
**ILLUSTRATED DISCUSSION
OF THE
BICHON FRISE STANDARD**



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Produced by the Bichon Frise Club of America, Inc.
Based on the Standard approved by the Bichon Frise
Club of America, Inc. and the American Kennel Club
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THE ILLUSTRATED DISCUSSION OF THE BICHON FRISE STANDARD

PREFACE

On the following pages the reader will find visual assistance in interpreting the Official Standard of the Bichon Frise.

You will note great emphasis has been placed upon clearly defining the proportions of the breed. The line-drawn illustrations are not intended to be precise anatomical drawings of the Bichon. The simplified drawings do give the basic proportions and relationships which, in the end, create an ideal specimen on the breed.

Clever trimming and presentation can conceal any number of faults on a Bichon. We have therefore chosen to present as many of the illustrations as possible without hair, so that the observer may more fully understand what lies beneath the Bichon Frise's luxuriant coat.

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GENERAL APPEARANCE

“The Bichon Frise is a small, sturdy, white powder puff of a dog whose merry temperament is evidenced by his plumed tail carried jauntily over the back and his dark-eyed inquisitive expression.

This is a breed that has no gross or incapacitating exaggerations and therefore there is no inherent reason for lack of balance or unsound movement.

Any deviation from the ideal described in the standard should be penalized to the extent of the deviation. Structural faults common to all breeds are as undesirable in the Bichon Frise as in any other breed, even though such faults may not be specifically mentioned in the standard.”

DISCUSSION

If you have an eye for balance, you'll find it in the Bichon (See Fig 1). He is not so short in body as to be restricted in movement, nor is he so long as to appear clumsy and ungainly (Fig. 2).

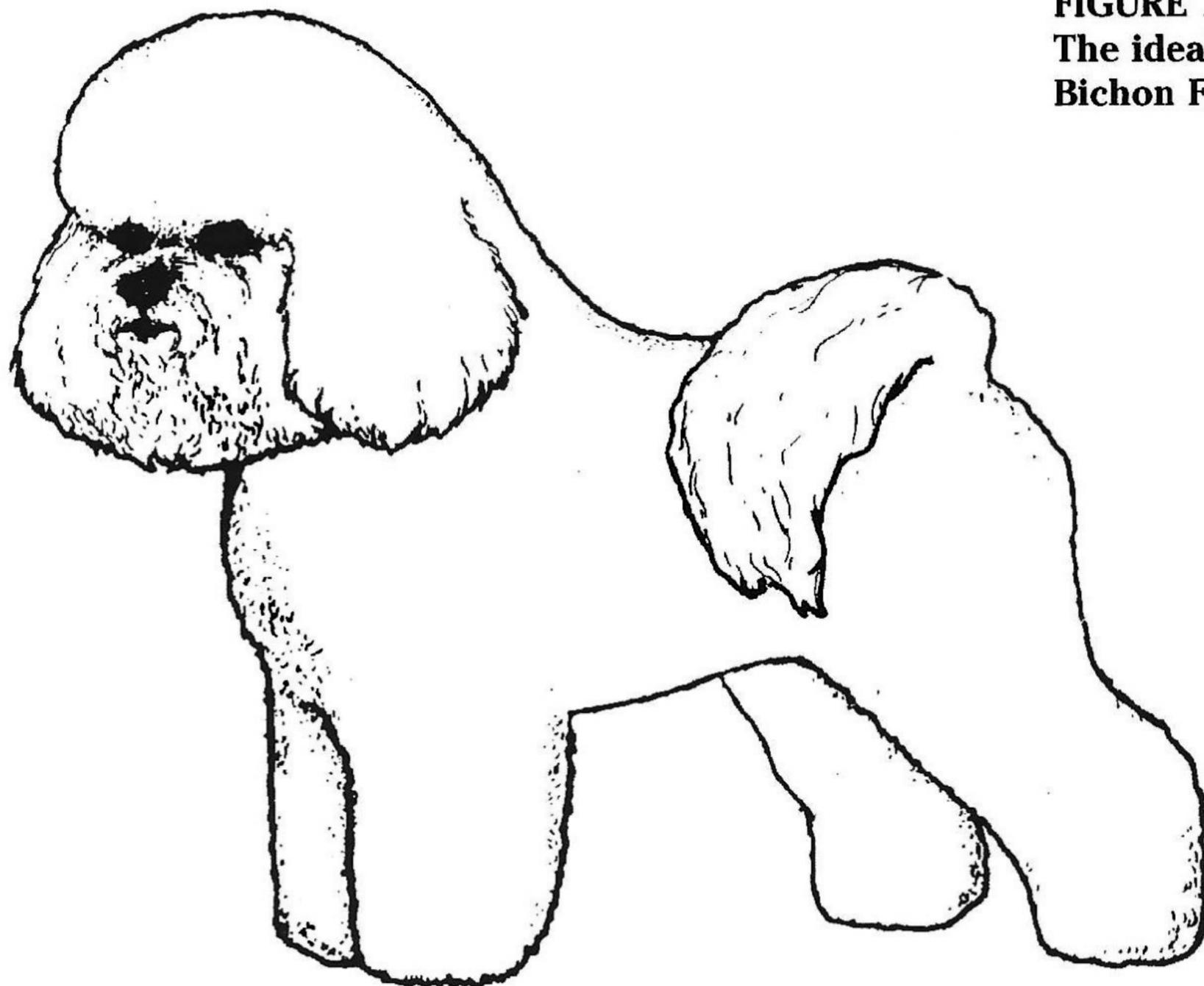
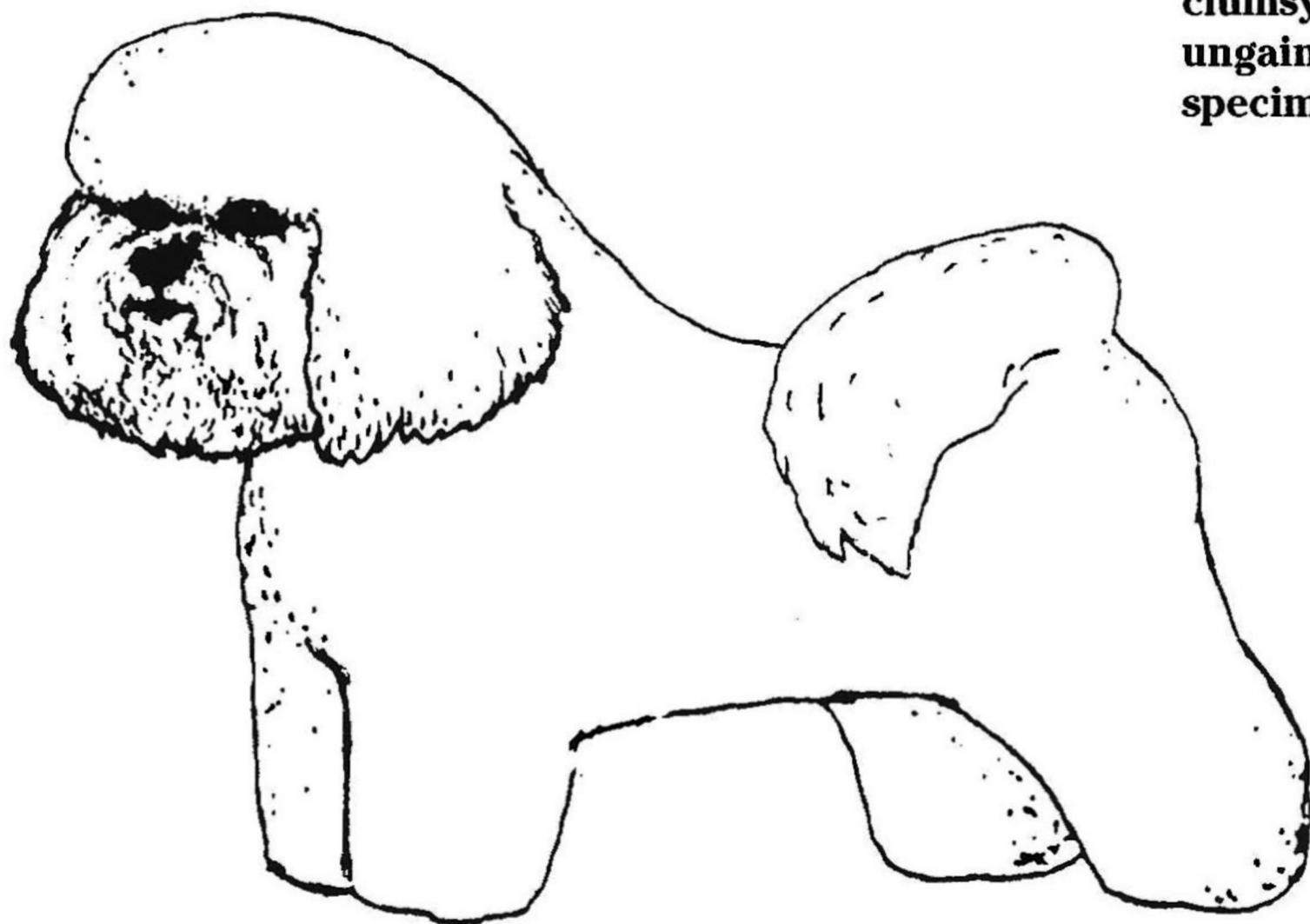


FIGURE 1
The ideal
Bichon Frise

FIGURE 2
Short legged,
clumsy and
ungainly
specimen



Look for the Bichon that stands well over his front with neck arched, head carried proudly, up on his legs with hindquarters thrust out behind.

Since he has no gross exaggerations, the ideal Bichon should be one of the best moving dogs in the ring. The balance of his parts and his angulation allow for smooth and efficient movement.

The Bichon is a sturdy dog for its size, with a not-too-sculptured-looking white coat. A truly outstanding example of the breed will exude elegance and assurance. His sunny attitude, carriage and sparkling black-against-white expression complete the picture of agility and alertness.

While some faults common to all dogs are not specified in this Standard, they should be given as much consideration as they would in any breed.

SIZE, PROPORTION AND SUBSTANCE

SIZE: “Dogs and bitches 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches are to be given primary preference. Only where the comparative superiority of a specimen outside this range clearly justifies it should greater latitude be taken. In no case, however, should this latitude ever extend over 12 inches or under 9 inches. The minimum limits do not apply to puppies.”

DISCUSSION

Equal consideration must be given to all Bichons within the preferred size range, all other things being equal. It must be remembered that this could well include a top of the scale bitch and/or a bottom of the scale dog. The standard provides considerable latitude in order to include all superior specimens. Decisions should never be made on the basis of size alone, as size constitutes only one small portion of the standard's requirements.

PROPORTION: "The body from the forward most point of the chest to the point of the rump is $\frac{1}{4}$ longer than the height at the withers. The body from the withers to the lowest point of chest represents $\frac{1}{2}$ the distance from withers to ground."

DISCUSSION

Correct proportions are of the utmost importance in defining Bichon type and must be adhered to in order to achieve proper balance.

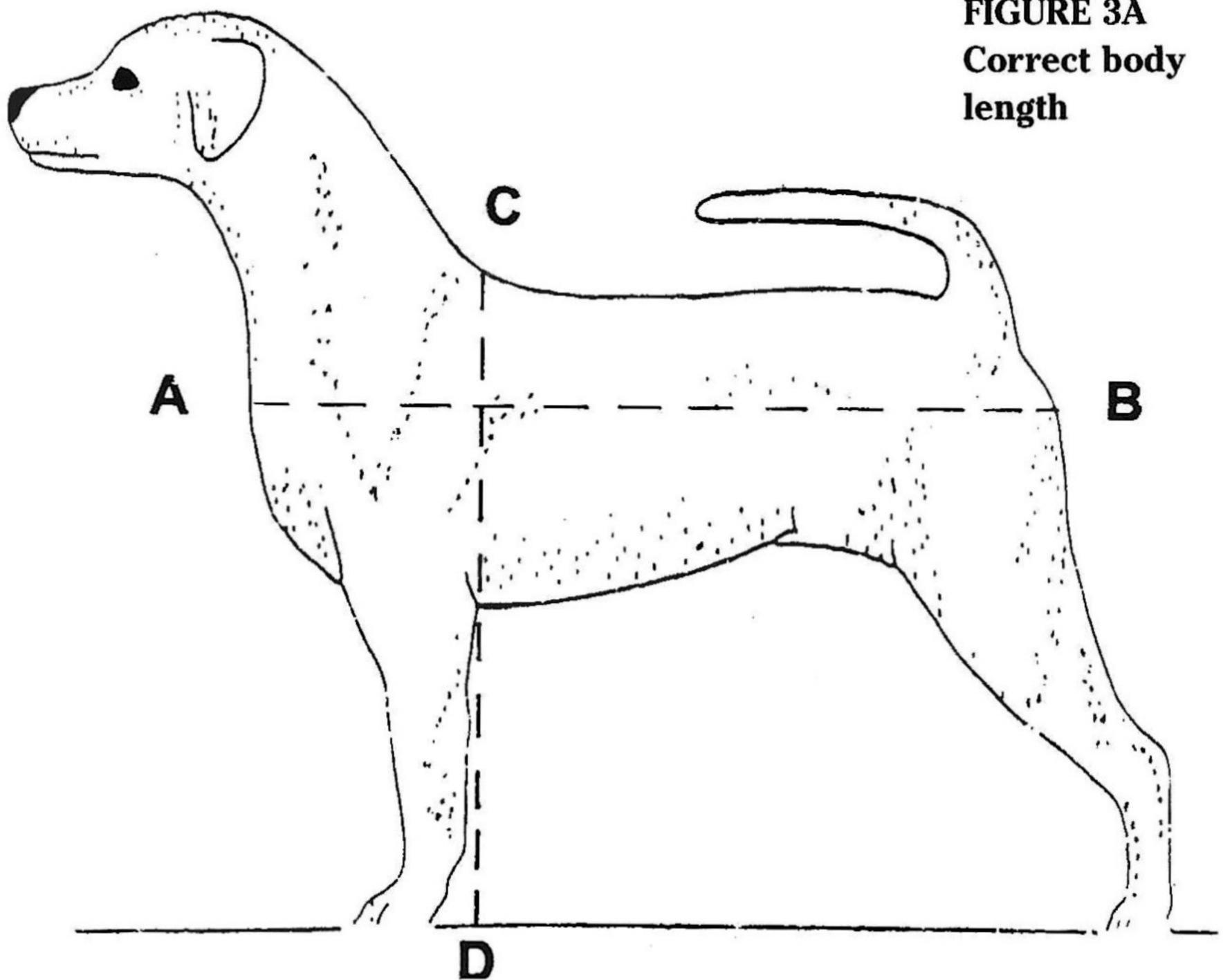


FIGURE 3A
Correct body
length

Body length measurement (A-B) is one-fourth longer than height (C-D) measured from highest point of withers to ground

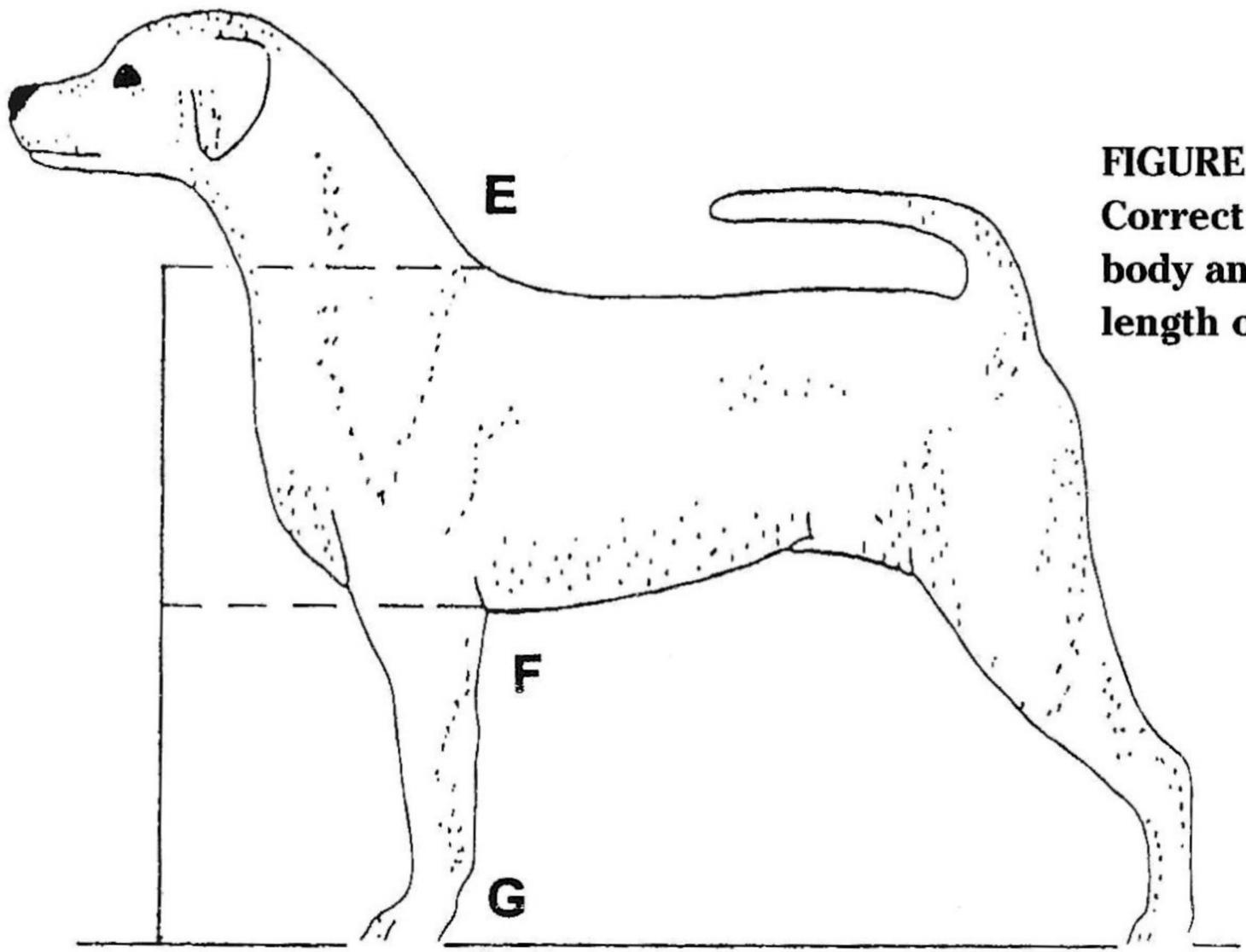


FIGURE 3B
Correct depth of
body and correct
length of leg

Correct depth of body (E-F) is $\frac{1}{2}$ of height (E-G) and correct length of leg (F-G) is $\frac{1}{2}$ of entire height (E-G).

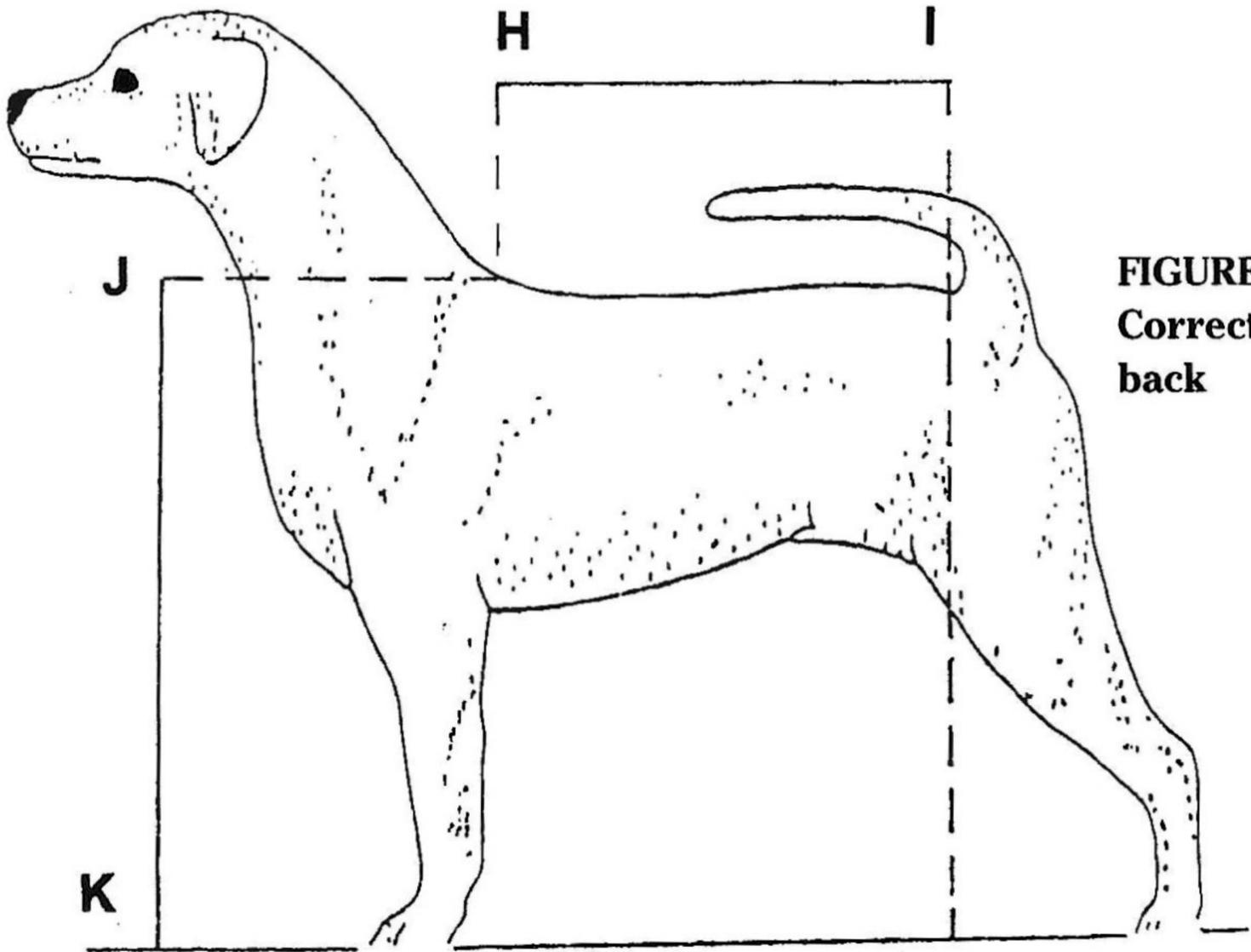


FIGURE 3C
Correct length of
back

Given these correct proportions as stated in the standard, it would then follow that the measurement from withers to tail, generally referred to as length of back, (H-I) would be shorter than the dog's height at withers (J-K) — approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ less than height at withers.

These are common faults of balance found in the Bichon Frise. With careful observation of these illustrations, one can understand why special emphasis is placed on correct balance.

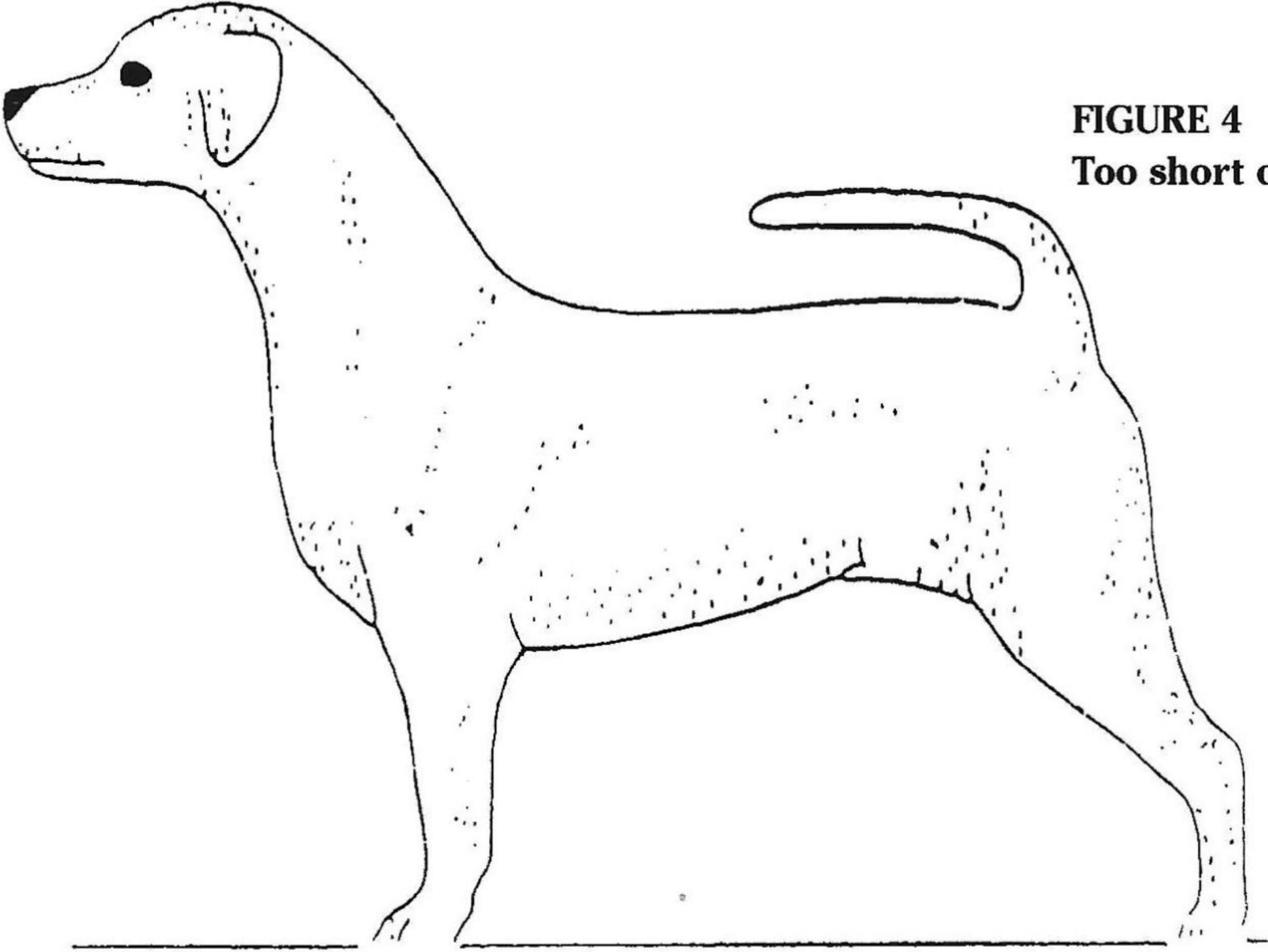


FIGURE 4
Too short on leg

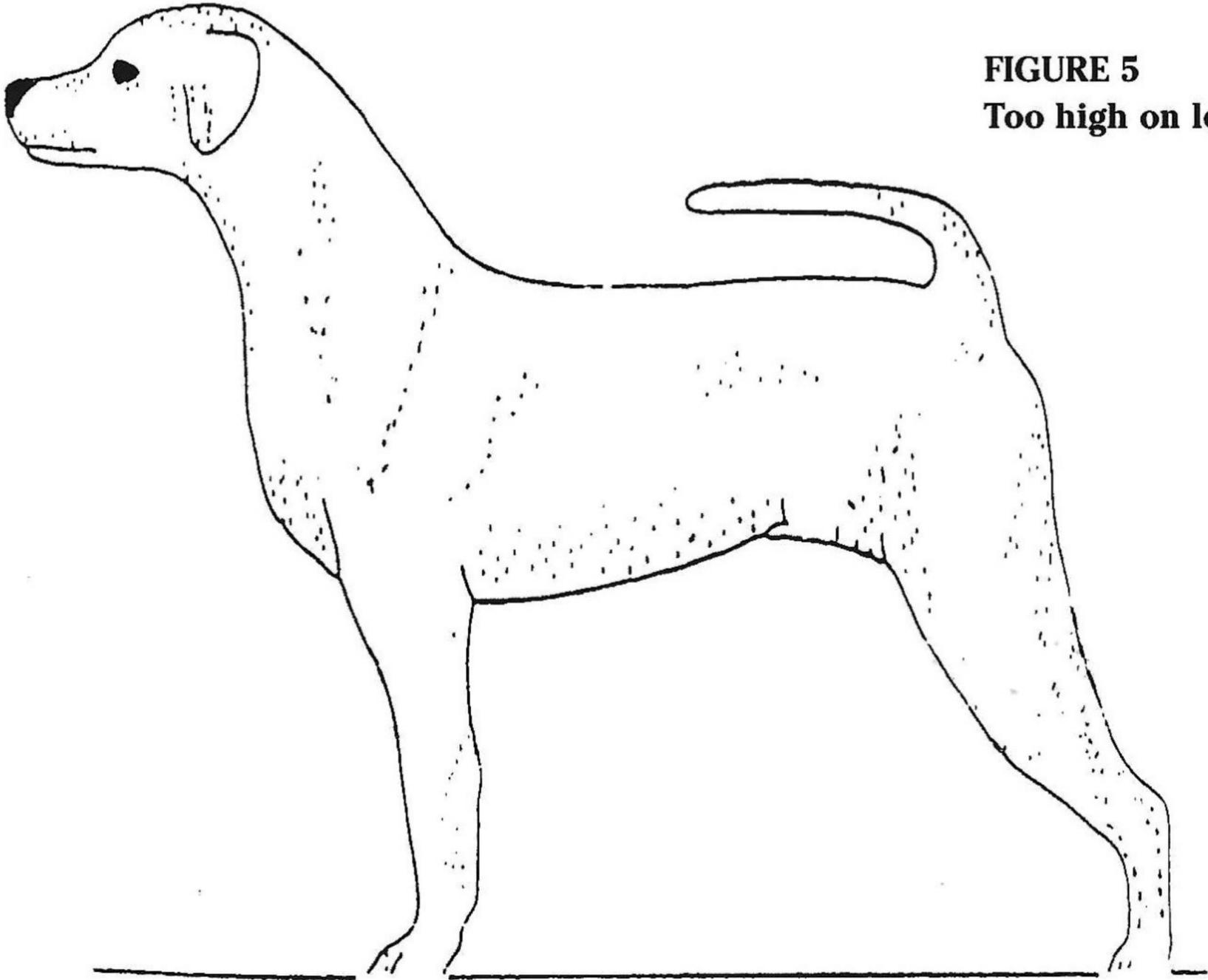


FIGURE 5
Too high on leg

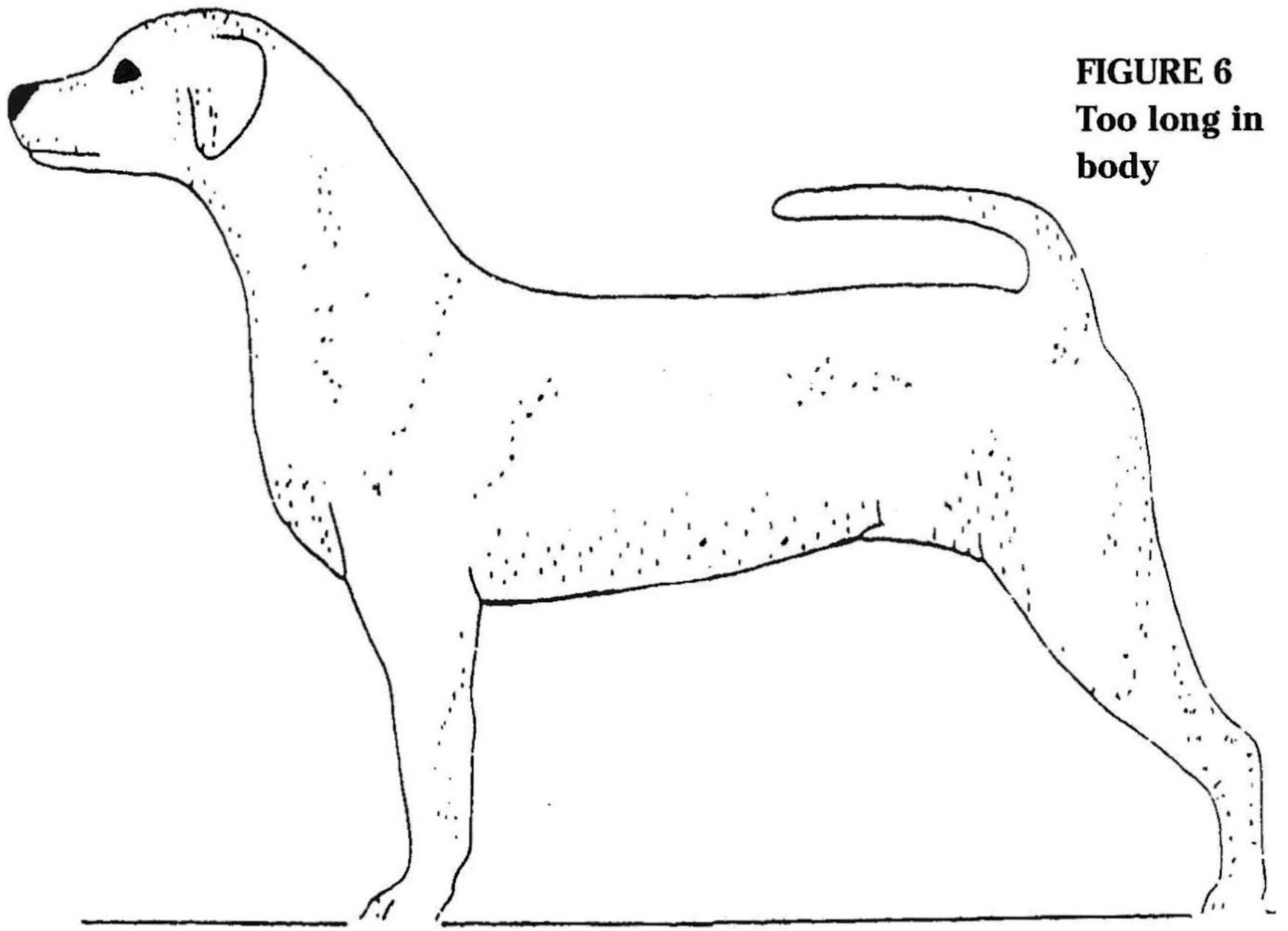


FIGURE 6
Too long in
body

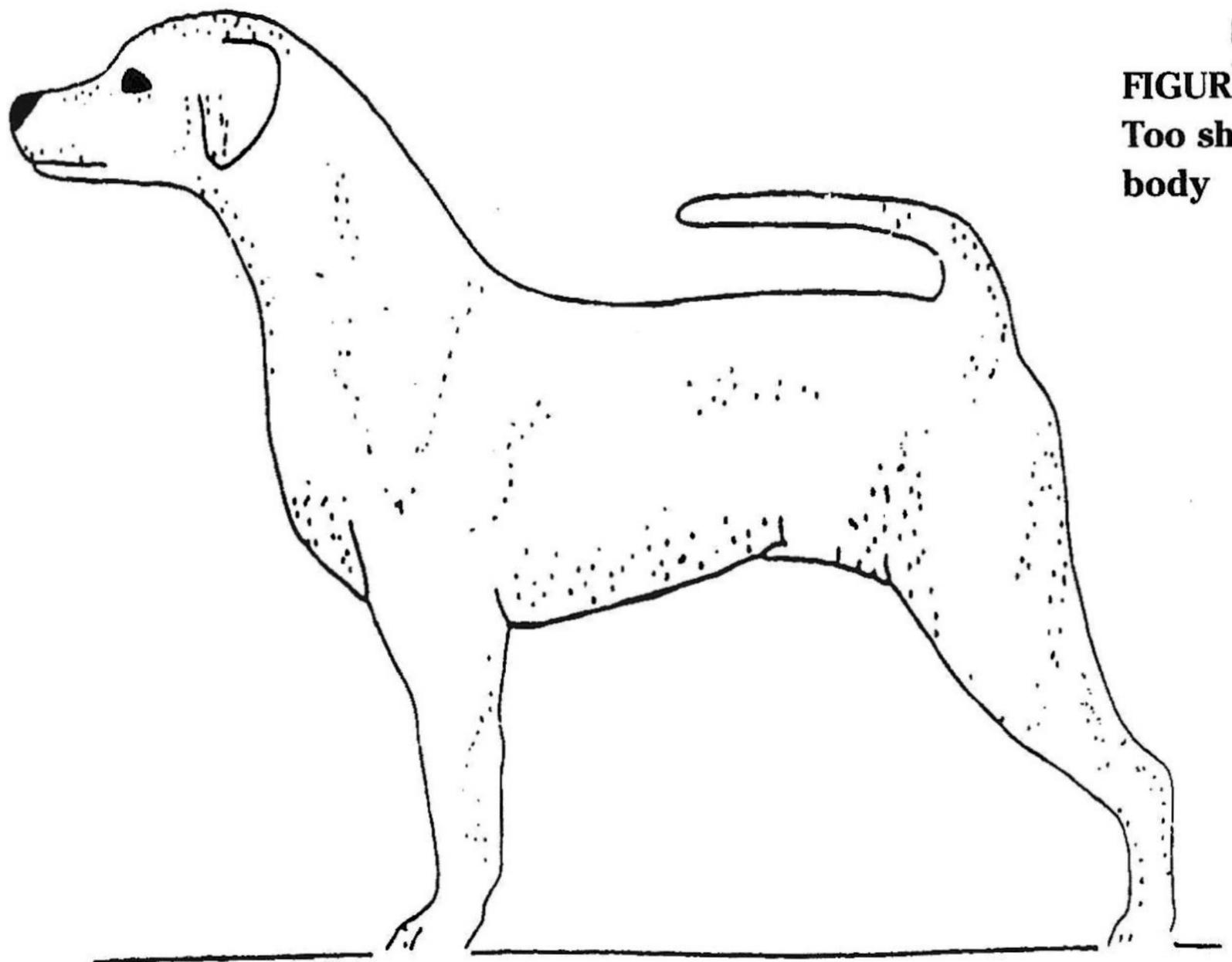


FIGURE 7
Too short in
body

SUBSTANCE: “Compact and of medium bone throughout; neither coarse nor fine.”

DISCUSSION

It is important to understand that the word “compact” for the purpose of this Standard refers to firmly jointed or well-knit.

HEAD

EXPRESSION: “Soft dark-eyed, inquisitive, alert.”

EYES: “Round, black or dark brown and are set in the skull to look directly forward. An overly large or bulging eye is a fault as is an almond shaped, obliquely set eye. Halos, the black or very dark brown skin surrounding the eyes, are necessary as they accentuate the eye and enhance expression. The eye rims themselves must be black. Broken pigment or total absence of pigment on the eye rims produce a blank and staring expression, which is a definite fault. Eyes of any color other than black or dark brown are a very serious fault and must be severely penalized.”

DISCUSSION

When looking into a Bichon’s face, one should be struck by the circle of white punctuated with the three black points of the eyes and nose. (Figs. 8 & 9). It is important to note that the darker the eye, the more pleasing the expression. Light eyes, and/or lack of halos, seriously detract from overall expression and should be penalized accordingly

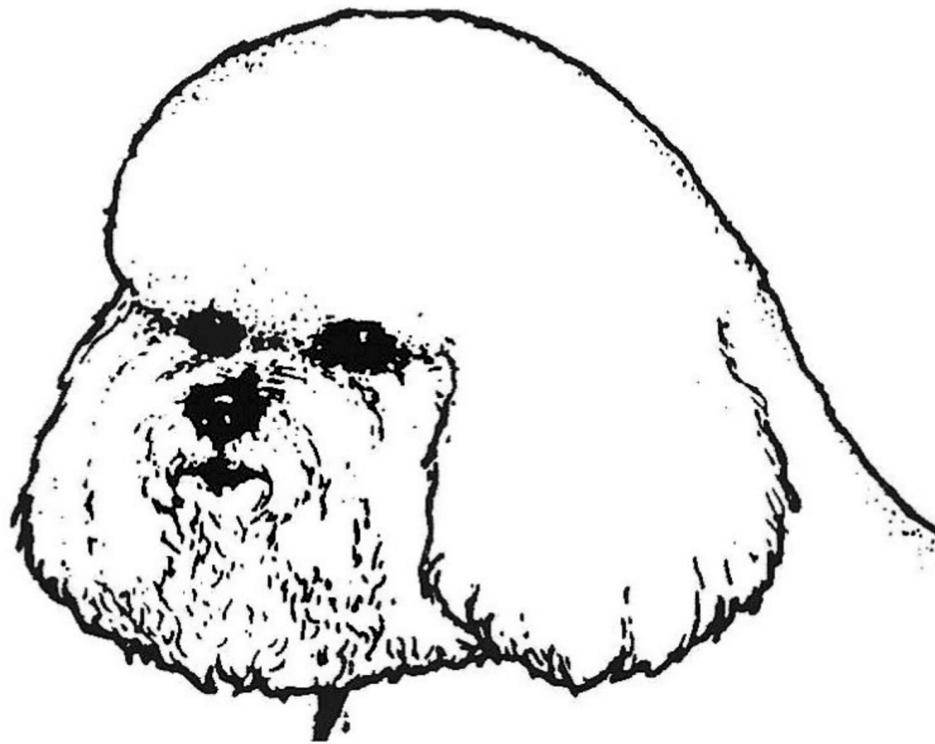


FIGURE 8
The ideal head expression

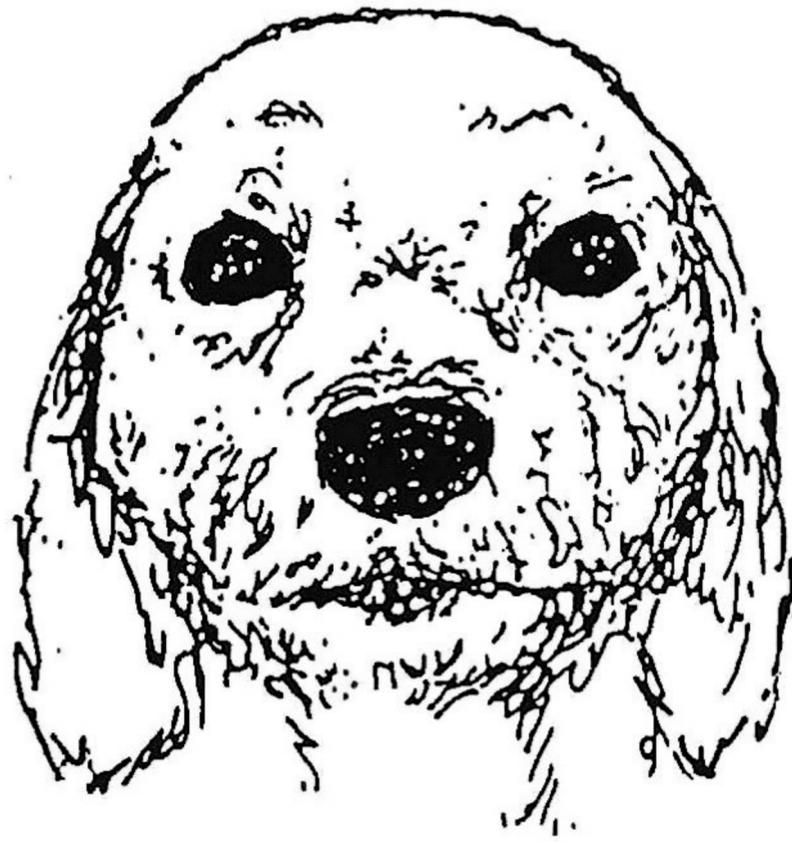


FIGURE 9
The ideal head
with coat
removed

EARS: “Ears are drop and are covered with long flowing hair. When extended toward the nose, the leathers reach approximately halfway the length of the muzzle. They are set on slightly higher than eye level and rather forward on the skull, so that when the dog is alert they serve to frame the face.”

DISCUSSION

The ear leather is short, v-shaped and rather fine (Fig. 10). When the Bichon is at attention, the high and forward carriage of the ears help fill the circular frame of the coat that surrounds the face.

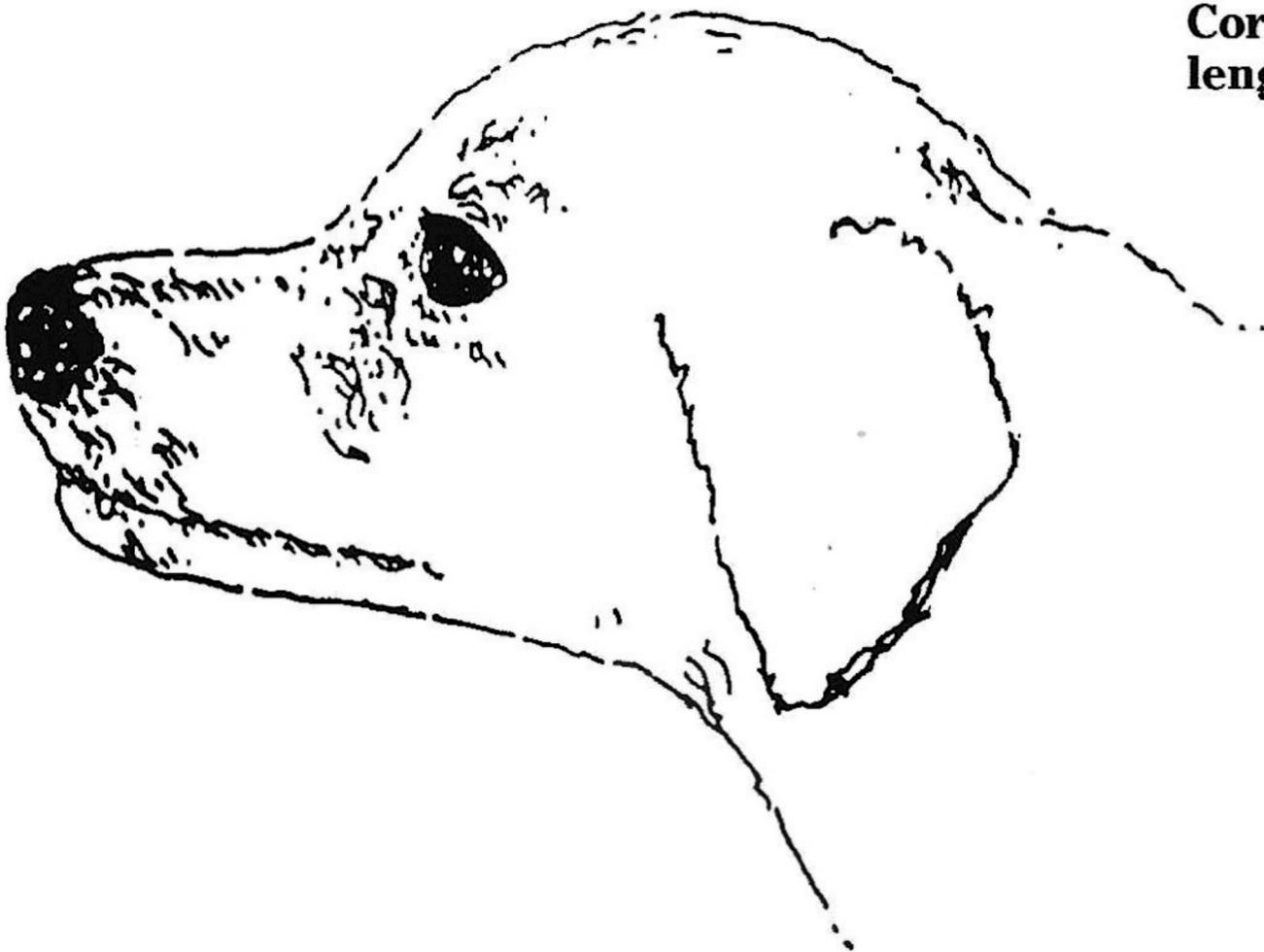


FIGURE 10
Correct set and
length of ear

Long, low-set ears, or those set far back on the skull (Fig. 11), ruin the expression in that they result in a soulful “Spaniel look.” This is the antithesis of the pert and lively expression desired. Ears of this type are frequently accompanied by loose and pendulous skin about the mouth, which is definitely undesirable.

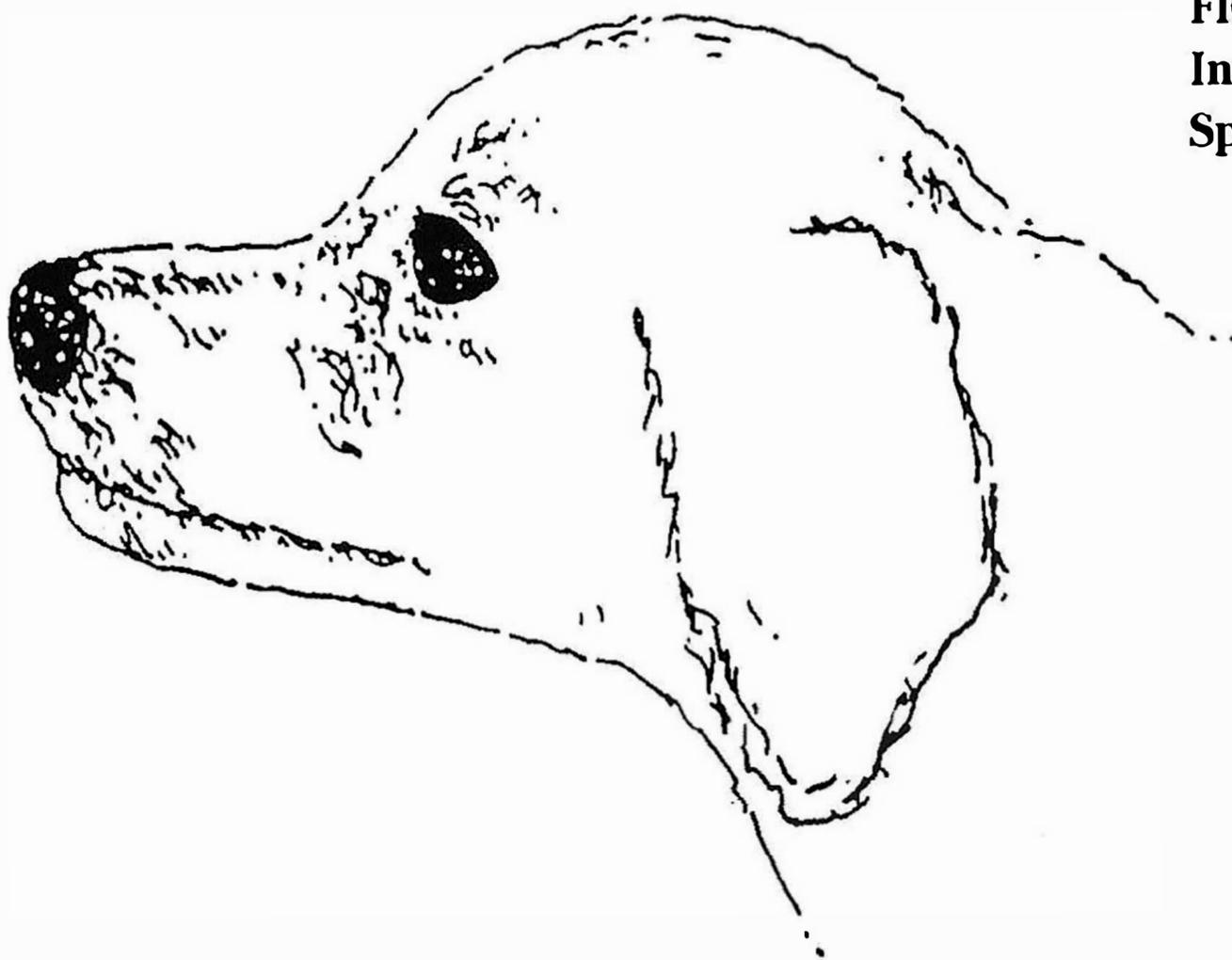


FIGURE 11
Incorrect
Spaniel-type ear

SKULL: “The skull is slightly rounded, allowing for a round and forward looking eye.”

STOP: “The stop is slightly accentuated.”

MUZZLE: “A properly balanced head is three parts muzzle to five parts skull, measured from the nose to the stop and from the stop to the occiput. A line drawn between the outside corners of the eyes and to the nose will create a near equilateral triangle. There is a slight degree of chiseling under the eyes, but not so much as to result in a weak or snipey foreface. The lower jaw is strong.”

DISCUSSION

Looking from above, we see the Bichon Frise head with the triangle superimposed (Fig. 12). In order to accomplish this balance, the skull must be wide enough and rounded enough to accommodate good-sized, forward-looking eyes with adequate space between them (refer to Fig. 9). Without the required width of skull and convex shape we are apt to find close-set eyes or almond shaped eyes that are placed to the sides of the head.

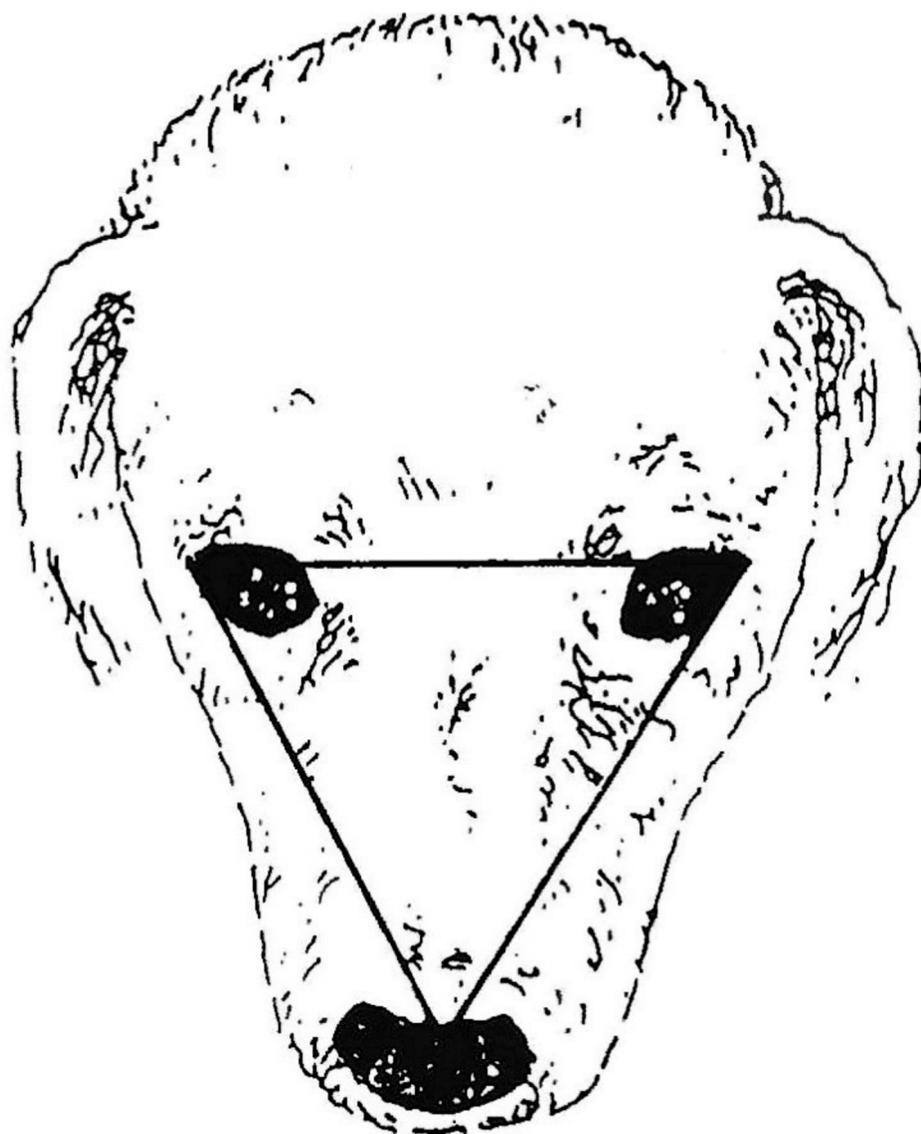


FIGURE 12
The head with
ideal triangle
superimposed.

Figure 13 illustrates the proper muzzle to skull proportion, with the slightly accentuated stop. These proportions are of great importance to the proper balance of the head. Further note the strength of under-jaw.

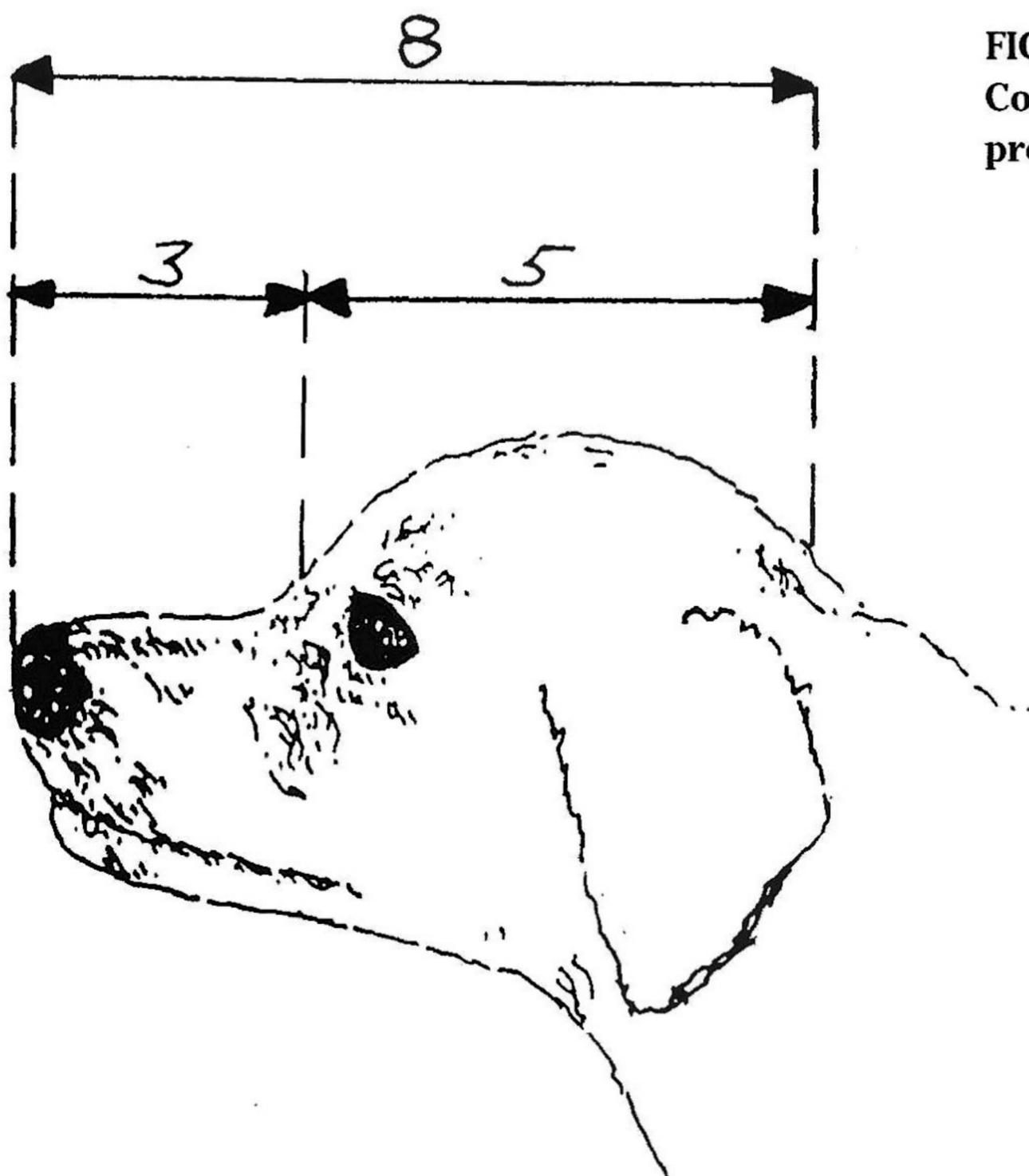


FIGURE 13
Correct head
proportions

NOSE: "The nose is prominent and always black."

LIPS: "Lips are black, fine, never drooping."

DISCUSSION

A strong, blunt, squared off nose is desired. The leather should be moderately large and prominent. A sharply receding nose is undesirable and is usually accompanied by a receding jawline (Fig. 14).



FIGURE 14
INCORRECT
receding nose
and under-jaw

The Standard is quite explicit in requiring black lips and nose. Spotted or pink areas indicate a weakness of pigment. Drooping flews would tend to reveal the pink gums of the mouth, again detracting from the black-on-white contrast desired.

BITE: "Bite is scissors. A bite which is undershot or overshot should be severely penalized. A crooked or out of line tooth is permissible, however, missing teeth are to be severely faulted."

DISCUSSION

A scissors bite is required (Fig. 15A). Strength and width of jaw (both upper and lower) allow for properly placed and full dentition. One is more apt to find out-of-line and missing teeth in narrow and receding under-jaws. Overshot bite (Fig. 15B) or an undershot bite (Fig. 15C) must be severely penalized.



FIGURE 15A
Correct bite

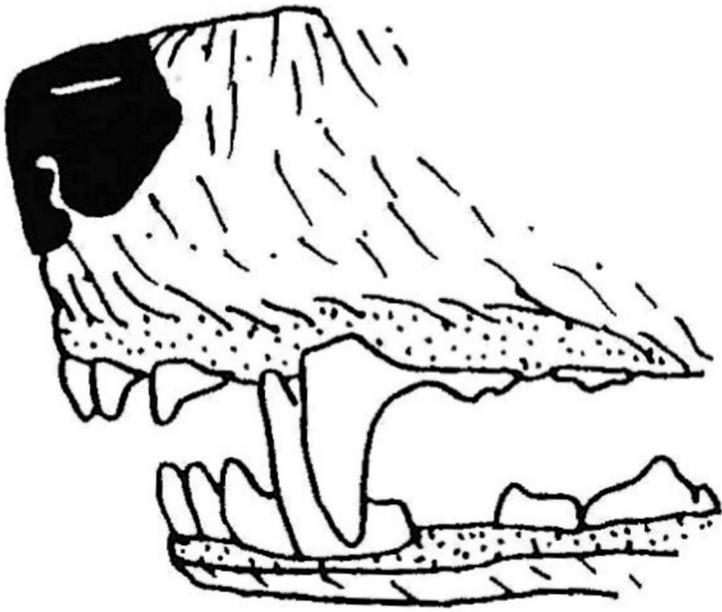


FIGURE 15B
Overshot bite



FIGURE 15C
Undershot bite

NECK, TOPLINE AND BODY

NECK: "The arched neck is long and carried proudly behind an erect head. It blends smoothly into the shoulders. The length of neck from occiput to withers is approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ the distance from forechest to buttocks."

DISCUSSION

In Figure 16, we see the correct neck to body-length proportions. Figure 17 dramatically compares the importance of proper length and arch of neck. The two Bichons pictured are actually very close in height, balance and proportion; the obvious difference being length of neck. This should leave no doubt of the importance of proper neck length to the correct Bichon silhouette.

FIGURE 16
Correct neck
length

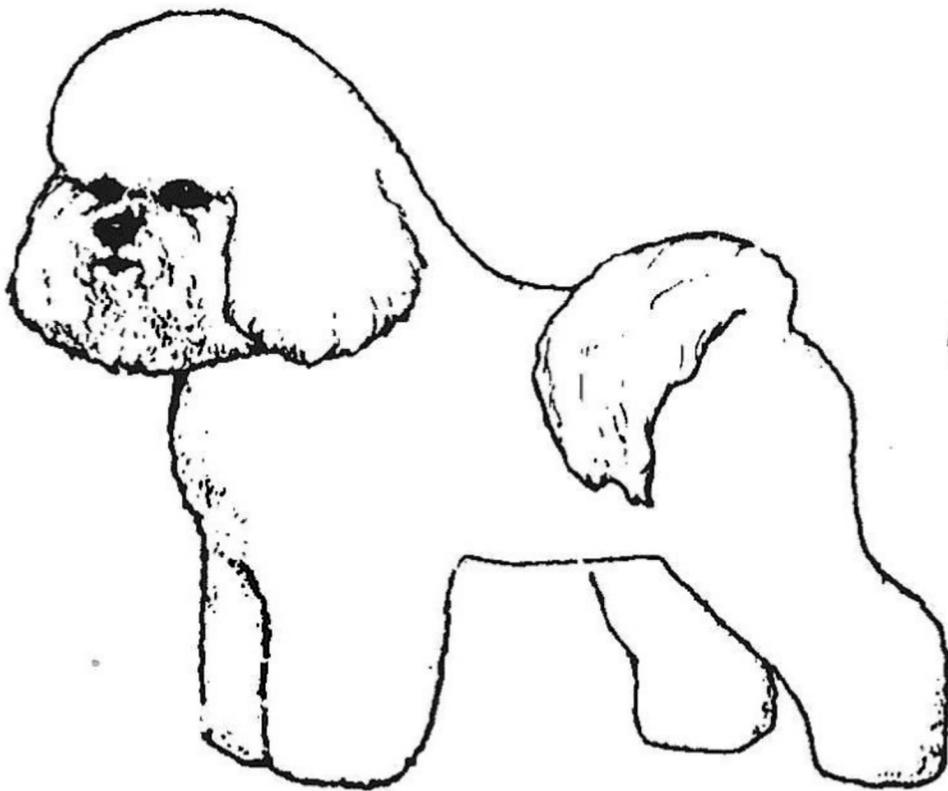
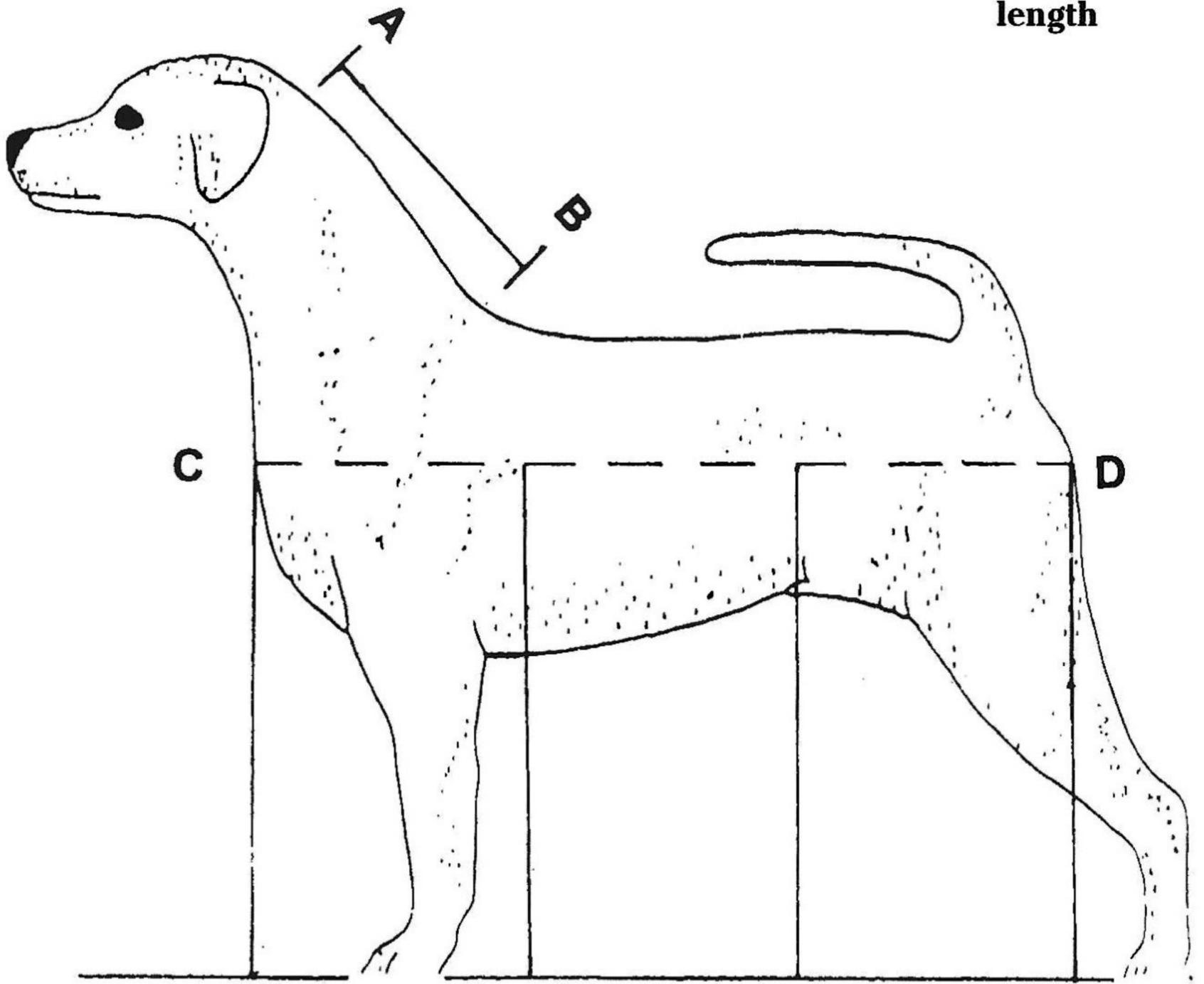


FIGURE 17A
Correct

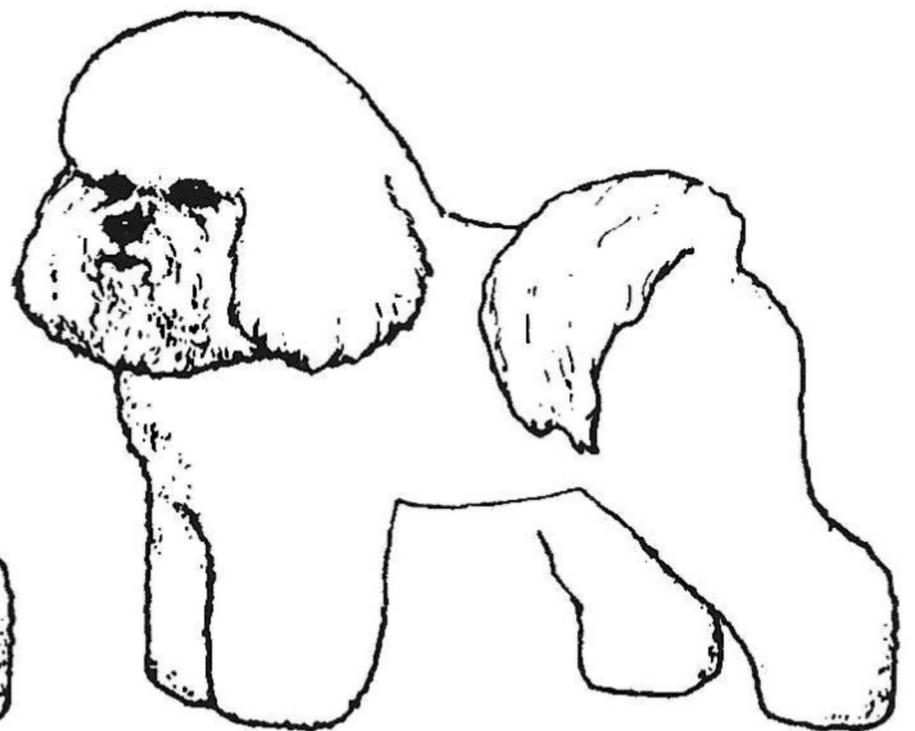


FIGURE 17B
Incorrect

TOPLINE: “The topline is level except for a slight, muscular arch over the loin.”

DISCUSSION

The slight rise over the loin in the Bichon Frise (Fig. 18) is created by both muscles and underlying bone structure. The Bichon’s construction in this area is a good part of what provides his strength, agility and maneuverability in the rear-quarters.

It is important to understand that what is described here is not mistaken for a “high rear” or reverse topline” which are anatomical faults and not what is called for in the standard.

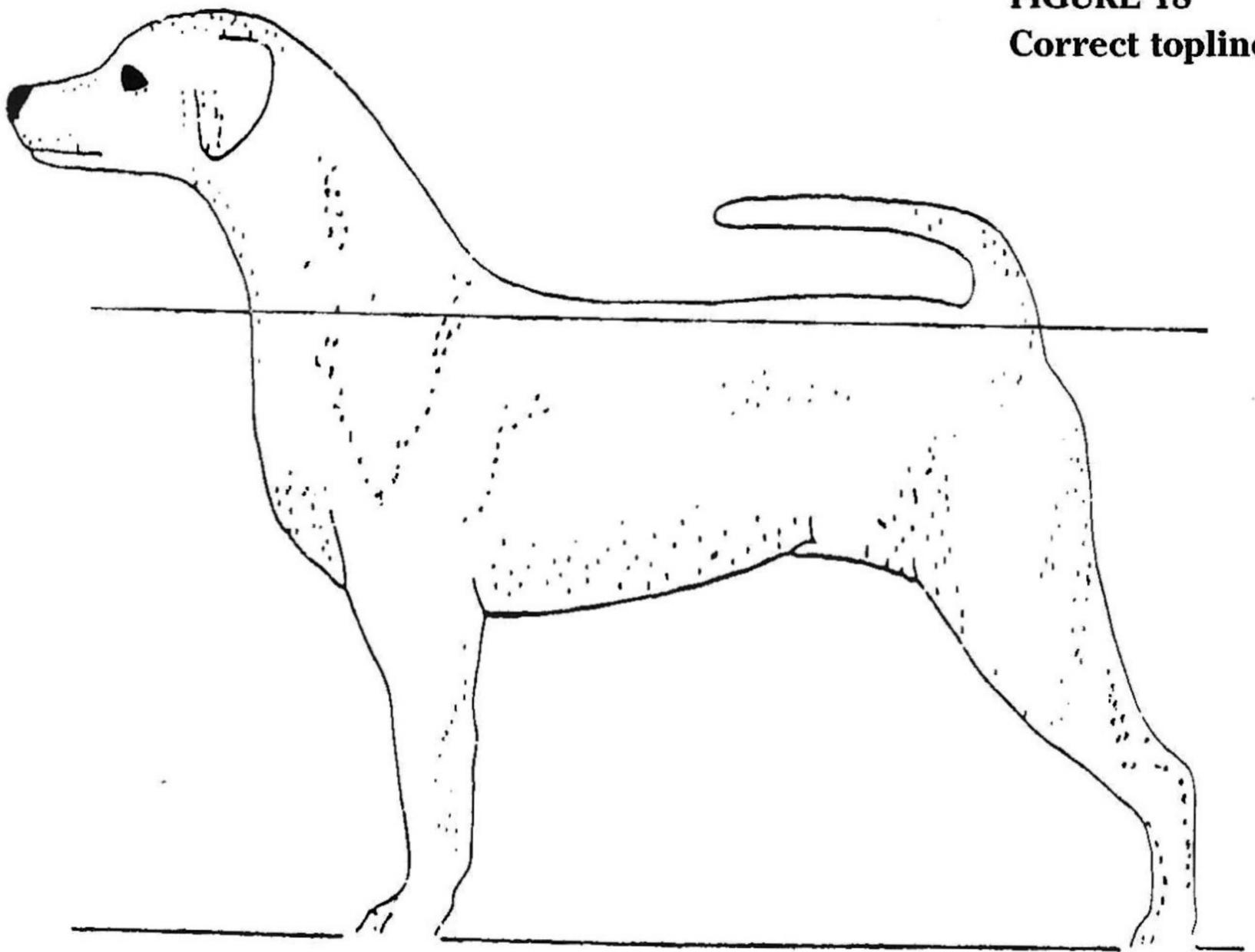


FIGURE 18
Correct topline

BODY: “The chest is well developed and wide enough to allow free and unrestricted movement of the front legs. The lowest point of the chest extends at least to the elbow. The ribcage is moderately sprung and extends back to a short and muscular loin. The forechest is well pronounced and protrudes slightly forward of the point of the shoulder. The underline has a moderate tuck-up.”

DISCUSSION

Moderate spring of rib is accompanied by a well-developed chest which permits adequate heart and lung room for stamina, endurance and performance. The lowest point of the chest must extend to the elbow (Fig. 19 also refer to Fig. 3B). It should be remembered that the Bichon is a slow maturing breed for its size and often does not achieve full spring of rib and depth of chest until around two years of age. This is especially true of males.

The Standard calls for a ribcage moderately sprung and long enough to extend to a short, muscular loin. Therefore, the Bichon's correct length of body is the result of the length of RIBCAGE, as opposed to length of LOIN.

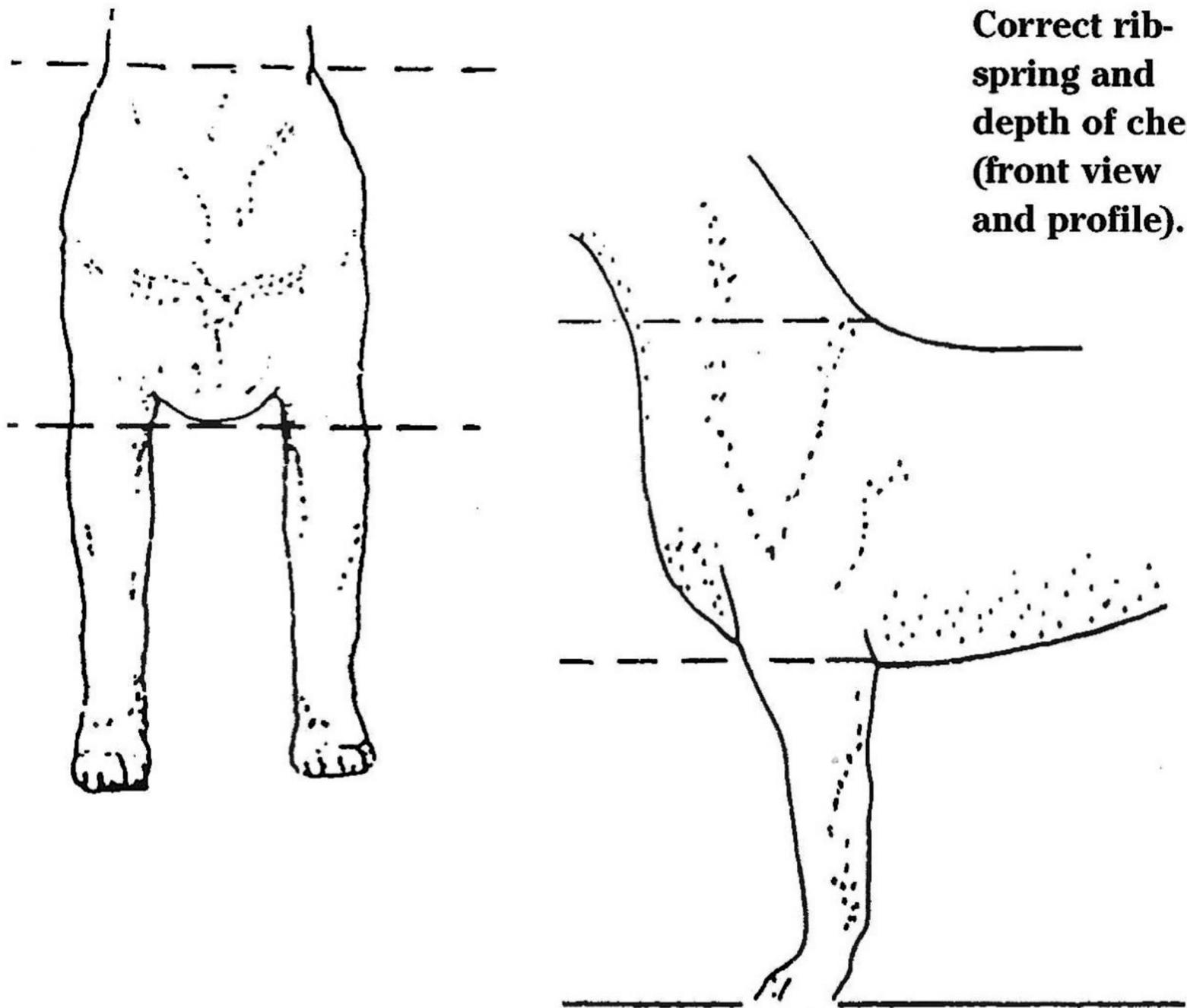


FIGURE 19
Correct rib-
sprung and
depth of chest
(front view
and profile).

TAIL: “Tail is well plumed, set on level with the topline and curved gracefully over the back so that the hair of the tail rests on the back. When the tail is extended toward the head it reaches at least half way to the withers. A low tail set, a tail carried perpendicularly to the back, or a tail which droops behind is to be severely penalized. A corkscrew tail is a very serious fault.”

DISCUSSION

A high set tail enables the Bichon to carry his tail effortlessly over the back (Fig. 20). The incorrect low set tail curves up over the croup before it can be carried over the back, creating a "teapot handle" effect. Dogs with a low tailset are likely to carry their tails at "half-mast" unless they are unusually excited.

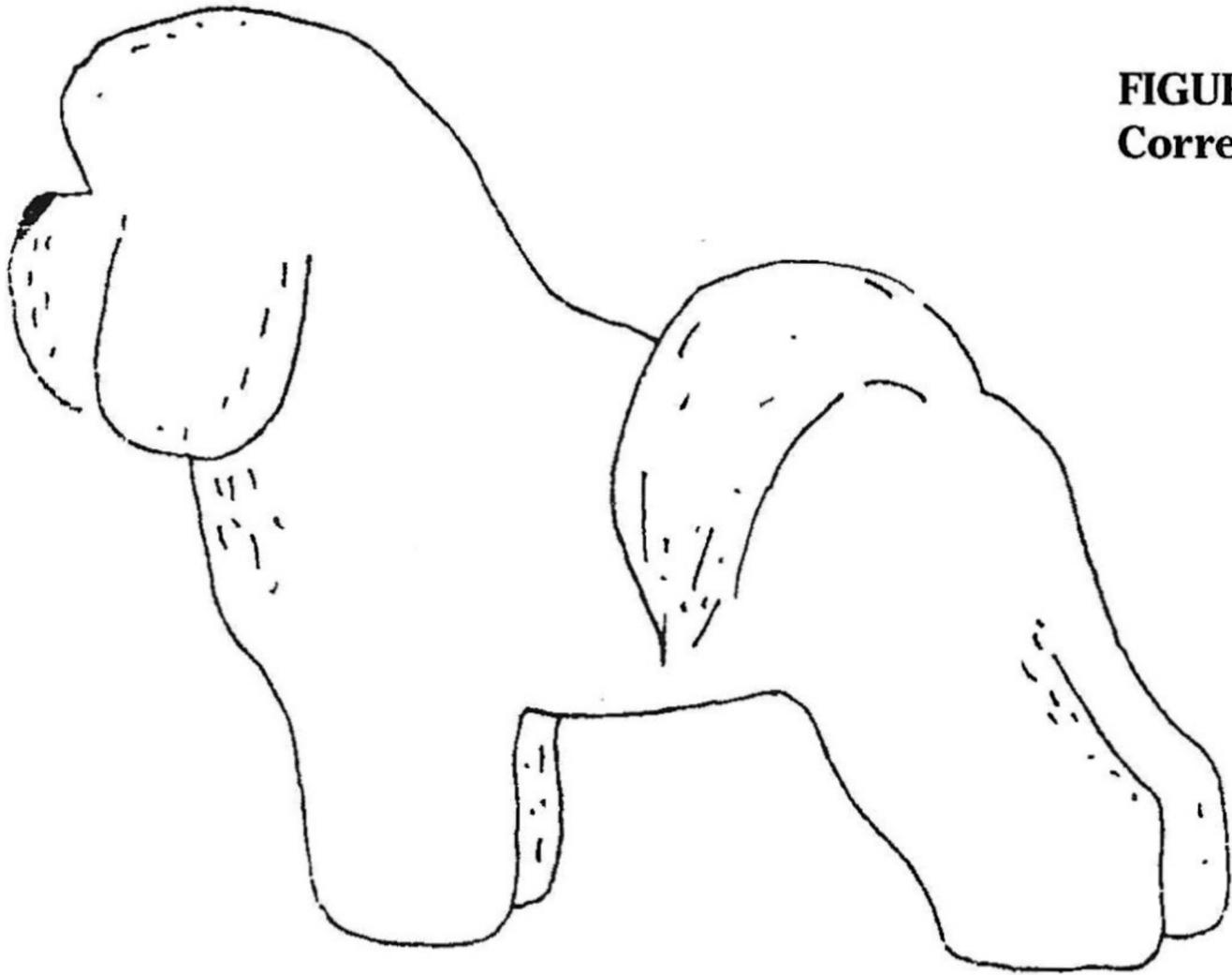


FIGURE 20
Correct tail set

The low tail set is the result of a falling off in the croup, which not only affects tail placement and carriage, but also turns the hindquarters under the dog resulting in restricted movement (Fig. 21).

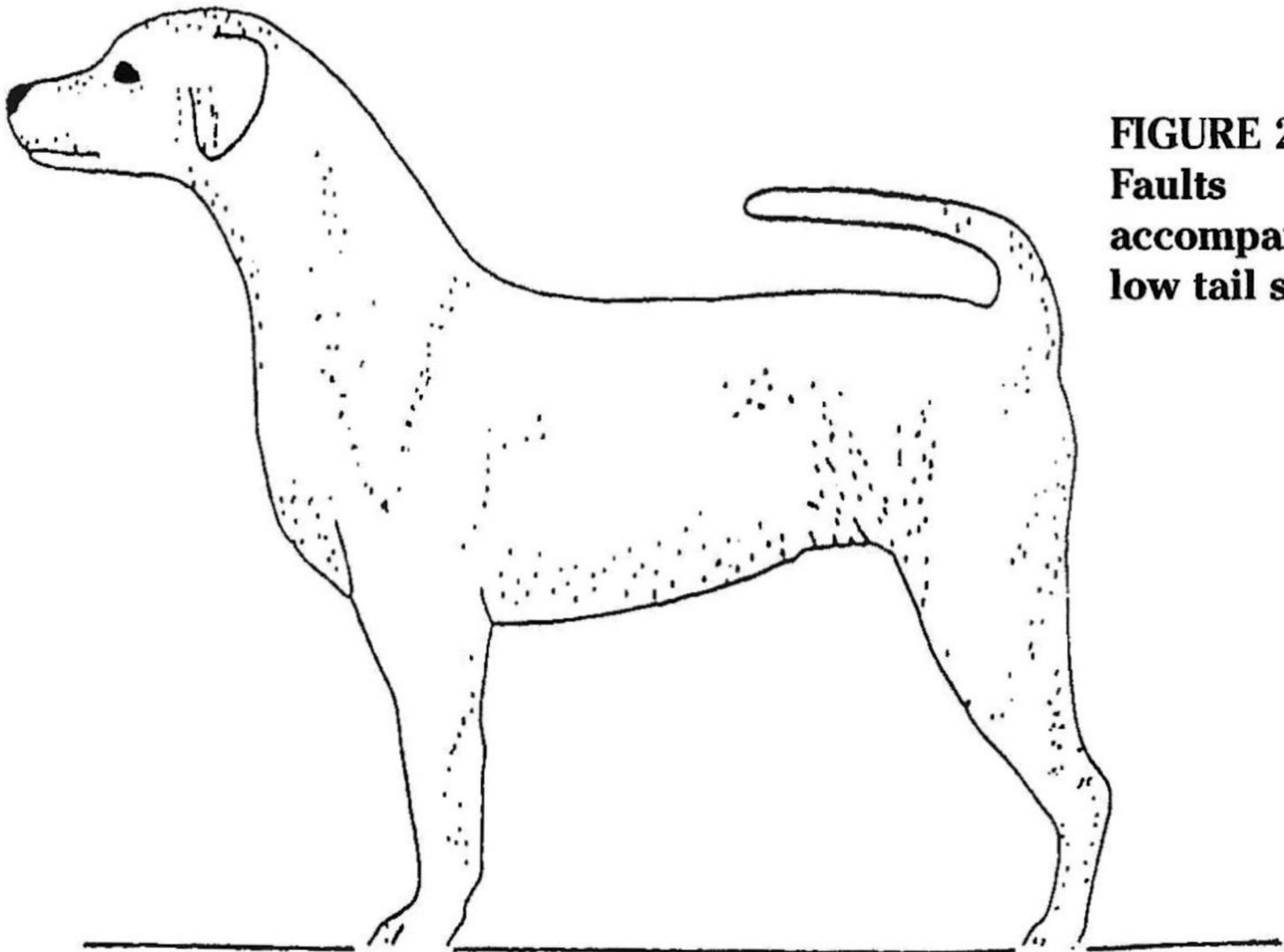


FIGURE 21
Faults
accompanying
low tail set

There are probably few breeds whose overall appearance is affected more dramatically by improper tail set and carriage. The tail hanging down behind is accompanied by a dull and listless (or shy) attitude. This is character contrary to the Standard's demands and is not indicative of the cheerful nature for which the breed has been prized.

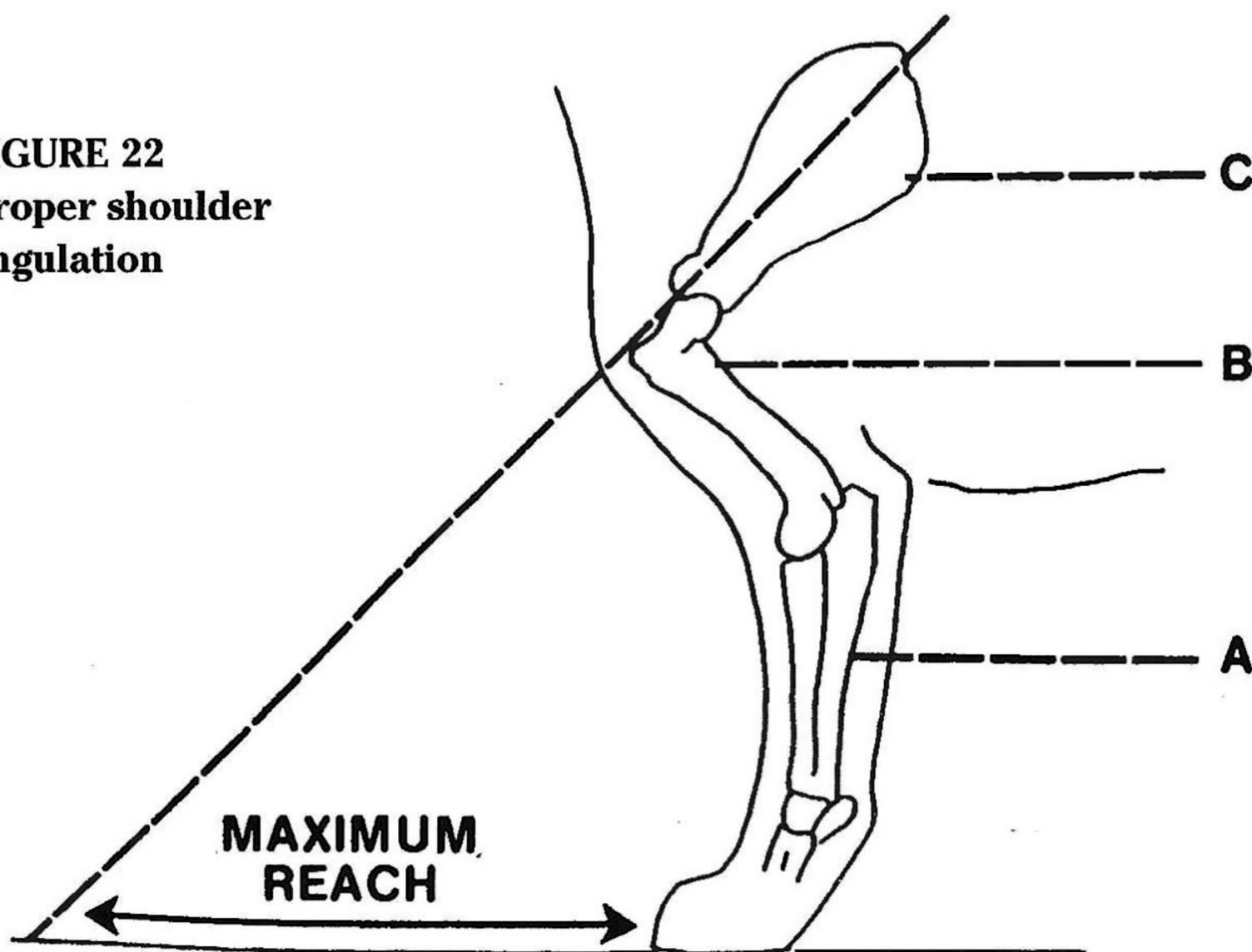
FOREQUARTERS

SHOULDERS: "The shoulder blade, upper arm and forearm are approximately equal in length. The shoulders are laid back to somewhat near a forty-five degree angle. The upper arm extends well back so the elbow is placed directly below the withers when viewed from the side."

DISCUSSION

In Figure 22, the angulation of the shoulder (scapula) C, upper arm (humerus) B, and forearm (radius ulna) A, required by the Standard, is to provide maximum reach with the least effort. The straight-forward movement of the forequarters is assisted by a well-developed chest which helps to stabilize and securely anchor the forequarters. More on proper movement under GAIT.

FIGURE 22
Proper shoulder
angulation



LEGS: "Legs are of medium bone; straight, with no bow or curve in the forearm or wrist. The elbows are held close to the body."

DISCUSSION

Straightforward movement depends upon straight forequarters held in place with proper shoulders and width of chest (Fig. 23). The coat can be deceiving, so it is important to check both forelegs carefully.

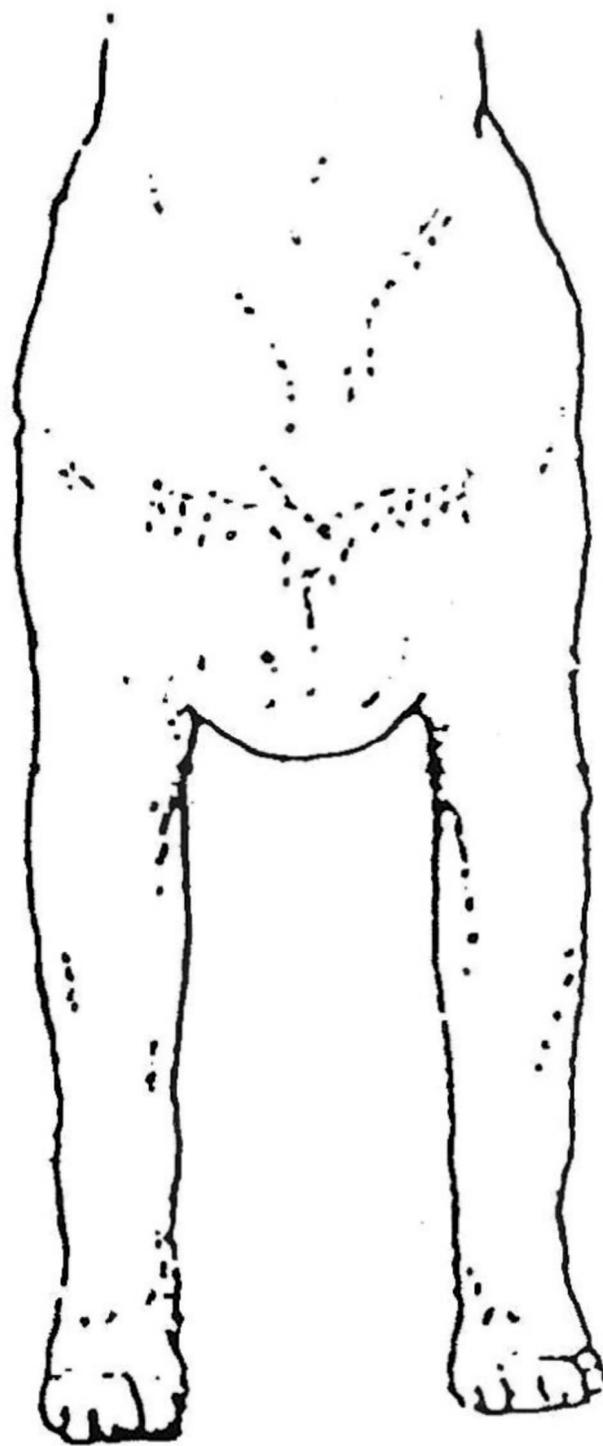


FIGURE 23
Proper width
of chest and
straight forelegs

PASTERNS: "The pasterns slope slightly from the vertical. The dew claws may be removed."

DISCUSSION

One should not confuse crooked pasterns (viewed from the front), with slightly oblique pasterns (viewed from the side). Moderately sloping pasterns are associated with good construction and movement in that they are part of the bone assembly which receive and cushion impact from the ground. A pastern with slight bend has spring and resilience. Straight or steep pasterns take impact with the ground head-on, jarring the entire front assembly of the dog.

FEET: “The feet are tight and round resembling those of a cat and point directly forward, turning neither in nor out. Pads are black. Nails are kept short.”

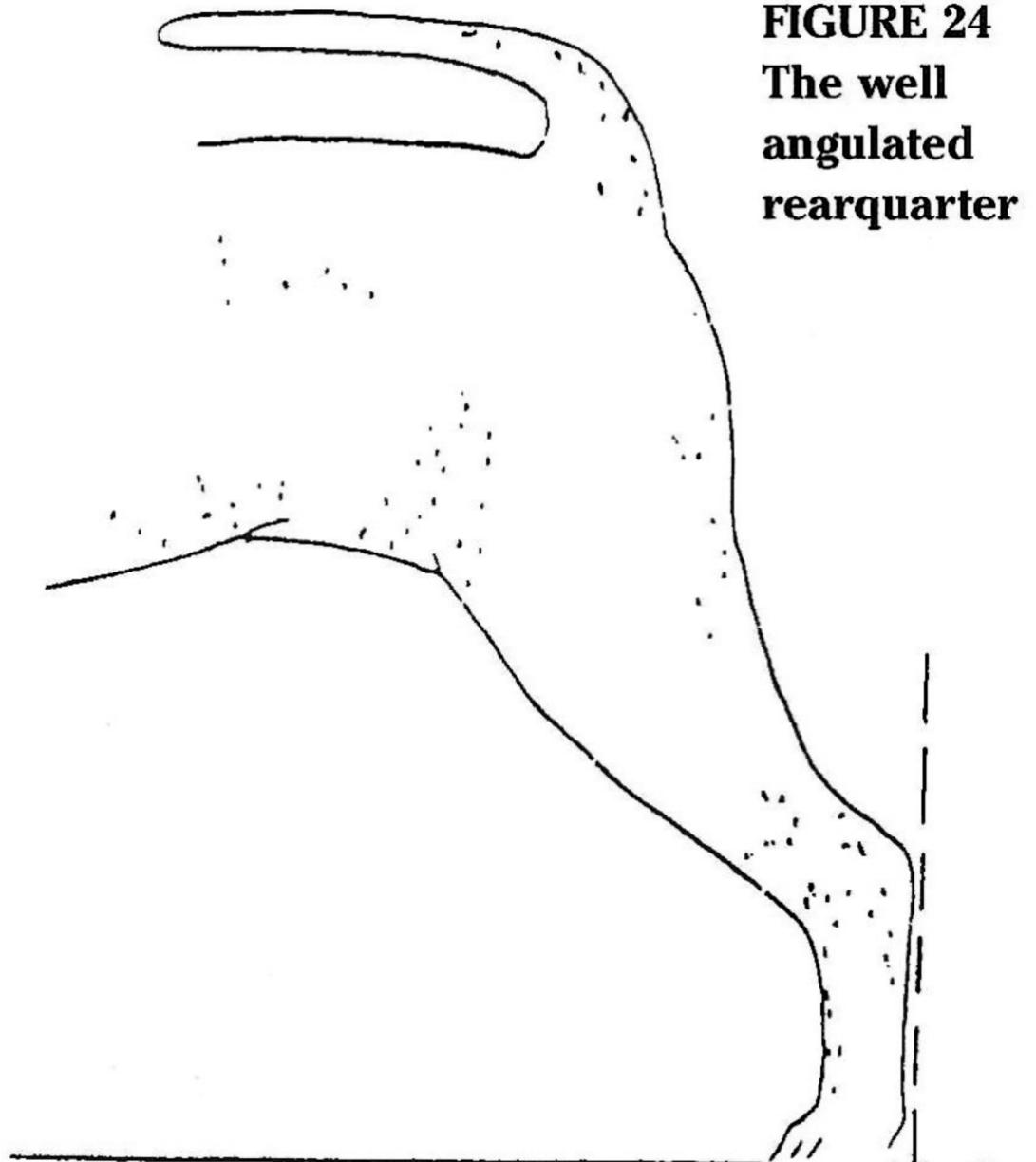
DISCUSSION

The Bichon foot is compact and round as pictured in Fig. 23. It is what one expects of an agile dog.

HINDQUARTER: “The hindquarters are of medium bone, well angulated with muscular thighs and spaced moderately wide. The upper and lower thigh are nearly equal in length meeting at a well bent stifle joint. The leg from hock joint to foot pad is perpendicular to the ground. Dew claws may be removed. Paws are tight and round with black pads.”

DISCUSSION

Since we have determined that a well laid back shoulder permits maximum reach, it stands to reason that the Bichon must have a rearquarter that provides matching drive from behind. The well-angulated hindquarters (Fig. 24) permit the Bichon to both reach forward under his body and to extend his leg well out behind (follow-through), resulting in what is referred to as “drive.” More on rear movement under GAIT.



COAT: “The texture of the coat is of utmost importance. The undercoat is soft and dense, the outercoat of a coarser and curlier texture. The combination of the two gives a soft but substantial feel to the touch which is similar to plush or velvet and when patted springs back. When bathed and brushed, it stands off the body, creating an overall powder puff appearance. A wiry coat is not desirable. A limp, silky coat, a coat that lies down, or a lack of undercoat are very serious faults.”

DISCUSSION

The desired coat type is extremely difficult to describe or to illustrate effectively, yet the coat itself is most important to the appearance of the Bichon. It is a double coat, which immediately sets the Bichon apart from anything remotely resembling the Maltese coat. Conversely, the Bichon coat is not wiry and coarse, as in the Standard Poodle.

TRIMMING: “The coat is trimmed to reveal the natural outline of the body. It is rounded off from any direction and never cut so short as to create an overly trimmed or squared off appearance. The furnishings of the head, beard, moustache, ears and tail are left longer. The longer head hair is trimmed to create an overall rounded impression. The topline is trimmed appear level. The coat is long enough to maintain the powder puff look which is characteristic of the breed.”

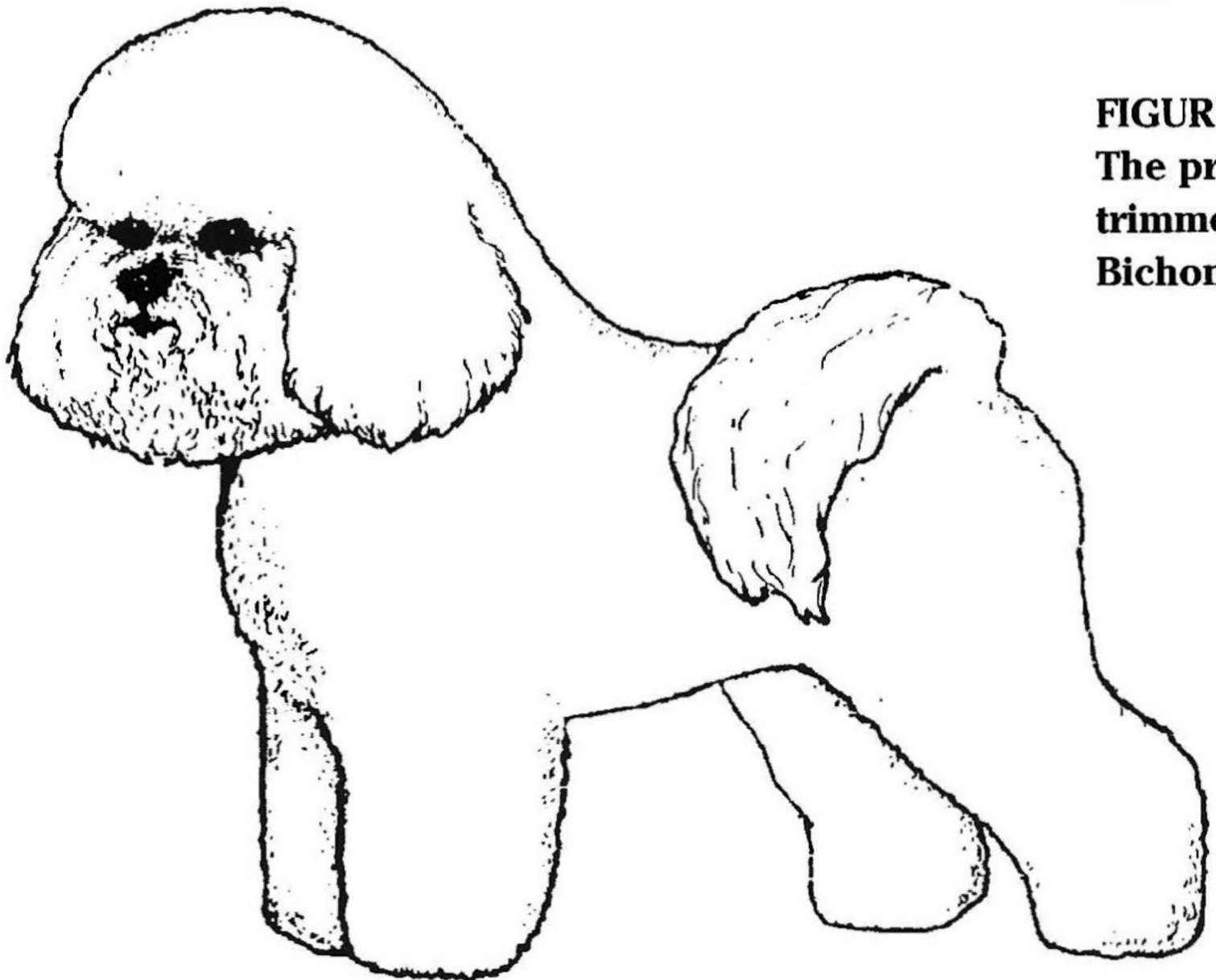


FIGURE 25
The properly
trimmed
Bichon Frise

DISCUSSION

The properly trimmed Bichon must give the powder puff impression following the natural outline of the body with a series of rounded contours (Fig. 25). There should be no exaggeration (Figs. 26-27) or sharp angles in a properly trimmed Bichon.

Since they have not as yet developed undercoat, puppies are often shown in a shorter coat, which is allowable in the Puppy Classes. Adult Bichons should have sufficient coat texture to be shown in proper length and trim.

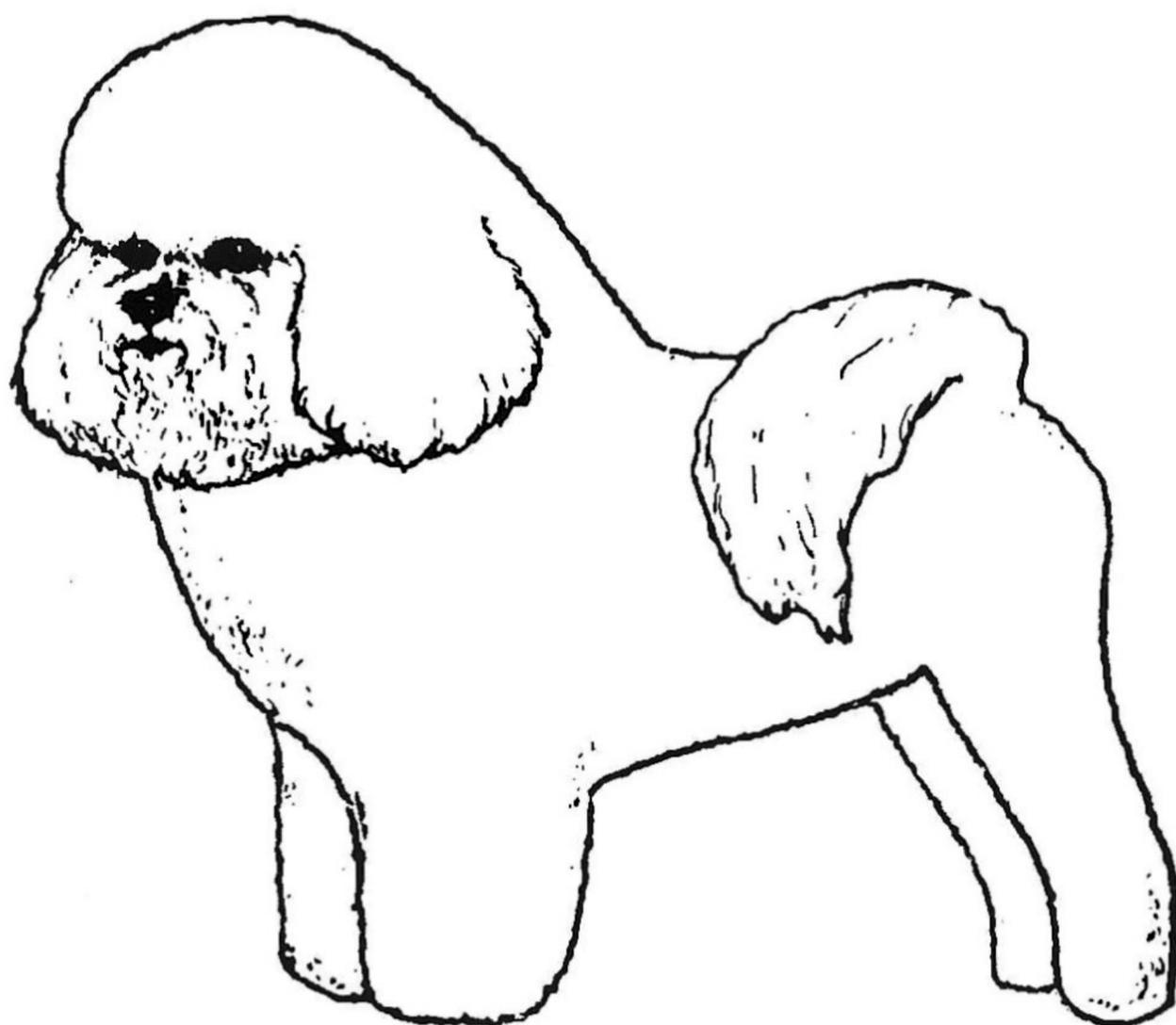


FIGURE 26
An exaggerated
over-stylized
trim

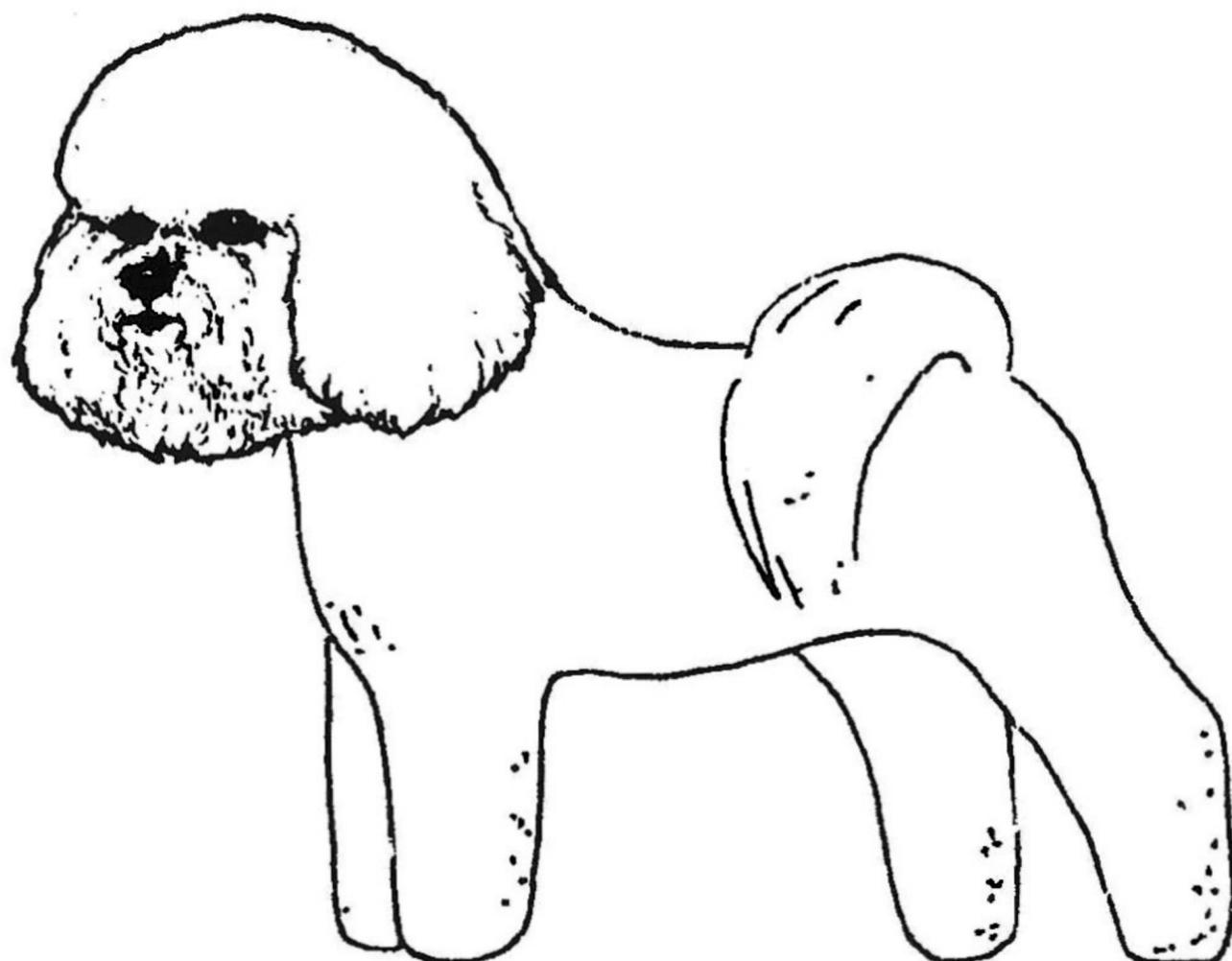


FIGURE 27
Body trimmed
too short for
head

COLOR: Color is white, may have shadings of buff, cream or apricot around the ears or on the body. Any color in excess of 10% of the entire coat of a mature specimen is a fault and should be penalized, but color of the accepted shadings should not be faulted in puppies.”

DISCUSSION

The Standard is specific in stating the Bichon Frise is a white breed. The very essence of the breed relies upon the black against white contrast produced by the ideal specimen, and Bichons adhering to this picture should be encouraged. Allowances are made, however, for shadings in small amounts, as stated in the Standard.

Puppies are often born with, or may develop color, especially about the head and ears, at times being surprisingly deep. This color is allowable only in specimens under 12 months of age.

GAIT: “Movement at a trot is free, precise and effortless. In profile the forelegs and hindlegs extend equally with an easy reach and drive that maintain a steady topline. When moving, the head and neck remain somewhat erect and as speed increases there is very slight convergence of legs toward the center line. Moving away, the hindquarters travel with moderate width between them and the foot pads can be seen. Coming and going his movement is precise and true.”

DISCUSSION

The Bichon’s movement in profile (Fig. 28) is above all effortless and ground covering. It is essential the rear pastern, between hock and foot, extend rearward beyond the vertical (Fig. 29). Proper rear extension, by itself, is not sufficient to produce correct movement. It must be matched by equal forward extension of the front legs. Furry little legs churning up a storm may appear to be going places, but in fact, are only using more steps and effort to get there.

Coming and going, there is only slight convergence of the legs (Fig. 30) and then only when the dog is trotting at high speeds. While the rearquarter movement of the Bichon is less wide than one might be accustomed to in other breeds, this does not mean to imply he should move close behind. Close movement is defined as that in which there is distance between the upper legs, but the lower legs, from hock to foot, brush against each other in movement.

FIGURE 28
Free, effortless
and unrestricted
movement; a
hallmark of the
breed

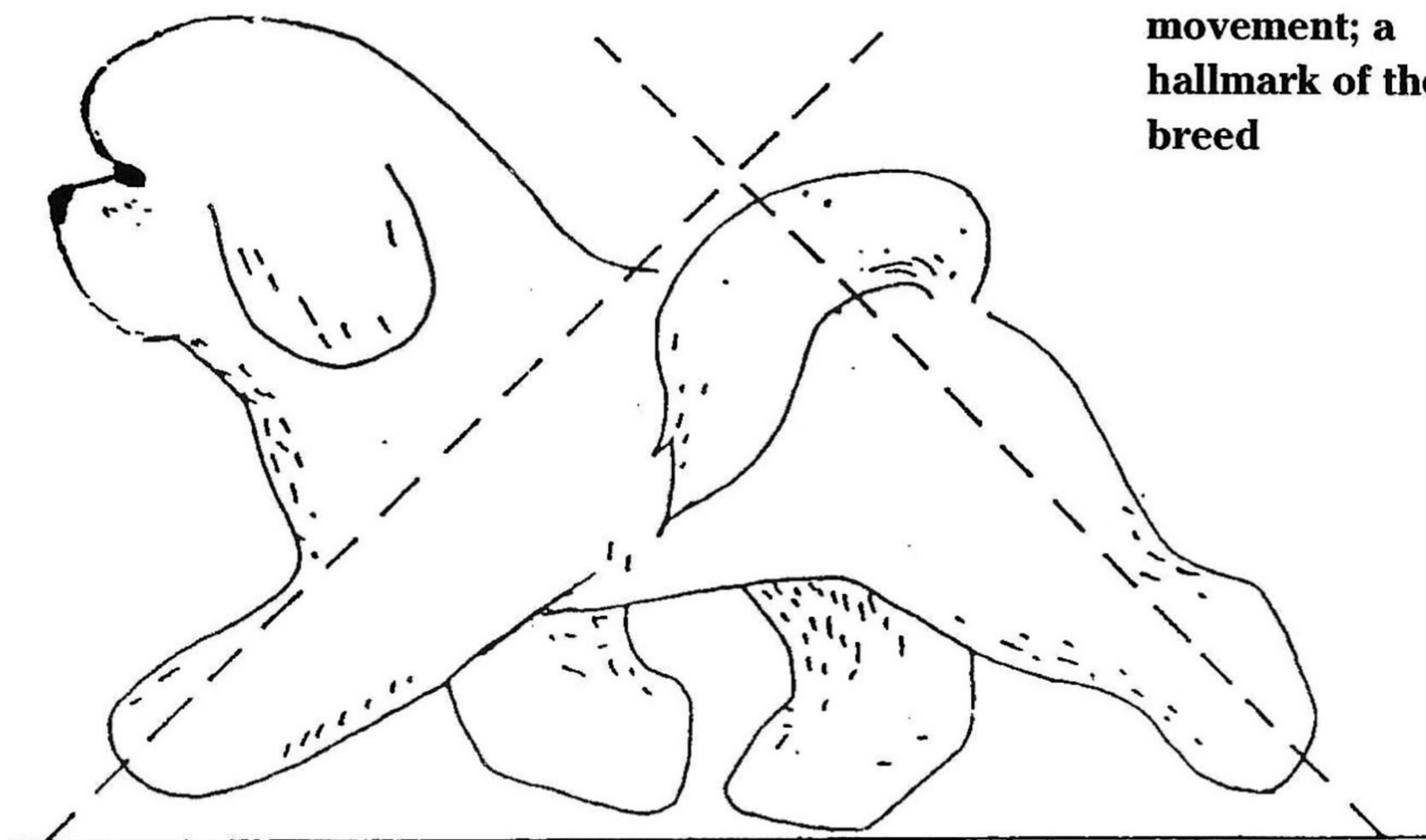


FIGURE 29
The rear pastern
between hock
and foot must
extend rearward
beyond the
vertical

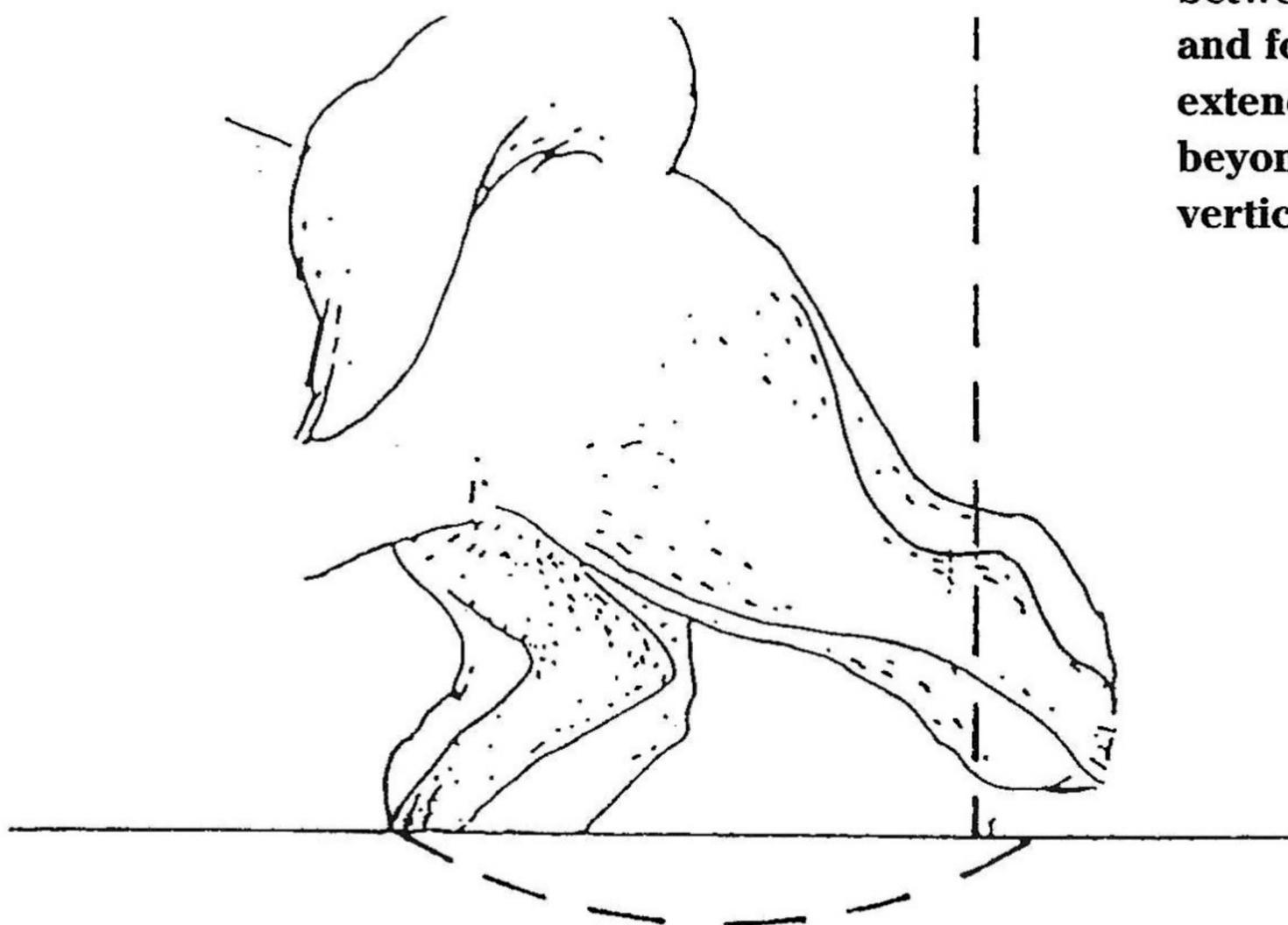
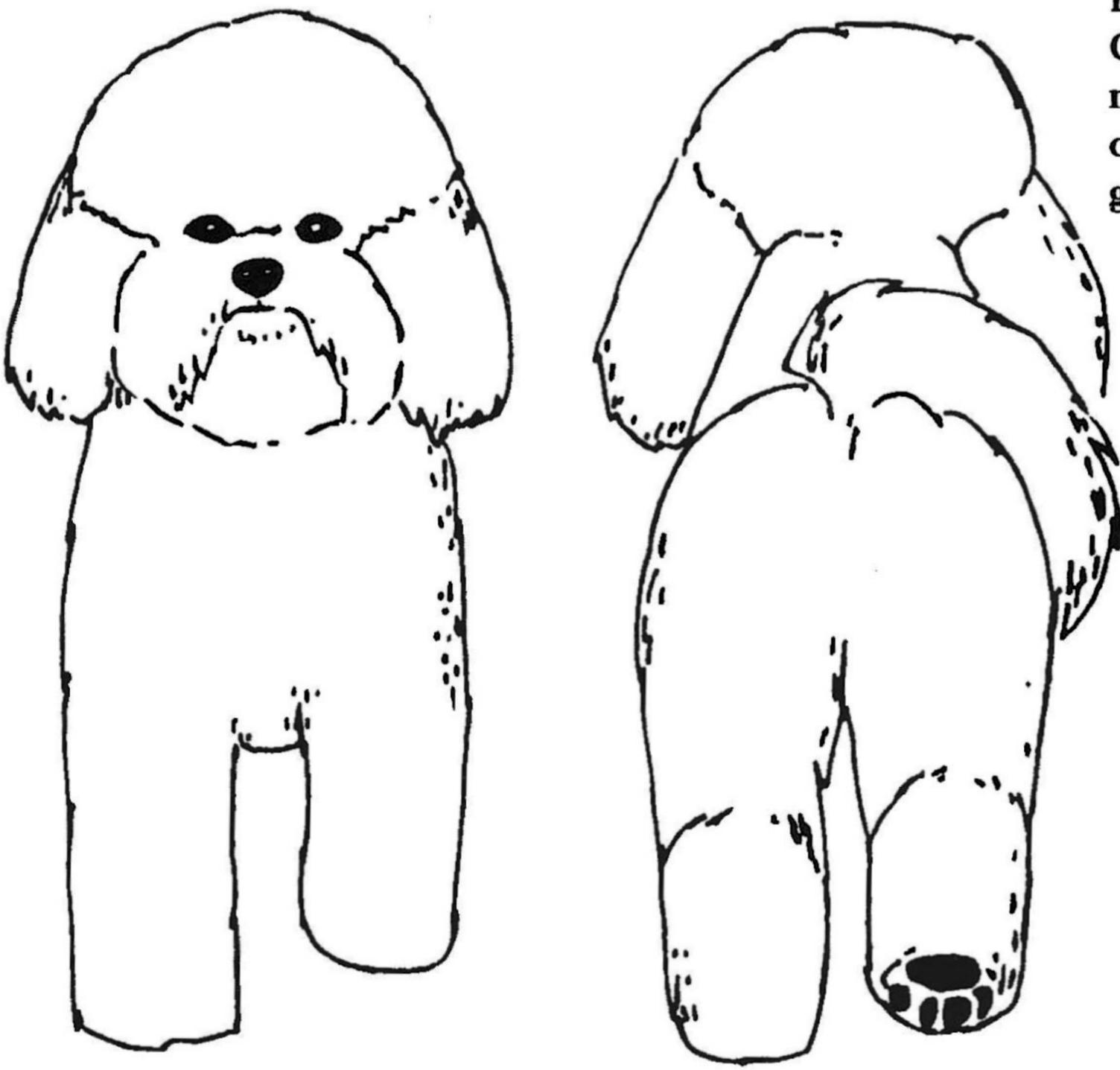


FIGURE 30
Correct
movement
coming and
going



TEMPERAMENT: “Gentle mannered, sensitive, playful and affectionate. A cheerful attitude is the hallmark of the breed and one should settle for nothing less.”

DISCUSSION

Temperament is the barometer for assessing breed character. Shyness or over-aggressiveness are not characteristic of true Bichon temperament, and should never be rewarded. The Bichon Frise is a companion dog, therefore, his attitude should never be anything less than what is a joy to man. He is at his best when he shows himself.
