

YOU BE THE JUDGE

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WEST HIGHLAND WHITE TERRIER

The Westie has a much different balance than the more lithe and wire Cairn, and a much different balance than the lower-to-ground, more stocky Scottish Terrier.

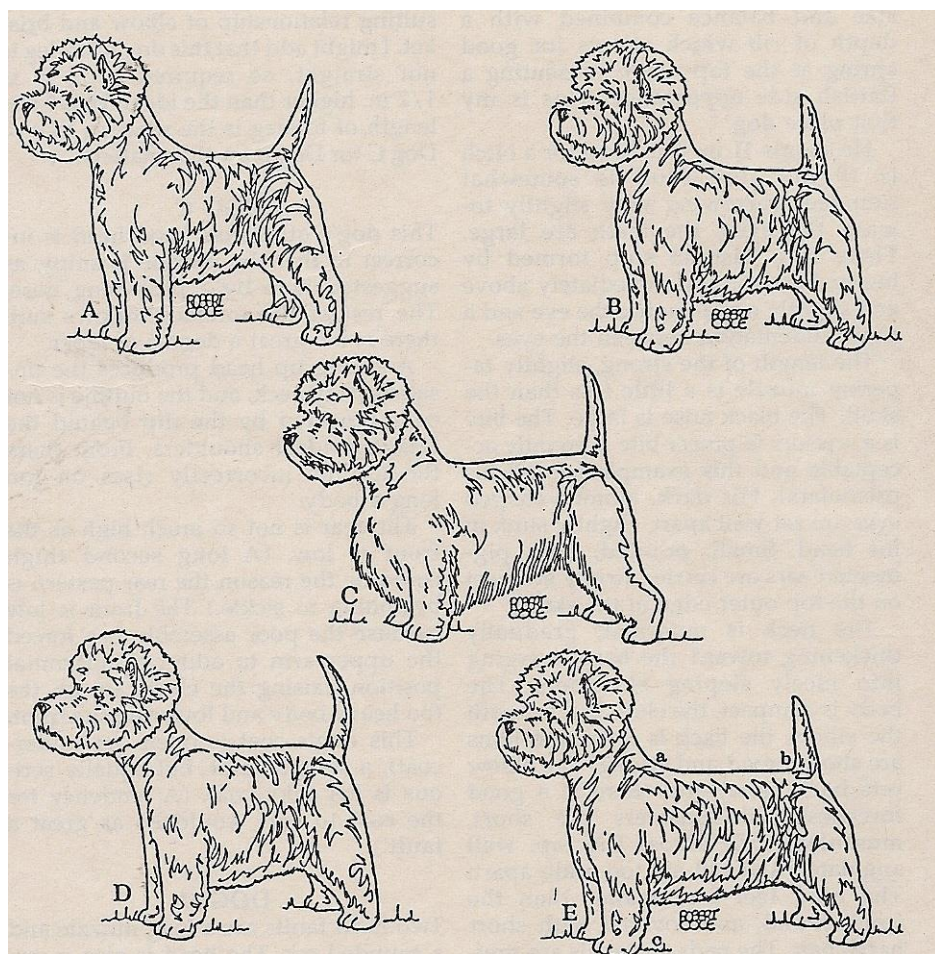
PURPOSE

Tom Horner informs us in his book *The World of Terriers*, Faber and Faber, 1984, that: "This is a breed in which it is necessary to look well beyond the trimming and presentation and remember what the breed is for. It has been said the Westie is a digger, but he is not – he is first and foremost a fighter who must be able to jump and scramble over and between rocks and deep cairns built of stone and immovable rock. He needs to be able to squeeze through wherever his quarry can go, and to turn in tight places and bet back again."

DECISION TIME

Three of these five Westies are sound. One of the three is more typical, from a hunter-function standpoint, than the other two. However, if you have based your selection on the official Canadian Kennel Club description, you have not selected the same example for first place that I have.

Based on the official wording in the current Canadian Westie standard, which reads, "Height from the highest point of the withers (a) to the ground (c) should be approximately equal to the length from the withers (a) to the set-on (b) of tail," you are obliged to consider the 11-inch tall Dog E for first place because, based on this wording, he alone possesses correct length of body.



If you wish to believe the requirement for an 11-inch topline (and a 15 inch body) is a typographical error, then consider the merits of the other two sound Open class males. Both have similar heads, bodies, coats and feet, yet balance is quite different. Both have appeal, and anyone not familiar with the Westie might readily give first place to the less typy of the two. In what way is their balance different?

It might help to know that, because of certain departures connected with steep shoulders, one of the two less sound examples is ½ inch over the ideal 11 in. and one is 1 in. under the ideal. (Any specimen as much as 1 inch over or under height limits is very objectionable.) Being aware that their heights depart in opposite directions from the 11-inch ideal while both possess the same length of foreleg indicates two ways this breed sometimes departs from functional type. This awareness may influence your choice for third – but wait, there is a great deal more ...

Between Dogs C and D, heads, necks, fronts, toplines, tail sets, hindquarters and coats are different. Dog C has one visible head fault, Dog D has two.

FIRST PLACE

Compare Dog A to Dog B. I have intentionally kept them very similar in order to make more dramatic a particular functional Westie departure. This departure produces an entirely different balance; it also produces unwanted height and, in turn, reduces the Westie's ability to turn in tight places. Dog B is 11 in. tall, Dog A is nearly 12 in. tall.

DOG B

Too long a length of leg for this breed of dog makes Dog A appear too high off the ground, whereas Dog B is neither too high off the ground nor too low to the ground. A hunter of various quarry between rocks and deep cairns, the Westie needs to be able to squeeze through after his quarry and to turn in tight places. This requires a particular size and balance combined with a depth of rib which allows for good spring at the top while presenting a flattish appearance. This is my first place dog.

He stands 11 in. (the ideal for a bitch is 10 in.). the skull is somewhat rounded, narrowing very slightly toward the eyes; the teeth are large. There is a distinct stop formed by heavy, bony ridges immediately above and slightly overhanging the eye and a slight indentation between the eyes.

The length of the strong, slightly tapering muzzle is a little less than the skull. The black nose is large. The bite is a scissors (a pincer bite is equally acceptable and this example has all his premolars.) His dark, almond-shaped eyes are wet well apart, slightly sunk in his head. Small, pointed, dark pigmented ears are carried firmly erect set on the top outer edge of the skull.

The neck is muscular, gradually thickening toward the base, merging into nicely sloping shoulders. The body is compact, the chest is level with the elbow, the back is level, the loins are short, broad and strong. The elbow sets back close, and there is a good forechest. Hindquarters are short, muscular, wide across the top, well angulated and not set too wide apart. The hind feet are smaller than the front, round and covered with short harsh hair. The pads and nails are preferably black. (Note: older dogs sometimes lose toe colouration.)

DOG A

Like Dog B, this example's double coat has an outer harsh coat about 2 in. long and an undercoat which resembles fur – short, soft and close. The proper colour is white but with this example there is a touch of cream along the back. Some writers advise that a touch of cream is part of the breed's history and should only be penalized when nothing else separates one dog from another – not the situation here. This is my choice for second place.

He departs from functional type in that his straight legs, elbows level with brisket, are too long for a Westie. With the same length and depth of body as Dog B, this extra leg length makes nearly-12inch Dog A appear shorter-bodied and more square, an appearance that sometimes wrongly finds favour.

THIRD PLACE

Compare the virtues and faults of Dog C to those of Dog D. *Heads* – the muzzle of each departs from typical but in different ways. I draw attention to muzzle length and muzzle ends. I also draw your attention to the ears. *Heights* – Dog C is an inch lower than the ideal 11 in. – why? The answer lies in the angle of upper arm

and the resulting relationship of elbow and brisket. I might add that this dog's foreleg is not straight, as required. Dog D is $\frac{1}{2}$ in. higher than the ideal. Why? His length of foreleg is the same as that of Dog C (or Dog B for that matter).

DOG C

This dog's otherwise good head is incorrect in that the muzzle is snipey, as suggested here by a projecting nose. The rest of the foreface follows suit; there is too great a degree of taper.

A strung up head produces the unsatisfactory neck, and the outline is not complemented by the dip behind the less-than-ideal shoulders. From there the topline incorrectly rises on too long a body.

The rear is not so much high as the front is low. (A long second thigh could be the reason the rear pastern is beginning to sickle.) The front is low because the poor assembly has forced the upper arm to adopt a horizontal position, raising the elbow up on the too heavy body and lowering the front.

This dog's coat is open (no undercoat), a serious fault, but equally serious is his silky coat. (A tendency for the coat to curl would be as great a fault).

DOG D

Two head faults are a long muzzle and a rounded ear. The head is also incorrectly carried forward in an extended position. This is probably due to the same steep shoulder blade and upper arm that has caused the forequarters to move forward on the body, reducing forechest (in front of point of shoulder) and creating a hole between the front legs. The steep shoulder blade and upper arm have also forced the body to rise $\frac{1}{2}$ inch above the elbow, creating an illusion of a shorter body. This inferior assembly has also caused the neck to appear short.

Lack of forequarter angulation is accompanied by equal lack of required angulation in the rear, and the croup incorrectly slopes down to a low set tail. I'd give this dog third place.