

## **Judging The Cocker Spaniel With An Undocked Tail**

*From the American Spaniel Club, Inc. (ASC)  
(Adopted by the Board of Directors on February 28, 2018)*

The Cocker Spaniel is a docked, hunting breed. The characteristic incessant, merry action of the tail while working in thick, dense cover which is sometimes deeper than the dog is tall, necessitates docking to prevent injury.

The ASC continues to support docked tails as an important characteristic required by the breed's function as a hunting dog. Therefore, the ASC does not intend to change the breed standard as regards docked tails.

In accordance with A.K.C. rules (Chapter 7, Section 15), a judge may either choose to judge the Cocker Spaniel, considering the tail to be a fault, or excuse the dog with an undocked tail as being inconsistent with the standard.

In May, 2012, the A.K.C. also issued the following statement:

***Individual Examination of Dogs.*** *Judges are expected to examine and gait every dog in the same objective, breed-specific manner even if a poor specimen may clearly be out of the ribbons. This includes breeds that according to their breed standard traditionally have been cropped and/or docked and dogs entered which may have deviations from the breed standard.*

The ASC will support your decision to judge an undocked dog, or excuse, after examination.

Should you choose to keep a Cocker Spaniel with an undocked tail in the ring, it is expected that you would prioritize your judging by virtues and factor in faults lastly. The natural tail is thick at the root (consistent with the required generous amount of bone), tapering to the end, and ideally not reaching below the hock joint. As the Cocker Spaniel has always been and should continue to be a docked breed, determine the tail set and carriage of an undocked tail by observing the first quarter to third of the tail as the dog is being moved.