Changes easily from trot to gallop. The legs move parallel. When working agile and fast.

The Finnish Lapponian Dog moves in an effortless and durable manner. Although long-stepping, the movement should not be exaggerated. The breed standard states "Changes easily from trot to gallop", the phrase which dates back to the time when the Finnish Lapponian Dog and Lapponian Herder were split into two different breeds and they wanted to make clear that the Lapponian Herder is the trotter breed out of the two. However, also the Finnish Lapponian Dog has to move with a sound, long step.

The Finnish Lapponian Dog has a tendency to single-track, which should not be mistaken for narrow movement. That said, you are likely to see dogs that actually are narrow coming and going, and many dogs have steep croups, which causes them to move with a short step, lacking reach in their hindquarters. Furthermore, it is typical and acceptable of this breed to toe in slightly on the move.

Movement (continued)



Coat

Hair: Profuse, especially the males have an abundant mane. The outer coat is long and harsh. On the head and on the front side of the legs the coat is shorter. There has to be an undercoat that is soft and dense.

The colloquial Finnish term "rössökarvainen" implies an erect, harsh, matt outer coat that does not look too polished. The coat must never be too abundant, since it would be a disadvantage if the dog were doing its original reindeer herding job. Nowadays the coats are noticeably longer than before, and, for example, the mane is not clearly visible because the coat on the body is equally long as the mane.

There are flat coats as well, and some dogs lack undercoat. Complete lack of undercoat should not be forgiven in the show ring since there are dogs that never do grow proper undercoat. All too often one sees soft-textured coats; an ideal harsh coat texture is a rare sight. An ideal outer coat is very harsh and an individual strand of hair is thick.

An ideal coat on a Finnish Lapponian Dog comprises a harsh and erect outer coat, dense undercoat, visible mane (especially on males), proper leg and thigh furnishings and tail plume, as well as proper undercoat on the legs. The undercoat tends to make the legs look thick. At their best the leg furnishings are erect just like the coat on the body.

Coat (continued)



Colours

All colours are permitted. The basic colour must be dominant. Colours other than the basic colour can occur on head, neck, chest, underside of the body, on legs and tail.

A treasured trait of the breed, the Finnish Lapponian Dog comes in almost any colour and shade imaginable. No colour should be preferred over the others, however, there are a couple of undesirable colours. The colour is rarely perfectly solid but instead often features different shades, depending on the colour of the undercoat.

A special feature of this breed is the spectacles. Dogs with spectacles are recessively solid-coloured, however, often have light shading, often very noticeable, on their leg furnishings and tail plume. The size of the tan markings can vary from remarkably large to barely noticeable, however, all are equally correct. The shade of a cream-coloured Finnish Lapponian Dog (genetically "ee") can vary from between almost pure white to red. Again, all shades should be considered equal.

Colours (continued)



Colours (continued)



Colours (continued)



Colours (continued)



Colours (continued)



Colours (continued)

The undesirable colours are particolour (white dominating over other colours), saddleback, and predominantly brindle (see slide 39 for photos). These colours can be penalized in the show ring, however, they are not a disqualifying fault. Brindle tanpoint is a "lesser evil" than predominantly brindle, but the brindle markings should be mentioned in the written critique in any case. However, a judge must not mistake dogs that have stripes or sooty markings on their toes - a very typical trait of this breed - for brindle. The markings of a brindle tanpoint dog have stripes all over them. In addition, it is important that a judge can tell apart a Finnish Lapponian Dog with spectacles from a brindle-coloured dog.

Colours (continued)



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 and on its ability to perform its traditional work.

- *Lack of sexual dimorphism.*
- *Light head.*
- *Insufficient stop.*
- *Over angulated or too straight rear angulation.*
- *Tail carriage continuously lower than the topline.*
- *Lack of under coat.*
- *Flat coat.*
- *Curly outer coat.*
- *Basic colour not dominant.*

Faults (continued)

DISQUALIFYING FAULTS:

- *Aggressive or overly shy.*
- *Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.*
- *Overshot or undershot mouth.*
- *Kinky tail.*
- *Full drop ears.*

When judging Finnish breeds in Finland, judges must always give verbal critiques of both individual dogs and when placing them in a class. If a judge is not able to justify their placements out loud, they appear incompetent. Dog owners expect lengthy and thorough written critiques. They read through them over and over again to analyze whether the judge spotted the faults and virtues of their dogs.