

YOU BE THE JUDGE

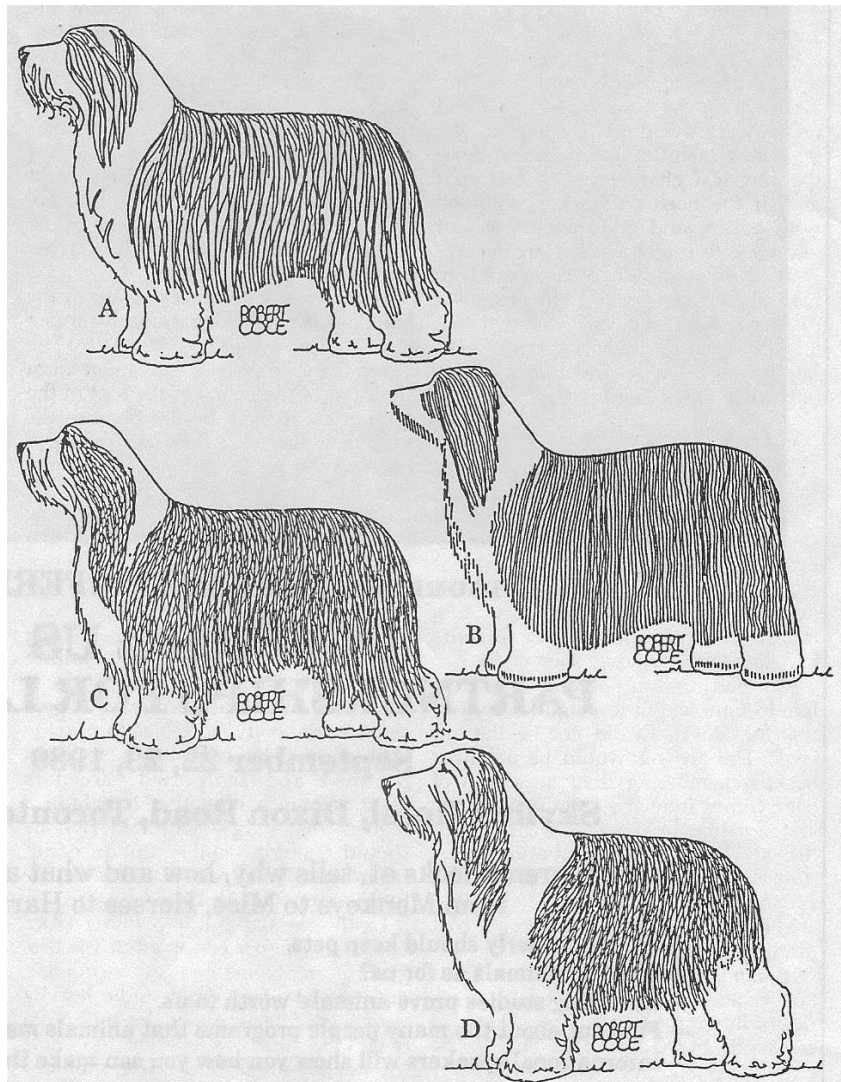
By Robert Cole

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THE BEARDED COLLIE

There are no Bearded Collie disqualifications, but breeders have conveyed from time to time a concern for nine serious faults. With the importance of these faults in mind, I have handicapped one of these four Beardies with seven of the nine. Award this handicapped sheep herder fourth place or, if you prefer, withhold the ribbon.

One of the three remaining bitches more closely represents typical; all three are sound. My second place could easily be mistaken for typical if power was a primary Beardie requirement. Third place departs in a number of interesting ways. Decide on first, second, third and then determine the fourth place bitch's seven faults.



DOG C

This Beardie's head is drawn in what I believe to be 'proportion to the size of the dog.' The skull is broad, flat and a square. The strong, full muzzle is equal in length to the skull. This black dog's large black nose is squarish (the nose normally follows coat colour in blues and browns). Skin pigmentation of lip and eye rims is solid, not patched, and follows nose colour. The bite is a scissors bite (pincer acceptable) and, as required, no teeth are missing. This is my visualization of typical, the one to whom I would award first place.

The large, expressive, intelligent and affectionate eyes are set well apart. The eyebrows are arched up and forward but not so long as to obscure the eyes. The drooping ears are medium size and covered with hair. They are set level with the eyes and, when alert, lift at the base, level with but not above the top of the skull, thereby increasing the appearance of skull breadth.

The slightly arched neck of fair length blends smoothly into well sloped shoulders. The ratio of body length to height is the required five-to-four, measured from the point of chest to buttocks. The appearance is of a long, lean, though strongly made body. The length of body comes from the length of ribcage, not the length of loin. The deep ribs are well sprung but not barreled, and reach to the elbow.

Desired length of leg does not receive mention in any Beardie standard but, to get 'plenty of daylight under the body' and to fully utilize this five-to-four ratio at the Beardie endurance trot, I have given this dog a moderate length of foreleg, the same length as depth of body. She stands the minimum 21 in. and would weigh in at around 50 lbs.

This dog's level topline blends smoothly into the curve of the rump. Good angulation is balanced front with rear, there is a degree of forechest in front of the point of shoulder (often absent) and, in the rear, the toes line up just behind a line dropped vertically below the point of buttocks. The tail is set low. The well-padded feet are oval in shape; the toes are arched and close together, well covered with hair, including between the pads.

DOG A

This heavy example departs sufficiently from long-and-lean correct Beardie length-to-height balance as to strength, by contrast, an appreciation of typical. Her body is the same length as my representation of typical – her depth of body and length of leg are not.

Her body is too deep and the legs are too long for a rough-country sheep herder and, less visible, both bone and breadth are overdone. By herself, she possesses many of the required Beardie physical characteristics and coat and, if the need for speed combined with agility and endurance was not known, she might have a greater appeal. However, when compared to Dog C, she can be seen to present a more powerful and very different balance. I would award this strong, sound but heavy bitch second place in this particular Open class.

DOG D

The length of foreface from nose to stop may equal or be slightly less than the distance from stop to occiput. It should not be longer, as it is here – this head is wrong for this third place Bearded Collie. Body-wise, this sound example's balance departs (but not to a totally unacceptable degree) towards Old English Sheepdog squareness.

Her body is too short for a correct five-to-four ratio, but less leg length would not be the answer. The answer would be a longer back, remembering that the length of back comes from the length of ribcage and not that of the loin. What about hocks? The hocks should be low; here, they are too high and the rear pasterns are too long.

The harsh texture of this dog's coat (similar to rain-shedding Skye Terrier's) is correct – the markings are not. Where white occurs, it should appear only on the foreface as a blaze, on the skull, on the tip of the tail, on the chest, legs and feet, around the neck. The white hair should not grow on the body behind the shoulder as it has here, nor on the face to surround the eyes. The Standard also advises that white should not extend above the hock. Sometimes tan is seen; it is acceptable on the eyebrows, cheeks, legs, inside the ears and under the tail.

DOG B

This is the Beardie handicapped by the seven informative faults considered serious by breeders. (Two additional serious Beardie faults not illustrated but worthy of mention are a steep pelvis and excessive height over 21 in., 22 for males). The muzzle is faulty, although difficult to see under the long hair on the sides of the face; the coat is faulty in four ways; the hindquarters have a serious fault; and the seventh fault relates to the cause of this 19 inch Beardie's lack of height.

The first, and one of the most serious faults, is this bitch's snipy muzzle, mostly hidden here by facial hair (it is also snipy viewed from above). The cheeks should be well filled below the eyes and the muzzle should be strong and full. This dog has an acceptable level (pincer) bite, but her nose is not 'large and squarish' and the front teeth (incisors) curve around the faulty narrow muzzle. The Standard does not spell it out, but the Beardie's front teeth should form a straight line between the canines, rather than be forced to curve around a narrow muzzle.

We are warned of steep croup in the Standard. Dog B's departure towards a flat croup is equally serious. (The croup is the portion of the topline from the front of the pelvis to the root of the tail.) A croup may be flat because the sacrum is flat (e.g., the Fox Terrier) or because the pelvis is flat. The Beardie Standard does not distinguish between the two; however, when the latter is the case (as here), the fact that there is a lack of angulation at stifle and hock and the rear is pushed up is, in my opinion, the more serious of the two.

This girl's coat is excessively long and silky, rather than harsh, falling straight to the sides like a mantle. It lacks the undercoat necessary to give shape to the body as well as to provide protection. The coat has also been trimmed and sculptured. Breeders have written asking that I include a request that judges withhold ribbons should trimming and sculpture occur, regardless of the fact that this departure is a man-made fault.

Lastly, she stands a little under 19 in. (20-21 in. is correct for adult bitches, 21-22 in. for dogs) and, in the opinion of many breeders, this is to be heavily penalized. She is under the minimum height because her legs are too short for her length of body. Her shoulder blades are also short.