

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

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THE NOVA SCOTIA DUCK TOLLING RETRIEVER

ORIGINAL PURPOSE

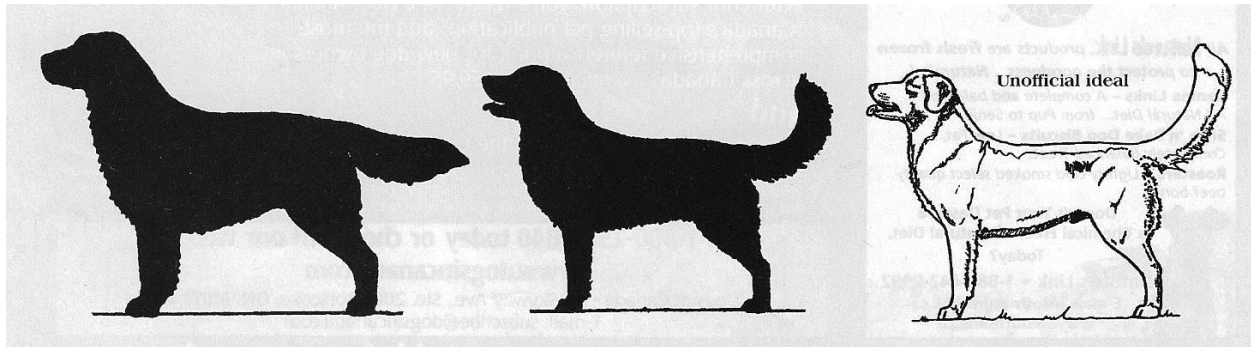
As described by Alison Strang (Westerlea) in her informative booklet *Judging the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever*:

“To understand the essence of the Toller, judges must remember the breed’s original purpose, which was to lure ducks and geese within gunshot range by running back and forth on the shoreline of a lake, pond or coastal marsh, retrieving sticks thrown by a hunter hidden in a blind. The extremely animated Toller retrieving style requires a dog which can rush out, scoop up a stick and return very quickly to the blind. Strength of bones, muscles and ligaments are needed, but the dog must not be overly heavy else the necessary agility will be lost. Neither must a Toller be too lightly boned, as once the duck or goose is shot, the dog must swim out and retrieve it.

The Toller ... was developed to its present state in the Yarmouth area of Southwestern Nova Scotia. A larger Toller was developed in other areas of Western Nova Scotia, to battle the huge tides of the cold Bay of Fundy when retrieving birds, but around Yarmouth a smaller dog was perfectly capable of working the marshes and lakes.”

IN SILHOUETTE

The Toller displays a distinctive silhouette quite different from that of the Golden Retriever which he is said to resemble.



UNOFFICIAL IDEAL

One of the most important things to determine is the breed’s correct proportions. Unfortunately, the standard doesn’t inform as to the ratio of height at the withers to length of body from the point of the forechest to point of buttocks; or the correct length of leg in relation to depth of body (the elbow should be level with the brisket). These things are left to the individual to decide. My representation of ideal is based on the breed’s requirement to retrieve both in water and on land, and on comments received from breeders. The male Toller stands 19 to 20 inches (48 to 51 centimeters); the ideal height for females is 18 to 19 inches (45 to 48 centimeters). The male weights 45 to 51 pounds (20 to 23 kilograms); females are 37 to 43 pounds (17 to 20 kilograms). The breed is slightly longer than tall.

MORE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

1. The skull is broad and slightly round; the occiput is not prominent.
2. The length of the muzzle is roughly equal to the length of the skull.
3. Nose colour should blend with that of the coat (or be black). The standard doesn't mention that the nose may be flesh coloured. Nostrils are well open.
4. The ears are triangular with rounded tips, set high and well back and of medium size. They are dropped and the edge of the ear is carried to the side of the head.
5. The eyes are almond shaped, set well apart, and amber to brown, blending with the coat colour.
6. The mouth is soft, with full dentition and a tight scissors bite.
7. The neck is medium in length, slightly arched, with no throatiness.
8. The forequarters are muscular; with shoulders well laid on. Pasterns slope slightly.
9. The body has a good forechest (deep to the elbow), a short back, level topline and a moderate tuck up.
10. The hindquarters are muscular and broad, and the stifles are well bent, in balance with the front.
11. Feet are medium in size, tight and round, with well arched toes. Rear dewclaws are removed.
12. The tail follows the very slight slope of the croup. When the dog is alert, the tail is carried curving over, but not touching the back.
13. He has a medium length water repellent double coat, which may have a slight wave or curl at the throat.
14. Acceptable colours include various shades of red or orange and usually one of the following white markings; tip of tail, chest, feet (not extending above wrist or hock) and blaze.

NINE FAULTS

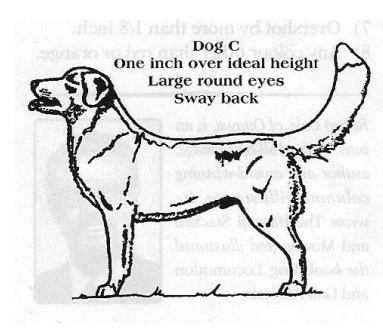
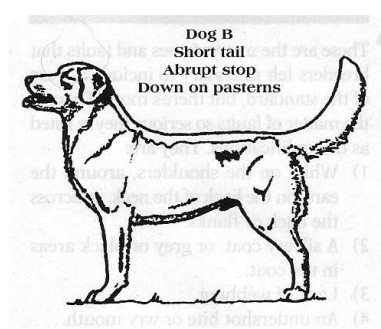
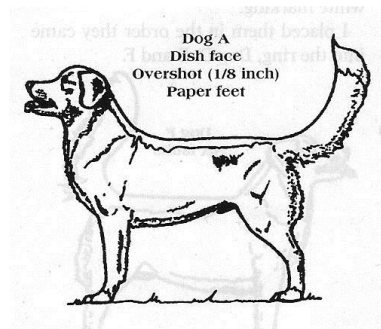
Nine faults have been allotted here to three almost identical NSDTRs, three to each dog. Your task is to decide how each fault affects ability and appearance, then penalize according to the degree of deviation. Now place them in order of merit. The intent of the exercise is to gain an appreciation of the seriousness these nine faults represent.

DOG A, B OR C

A dish face has very little appeal. A pincer bite disturbs, an undershot bite disqualifies, and an 1/8 inch overshot bite is somewhere in between. Paper feet are a serious handicap.

A short tail, or one without a white tip, reduces visibility. An abrupt stop creates a hard look and front pasterns that are down suggest weak forequarters.

An inch over size is not a serious fault unless the dog is very heavy boned. Large eyes greatly change expression and a sway back suggests body weakness. How did you place them?



OPINION

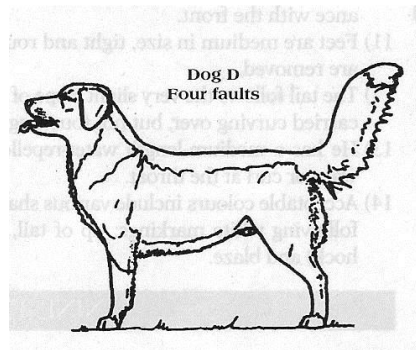
In terms of the seriousness of the faults and the degree of deviation from typical (not forgetting each dog's merits), I placed them in the reverse order – Dog C, Dog B and Dog A.

FIFTEEN MORE FAULTS

There seems to be no end to the faults that NSDTR breeders wish me to bring to your attention. Here in this illustrated judging scenario are 15 more. Again the unofficial ideal serves as typical. Find the faults, determine their seriousness and place these three dogs in order of merit.

DOG D, E OR F

Artists have a tendency to handicap the Toller with too much substance. I did that here with these three dogs. If you compare them to the unofficial ideal you will see what I mean. I have left them heavy as a reminder that the Toller is a medium sized, well muscled dog with medium bone and a high degree of agility.

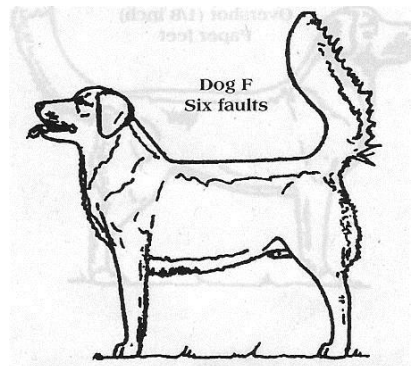


DOG D

This dog has a good, strong, slightly arched neck of moderate length, good forequarters and hindquarters, a nice level topline and correct tail set. His legs are the correct length but his body is too long. He has a pronounced occiput whereas the unofficial ideal has none, and he has more than just a moderate tuck up. The white on the front feet has incorrectly extended beyond the height of the wrist.

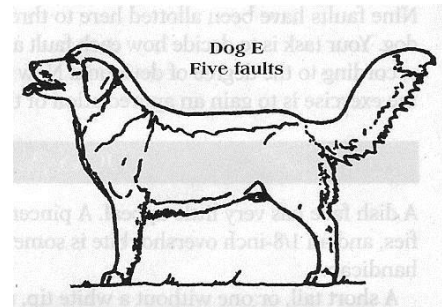
DOG E

Sound but very heavy, this example may not have the required degree of agility. His level topline ends in a faulty low tail set. His legs are short and his rear pasterns are long (a fault seen too often in this breed). His ears should be higher and set further rearward.



DOG F

Fronts are a problem area in Tollers and Dog F is a classic example. His steep forequarters have moved forward on the body, reducing forechest. The front pastern lacks a slight slope. His shoulder blade is steep and his upper arm is short and steep with much the same degree of steepness in the rear. The neck arch is absent and the neck joins the topline at an abrupt angle. The tail should follow the slope of the croup and may be carried below the line of the back. He should have at least one white marking.



I placed them in the order they came into the ring, Dog D, E and F.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

These are the many virtues and faults that breeders felt necessary to include as part of the standard, but there's more. There is the matter of faults so serious they're listed as disqualifications. They are:

1. White on the shoulders, around the ears, on the back of the neck, or across the back or flanks.
2. A silvery coat, or grey or black areas in the coat.
3. Lack of webbing.
4. An undershot bite or wry mouth.
5. In adult classes, any shyness.
6. A butterfly nose.
7. Overshot by more than 1/8 inch.
8. Any colour other than red or orange.