

Sussex Spaniel Hunting Style

The following description of the hunting characteristics of the Sussex spaniel was approved by the Sussex Spaniel Club of America to assist hunt test judges, in understanding the Sussex Spaniel hunting style.

Sussex Spaniels were developed with a unique hunting style designed to allow them to efficiently hunt in thick, difficult to penetrate, undergrowth. Hunting in such undergrowth requires that a dog have drive and determination to fight through any obstruction once a bird is scented. Thus the Sussex was developed to work as a methodical, determined thorough hunter, with a moderate pace, excellent endurance and an overall toughness.

A Sussex does not tend to cover every square inch of ground with his feet in hopes of locating birds he does not scent. Rather, he moves logically with head down in order to catch the faintest of scents. Once the bird's scent is detected, Sussex often slow down when working a bird, pausing or hesitating briefly before performing an "English" style flush. Additionally, when a bird is located Sussex may give tongue, in thick undergrowth this characteristic is considered quite useful, alerting the hunter to imminent flushes.

Sussex easily master the skills needed to retrieve from both land and water, delivering to hand. Their water entry is deliberate and their speed is moderate but they retrieve capably from water.

To summarize: Sussex hunt at a moderate pace, a quick-stepped trot. They should demonstrate excellent noses as they investigate the faintest scent thoroughly. Sussex should "come alive" when they hit bird scent, show strong determination to track the faintest scent and be very persistent as they "work it out." Once a bird is scented Sussex move deliberately, performing an "English" style hesitation flush. Once down the bird will be located and retrieved either from land or water, and delivered gently to hand.