

A Guide to the Alaskan Malamute Coat, Colour & Markings

Judging and Coat

- **NEVER LONG**
- **NEVER SOFT**
- **NEVER TRIMMED** (the exception is trimming of feet for neat appearance)

The texture, composition and quality of the coat are an integral part of the Malamute's ability to survive in arctic conditions. In colder climates, a Malamute in full coat will have such a dense undercoat it will be difficult to part to the skin. The woolly undercoat also has protective oils which may leave the hands feeling slightly soiled even though the dog is clean – these oils may be temporarily removed by washing.

Baby puppies may not have a fully developed guard coat giving them a “woolly lamb” appearance - this is acceptable in baby puppies. If you part the coat you should see darker guard coat coming through. A triangular patch part way down the tail should be noticeably visible, giving an indication of colour and texture. Extra fluffy coat behind the base of the ears may be an indication of an incorrect coat.

Providing that a Malamute's coat complies with the requirements of the breed standard, the structure and soundness of the breed must be given priority when judging. Undue emphasis should therefore not be placed on the “impressive” appearance of a more profuse coat unless the exhibits are otherwise of equal quality.

Why not Long or Soft?

An overly long or soft coat are fatal flaws for a Malamute living in arctic conditions and should be penalised accordingly. The guard coat needs to be sufficiently coarse to protect the undercoat, whereas a soft coat would lack the ability to deflect wind, snow and rain and retain its insulating properties.

The long coat will part, exposing the undercoat and skin to the elements. In addition, the iceballs and snow crust forming on the extremes of a long-coat are not in close enough proximity to the body to be melted by the body heat and will stick to a coat of incorrect texture (see images below). These iceballs build up, adding significant weight to the dog and compromising the coat's insulating properties.

Any attempt to disguise a longer coat by trimming or artificially texturise a soft coat is unacceptable.

How long is too long?

The guard coat must be of sufficient length to protect the woolly undercoat, which the Standard states is 1 to 2 inches in length. Along the sides of the body the coat is generally around 1½ inches long, increasing to 3-4 inches over the neck, back, rump and tail.

The undercoat must support the guard coat in order for the Malamute coat to stand off the body. Any appearance of draping or parting is an indication of an overly long coat.

Shedding & Adaptation to Climate

The Malamute will shed coat once or twice a year as a normal part of the breed's natural coat cleaning and maintenance process. The Breed Standard states that the coat will be shorter and less dense during warmer months, indicating that the Malamute coat is expected to adapt according to climate.

The density and length of the coats seen in Australia will be less than if that same Malamute were living in a colder climate, particularly in the warmer months.

A Malamute that is shedding or with a less dense coat should therefore not be penalised in favour of an exhibit with more coat but less desirable structure or exhibiting unsoundness. The coat will change throughout the seasons and with changes of climate, but the structure will not!

The Illusion of Coat, Colour and Markings

A hands-on approach is required to determine the boning, depth of chest, height at shoulder etc. as well as the texture of the coat.

Coat can create the impression of substance and can be used by the clever groomer to hide or “resculpt” structural inadequacies. Profuse coat can give the illusion of shorter leg and heavier bone.

Be aware that some markings can create an optical illusion which may be misleading. For example, a dark bar extending down the muzzle will give it the illusion of being narrower than with an open face. Likewise, a blaze can give the illusion of a narrower head, and a collar may give the illusion of a longer leg.

A dark coloured exhibit may give the illusion of being less substantial than the same sized exhibit with lighter colouring.

Do not over-prioritise or be misled by coat - use your hands to measure and feel the structure of the exhibit.



Above are photographs showing puppies that have been playing in the snow. Note the ice balls that have formed on the long coated bitch. And note that the pup who has a full coat with guard hairs, has NO snow stuck to her.

These photographs show the difference between long coats and normal coats. The 35 cm of snow they were playing in was very dry and powdery - just like sugar when you pick it up. One can't even make a snowball with it as it runs through your fingers like sand and blows away. However, it seems to ball up quite nicely on the fluffy's coat.

"In judging the Alaskan Malamute, (its) function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting must be given consideration above all else."

Excerpts from the ALASKAN MALAMUTE BREED STANDARD:

GENERAL APPEARANCE - The coat is thick with a coarse guard coat of sufficient length to protect a woolly undercoat. Malamutes are of various colours.

COAT - The Malamute has a thick, coarse guard coat, never long and soft. The undercoat is dense, from 2.5 - 5 cm (1 - 2 ins) in depth, oily and woolly. The coarse guard coat varies in length as does the undercoat. The coat is relatively short to medium along the sides of the body, with the length of the coat increasing around the shoulders and neck, down the back, over the rump, and in the breeching and plume. Malamutes usually have a shorter and less dense coat during the summer months. The Malamute is shown naturally. Trimming is not acceptable except to provide a clean cut appearance of feet.

COLOUR - The usual colours range from light grey through intermediate shadings to black, sable and shadings of sable to red. Colour combinations are acceptable in undercoats, points, and trimmings. The only solid colour allowable is all white. White is always the predominant colour on underbody, parts of legs and feet, and part of face markings. A white blaze on the forehead and/or collar, or a spot on the nape is attractive and acceptable. The Malamute is mantled, and broken colours extending over the body or uneven splashing are undesirable.

Descriptive Colour and Marking Code

Color Description

Black and White — Black guard hair with black or dark grey undercoat

Seal and White — Black or black tipped guard hairs with white or cream undercoat. Dog appears black at a distance but is not a true black because of the light undercoat.

Sable and White — Black or grey guard hairs with a reddish undercoat and red trimmings. Both black and red factors evident.

Grey and White — Grey guard hairs with light grey, cream, or white undercoat. Dog definitely appears grey even though there may be some black hairs on the topline. No red factor evident.

Silver and White — Light grey guard hairs with white undercoat.

Red and White — A definite shade of red, either light or dark; with light points (lip line and nose), and eye colour. No black factor evident.

All White — Both guard hairs and undercoat are white. Often evidence of a mask in cream colour. Only solid colour allowed.

Trimmings — Shadings of gold, cream, buff, brown or reddish hues often found on legs, ears, tail and face between white areas of the underbody and the dark colour above.

Neck Area

Collar — A white band of colour encircling the neck. Can be full or partial.

Withers Spot — A white mark varying in size but centred on the withers or at the base of the neck.

Chest Markings

Necklace — A curving band of dark colour across the chest.

Eagle — Two bands of dark colour protruding partially across the chest forming a pattern resembling the eagle emblem.

Face Markings

Cap — A cap of colour covers the top of the head and ears usually coming to a point in the centre of the forehead.

Goggles — Dark areas under the eyes and extending sideways to the cap.

Bar — A dark area extending from the centre point of the cap down the nose.

Eye Shadow — Dark markings under the eyes but not extending out to the cap.

Star — A small white spot in the centre of the forehead.

Blaze — A white mark extending from the centre point of the cap back up the forehead. Width and length can vary.

Closed Face — Dark colouring covering the face with no distinct markings on the face.

Open Face — A cap covering the top of the head and no other markings on the face.

Full Mask — The combination of cap, goggles and bar.

Mask — The combination of cap and goggles.

Mismarkings

Undesirable, uneven splashings.

Important Points to Remember

An Alaskan Malamute

- Must have a double coat. The guard coat must be thick and coarse. The dog will have a shorter, less dense coat in the summer and in warmer climates (such as that in Australia).
- Must NEVER have a long or soft coat.
- Is a breed presented naturally. Artificial texturising and trimming (except on the feet) are unacceptable.
- May be one of several different colour combinations and markings. None is given preference over the others.
- Should not have broken colours extending over the body.
- Needs a hands-on approach to judging – the coat, colour and markings can create misleading illusions.
- **Survival and functional characteristics should never be sacrificed in favour of cosmetic ones.**