

## **CHOW CHOW ANATOMY**

### **THE CHEST**

I read with considerable interest and astonishment a recent article which stated that "the lay of the shoulder... sets the width of the chest." This is anatomically faulty reasoning and I would like to say a bit about the structure of the Chow chest.

The chest is that portion of the body" between the neck and the abdomen; it is formed by the thirteen thoracic vertebrae, the thirteen pairs of ribs, the sternum, and the muscles and fascia attached to these." (From Stedman's Medical Dictionary). It follows that the shape of the chest is primarily determined by the shape of the ribs, the thoracic vertebrae and the sternum. The chest can be little more broad or deep than the skeletal foundation which gives the chest its basic depth and width.

The covering over the ribs, composed of muscle, fat and connective tissue, is relatively thin, especially at the broadest part of the chest. The depth of the chest and to a large extent the breadth of the floor of the chest is determined mostly by the underlying bony structures which are the ribs and the sternum. There are some fairly thick muscles in this area and frequently considerable fat accumulation, however, when the bone structure is incorrect as in the" keel chest" or "chicken breasted" Chow, nothing short of gross obesity will hide the pinched chest that results.

When the shape of the chest is wrong the front can never be correct. The shoulders

are attached to the chest by a muscular "sling-like arrangement. The shoulders and the upper part of the true arm can be no further apart than the chest, which they overlay. It is true that shoulder blades which are close together accompany a narrow front but these narrow shoulders are due to the lack of breadth of chest, which of course is primarily due to a lack of rib spring. When the true arm lacks angulation, then the front legs are very often close together, as they project in front of the ribs and are not separated by the broad chest. But this is a matter apart from the width of the chest. The slab-sided, shelly Chow with a narrow front has its basic defect in the lack of rib spring. If the rib cage is narrow, the chest is narrow and from this serious fault comes a host of other faults.

The Chow Chow Standard says:

"Chest - broad, deep and muscular, never narrow or slab-sided. The ribs close together and well-sprung, not barrel. The spring of the front ribs is somewhat narrowed at their lower ends to permit the shoulder and upper arm to fit smoothly against the chest wall. The floor of the chest is broad and deep extending down to the tips of the elbows. The point of sternum slightly in front of the shoulder points. Serious faults - labored or abdominal breathing (not to include normal panting), narrow or slab-sided chest." These are basic points and must be present for correct Chow type.

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