

THE Samoyed

Compendium for FCI-judges

Group 5

Breed number 212



Preface



The Samoyed dog is a polar working dog that is used mainly for outdoor activities like sledding and backpacking, and all in all, as a physically and mentally active family dog. The characteristics that make the Samoyed a wonderful working dog are described in the breed's FCI standard. The standard focuses on a purposeful form fit for functioning as a polar working dog, efficient movement, correct coat quality that can withstand very low temperatures and other important breed details that in sum will ensure that the Samoyed is preserved as a strong, friendly, tenacious and courageous working dog.

The Nordic Kennel Union has a shared responsibility towards all countries that are members of the FCI when it comes to the breed standard for the Samoyed.

This judging compendium is structured around the FCI standard and includes comments and annotations from a group of breed experts. It is intended to be used for the education of trainee judges, new judges and experienced judges who want a refresher on the interpretation of the breed standard.

The exterior judges who have written the text and are responsible for the content are:

Eivind Mjærum, who has owned, bred under the kennel name Mjærumhøgda, and used the breed actively since 1967. He was authorized as a judge in 1984.

Tuula Pratt has been involved with the breed since 1967. She owns kennel Humoresque, and has been an exterior judge since 1991 as well as a mentor judge for Samoyed dogs in the Finnish Kennel Club.

Matti Tuominen has grown up with the breed and got his very first Samoyed from his aunt who had a kennel since the 60s. He bred his first litter in 1980, and all of his litters have been born under the Kuuran kennel name. He later got approved to judge, Samoyeds first of course. Over the years, he has been active and instrumental in many different tasks in the Samoyed club and the Finnish Kennel Association related to Samoyeds.

Katja Korhonen had her first encounter with the breed in 1985 when her family got one. She started her work as a breeder under the kennel name Schatzave in 1993. She got approved to judge in 2007 and qualified to judge the Samoyed in 2007.

In addition to the judges, the project group has consisted of:

Gro Moe-Gumø - project coordination
Tone-Lise Vilje - layout and design
Ida Skadberg – editing and translation

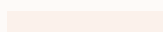
The image material has been collected from several of the most internationally recognized breeders and exterior judges. We thank you for the goodwill and for the enthusiasm we have encountered throughout the process from Samoyed people all over the world.

We hope that the judges' compendium will be of use and serve as a guide for judges, and that the qualities of the Samoyed as a polar working dog will be emphasized whenever the exterior of the breed is evaluated.



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Description from FCI-standard



Additional comments from judges



Fault



Serious fault



Disqualifying fault

History

The name Samoyed derives from the Samoyed tribes in Siberia and other parts of Northern Russia.

FCI - standard:

In Southern parts of the area they used white, black and brown parti- coloured dogs as reindeer herders; in the northern parts the dogs were pure white, had a mild temperament and were used as hunting- and sledge dogs. The Samoyed dogs lived close to their owners, they even slept within the shelters and were used as heaters. The British zoologist Ernest Kilburn Scott spent three months among Samoyed Tribes in 1889. Returning to England he brought with him a brown male puppy called « Sabarka ». Later he imported a cream coloured bitch called « Whitey Petchora » from the western side of the Urals and a snow white male called « Musti » from Siberia. These few dogs and those brought by the explorers are the base for the western Samoyed. The first standard was written in England in 1909.

Comments:

The Samoyed – a brief summary of history and background in Nordic countries.

The breed's history in the Western world is described in some English works. Mainly through the works of Ernest Kilburn Scott. These are important, well-documented and correct, but there is still a lot more to take note of.

One of the reasons for why the Nordic countries are responsible for the breed's FCI standard is because of their geographical proximity and shared borders with Russia. Moreover, we have knowledge of using the dogs for what they were bred for. The borders between Russia-Finland and Sweden-Norway were more or less open until 1917, so there was contact between the Samoyed people, Ostyaks and Laplanders. The Kola peninsula and Karelia were also important areas for exchanges of dog-related material and information. This happened for centuries.

Long before we started describing specific breeds, people had working dogs for hunting, transportation and guarding. There were many groups of Samoyed-people and ostyaks, and most known for their influence on the Samoyed-dogs were the Nenets-samoyed people. They mainly lived in areas in Russia along Ob and Yenisei rivers, and in the Yamal peninsula.

Before today's modern communications and infrastructure, there was also a lot of ship trade; Pomor, timber and stockfish to name a few. The trades moved between the North West of Siberia, Norway, Denmark, England, the rest of Europe. Dogs were often on board and were sometimes left behind, which in part explains how the breed established itself in different parts of the world.

Another part of the explanation was the use of dogs to transport freight and equipment by Arctic and polar explorers. Cold and harsh conditions meant using dogs that had strength,

stamina and physical qualities well-suited for these climates. Many famous explorers used Samoyed-dogs and brought some home with them after expeditions.

There are also a few people that should be mentioned as they have played central roles in the breed's development in the Nordic countries. One of these people was Alexander Trontheim, a man from Siberia, who collected between 300 and 400 dogs for explorers and their expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic. A lot of these dogs went back with the explorers and became very important for further breeding and the breed's development.

Another man, a Swedish man by the name of Eugene Hemberg, traveled a lot to Siberia and he made his own description (standard) for the ostjakhund/samojedhund in 1889, which is actually not too far from today's standard. The Swedish Kennel Club made the first standard for the Ostjakhund at the same time as the English Kennel Club made the first breed standard. The other Nordic countries adapted the standard from SKK's standard, which also outlines/explains the genetic relationship that forms the basis for the argument that the ostjakhund/samojedhund should share breed standard with the Swedish lapphund.

Finally, it is worth mentioning Kaare Pedersen. A man from Norway and the founder of Kennel Ibur. He got his first Samoyed in 1946. He then traveled and did research in order to learn more about the breed and what was needed to help its further development. He then imported and exported dogs that became instrumental for the breed's further development in the Nordic countries.

The Samoyed was used for hunting, transportation, keeping watch against wild animals long before it was used for herding reindeer.



Fridtjof Nansen on the first Fram-expedition in 1893. Polar expeditions made the breed known all over the world. In this photo we can see that the dogs have different colors. These Ostyak dogs have become a part of the Samoyed as we know it today, and came in multiple colors.



Dogs from Fridtjof Nansen's Kjabarova-expedition in 1893. The breed type has been preserved well even after 130 years.



From the National Gallery: Roald Amundsen with some Samoyeds on an expedition to the North Pole. All of these dogs were brought back to Norway.



Photo taken by Mona Selbach in 1969 of Kaare Pedersen. His breeding through kennel Ibur meant a lot for the breed in all Nordic countries after the war.

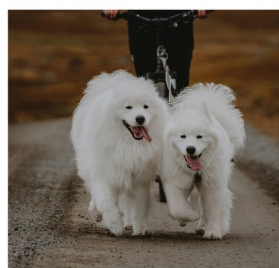
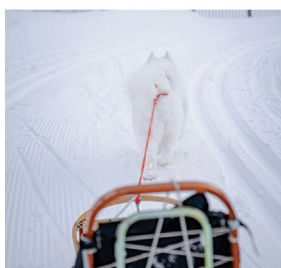
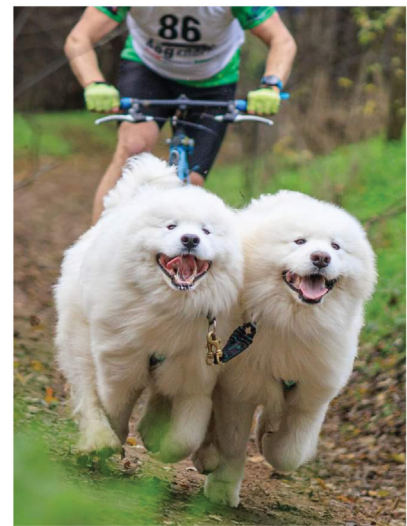
Samoyede Travelers Moving by Sledge.



Circa mid- 1700s'



Photo to the left of an original import from 1894 and photo on the right from 2010. It is clear that the breed as we know it today has not changed all that much since it got its own breed standard.



Behaviour and temperament

FCI - standard:

Friendly, open, alert and lively. The hunting instinct is very slight. Never shy nor aggressive. Very social and cannot be used as guard dog.



Comments:

The Samoyed is known for its open and friendly temperament, a feature highly valued and worth preserving in the breed. Samoyed dogs used to live in close coexistence with people, which shaped their behavior and temperament. A Samoyed is an observant dog who expresses itself by barking. Occasional barks and vocalization in the show ring should not be a reason for penalization. However, constant or disruptive barking and vocalization is not desirable. An aggressive or shy dog is not suitable as a working dog. Aggressive behavior towards other dogs in the ring should be penalized.

The standard underestimates the hunting instinct of the breed. Historically, they used to be hunting dogs, and although they are not still actively used, there are still individuals with strong hunting instincts. They were hunting and sled dogs long before they were herding dogs.

'Cannot be used as guard dog' - depends on what is meant by guarding. Historically, Samoyed people and dogs lived together in small groups where one of the dogs' tasks was to alert by barking if something unusual was happening.

- Aloofness
- Aggressive or overly shy dogs. Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioral abnormalities.

General appearance

FCI - standard :

Medium in size, elegant, a white Arctic Spitz. In appearance gives the impression of power, endurance, charm, suppleness, dignity and self-confidence.

The expression, the so called « Samoyed Smile », is made up of a combination of eye shape and position, and the slightly curved up corners of the mouth. The sex should be clearly stamped.

Comments :

The Samoyed is an active and functional all-round dog well-adapted to an arctic climate. It has an appealing appearance and strong quarters without ever appearing clumsy or heavy. The Samoyed should always be in good physical condition, which should always be evaluated through a hands-on examination. In the silhouette, the neck and tail form two distinctive and softly curved arches.

The coat is a profuse double, polar coat, yet it is not too abundant so as to hide the outlines of the dog. 'White' is not necessarily bright white as in the Japanese Spitz for example. White and cream with or without biscuit markings should be judged equally regarding color. In addition to the functional qualities, an essential part when judging the Samoyed is the correct shape of the head and the typical smiling expression.

● Males not masculine and females not feminine.

Excellent males:



Excellent females:



Proportions

FCI - standard :

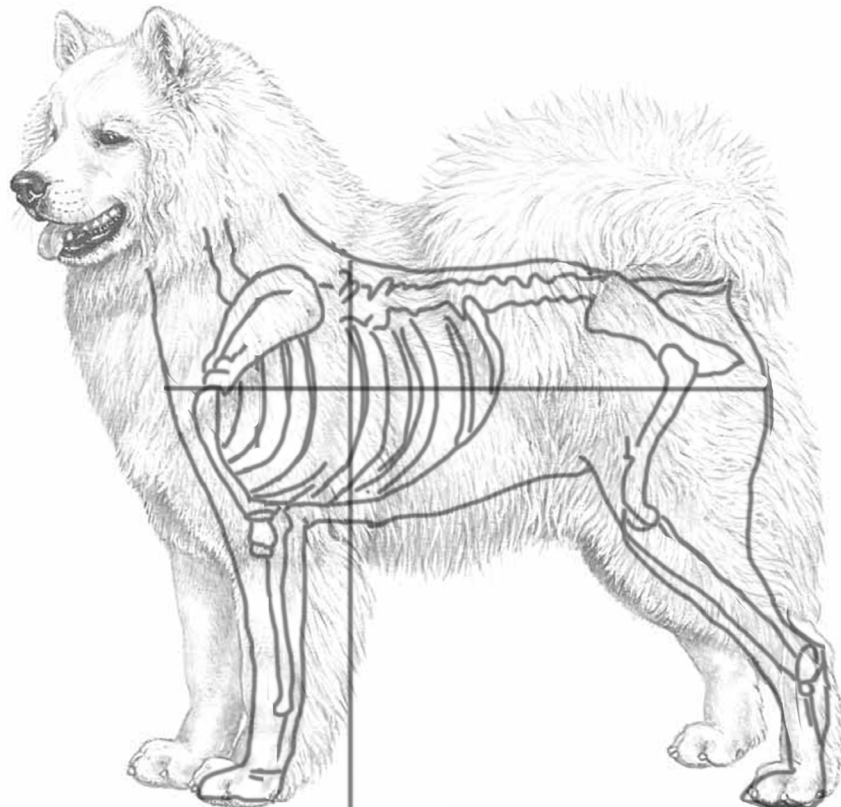
The length of the body is approximately 5% more than the height at the withers. The depth of the body is slightly less than the half of the height at the withers. The muzzle is approximately as long as the skull.

Comments :

When evaluating the proportions between the depth of ribcage and the length of leg, it is best to do a hands-on examination. On one hand, a dog in full coat might give an impression of having short legs. On the other hand, if a dog in full coat gives a leggy impression, it probably is.



● Low on the legs



Head and details

FCI - standard :

Powerful and wedge-shaped.

CRANIAL REGION:

Skull: viewed from the front and in profile only slightly convex. Broadest between the ears. Slightly visible furrow between the eyes.

Stop: Clearly defined but not too prominent.

FACIAL REGION:

Nose: Well developed, preferably black. During some periods of the year the pigment of the nose can fade to a so called « winter nose »; there must however always be dark pigment at the edges of the nose.

Muzzle: Strong and deep, approximately as long as the skull, gradually tapering towards the nose, neither snipey nor heavy and square. The bridge of the nose is straight.

Lips: Close fitting, black and rather full. The corners of the mouth are slightly curved forming the characteristic « Samoyed Smile ».

Jaws/Teeth: Regular and complete scissor bite. The teeth and the jaws are strong. Normal dentition.

EYES:

Dark brown in color, well-set in the sockets, placed rather apart, somewhat slanting and almond-shaped. The expression is « smiling », kind, alert and intelligent. The eye rims are black.

EARS:

Erect, rather small, thick, triangular and slightly rounded at the tips. They should be mobile, set high; due to the broad skull well apart.

- Males not masculine and females not feminine
- Pincer bite
- Overshot or undershot bite
- Yellow eyes
- Clearly unpigmented areas on eyerims or lips
- Eyes blue or of different colours
- Soft ears
- Ears not erect



Male (left) and female (right) head with well-furred ears, almond shaped eyes and the typical Samoyed smile.

Comments:

The head with the smiling expression is a breed specific characteristic that distinguishes the Samoyed from any other breed. Therefore, when judging the Samoyed, it is important that enough emphasis be given to the head. All of these details play an important role in the correct Smiling Samoyed expression, not just the slightly curved corners of the mouth and the slanting almond shaped eyes.

The wedge is more blunt than sharp, nicely plump with soft lines, never coarse nor tapered. The form of the head resembling an equilateral triangle is wrong. The sex should be clearly stamped.

CRANIAL REGION:

The origin of the Samoyed is diverse which partly explains the variation in cranial region.

A skull on the narrower side does not give an impression of a powerful head. It also results in closer than desired set ears. On the other hand, a skull too broad easily becomes coarse. A poorly defined stop makes the wedge look long and affects negatively on the correct expression. Too steep a stop will give a harsh impression and distracts from the friendly and open one. When judging the head it is important to keep the middle ground.

FACIAL REGION:

The dog with a faded pigmentation on the nose or winter nose, should not be penalized as long as there is a circle of dark pigmentation around it. The muzzle should not be much longer or much shorter than the skull.

LIPS:

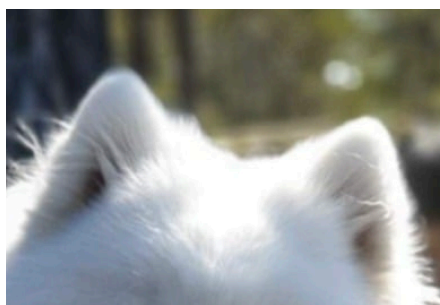
Tight enough lips and well-developed underjaw ensures the Samoyed smile. A more loose-fitting lip line at the corners of the mouth changes the smiling expression into a sad and serious one.

EYES:

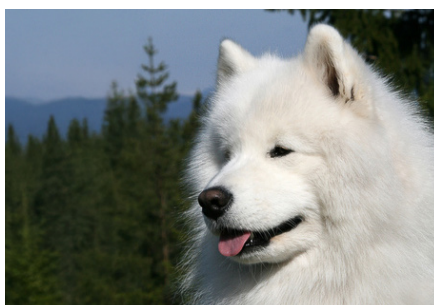
Well adapted to the arctic climate, the eyes are never large or protruding, but rather small and well-set in the sockets. The shape is more important than the ideal color. Samoyeds smile with their eyes.

EARS:

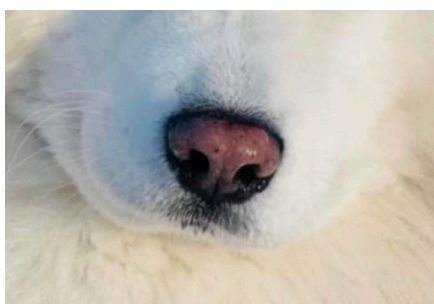
All the details described here are important arctic qualities. If the ears are not correct, this negatively affects both function and the typical Samoyed expression. Moreover, the ears should be well furred as this supports several functions such as keeping bugs away and managing cold temperatures and harsh weather.



Well furred ears.

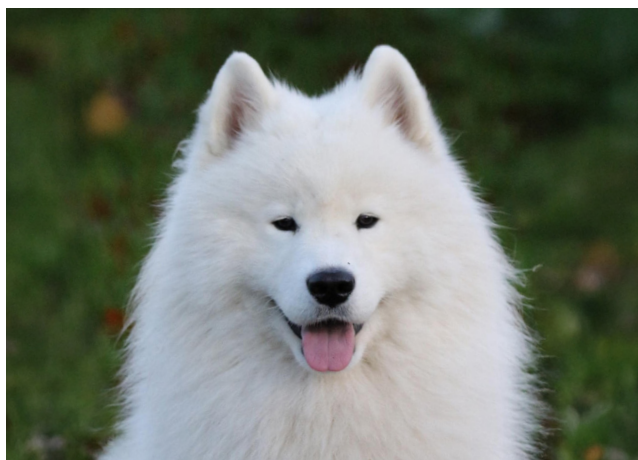
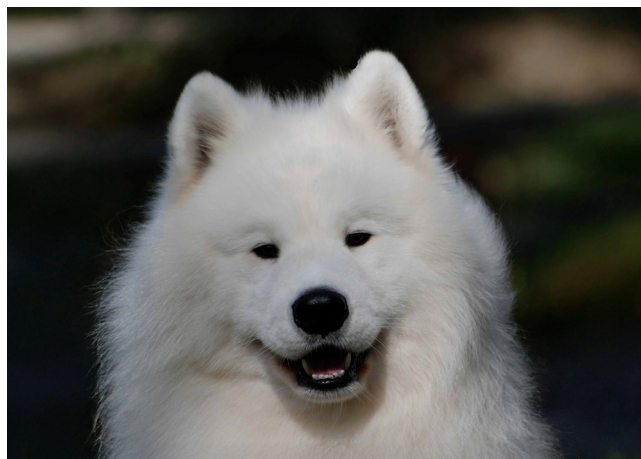
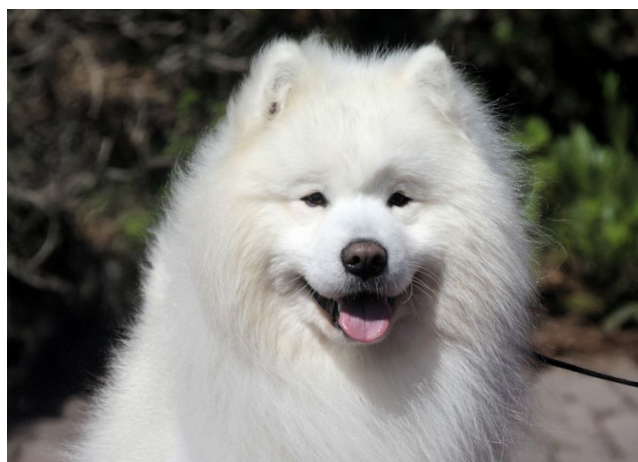
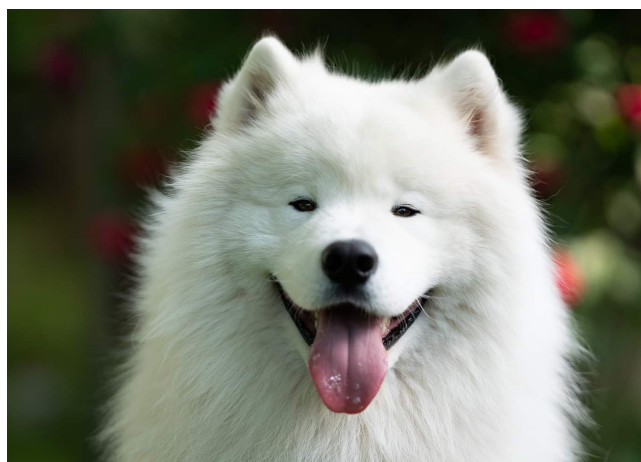


Excellent example of 1:1 ratio (skull:muzzle). Remember hands-on examination of the stop since the coat can sometimes be misleading.

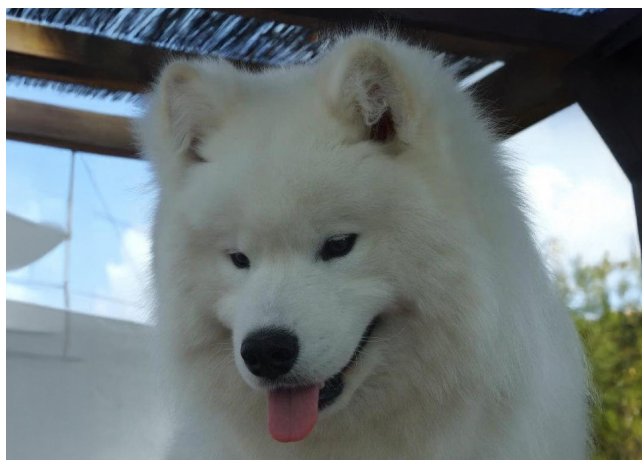
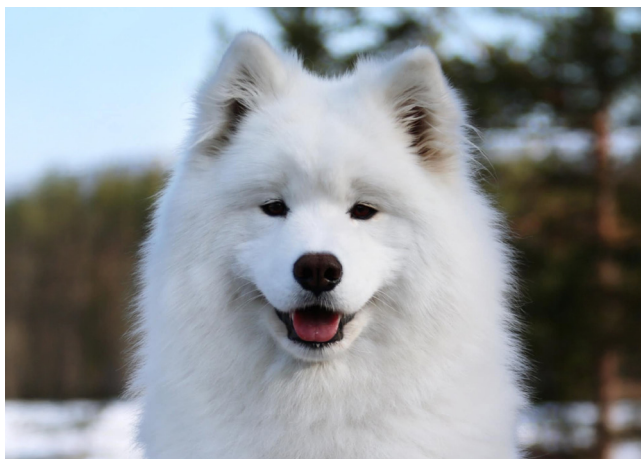
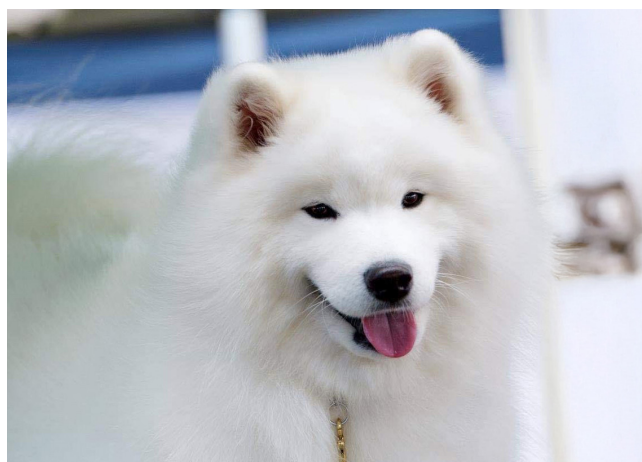
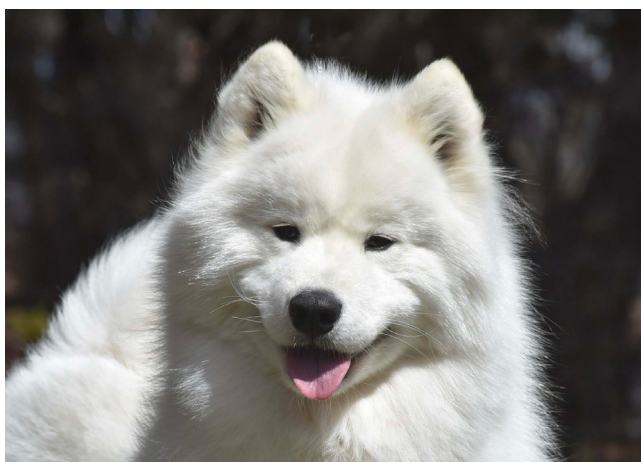


Nose shown with preferred black pigmentation as well as with the correct winter nose where the dark edges of pigmentation are clearly visible.

Excellent male heads of different breed types



Excellent female heads of different breed types



Neck, body, tail and limbs

FCI - standard :

NECK:

Strong and of medium length with a proud carriage.

BODY:

Slightly longer than the height at the withers, deep and compact but supple.

Withers: Clearly defined.

Back: Of medium length, muscular and straight; in females slightly longer than in males.

Loin: Short, very strong and defined.

Croup: Full, strong, muscular and slightly sloping.

Chest: Broad, deep and long, reaching almost to the elbows. The ribs are well sprung.

Underline: Moderate tuck-up.

TAIL:

Set rather high. When the dog is alert and in motion the tail is carried bent from the root forward over the back or side, but may be hanging at rest, then reaching to the hocks.

LIMBS - FOREQUARTERS:

General appearance: Well placed and muscular with strong bones. Viewed from the front straight and parallel.

Shoulder: Long, firm and sloping.

Upper arm: Oblique and close to the body.

Approximately as long as the shoulder.

Elbow: Close to the body. Carpus: Strong but supple.

Metacarpus (Pastern): Slightly oblique.

Fore Feet: Oval with long toes, flexible and pointing straight forward. Toes arched and not too tightly knit.

Elastics pads.

LIMBS - HINDQUARTERS:

General appearance: Viewed from behind straight and parallel with very strong muscles.

Upper thigh: Of medium length, rather broad and muscular.

Stifle: Well angulated.

Hocks: Rather low and well angulated.

The bones are strong but never heavy so as to give a clumsy appearance.

Pasterns too oblique are undesirable, likewise narrow upper thighs.

Metatarsus: Short, strong, vertical and parallel.

The short metatarsus keeps the stride close to the ground.

Hindfeet: As front feet. The dewclaws should be removed (except in countries where it is forbidden by law).

- *Visible faults in structure*
- *Barrel rib cage*
- *Double twisted tail*
- *Light bone*
- *Badly bow-legged or cow-hocked*



Comments:

NECK:

The proudly carried strong neck attaches via clearly defined withers to the body forming a beautiful arch. Upright shoulder blade, a neck that is too short or too long, or poorly defined withers will have a negative effect on this arch as well as the front movement. In movement, the dog naturally lowers its head. Carrying its head high during movement is unnatural to a working dog.

BODY:

The Samoyed has a slightly visible waistline, but never narrow like an hourglass. The loin is short and very strong (compact body), but also defined (supple body). Starting from the backbone, well-sprung ribs and a deep and long ribcage allow for plenty of space for the inner organs. The ribs taper towards the sternum, which allows for free movement of the front legs. A short or narrow ribcage as well as a long and weak loin are not uncommon in the breed.

TAIL:

The profusely coated tail that reaches down to the hock protects the airways when the dog curls up in the snow to rest. It also forms a beautiful arch balancing the one formed by the neck. It is a functional tail, not too tightly curled. A low set and often loosely carried tail can make the dog look longer in body, whilst a high set tightly curled tail can do the opposite. Judges should be aware of short tails, poorly furred tails, tails that are too tight or loose, and really anything else that prevents it from performing its function properly.

LIMBS:

The Samoyed stands firmly on its quarters which are placed at the corners of the body. The balance between the front and rear assembly is crucial for the efficiency of movement. It is important to check hands-on the muscular condition and the strength of bone. The Samoyed is a working breed, and the dogs are dependent on their physical form to be able to do their job properly. Judges are encouraged to praise a dog shown in a good muscular condition. It is also worth mentioning the lacking condition, but not to penalize it too hard, unless it clearly reduces the overall quality.

The bones are strong but never heavy so as to give a clumsy appearance.

Pasterns too oblique and narrow upper thighs are undesirable.

The short metatarsus keeps the stride close to the ground.

The paws should be flexible and resemble a hare-foot, not a cat-foot. This allows for the Samoyed to better walk on the snow.

See Appendix for photos of tails, pasterns and paws.

Gait

FCI-standard:

Powerful, free and tireless in appearance with a long stride. Good reach in the forequarters and good driving power in the hindquarters.

Comments:

The Samoyed's gait should be effective and cover a lot of ground in every step. The length of the step is naturally within the limits of the angulation typical of the breed. Effective and energetic are not the same thing. Too many steps with little drive forward is not effective even if it is very energetic. Gait with a lot of high-kicking in the back might look flashy, but it is neither effective nor has it the necessary powerful drive. The Samoyed moves close to the ground, and its physical condition should be visual on the move as well as standing.

Effectivity is ensured through single tracking; an important feature of a lot of working dogs. This can be observed as the speed of the movement increases in which front and rear limbs converge towards a center line.



Size

FCI - standard :

Height at withers: Ideal height: male 57 cm with a tolerance of ± 3 cm and females 53 cm with a tolerance of ± 3 cm.

Comments :

One or even two cm can easily be regarded as a measurement error. It is always a matter of overall balance. If the height is 3 or more cm over or under the limit, it most probably starts to affect negatively on the breed type.



Coat and colour

FCI - standard :

HAIR:

Profuse, thick, flexible and dense polar coat. The Samoyed is a double coated dog with short, soft and dense undercoat and longer, harsher and straight outer coat. The coat should form a ruff around the neck and shoulders framing the head, especially in males. On head and on front of legs, hair is short and smooth; on the outside of ears short, standing off and smooth. Inside the ears should be well furred. On the back of the thighs the hair forms trousers. There should be a protective growth of hair between the toes. The tail should be profusely covered with hair. The coat of the female is often shorter and softer in texture than that of the male. The correct coat texture should always have a special glistening sheen.

COLOUR:

Colour: Pure white, cream or white with biscuit. (The basic color to be white with a few biscuit markings.) Should never give the impression of being pale brown.

- *Wavy or short coated throughout, long, soft or coat hanging down*
- *Coat colour other than permitted in the standard*





Comments:

HAIR:

The coat is profuse, never exaggerated so as to hide the outlines of the dog.

The Samoyed should be well furred, even on the underside and belly.

The dense undercoat provides warmth and the harsher outer coat protects against moisture and dirt. This is why the correct quality of the outer coat is important.

Today it is quite rare to see a proper ruff (see Appendix). If there is one, it should be positively mentioned in the critique. The silvertips of the outer coat is a breed characteristic.

The Samoyed is not a breed whose coat is shaped with scissors, only the feet can be tidied of excess hair.

It is important to judge the quality and functionality of the coat. This can be difficult and sometimes impossible when a dog is changing coat or totally out of coat. The coat is also an important part of the overall impression (see Appendix).

COLOUR:

The original imports were not only white. It was only later that white became the dominant color. So, the Samoyed has never been only white. It is worth mentioning that in the American and Canadian breed standard all-biscuits are one of the accepted colors.

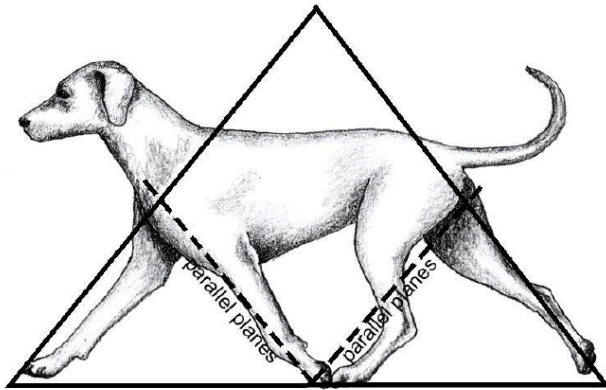
When judging the Samoyed, it is important to understand that the concept of white mentioned in the section "General Appearance" covers more than only white. The white itself can vary on a spectrum from pure white to cream.

In addition, the color can be white with biscuit (either shaded areas or spots). All the colors are equal, although there is, unfortunately, a tendency to prefer bright white dogs.

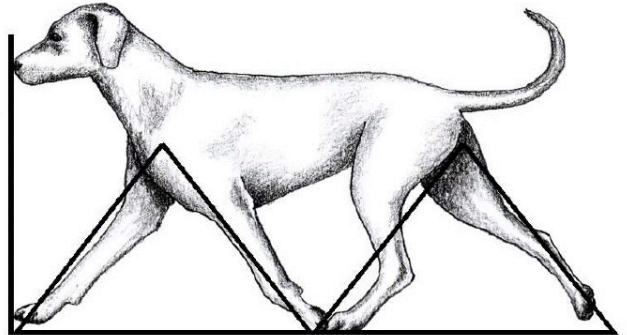
The wording in the standard is not optimal; the emphasis is on the idea of a white dog, even if there are a few biscuit markings. 'Should never give the impression of being pale brown' - it is a different thing to have an all over biscuit colored dog from a dog with biscuit shading or markings in the outer coat and white undercoat.

Appendix and references

Figures and texts from the Kennel Union of Southern Africa (KUSA) Breed Judges Learning Programme, Study Guide: 6.
Illustrations by Joy McFarlane and permission of use from KUSA.

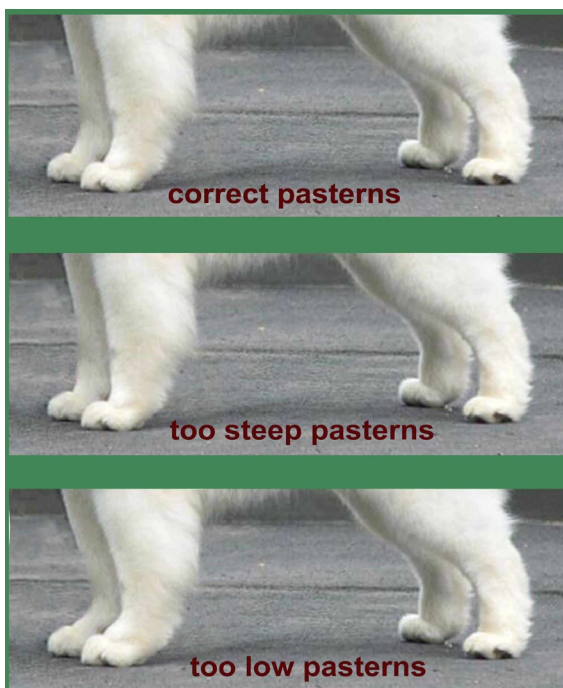


Balanced gait is typified by a **synchronisation** of front reach and rear drive. If a dog were to have a somewhat straight front assembly, it would be better for it also to have straight rear assembly to remain in balance, rather than a straight front trying to move in sync with an angulated rear. This problem would manifest itself as tremendous **kick-back** behind, yet the front would be unable to reach an imaginary plumb line dropped down from the nose. Such unbalanced movement is energy-wasting and can quickly lead to exhaustion.



Balance calls for identical triangular action in front and back. This is the best indication that the dog, as a whole, is correctly constructed and capable of performing its function efficiently without excessive energy consumption. Generally, reach should not extend beyond an imaginary plumb line from nose.

Photo showing the difference between correct, too steep and too low (or soft) pasterns.



Flexible, strong, hare-foot-shaped paws.



Tail carried forward to the side.



Tail carried forward over the back.



The underside/belly should also be well-furred to provide insulation and protection.



Male with proper ruff.



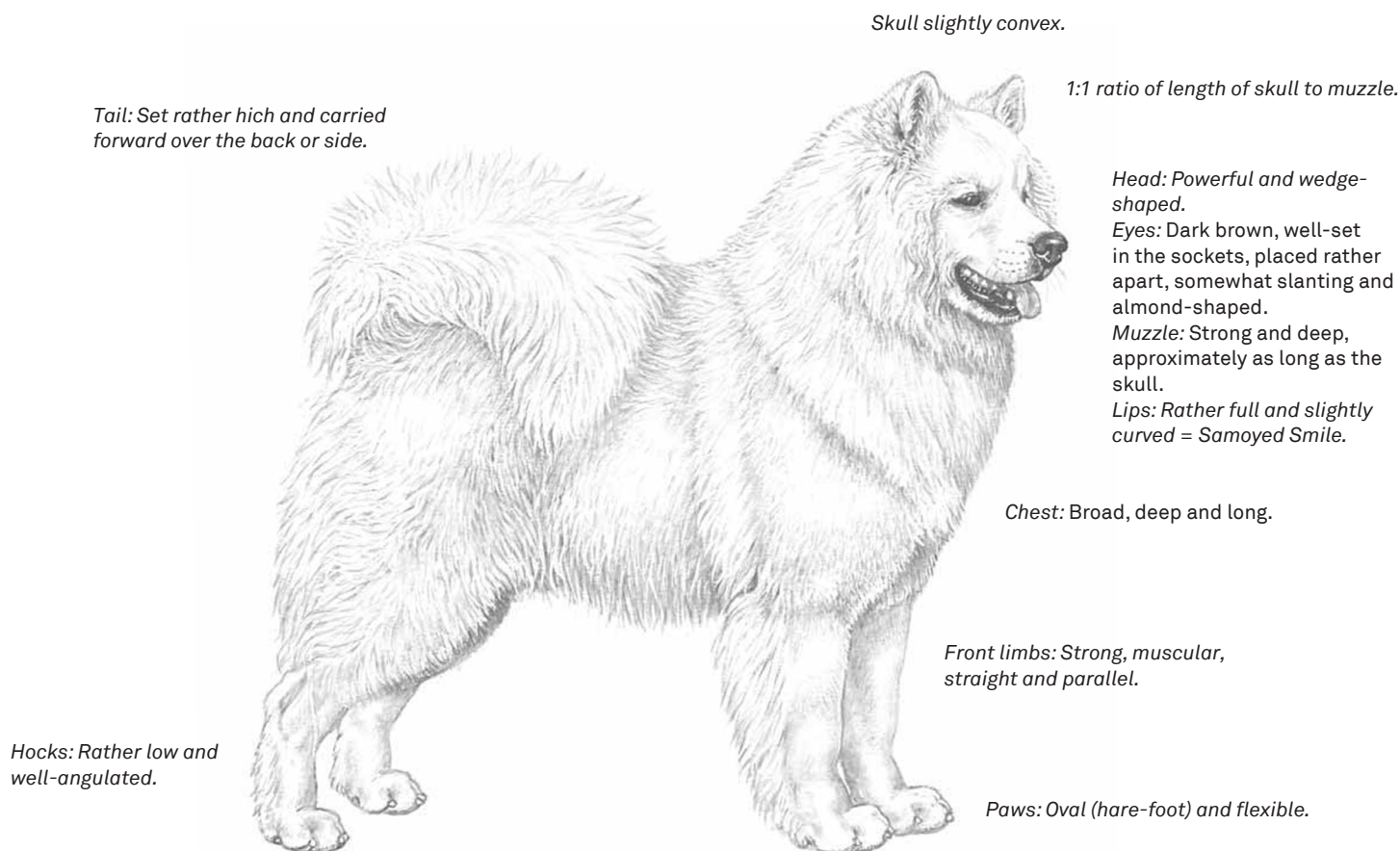
Photo of the same dog, showing the major difference between being in and out of coat. Remember the importance of the hands on examination.



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McFarlane, J. (2019). KUSA BREED JUDGES LEARNING PROGRAMME, STUDY GUIDE 6: GENERAL, ANATOMY, CONFORMATION & MOVEMENT, EXAMINATION CONTENT FOR LEVELS 1 & 2. KUSA - Kennel Union of Southern Africa. <https://www.kusa.co.za/images/Gallery/structural%20.pdf>



Movement: Powerful, free, tireless, long stride and good reach.

Height at withers: Ideal height: male 57 cm with a tolerance of ± 3 cm and females 53 cm with a tolerance of ± 3 cm.

Coat: Profuse, thick and flexible double polar coat. Glistening (silver tips).

Body: Slightly rectangular, deep, compact and supple. Muscular and straight back. Short and very strong loin.

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