

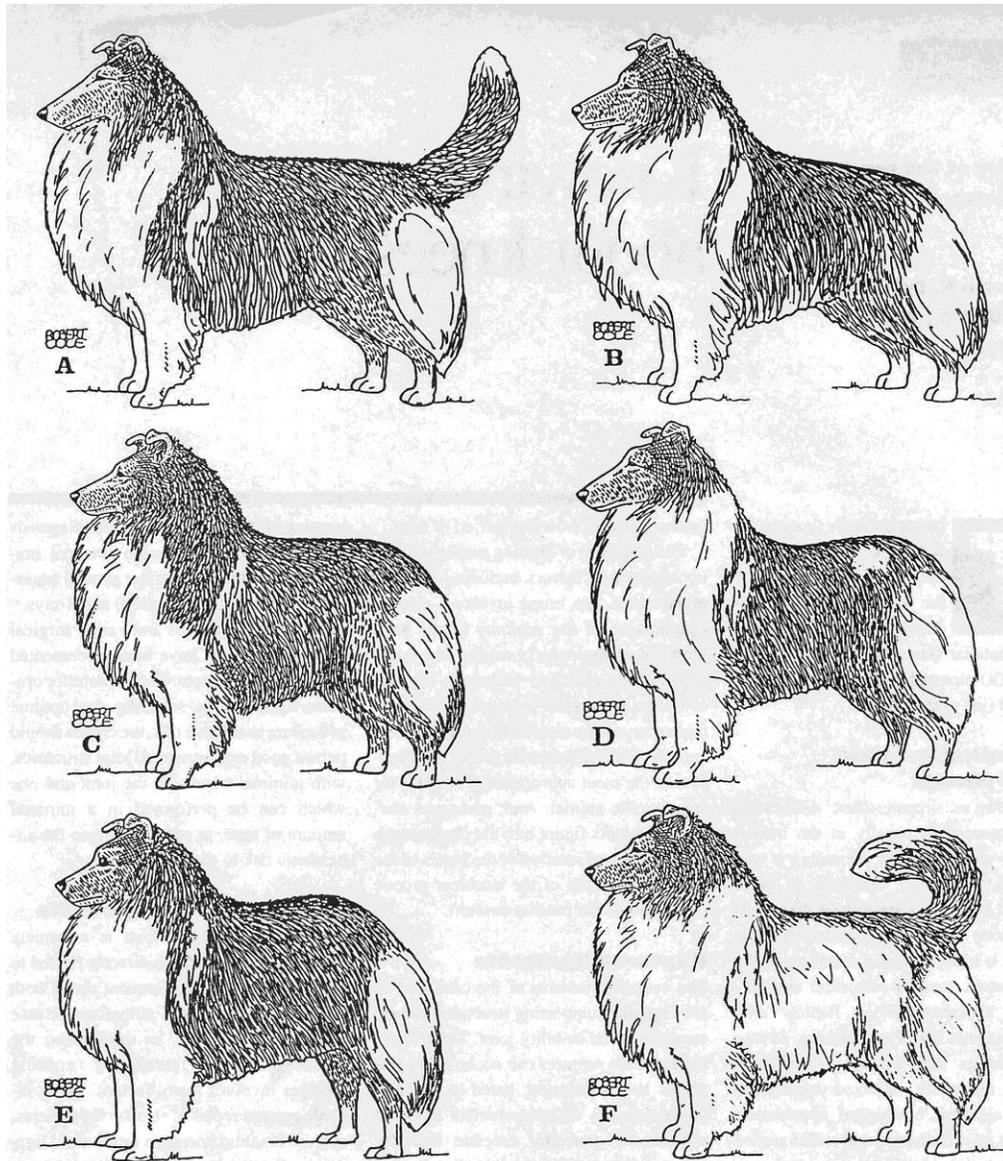
YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

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THE SHETLAND SHEEPDOG

The Shetland Sheepdog is a herding breed; good structure is important. The Sheltie is also a pretty breed and this may be one reason for the disproportionate number of attractive but poorly constructed entries. Of the six examples I have drawn, one represents typical and the remaining five depart from type, balance and structure in a variety of interesting ways. Select a first, second, third and fourth place winner from this male class.



BALANCE

The typical Shetland Sheepdog is a small (Shelties below or above 13-16 inches are disqualified), alert, rough coated and long haired. I have attempted to convey Sheltie beauty in my representation of typical balance, keeping good structure in mind. I have given him a muscular, well arched neck of length sufficient to carry his head proudly, a body slightly longer than high, and a deep chest that extends to his elbow, or half his height. His back is level. There is a graceful sweep over the loins, and the croup slopes gradually to the rear. His tail sets low (it can be lifted high when he is alert, but not carried forward over the back), the bone reaching the hock. Tuck up is moderate. He is well angulated front and rear, his legs muscular and of strong bone. There is a slight slope to his strong front pasterns,. His perpendicular rear pasterns are short. His oval feet are well padded, the toes arched and close together.

HEAD

His head is refined; its shape, when viewed from the top or side, is a long, blunt wedge tapering slightly from small ears to a black nose. The top of the skull is flat and is equal in length to the muzzle; the balance point is the inner corner of the eye. In profile, the topline of the skull is parallel with the topline of the muzzle, but on a higher plane due to a slight but definite stop. There are many opinions as to degree of "slight but definite." I have graphically interpreted what I believe is typical.

His brown eyes are dark, with almond-shaped eye rims set somewhat obliquely. (Merle can have brown eyes, blue eyes, blue flecked eyes, and not mentioned in the standard, one brown and one blue eye.) His small ears, moderately wide at the base, are placed fairly close together on top of his skull; when alert, they are brought forward and carried semi-erect with the tip falling forward. His teeth are sound, with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite.

COAT AND COLOUR

He has a double coat of long hair, harsh textured and straight, with a soft, short and close undercoat. Mane and frill are abundant and his forelegs are well feathered. The hind legs above his hocks are profusely covered with hair.

He could be sable (clear or shaded, any shade from pale gold to deep mahogany), tri-colour (black, white and tan), blue merle (clear silvery blue, splashed and marbled with black, with or without tan, the general effect being blue), black and white, or black and tan. White markings may appear (except in black and tan) in the blaze, collar and chest, frill, legs and tip of tail. Absence of these markings is not to be penalized. Brindle disqualifies in the U.S.A., but not in Canada. Jean Daniels Simmons, author of *The Illustrated Shetland Sheepdog Standard*, says brindle might no longer exist.

DOG A

This dog is fairly sound, but his neck and body are too long. His muzzle is also too long, and his stop lacks definition. Do not let this alert dog's high tail carriage disturb. This correctly raised tail is faulty only when it is carried sickle, i.e. "up and out in a semi-circle".

DOG B

This example has a faulty two-angle head, the skull rising from eyebrows to occiput, producing non-parallel planes. The end of this muzzle is abrupt and too deep, which gives a foreign look to the profile. His incorrect topline (it should be level) slopes downward. His overly long second thigh positions the hind feet too far rearward. He is unbalanced front to rear.

DOG C

This example represents typical. In producing him, I was reminded of a published comment by Joyce Waste, which reads: "Balance can be a precarious thing indeed. The least little deviation, the smallest thing 'out of whack' and the balance is disturbed or destroyed. If the head is too small or too large in proportion to the body; if the dog is too long or too short in neck and/or back; if the Sheltie is straight in front and/or rear; has too much or too little coat, etc.; then he/she has lost that which we call balance."

DOG D

Here again is a two-angled head, but this time the back skull recedes. There is overfill above the eyes. His lack of neck arch is due to faulty forequarters, the steepness causing the front pasterns to weaken. His back is soft. He has sickle hocks. He also has a faulty white spot. Though not apparent, his tail is short (a current concern in the breed); the bone ends above rather than reaching at least to the hock. A kinked tail would be equally or more disturbing.

DOG E

He has what is called an 'old type head. The muzzle is short, the eyes are large and the stop is pronounced. His neck is short. His shoulder blades and short upper arms are steep. Notice that there is no slope to the front pasterns and that the legs have moved forward, positioning more under the eye than rearward of the ears.

The pelvis is steep, causing the upper and second thigh to steepen and the croup to rise. His feet are neither compact nor arched.

DOG F

This example is identical to typical Dog C but for colour, tail and length of leg. Unlike the Collie, a Sheltie cannot be predominantly white. The Sheltie standard advises: "A Sheltie with more than 50 per cent white shall be so severely penalized as to effectively eliminate it from competition."

He has a faulty sickle tail, carried up and out in a semi-circle. The Sheltie's tail may be slightly raised, but never over the level of the back. The cause of this high tail carriage is not due to a steep pelvis, since he has angulation at stifle and hock; the cause is probably a horizontal sacrum, which prevents a gradual slope to the croup.

Height from girth to elbow, and from elbow to withers (when the elbow is level with brisket) should be equal. This short legged Sheltie (I have shortened the legs by one inch) is out of balance.

1, 2, 3 and 4

My first place choice is typical representation Dog C. Second place goes to long-necked, long-bodied Dog A. Third place goes to sloped topline Dog B, who is stronger in the rear than the front. I give fourth place to soft-backed Dog D.