

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, July 2001

THE COLLIE HEAD

Based on the CKC Breed Standard

YOUR TASK

The Smooth variety of Collie is judged by the same standard as the rough variety, and the advise that the head properties are of great importance applies to both. Because of the importance of the head characteristics, prominent faults are severely penalized. With this in mind, I have drawn two good heads and 17 faulty ones. Your task, after studying the good heads, will be to identify faults.

FIGURE 1 – A GOOD HEAD

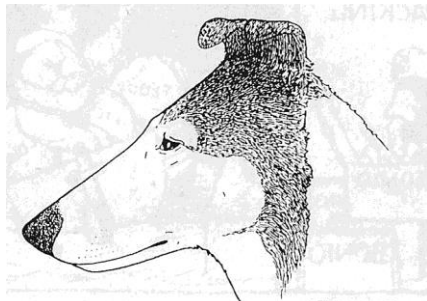


Figure 1

The top of the skull on this correct Smooth Collie, and the top of the muzzle, lie in two straight parallel planes of equal length, divided by a slight but perceptible stop. The inner corner of the eye marks the mid-point; this is also where the stop should be. The end of the muzzle is blunt but not square. This is all the information you need to determine the one departure possessed by each of the next nine profiles.

NINE PROFILE DEPARTURES

There are almost as many profiles as there are Smooth Collies. Each of these nine heads exhibits one profile departure. Determine in what way each profile departs and then think about which one of the nine disturbs you the least.

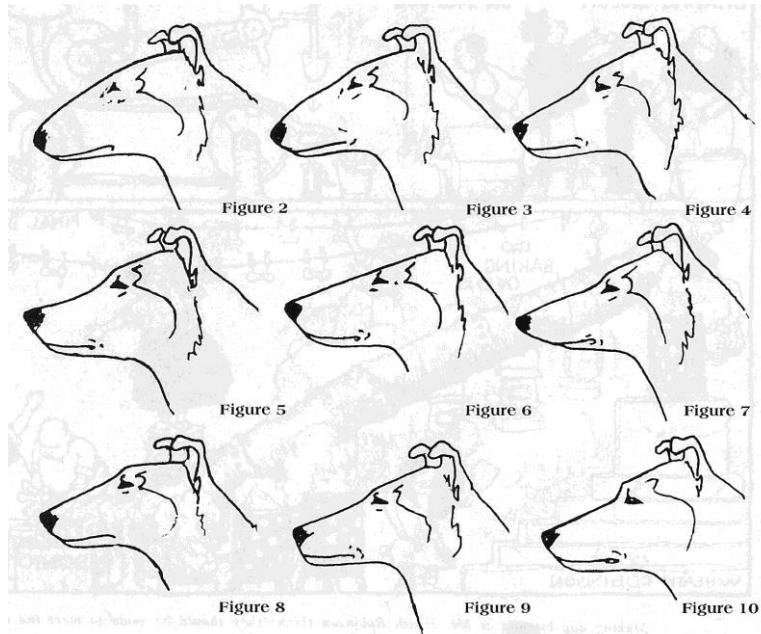


Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Figure 10

ANSWERS

The arched profile (not the whole head) on Figure 2 resembles that of a Bull Terrier's downface. The muzzle on Figure 3 drops off in the form of a Roman finish. The stop on Figure 4 is long and gradual. The muzzle on Figure 5 is dished. Figure 6 has a straight, single-plane profile with no stop. Due to the shape of the muzzle, the head on Figure 7 resembles that of a shark. The skull and the muzzle on Figure 8 are on two different angles rather than on parallel planes. The end of Figure 9's muzzle is square rather than blunt. Figure 10's head is made common by too much stop. Now which profile is the least disturbing?

I consider the least disturbing of the nine profiles to be Figure 4, the profile with the long gradual stop.

FIGURE 11 – A GOOD HEAD

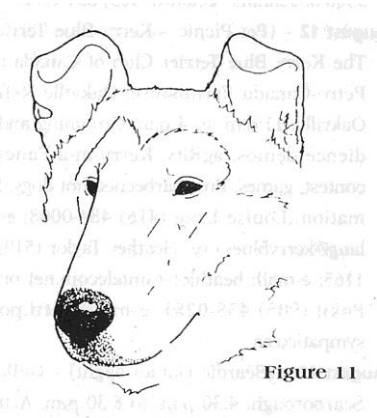


Figure 11

To convey correct expression, from my perspective as a non-specialist, I kept the lines of my drawing to a minimum. I believe I have come close enough that you can see why Collie expression is difficult to define in words.

Correct expression in this line drawing, and in real life, is produced by a combination of skull and foreface balance; size, shape, colour and placement of the eyes; and placement and carriage of the ears. Face-on, the head bears a general resemblance to a lean wedge, being smooth and clean in outline, tapering gradually and smoothly from ears to black nose.

The almond shaped, dark brown eyes are of medium size, placed obliquely to give them the required forward outlook. Except in blue merles, they are required to be matched in colour. In blue merles, either or both eyes may be merle or china in colour in part of one or both.

The ears are in proportion to the size of the head. When 'on alert', they are drawn well up on the backskull and are carried about three quarters erect with one quarter tipping or breaking forward.

NINE FACE ON DEPARTURES

One of these nine face-on heads is correct, each of the other eight exhibits one fault that affects correct Collie expression. Some faults are more obvious than others. Find the correct head, determine the one departure on each of the other eight heads, then decide which one of the eight faults you would penalize the least.

ANSWERS

The correct expression is formed on Figure 12. The round eye on Figure 13 disturbs. The head on Figure 14 is too narrow. The head on Figure 15 is wide enough but the eyes are too close. The prick ears on Figure 16 affect expression. The muzzle on Figure 17 is short. The eyes on Figure 18 are too small. The ears on Figure 19 are low set. The skull on Figure 20 is too broad.

None of these head faults interferes with this breed's herding ability. Confronted with a variety of departures from correct expression, a judge might ask himself which of the eight faults is least likely to contribute problems in a breeding program. If he did, he would probably choose Figure 18 with its too small eyes.



Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

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THE COLLIE AT THE TROT

Based on the CKC breed standard

ACTION ERROR?

What is wrong with Figure 1, a drawing of a trotting Collie?

This drawing is intended to demonstrate how two legs – the left hind and the left front – support the body, enabling the right hind foot to slip under the flexed right front foot, and thereby avoid interference or the necessity to overreach. A Collie drawing similar to this one has served to describe this very important action for almost 50 years. Unfortunately it doesn't tell a true story.

Anyone who tries to apply Figure 1's incorrect action to the living dog will have trouble seeing action at the trot. The drawing is misleading because it advises that at the trot, the Collie's body is always supported by one or two legs – in this case, two lateral legs.

Figure 1

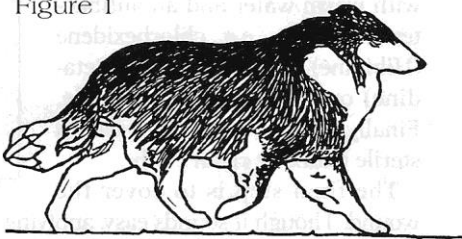


Figure 2



As long as people believe that a dog's body must always be supported at the trot, and that only the German Shepherd Dog is capable of a brief period of suspension, drawings like Figure 1 will continue to limit the reader's ability to see movement, regardless of the breed.

ONE BRIEF MOMENT

A dog's body is not always supported at the trot. There is one brief moment when all four feet are free of contact with the ground. That critical moment occurs when the hind foot reaches forward under the flexed lateral front foot and, in the process, occupies the spot vacated by the front foot.

Figure 2 is lifted from an illustrated sequence of 10 drawings traced from movie film, taken at 54 frames per second, of a good moving Collie. All four feet are free of contact with the ground. The dog is airborne.

All dogs are capable of being airborne, the duration varies depending on breed. The German Shepherd's overreach produces a longer period of suspension than that of most

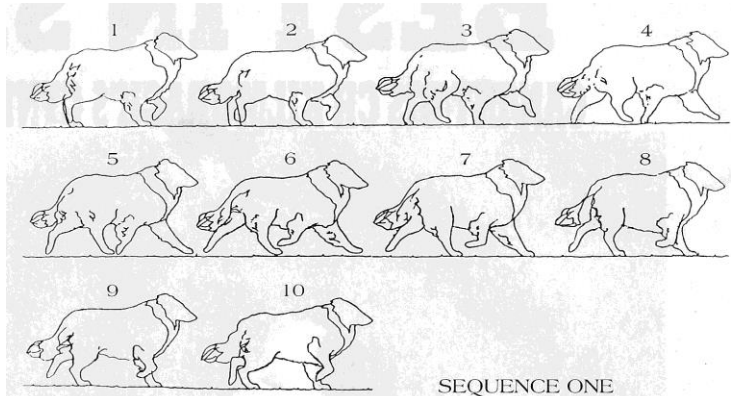
breeds.

SUSPENSION

In order to see action at the trot, you must be aware that a brief period of suspension occurs during the changeover of diagonals, and that the right hind foot and left front foot will strike the ground at the same time. Once you are aware of these two things, you realize that for the right hind foot to slip under the right front foot, there has to be a brief period of suspension. Action at the diagonal trot then becomes easier to see.

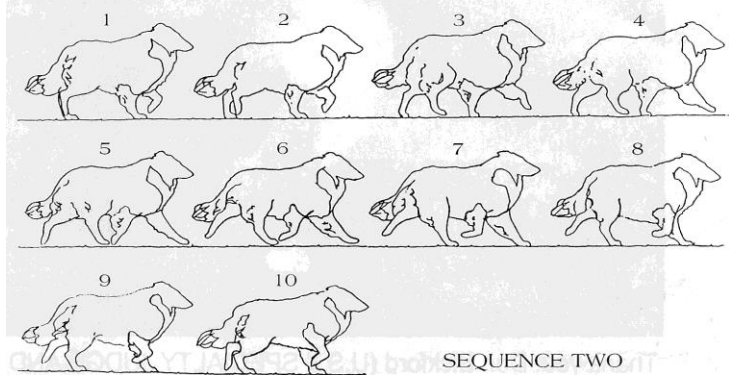
SEQUENCE ONE

My illustrated sequences all begin with the right front leg in vertical support. The position of the remaining three legs varies depending on individual structure, and continues to vary throughout the half cycle. The most telling phase is phase 6, where the greatest reach and extension of all four legs occurs. Note that the left hind foot and diagonal right front foot are in the process of relinquishing support in Phase 4, and the opposite pair of diagonals strikes the ground together in Phase 7.

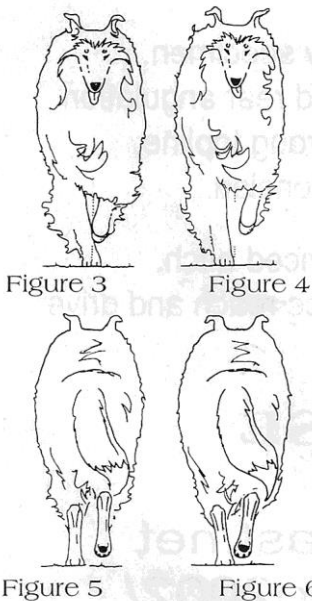


SEQUENCE TWO

The Collie in the first sequence is a good mover; the Collie in this second sequence is average. His action is enlightening because the manner in which it departs from good suggests that his quarters are less than ideal. Notice that his left hind leg lifts wastefully high in Phases 6, 7 and 8. The cause might lie in the angle of the pelvis or the length of upper or lower thigh. Unfortunately, these sequences were filmed prior to my practice of also filming the subject standing in profile.



Notice also that in Phase 4, the left hind foot is more prepared to relinquish support and will do so slightly in advance of the diagonal right front foot. Somehow – perhaps with the extra high lift of the left hind leg – he gets his (synchronized) act together and diagonal legs strike at exactly the same time in Phase 7.



SINGLE TRACKING – FIGURE 3 OR 4?

The Collie standard advises that the breed single-tracks front and rear as speed at the trot increases. Some people believe that the Collie should place one foot directly in front of the other, with all four feet on a centre line under the body as in Figure 3. I am not one of these people. I believe that only the inner toe should touch the centre line, as in Figure 4, and only in breeds similar to the Collie – the Shetland Sheepdog and Belgian Sheepdogs. I have on film a number of Collies (the dog in Sequence two, for instance) that bring one foreleg around the other to place it directly on the centre line. (The dog in Sequence two does the same thing with the hind legs.) On studying this film footage, I find the action energy wasteful.

GOING AWAY – FIGURE 5 OR 6?

In Figure 5, the rear pasterns are parallel, the planes vertical. In Figure 6, the hind legs follow. The Kennel Club's Collie standard – ie., “the hind legs are brought inward in a straight line from the hip toward the centre line under the body.” The rear pasterns are not parallel nor does the dog single-track, one foot in front of the other.