



# **The Alaskan Malamute Illustrated Standard**

Prepared by

The Alaskan Malamute Club of America

## **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATED STANDARD**

### **Purpose:**

Articulate the nuances of the breed to help judges, breeders, owners and enthusiasts by explaining and picturing the official Standard.

### **Official Standard and Explanations:**

The official Standard is shown verbatim in **bold print**.  
The explanations are shown in standard print.

### **Use of “he” and “his”:**

“He” and “his” are used throughout the document as a generic term to refer to the Alaskan Malamute and should be considered to refer to either a male or female. “She” or “her” are equivalent alternatives. The Standard gives no preference to the sex of the Alaskan Malamute. The committee considers that using “he/she” or “his/her” would be tedious and distracting.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

### **ILLUSTRATOR:**

Jeanne Flora - Argostar

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# HISTORY

The Alaskan Malamute we know today has evolved from an arctic dog with a long and remarkable history of service to man. To properly evaluate the Malamute, one must understand something of the severe arctic conditions under which these dogs did their job, and their invaluable contributions to the survival of the people who kept them.

The early explorers venturing to the land known as Alaska discovered dogs of unbelievable hardiness, able to work in the brutal arctic climate, often on starvation diets. These dogs had several functions, including hauling heavy sledges and packing. Although their existence was one of heavy work, the dogs were often part of the Eskimo family, playing with children and sleeping in the shelters helping to keep the family warm.

During the Gold Rush, the demand for working dogs resulted in breeds from “outside” being brought in and bred with the native sled dogs. As a result the breed was all but destroyed. However, the Mahlemut people, from whom the breed takes its name, lived a remote, isolated life. Because of this, their dogs remained largely pure.

In the early 20’s and 30’s some in the US became involved with sled dogs. Dogs brought from Alaska were thought to be Malamutes, but with no pedigrees, or kennel club to look to for verification, no one was sure. There were substantial differences among these dogs, but the Kotzebue strain had consistent type and size. These dogs were later registered by Milton and Eva Seeley. The M’Loot strain, developed by Paul Voelker, was larger, with less angulation and more variation in coat and color. Mr. Voelker wasn’t interested in showing, so these dogs were initially not registered. The Hinman/Irwin dogs were not an identifiable strain, but rather a few individual dogs, neither Kotzebue nor M’Loot but offering qualities the others did not.

Breed recognition came in 1935, largely through the efforts of Mrs. Seeley. At that time many dogs were of unknown ancestry. Those who appeared purebred were used for breeding, others weeded out. After a few years the registry was closed.

Losses from service in World War II all but eliminated the breed. In 1947 there were estimated to be only about 30 registered dogs left, so the stud book was reopened. Robert Zoller became involved in the breed and took this opportunity to combine M’Loot and Hinman/Irwin dogs with selected Kotzebues to create what became the Husky Pak line. All modern Malamutes are descended from the early strains, and show combinations of characteristics in greater or lesser degree. Thus the natural differences we see today.

The Alaskan Malamute has a proud heritage as an intelligent and tireless worker in conditions most of us couldn’t imagine. When you are privileged to judge our breed, please keep in mind his purpose, and the characteristics necessary to survive and complete his mission.

# THE ALASKAN MALAMUTE ILLUSTRATED STANDARD

## GENERAL APPEARANCE

**The Alaskan Malamute, one of the oldest Arctic Sled dogs, is a powerful and substantially built dog with a deep chest and strong, well-muscled body. The Malamute stands well over the pads, and this stance gives the appearance of much activity and a proud carriage, with head erect and eyes alert showing interest and curiosity. The head is broad. Ears are triangular and erect when alerted. The muzzle is bulky, only slightly diminishing in width from root to nose. The muzzle is not pointed or long, yet not stubby.**



The initial overall impression of an Alaskan Malamute should be that of a powerful, balanced, athletic dog, beautiful in appearance and attentive to his surroundings. As a working sledge dog, the Alaskan Malamute should be physically fit and leave no question that he could perform his duties with the necessary strength and endurance. A Malamute should have heavy bone compared to his Arctic counterparts, with perfectly formed legs & feet, a broad head with bulky muzzle, and a balanced front and rear. The Alaskan Malamute must be balanced, with no part over or under done compared to the whole dog.

The Malamute is a natural breed that evolved to fit his environment and function. Extremes are not in keeping with a natural breed; hence the term “moderate” is used with great frequency throughout the entire standard.



**The coat is thick with a coarse guard coat of sufficient length to protect a woolly undercoat. Malamutes are of various colors. Face markings are a distinguishing feature. These consist of a cap over the head, the face either all white or marked with a bar and/or mask. The tail is well furred, carried over the back, and has the appearance of a waving plume.**

A harsh double coat is a survival characteristic vital in this breed. Lengths may vary but the coat should never be excessively long or soft & silky. Colors range from silver & white and solid white, through various shades of gray, sable or red, to the darkest jet black & white. Distinctive and varying facial markings make each dog a unique specimen. All allowed colors and markings are equally acceptable and no preference should be given when judging. Tails arch over the back like a waving plume, not snapped, tightly curled or lying on the back.

**The Malamute must be a heavy boned dog with sound legs, good feet, deep chest and powerful shoulders, and have all of the other physical attributes necessary for the efficient performance of his job. The gait must be steady, balanced, tireless and totally efficient. He is not intended as a racing sled dog designed to compete in speed trials. The Malamute is structured for strength and endurance, and any characteristic of the individual specimen, including temperament, which interferes with the accomplishment of this purpose, is to be considered the most serious of faults.**



The Malamute is an endurance dog, built to carry heavy loads at a moderate speed over long distances. Therefore, soundness of legs and feet with a perfectly balanced gait is a top priority. Every Malamute is attractive, but physical attributes must always take precedence over cosmetic traits. Judges must understand that the goal of the Alaskan Malamute Club of America is to preserve our breed, its survival characteristics, and working heritage.

## **SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE**

**There is a natural range in size in the breed. The desirable freighting sizes are males, 25” at the shoulders, 85 pounds; females 23” at the shoulders, 75 pounds. However, size consideration should not outweigh that of type, proportion, movement and other functional attributes. When dogs are judged equal in type, proportion, movement, the dog nearest the desirable freighting size is to be preferred.**



The Alaskan Malamute should be heavier and more powerful than the other Northern breeds, yet he should not be ponderous or clumsy. There is a natural range of sizes around the desirable

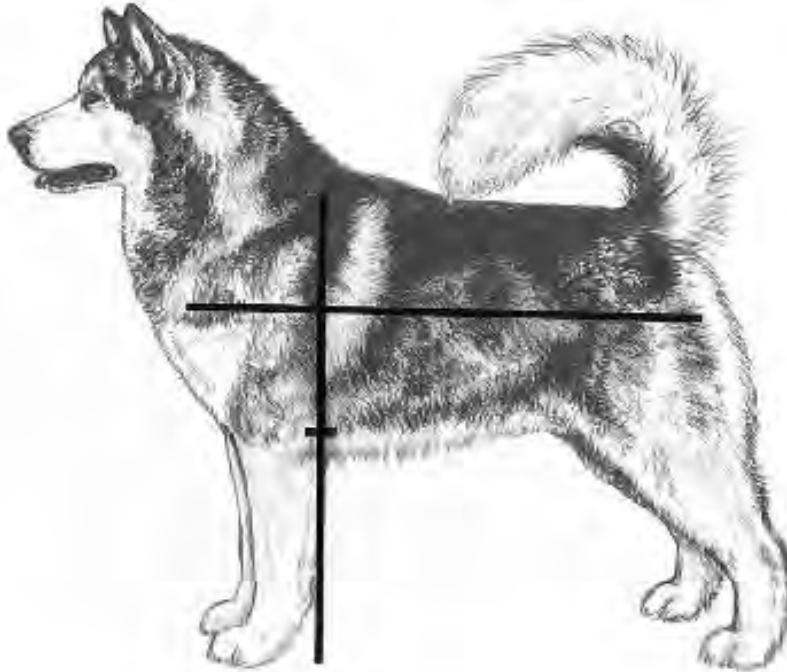
freighting size. While the standard allows for these variables, it is important to understand that there are valuable reasons for the ideal freighting sizes quoted in the standard. Dogs that are significantly undersized or oversized may lack the strength or endurance to efficiently perform their intended duties. When judging the Alaskan Malamute, it is necessary to feel the withers to obtain a correct assessment of size, as the coat length over the withers and back can create an illusion of added height.

**The depth of chest is approximately one half the height of the dog at the shoulders, the deepest point being just behind the forelegs. The length of the body from point of shoulder to the rear point of pelvis is longer than the height of the body from the ground to top of the withers. The body carries no excess weight, and bone is in proportion to size.**



As an athlete, the Malamute should never appear overweight or out of condition. The heavy bone required by the standard must be balanced to the individual dog. Malamutes must appear neither ponderous nor fine-boned. Judges should not limit themselves to a visual appraisal of bone, as the amount of leg hair can be misleading.

Chest depth comes with maturity; therefore younger specimens may not yet have the preferred chest depth. Likewise a Malamute should not be so deep-chested that he appears out of balance or “overloaded” in the front. It is important that the length of body be only slightly longer than the height. A long loin that weakens the back, or a short back that impedes movement, both reduce the Malamute’s endurance capability and are equally faulty.



## HEAD

The head is broad and deep, not coarse or clumsy, but in proportion to the size of the dog. The expression is soft and indicates an affectionate disposition. The eyes are obliquely placed in the skull. Eyes are brown, almond shaped and of medium size. Dark eyes are preferred. *Blue eyes are a Disqualifying Fault.*



*correct head, eyes & ear placement*



The Alaskan Malamute's broad head and bulky muzzle are important distinguishing features, defining type and clarifying the Malamute's difference from other natural breeds.

The Malamute's head and expression indicate a high degree of intelligence. The eyes, by their position, dark brown color, almond shape, and oblique set, give the Malamute his required soft expression, a hallmark of the breed. Dogs with black or heavy facial markings still display a friendly appearance if the eyes are correct in shape, color and set.



*eyes too round & protruding*



*eyes too small & squinted*

**The ears are of medium size, but small in proportion to the head. The ears are triangular in shape and slightly rounded at the tips. They are set wide apart on the outside back edges of the skull on line with the upper corner of the eye, giving ears the appearance, when erect, of standing off from the skull. Erect ears point slightly forward, but when the dog is at work, the ears are sometimes folded against the skull. High set ears are a fault.**



*correct head & ear placement*



*correct head with ears more alert*

When the Malamute is in full coat, the ears appear smaller due to the heavy fur around the head & ears. The ears should be well-furred, have thick leather, and show no signs of weakness when the dog is standing or moving. Judges should note the eye line, and fault ears that are tall and set too high, and ears that are set too low and wide. The mobility of the Malamute's ears allows him to raise, lower, or rotate his ears back when working or moving. Therefore judges should determine correct ear set & placement when the dog is alert.



*ears pointed, too large & high set*



*ears too large & set too wide, domed skull*

**The skull is broad and moderately rounded between the ears, gradually narrowing and flattening on top as it approaches the eyes, rounding off to cheeks that are moderately flat. There is a slight furrow between the eyes. The topline of the skull**

**and the topline of the muzzle show a slight break downward from a straight line as they join.**



*correct head, muzzle length & stop*

The Alaskan Malamute's skull is shaped like a broad wedge, having no sharp angles or hollows. There is adequate fill under the eyes to allow smooth integration with the bulky muzzle.

As described by the standard, the stop is relatively slight on the Malamute. Fatty layers around the eyes may create the image of a stop and a slight furrow between the eyes. Dogs having a well-defined or extreme stop will exhibit incorrect eye placement and a rounder eye. In those dogs completely lacking stop, the eyes will appear too close together.



*domed head, stop too abrupt, muzzle too short, loose flews*

*lack of stop*

**The muzzle is large and bulky in proportion to the size of the skull, diminishing slightly in width and depth from the junction with the skull to the nose. In all coat colors, except reds, the nose, lips, and eye rims' pigmentation is black. Brown is**

**permitted in red dogs. The lighter streaked “snow nose” is acceptable. The lips are close fitting. The upper and lower jaws are broad with large teeth. The incisors meet with a scissors grip. Overshot or undershot is a fault.**

The Malamute’s large muzzle is relatively short and bulky, but should not appear stubby. The muzzle is slightly shorter from the nose to the stop than from the stop to the base of the occiput. Black pigmentation on the nose, lips and eye rims is required in all coat colors except red, which permits brown. The common and acceptable “snow nose” (a pinkish stripe on the nose) should be distinguished from a permanent lack of pigmentation.



*muzzle too long & narrow, lack of underjaw*

The broad and powerful jaws should be properly aligned. The teeth are large and meet with a scissors bite.



*correct scissors bite*

## NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

The neck is strong and moderately arched. The chest is well developed. The body is compactly built but not short coupled. The back is straight and gently sloping to the hips. The loins are hard and well muscled. A long loin that may weaken the back is a fault.



The Malamute's neck should be deep and well muscled. It should display a pleasing arch when viewed from the side and blend smoothly into the shoulders and back. Lack of proper shoulder angulation will often give a dog the appearance of having no definable neck.

The Malamute's chest is broad and deep. A well developed chest will not be hollow, narrow, or pinched at the elbows. It should not be so broad that the elbows are displaced, rendering the dog incapable of correct front extension when moving. The Malamute must not be barrel chested or slab sided, but the chest must have the capacity to expand to accommodate the oxygen demands necessary for endurance. The prosternum must not be exaggerated but can be easily felt upon examination.



*pinched elbows*



*front too broad, out at elbows*

The topline is strong, straight and displays a slight slope towards the rear. This slope should not be so steep or exaggerated as to interfere with the power of the rear movement. While moving, the topline should remain firm with no indications of weakness such as rolling, bouncing, dipping or roaching. The arch of the Malamute's tail frequently causes the coat on the rump to rise, giving the appearance that the dog is high in the rear. Therefore it is vital that judges feel the topline rather than rely on a visual appraisal.

The standard describes the Malamute as having a compact body yet not short coupled. A short loin will impede the extension of movement. The loin must have sufficient length for economy of motion, but never be so long as to weaken the back.



*roached topline*



*sagging topline & long loin*

**The tail is moderately set and follows the line of the spine at the base. The tail is carried over the back when not working. It is not a snap tail or curled tight against the back, nor is it short furred like a fox brush. The Malamute tail is well furred and has the appearance of a waving plume.**



*correct tailset & carriage*

The Alaskan Malamute's "waving plume" tail is a distinguishing type characteristic of the breed. The tail follows the line of the spine, curving loosely over the back. It should be well furred and of sufficient length to display the arched waving plume. It should not be tightly curled, snapped, or drop heavily to a side. It is common for a Malamute to relax the tail down while standing or trail the tail behind when working or moving.



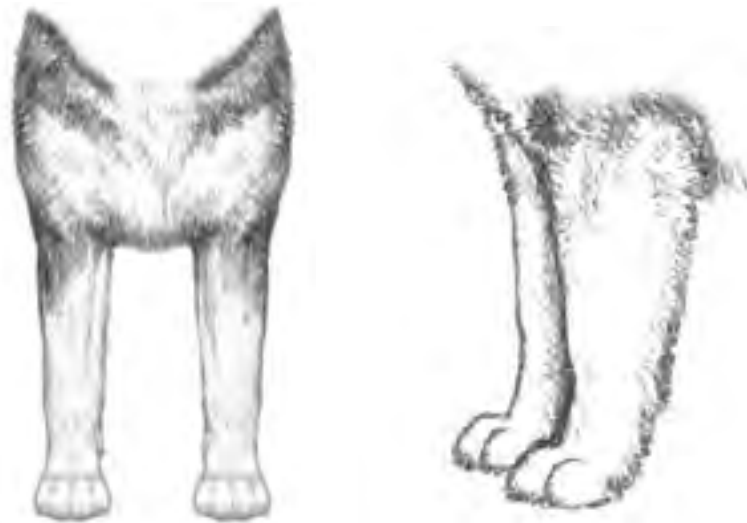
*tail snapped to one side*

*tail too short*

*tightly-curved tail*

## **FOREQUARTERS**

**The shoulders are moderately sloping; forelegs heavily boned and muscled, straight to the pasterns when viewed from the front. Pasterns are short and strong and slightly sloping when viewed from the side.**



Proper moderately sloping shoulders are essential for adequate reach while moving. The upper arm (humerus) should be at least as long as the shoulder blade (scapula). Heavily boned and muscled forelegs appear as straight parallel columns and should travel straight

and true, converging towards a centerline as speed increases. A correct front will not toe-in or toe-out when the dog is moving.

Pasterns are strong and relatively short. It is important for judges to realize that the slope of the pastern is only very slight for flexibility purposes. Heavily sloping pasterns will weaken the stride and eventually break down. Additionally, weak pasterns will prevent the dog from having the desired tight foot with strong toes. Completely upright pasterns are usually the result of a straight shoulder and should likewise be faulted.



*pasterns too sloping with flatter foot*



*pasterns too long & straight*

**The feet are of the snowshoe type, tight and deep, with well-cushioned pads, giving a firm, compact appearance. The feet are large, toes tight fitting and well arched. There is a protective growth of hair between the toes. The pads are thick and tough; toenails short and strong.**



It has often been said that “a Malamute is built from the ground up” and there is no doubt that having proper feet is a vital component for survival in the arctic environment. The Malamute’s snowshoe feet are LARGE, compact and well furred, with highly muscled toes. They should never be small, flat or splayed. Footpads are thick and well cushioned, and should not be visible on the rear feet when the dog is standing. Trimming of the feet is permitted to give a neat, clean appearance.





*feet too small*



*splayed foot*

## HINDQUARTERS

**The rear legs are broad and heavily muscled through the thighs; stifles moderately bent; hock joints are moderately bent and well let down.**



*correct rear stances displaying a well let down hock*

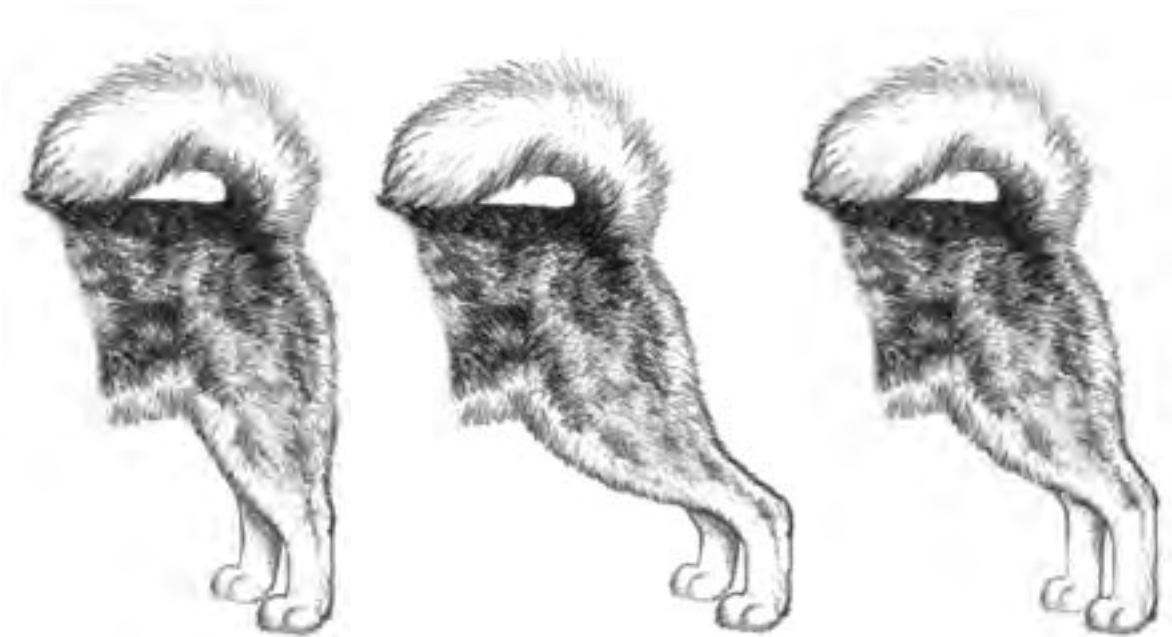
As with all structural attributes of the Malamute, moderation and perfect balance are again the key factors. The rear assembly must correspond to and be compatible with the front assembly for the Malamute to function correctly. The strong rear legs are moderately angulated and display tremendous power. Thighs are thick and echo the heavy muscle called for throughout the Malamute standard. The hocks appear relatively short, turning neither in nor out, and are well let down to aid in the powerful drive needed from the rear.



*incorrect cowhocked rear*

**When viewed from the rear, the legs stand and move true in line with the movement of the front legs, not too close or too wide. Dewclaws on the rear legs are undesirable and should be removed shortly after puppies are whelped.**

Rear movement should drive straight and powerful, with no wasted motion or weakness in legs or hocks. Dogs with insufficient rear angle may move with a stilted or choppy gait. Overangulated dogs can exhibit a “flying” side gait but, viewed from behind, the rear movement may be weak, cow-hocked or wobbly. The Malamute’s rear movement may initially start wide but must converge to a normal gait within a very few steps.



*rear too straight*

*overangulated rear*

*hocks too long*

## COAT

**The Malamute has a thick, coarse guard coat, never long and soft. The undercoat is dense, from one to two inches in depth, oily and wooly. 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.**

The texture and quality of the Malamute's coat was critical for survival in the Arctic environment. A double coat with harsh, water-repellant properties allowed these dogs to withstand extreme temperatures and difficult conditions. Texture is the most important consideration in determining a correct coat. The oily & wooly undercoat is approximately 1-2" in depth and is softer to the touch. The 3-4" guard coat should not be long or soft yet will be more profuse around the neck, down to back, and in the pants & tail area. Bitches may have a somewhat shorter coat, but it should be no less dense. Some dogs have more impressive coats than others do but a shorter dense coat is also correct.

**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.**

When a Malamute sheds his winter coat, there will be almost no undercoat and the guard hairs may lay flat. This is a normal occurrence and should be judged accordingly. Altering the texture of the body coat with foreign substances or any trimming other than on the feet is completely unacceptable.

## COLOR

**The usual colors range from light gray through intermediate shadings to black, sable, and shadings of sable to red. Color combinations are acceptable in undercoats, points, and trimmings. The only solid color allowable is all white. White is always the predominant color on underbody, parts of legs, feet, and part of face markings.**

The basic colors for guard coats are black, white, red and gray combinations. The hair strands contain bands of color with the lightest color being at the base and the darkest color at the tip. Depending upon the intensity and how these bands are distributed, the appearance of the coat color can range from very light to very dark.



**light gray & white**



**dark gray & white**



**red & white**



**sable & white**



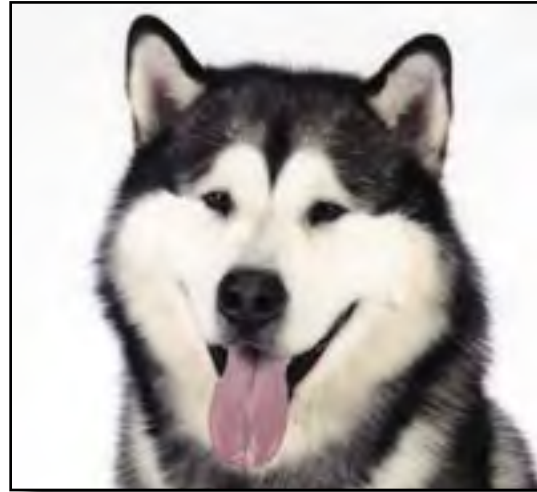
**black & white**



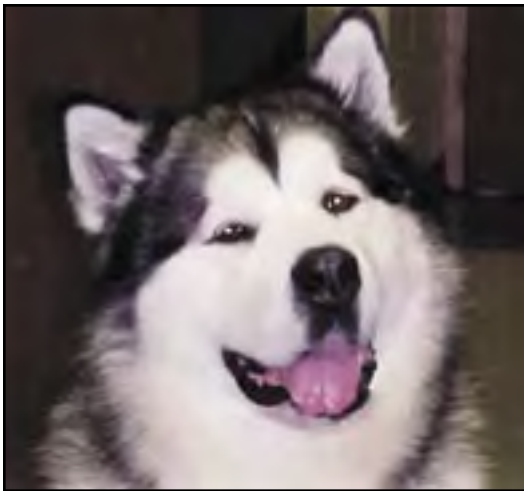
**seal & white**



white



open face



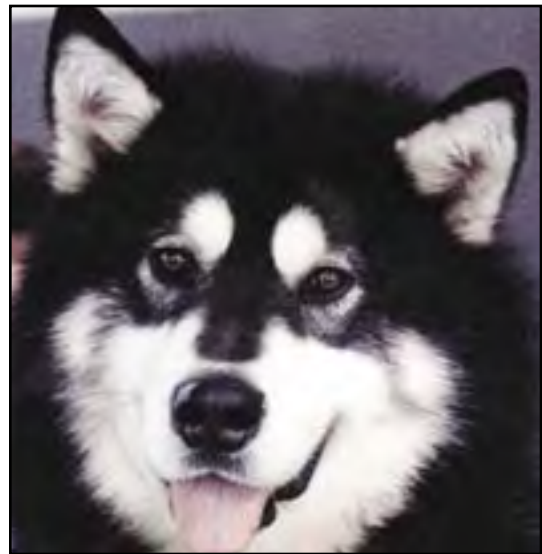
snow nose



mask with star (left) & mask with blaze (right)



cap with goggles & eyeshadow



full mask with goggles & bar



Malamutes can have trimmings, which are shades of gold, cream, brown, buff or red found on legs, ears, tails, face markings & underbellies. Trimmings are located around the margins of color where the light and dark shades meet and frequently extend into the color.

Chest markings may be solid white or may contain bands of dark coloring. A single curving band of dark color is called a necklace. An eagle marking represents two bands of color that form a pattern resembling an eagle emblem across the chest.

The variety of facial markings in the Malamute is clearly what makes each dog a unique specimen. No one color or facial marking is preferred over another. All acceptable colors & markings are equally desirable and no preference should be given in judging.

**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 colors extending over the body or uneven splashing are undesirable.**

## **GAIT**

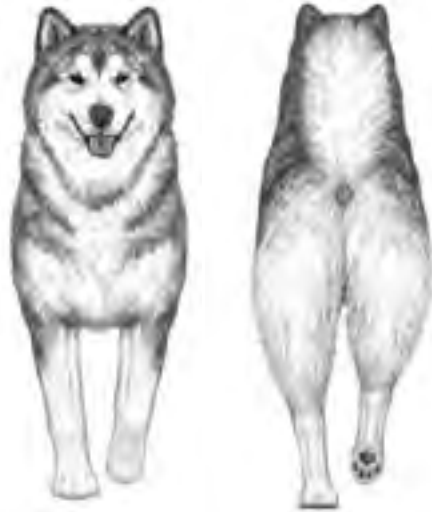
**The gait of the Malamute is steady, balanced, and powerful. He is agile for his size and build.**



*correct gait - a Malamute often gaits with the tail extended*

The Malamute is a dog who works on the move, often negotiating steep, uneven terrain, obstacles in his path, or sharp turns. Therefore soundness and endurance in the gait is his most vital attribute. His movement should denote power while displaying agility and tirelessness.

**When viewed from the side, the hindquarters exhibit strong rear drive that is transmitted through a well-muscled loin to the forequarters. The forequarters receive the drive from the rear with a smooth reaching stride. When viewed from the front or from the rear, the legs move true in line, not too close or too wide. At a fast trot, the feet will converge toward the centerline of the body.**



The Malamute should have a smooth, reaching stride with strong rear drive from the hindquarters, through the loin to the forequarters. This breed is not intended to have the flying trot of some Herding breeds. Extension should be moderate and smoothly delivered with no high kicks, paddling feet, or wasted motion. Excessive follow-through may be impressive to the eye, but it is wasted and inefficient motion.

The head and neck will extend forward and the back must remain strong, with no roaching, dipping or rolling, to hold the straight line of power in the gait. As explained in the Forequarters and Hindquarters sections, the front and rear legs should move true in line and converge towards a centerline as speed increases. If the Malamute's front and rear assemblies meet the criteria of the standard, he will not crab, overreach, interfere, or display any other movement faults.

**A stilted gait, or any gait that is not completely efficient and tireless, is to be penalized.**



Insufficient angulation in the front and/or rear creates a shortened stride, thereby forcing the dog to take more steps to cover the same distance as a correctly structured dog.

Movement is one of the most important factors in judging the Alaskan Malamute breed. Any deviation from a totally sound, effortless and efficient gait should be severely penalized.

## **TEMPERAMENT**

**The Alaskan Malamute is an affectionate, friendly dog, not a “one man” dog. He is a loyal, devoted companion, playful upon invitation, but generally impressive by his dignity after maturity.**

The Malamute is a true pack animal with the natural instinct to “lead or be led.” This results in an independent, self-confident and strong willed personality, and explains why Malamutes can sometimes be aggressive with other dogs of the same sex. While historically guardians of campsites and Eskimo children, the Malamute is not the type of guard dog that sees a threat in eye contact or the approach of strangers. Dogs who react negatively towards people do not typify correct Malamute temperament and any sign of aggression towards humans is unacceptable.

Young Malamutes will react to any perceived invitation to play and their curiosity may tempt them to try to remove a judge’s dangling jewelry, hat, scarf or corsage.

## **SUMMARY**

**IMPORTANT: In judging Malamutes, their function as a sledge dog for heavy freighting in the Arctic must be given consideration above all else. The degree to which a dog is penalized should depend upon the extent to which the dog deviates from the description of the ideal Malamute and the extent to which the particular fault would actually affect the working ability of the dog.**

This summary stresses the qualities the AMCA deems vital in our breed. The Malamute no longer exists under “survival of the fittest” conditions and, as a result, important characteristics can begin to fade in varying degrees. He was and is built to pull heavy loads over long distances and that fact should be kept in mind at all times when judging this breed.

The Malamute must first look like a Malamute. If a dog lacks breed type, that dog has lost the essence of what makes his breed unique. While animation and showmanship are desirable traits



for the show ring, they should never be the deciding factors to justify awarding wins to a lesser quality animal.

**The legs of the Malamute must indicate unusual strength and tremendous propelling power. Any indication of unsoundness in legs and feet, front or rear, standing or moving, is to be considered a serious fault. Faults under this provision would be splay-footedness, cowhocks, bad pasterns, straight shoulders, lack of angulation, stilted gait (or any gait that isn't balanced, strong and steady), ranginess, shallowness, ponderousness, lightness of bone, and poor overall proportion.**

The Alaskan Malamute must possess the positive attributes that would enable him to survive and work in the harsh, primitive environment from which he originated. This Illustrated Standard has tried to emphasize those attributes while also making it clear the whole dog must be considered when evaluating our breed.

## **DISQUALIFICATION**

**Blue eyes.**



