

# Old English Sheepdog



Traditional theory suggests that the Scottish Collie or Bearded Collie played some part in the development of the breed and some breed historians suggests that the sheepdogs of Europe including the Ovtcharka might have played their part. The Old English is the most substantial of sheepdogs, and underneath the glamour of a crisp blue and white coat, there should be a dog still fit for working with the flocks. The Old English Sheepdog was until recent years customarily docked, but since tail docking is no longer allowed the traditional epithet 'The Bobtail' is no longer appropriate.

Indeed, the traditional docking of the tail in this breed is debated, one party saying that the Old English was docked for hygienic purposes as in the same way that sheep are docked. Another party suggests that the practice was started as a ruse to avoid tax as at one time drover's dogs were exempt from tax and a mark of this was the docked tail. Note that it was seen as a drover's dog for driving cattle, hence calling into question the title of the breed as sheepdogs, which were not docked because they needed their tail to act as rudders and balance in their quick athletic turns and movement. The slower moving cattle dogs did not require the tail. An interesting debate.

So too is the name of the breed – Old English – and theories exist to suggest that Scottish Bearded Collies were crossed with European sheepdogs including the Ovtcharka to produce the breed.

So here in the debated history of the name and origins of the Old English Sheepdog is illustrated the fact that very little is certain in the origins and development of any breed, except perhaps in the more recent ones where breeding programmes have been recorded in detail. There is a lot of supposition and the theories are fascinating.

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## What health screening is currently relevant?

Kennel Club Accredited Breeders must use, or are strongly recommended to use, the following screening schemes and/or advice for sires and dams:

- **BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia Scheme**
- **Eye testing**
- **DNA test - PCD**



ACCREDITED BREEDER SCHEME