

A Brief Primer On Epagneul Breton Gait And Head Carriage

By Fred Overby

From the Official Epagneul Breton Working Standard:

Gait

Happy, alert, lively with energetic and rolling gallop, a fast succession of short movements. A long extended gallop or gallop pique* is prohibited.

*"Gallop pique" means when the dog appears it is plunging forward with its head first and the front legs are digging in and pounding the ground heavily to drive the dog forward.

Carriage of the Head

The head must be held high without exaggeration above the top-line. The lines of the skull and muzzle are slightly inclined. The head is always mobile showing confidence and a constant olfactory flexibility in the search of the game. However, in certain difficult scenting conditions, occasional rapid scenting of the ground is acceptable.

The late Gaston Pouchain, an esteemed authority on this breed who served as President of the French Kennel Club for Six Years and as President of the CEB-France for thirty (30) years, once wrote of the movement of the Epagneul Breton:

"The continental's inherent gait of the breed is:-- smooth gallop, but swift and energetic, excitable influx, knowing how to turn on its length, no tail to stand against the leeward, high head carriage, at least in line with the centre of the body, willingness to hunt, and love of his handler."

When one views a Breton with excellent gait and overall style when at work, the unique method of movement and carriage manifests itself to the observer. This unique gait, when the dog is at full gallop, appears to the observer to be an easy, yet enduring, "rolling" gait. The points at which the legs move in flexion and extension of the shoulders and hip joints are somewhat analogous to well oiled wheels, which seem to turn smoothly like those of a locomotive, such that the dog appears to roll across the terrain. The rear legs which provide the propulsion to move forward will contact the ground almost simultaneously. The gait of the Epagneul Breton in full gallop is powerful, yet enduring. The EB of excellent style should appear to move forward in a classic Breton "roll" across the terrain, with head carried high seeking to detect the scent of upland game. Among the pointing breeds, the typical Epagneul Breton is a "galloper" with a higher headset when trying to scent game, compared to members of a "trotter" pointing breed which run more methodically with the head and nose carried close to the ground while hunting. The head carriage, coupled with the rolling gait, gives the well built Epagneul Breton a regal and graceful appearance which is beautiful to observe.