

THE FIELD SPANIEL HUNTING DESCRIPTION

As approved by the Field Spaniel Society of America, Inc., 11/01/2006

This description of the hunting characteristics of the Field Spaniel is to describe the natural, inherited characteristics of the breed which we find desirable and want to preserve.

The Field Spaniel was developed in the Midlands of England during the mid-1800s. During this period of time, the Field was used in areas covered in blackthorn that was difficult to penetrate. The result was a dog that is persistent on scent and with an efficient ground-covering trot. The ground-covering trot is not to be confused with lack of enthusiasm since the Field will exhibit a faster extended trot or running gait when scenting conditions are easier. The Field uses his nose more than his feet in finding birds and will not cover every inch of ground in hopes of startling birds not scented: he will also naturally tend to investigate cover that his experience has taught him is likely to produce game. While a Field Spaniel should demonstrate a reasonable pattern in working in field at hand, at the same time the Field Spaniel sees no sense in adhering to a strict windshield-wiper quartering pattern once the scent cone of a bird is discovered. At this point, the Field Spaniel may well abandon a strict pattern, instead following their nose to the direct location of the bird. As the Field hones in on scent, his gait may slow as he more precisely determines the location of the bird. It is readily apparent that the closer the Field Spaniel gets to the bird, the more intense of action in the tail.

The difficulty of the original cover during development of the breed required a dog with tremendous drive and determination to fight through the brush when birds were scented. A fast hard flush at a run in these conditions was physically impossible, so the Field had to be very persistent in honing in on the scent to force the bird into flight.

While experienced dogs will quickly recognize the difference between scent from an old fall or nest, less experienced dogs will require more leeway in allowing the dog to work it out. The overall picture of the dog-handler team should be one that shows teamwork between handler and dog, including overall responsiveness to commands. However, a Field Spaniel who is certain that the bird has been wounded will work until the bird is found: this trait is simply the persistence of the breed to achieve an objective.

As the Field Spaniel approaches the bird, he may often slow down to precisely determine its' location. A momentary pause prior to routing the bird into flight is not blinking the bird, nor should it be considered a detriment as the flush will still produce birds for the gun.

Most Fields swim well. While some have a water-entry that would rival any retriever breed, others have a more deliberate entry. Either style will still get the job done.

In summary: Fields move somewhat slower than their field-bred English Springer and field-bred English Cocker Springer cousins, often starting with a burst of speed due to their intensity on the game at hand, but generally will settle into an efficient ground-covering trot which they can maintain all day. They should never appear casual as if out for a stroll in the field and should “come alive” when they hit bird scent as evidenced by the action of the tail. They should demonstrate excellent scenting ability as they investigate the faintest scent thoroughly. Once on scent, they should be persistent and show intense desire to catch the bird before it flushes. They should retrieve with reasonable speed, but will generally be somewhat slower on the return as if savoring their moment in the spotlight and anticipated reward of “That’s a good dog” from the handler. Their water entry is variable from deliberate to intense, and their swimming speed is moderately fast.