

Standard (Canadian) Reaction Time

Cynthia Mahigian Moorhead.

The Canadian standard differs from the American (and even the British) in a number of ways. As I have done previously for the American one, I have given my reactions to each section in turn. Some of this will be familiar to some of you, as there are also many similarities between the two and therefore not much had to be altered from my original article.

If nothing else, you should be aware that there are many “unspoken” points to the Beardie standard—in spite of exactly what the standard says, there are things which most knowledgeable breeders simply take for granted as “gospel” which may or may not be appropriate in light of close examination of how the standard reads. Once you start *interpreting* the words of a standard, you are faced with a whole additional set of variables. It’s truly hard enough to stick to what is actually written, without embellishment, however altruistically meant. So examine the standard for yourself, look at as many dogs as possible, talk to as many knowledgeable people as you can, and form your own conclusions. But remember, you are judging the dogs against the standard, not the other way around.

There is, of course, an interrelatedness to everything, and I think this becomes increasingly clear throughout a careful examination of the standard. When one angle is off, it is not just that angle which is affected, other angles, lines, etc., are also thrown off. In addition, natural breeding and selection has designed an animal that is efficient for the job it has historically been required to do. The standard should be a verbal affirmation of this design. When the standard is inadequate or unclear, or open to myriad subjective interpretations, it weakens the breeder’s ability to follow and understand nature’s answers to problems of natural construction and temperament. The standard represents only the attempt to verbalize that which the eyes and hands have seen and felt to be true in the breed. After all, the Beardie came first, not the standard.

Origin and Purpose:

One of the oldest of the British herding breeds, the Bearded Collie has for centuries been the Scottish hill shepherd's dog, used to hunt and gather free-ranging sheep on the Highlands. The breed was also popular as a cattle drover. Both jobs required a hardy constitution and intelligence, initiative, strength, stamina, and speed.

Reaction:

Too many of our showdogs today lack even the most basic of the characteristics that are, essentially, the definition of “type.” In seeking the glamour necessary to win in the ring, we have too often forsaken the integrity of construction necessary for the Beardie to perform a full day’s work. Moreover, we seem to have forgotten that “initiative” was once a prized commodity in a working dog, and have somehow managed to convince ourselves that the dogs are essentially supposed to be carefree, happy clowns. It is easy to mistake initiative for willfulness, but hard to remember that the ability to think on their own, to problem-solve, allowed them to do their historic jobs more completely.

Beardies present a curious situation: the breed is an ancient one, with an ancient heritage, no doubt about that. But the Bearded Collie that we all know and love has essentially evolved from Mrs. Willison’s two dogs in the late ’40s, early- ’50s. When we discuss the integrity of the breed, we are not necessarily speaking solely about those unknown Highland workers for whom a very different set of problems was reality. The earliest written standards—and they may well precede even the 1805 Scottish version many of us have read—reflected the dogs of the time, just as our does—or should do—today. It should be remembered, moreover, that we have, and society has, for the most part, essentially changed the job for which the breed was developed, for in spite of our sincere efforts to maintain the working ability of which we can justifiably be proud, it is the showring with its specific requirements, which has become the natural “working” arena for the Bearded Collie today. Does this mean that we should have, like the Cocker Spaniels, or Setters, two types of Beardies and two kinds of standards? How can breeders *improve* the breed, and maintain its essential integrity of type and construction? The future of the breed rests in your hands. Take a little time to appreciate the responsibility you have. These are difficult questions; there are no easy answers.

General Appearance:

This is a lean active dog, longer than it is high in an approximate proportion of 5:4, measured from point of chest to point of buttock. Bitches may be slightly longer. The dog, though strongly made, should show plenty of daylight under the body and should not look too heavy. A bright, inquiring expression is a distinctive feature of the breed.

Reaction:

Years ago I was troubled by dogs with short backs in the ring. While this is still a problem, today I think a far greater one is the preponderance of dogs that at first glance appear to be correctly proportioned, but on closer examination are, in fact, way too short on leg. You can't have "plenty of daylight" under the body if the body appears to be standing (and moving) in a trench. And you can't move out characteristically, with reach and drive, when you're forced to take a jillion short, choppy steps to get anywhere. I believe the problem is coming from a shortened upper arm.

I have never understood why bitches "may be slightly longer"; and please, don't run that "to have room for puppies" nonsense by me again!

Just as important as not looking too heavy, though, the Beardie should never appear fragile; and when you feel under all that hair there should be some substance and strength—which in turn helps give the dog confidence in his own physical abilities.

"Bright" expression does not connote either "feverish" or "frantic." It does, however, mean that there should appear to be *something* going on behind the eyes. Too often an otherwise acceptable head is marred by a vacant or dull expression. Attentiveness and interest are important to expression.

Size:

Ideal height at the shoulder: dogs, 21-22 in. (53-56 cm); bitches, 20-21 in. (51-53 cm). Over-all quality and proportions should be considered before size but excessive variations from the ideal height should be discouraged.

Vocabulary—

Withers—The highest point of the shoulders, immediately behind the neck.

Reaction:

Size is one of the hardest things for many people to judge extemporaneously. For this reason, I recommend that everyone measure their dogs or have them measured,

using an accurate measuring device. This helps cultivate “an eye” for size, and will contribute greatly to a person’s ability to tell whether or not a dog falls within the “ideal” height range. Many things can erroneously influence a person’s perception of height, including—but not limited to—the size of a dog’s handler, the size of the other dogs in the ring, markings, length of back and/ or of neck, etc., etc. It is commonly held that “an inch over or under” the ideal represents the outer limits of acceptability in size, though obviously the standard does not so state. It is more important that the dog or bitch conform to the basic tenets of good balance, construction, and movement, than to have none of these but fall within the ideal size—so long as the discrepancy remains minor. It is important that the Beardie remain a medium-sized dog able to perform its traditional role with grace and ease. I think that there should be some mention about dogs looking like dogs and bitches looking like bitches. I’ve never minded a slightly too big girl or a slightly too small boy as long as the bitch was feminine-looking and the dog, masculine.

Characteristics and Temperament:

The Bearded Collie must be alert and self-confident, and should be lively and active. The temperament should be that of a steady, intelligent working dog and must show no signs of nervousness or aggression.

Reaction:

“Lively and active” is not synonymous with “empty-headed ditz-brain”! Nor should it be a rationale for excessive or uncontrollable effusiveness. I’m all for ebullience, and the Beardie Bounce is certainly recognizably joyful, but that’s a far cry from being a hyper maniac!

I get more and more calls from prospective buyers who question the breed’s temperament—they’ve heard so many stories about unstableness and even aggressive behavior toward family members that they are actually *afraid* to buy into the breed. Ten, even five, years ago, no one worried about being bitten by a Beardie!

Coat:

The coat must be double with the undercoat soft, furry and close. The outer coat should be flat, harsh and strong, shaggy, free from wooliness and curl, though a slight wave is permissible. The length and density of the hair should be sufficient to provide a protective coat and to enhance the shape of the dog, but not enough to obscure the natural lines of the body. The adult coat may break along the spine, but must not be artificially parted. The coat must not be trimmed in any way. On the head, the bridge of the nose should be sparsely covered with hair which should be slightly longer on the sides just to cover the

lips. From the cheeks, the lower lips and under the chin, the coat increases in length towards the chest, forming the typical beard.

Vocabulary—

Double coat— An outer coat resistant to weather and protective against brush and brambles, together with an undercoat of softer hair for warmth and waterproofing.

Reaction:

As I have said elsewhere, the proper Beardie double coat, so admirably suited for its original purposes, can be particularly frustrating to wet down in the bath before the show. Just when you think you can *finally* lather up, you find another layer, bone dry just below! The alternative, however, is much more common—that is to say, an *improper* Beardie coat, which more often than not is soft, inside and out, and when wet, resembles cotton candy in the rain. Beardies whose coats are appropriately harsh (NOT wiry) and free from woolliness make grooming simple, and are cosmetically attractive, because the texture allows for the length required for the showring, without breaking off (too wiry), while not allowing the excessive length that an overly silky coat will naturally attain. (There is a great deal of variation even in puppy coats, which tend to be softer, fuller, and woollier. This should be taken into consideration by judges. Generally, adult coat will be at least partially in by 18 months, sometimes after a traumatic [for the owner] coat loss during which time the Beardie can be half- [front or rear] or almost completely lacking in coat, or exhibit some weird combination of woolly puppy stuff and flat adult hair, often in a strange array of colours!). I personally find the phrase “to enhance the shape of the dog, but not so profuse as to obscure the natural lines of the body” to be confusing. Surely “enhancing” connotes some change for the better, and therefore is at odds with the idea that the dogs should be shown naturally and untrimmed. Good grooming should include the notions of clean, unmatted, and without foreign substance. As regards the desirability or not of “a slight wave,” I have noticed that most judges, and possibly most owners, prefer no wave at all. That’s fine, as long as there is the clear understanding that it is specifically permissible and therefore not to be penalized. From a practical standpoint, it may be somewhat harder to keep a Beardie with a slightly wavy coat looking as “finished” as one with a straighter one. I have noted, however, that *usually* these wavy coats are of a very correct texture, and while they may not stay in place so easily for the showring, they may tend to be easier to groom.

Today, it is an unusual Beardie that is shown totally without some kind of trimming—usually on the feet, and/or between the eyes. Technically, by the American standard, the judge should “severely penalize” the dog for this practice

in the showing. Unfortunately, so widespread is the problem that a dog who has not been trimmed in any way is apt to look pretty unkempt and relatively ungroomed next to its tidy neighbors. One of the things that has made this trimming “necessary” is the change in coat texture we have effected over the years in the quest for bigger, flashier, more glamorous coats for the showing. The silkier coats grow longer without breaking off like the harsher coats do—a kind of built-in self regulation designed to keep a working dog from becoming enmeshed in gorse and brambles. That also means that there is more hair on the feet and head which must somehow be dealt with or the dog will appear to be wearing snowshoes and a veil!

I think all the standards need to address this problem more effectively, however, as much as I hate to see a Beardie plucked, trimmed, and “enhanced,” such cosmetic considerations must take a backseat to pros and cons of conformation.

Colour:

Bearded Collies are born dark, pure black, brown, blue or fawn, with or without white markings. The base colours mature to any shade of black, grey, blue, brown, or fawn, with the coat usually having a mixture of many shades at once and individual hairs showing bands of light and dark. Grey hairs may be lightly interspersed with all colours. Where white occurs, it should only appear on the foreface, as a blaze on the skull, on the tip of the tail, on the chest, legs and feet and, if round the collar, the roots of the white hair should not extend behind the shoulder. White should not appear above the hocks on the outside of the hind legs. Slight tan markings are acceptable on the eyebrows, inside the ears, on the cheeks, under the root of the tail, and on the legs where white joins the main colour.

Vocabulary —

Blaze—A white stripe running up the center of the face usually between the eyes.

Isabella—Fawn or light bay colour.

China eye—A clear blue eye.

Walleye—An eye with a whitish iris; a blue eye, fisheye, pearl eye.

I find the specific notation of colour bands in this standard an interesting addition. While it is certainly accurate, it seems more aimed at breeders than at judges (who will no doubt ignore it anyway!). Much has traditionally been made of the presence or absence of extra white. I do not wish to get into the old functionality argument here. Suffice it to say that the American standard allows for a great deal of interpretation on exactly where white may occur—it *not* clear, for example, what constitutes the ending of the “body” and what constitutes the beginning of the

“leg,” so that it is arguably possible to have a dog with a full white chest, full white collar “around the neck” (though not behind the shoulder), four completely white legs—up to the shoulder joint in front and the hip joint in the rear—and a wide blaze and white skull, without the dog technically being mismarked. I am not sure how a dog with only colored rings around its eyes, on its ears, in a “blanket” shape on its body, with a stripe leading to and then including the tail (excluding, of course, the “tip”), would be received in general, but I suspect it might strike some as unusual looking however “correct” according to the standard. The Canadian standard, however, while being more succinct, has handily managed to avoid that problem altogether.

Too many people ignore or are unaware of the presence of the tan markings known more familiarly as “tri” markings. Often puppies are registered without consideration of these markings, and several generations down, breeders are surprised to note entire litters of tris when none have ever apparently been in their pedigrees before. Tri markings, in appropriate places, are perfectly acceptable, though, like wavy coats, are not always welcome by everyone. They can range in colour from the lightest taupe to a relatively rich medium brown. Moreover, they can appear in all four colours, though they are obviously most easily seen in born blacks. Because tri markings do not always appear everywhere they’re allowed to, they are often missed. Checking under the tail of very young puppies is generally the surest way to find out if you should be registering them as tris, although I have had some develop tri markings as late as 8 weeks or so.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Beardie coat colour is the never-ending changing so many exhibit throughout their lives. Dogs which began life coal black may end up lighter than the silvery blues from the same litter, in the meantime going through every possible gradation in between. There are, of course, what have been come to be called “stay-blacks,” which never change coat colour much (if any) at all. I have rarely heard the term applied consistently to the other colours—i.e., “stay-browns,” “stay-fawns”—though that is not to say that it isn’t possible to find such animals. We have also adopted the term “slate” to connote a born-black dog that does not stay black. A slate may be indistinguishable from a blue dog later in life, or may be even lighter in colour!

Head:

The head should be in proportion to the size of the dog. The skull is broad and flat, the distance between stop and occiput being equal to the width between the orifices of the ears. The muzzle is strong and equal in length to the distance between the stop and the occiput, the whole effect being that of a dog with strength of muzzle and plenty of brain room. The stop should be moderate. The nose is large and square. Pigmentation of nose leather, lips, and eye rims follows coat colour at birth and should be of a solid colour without spots or patches. The eyes should be set widely apart and are large, soft and affectionate, but not protruding. The eyebrows are arched up and forward but are not so long as to obscure the eyes. Eyes should tone with coat in colour. Born blues and fawns will have lighter eyes with all shades of coat than born blacks or browns. The ears are of medium size and drooping. When the dog is alert, the ears lift at the base, level with, but not above, the the skull, increasing the apparent breadth of the skull. The teeth are large and white, the incisors of the lower jaw fitting tightly behind those of the upper jaw. However, a level bite is acceptable. A full set of forty-two teeth is desirable.

I much prefer the break-out of the American standard, which deals with head, eyes, ears, teeth, etc., in separate sections. I think too much is accorded too little here.

Vocabulary—

Occiput—upper, back point of skull

Stop—the step up from muzzle to skull, indentation between the eyes, where the nasal bone and skull meet

Muzzle—the head in front of the eyes, nasal bone, nostrils and jaws

Foreface—the area from tip of nose to stop; virtually synonymous with “muzzle”

Snipey—a pointed, weak muzzle

Scissors bite—in which the outer side of the lower incisors touches the inner side of the upper incisors.

Reaction:

I am well-known for paying close attention to heads. While it is true that the head doesn't move the dog, it is also true that the head, with its shape, expression, and size is absolutely essential to presenting both a pleasing overall picture and to being one of the most absolute definitions of Beardie type. The head should fit the dog, although as I've said before, *usually* a slightly too-big head is more visually pleasing than one too small. The fashion in the ring right now has dictated a shorter foreface and backskull than what we saw earlier in the breed. This has several things to recommend it: it is easier to breed; it means the backskull does not have to be so wide to match the rest of the head; it makes the cheeks *appear* to be more well-filled beneath the eyes, and the muzzle, since it is so short, generally is not

snipey. It makes for a very “cute” fuzzy face. However, it also means that the placement and shape of the eyes changes—they become set more forward, less obliquely, closer together (there’s nowhere else for them to go!) and generally rounder in shape. There is a natural tendency for them to be more protruding. While I would never put up a dog solely on the basis of the longer foreface and correspondingly longer, broad backskull that allows for, in my opinion, a more typical and pleasing head, all other things being equal, such a dog would certainly be more in conformity headwise to the standard overall than his round-eyed opponent, and as such, would have to win out.

A snipey muzzle often goes along with bite or teeth anomalies, though not always.

“Moderate stop” is becoming a thing of the past. In fact, I often see handlers teasing the hair on the top of the head to apparently give the visual effect of more stop than is actually there. This is really nonproductive since a hands-on exam will tell you exactly where the stop is, and almost always the teasing takes the stop well past “moderate” and into the visually domed look. Coupled with the short muzzles and backskulls and round eyes, instead of a Beardie head you find yourself looking at a Dandie Dinmont face!

It’s my feeling that the “eyebrows” are made up of hair above the eyes and not the bit that grows between the eyes at the stop or upper part of the muzzle. That last bit is generally what gets plucked out by handlers. Unless the coat is adult and of the proper texture, the true eyebrows will have an aggravating tendency to remain in front of the eyes (incidentally, I much prefer the Canadian and British standards’ wording to the American’s). Again, teasing sometimes acts to keep them in place—but so does styling gel or the like. A backward sweep of the comb or brush may help temporarily, but frankly I’d rather let them fall where they may than resort to “artificial” means.

Regarding the ears, “lift” should never be taken to mean “Collie-like” or even “Irish Wolfhound-like.” You should not, however, forget that two types of ears can be found in Beardies, often in the same dog: one with a transverse fold that allows the ear to fold back against the skull, thereby exposing the ear orifice more completely (a “working” ear), and the other without the fold—a true hanging ear. The folded kind tend to be smaller, and not always so successfully covered with ‘long hair.’ They may also be set slightly higher. Generally speaking, the average ear will be long enough to reach the eye when gently pulled forward.

The section on eye colour is slightly better than the American standard.. Even so, if you ask a random sampling of, say, 50 knowledgeable Beardie people, I'd be willing to bet that 45 or more would say that eye colour should follow coat colour—"it's in the standard." Well, it *isn't* in the standard. Eyes "should tone with the coat color" is not the same thing at all. It *doesn't* say a black dog will have dark brown eyes, a blue dog will have blue-grey eyes, etc., etc. It also means that yellow eyes, in a fawn dog, could conceivably tone excellently with the coat—but how many people would like "bird of prey" eyes in their Beardie? What about dark green eyes in a slate? So long as they "tone" with coat, they should not be penalized? And how do you decide what "tones"? Does that mean any pleasing colour combination? How can you penalize, say, a slate dog with greyish-brown eyes, rather than bittersweet chocolate eyes, when the former look to tone appropriately? And anyway, the standard says "will *generally*" tone; surely that means, "not always." Some Beardies are born bi-eyed—one a china or walleye, for example. The popular conception is that is acceptable in a blue dog, but not in a black or slate dog. However, how can a bi-eyed dog be penalized using the guideline "should tone with coat color"? Unless the eye colour adversely affects expression—and this, too, is so subjective—how can any judge find fault applying this directive?

As regards all these cosmetic considerations, especially in light of the loose nature of the standard, my personal feeling is that proper construction must be of paramount importance, while markings, colour, etc., must be secondary. Everyone will have a personal range of cosmetically acceptable considerations, arrived at by diverse rationales. However, so long as these considerations are not offensive to the individual's eye, not at odds with the standard, and do not detract from the overall pleasing picture of the dog, they should not supersede the absolute necessity that the dog be sound, typey, well-constructed, and accordingly, able to move correctly.

At least in part because of the changing nature of coat colour, discerning colour in adult Beardies can be a challenging experience, especially for a judge, who is not supposed to ask the colour of an exhibit under him or her in the showring. This is where the pigmentation should come in as, unlike the coat, the nose leather, lips, roof of the mouth, etc., should remain constant throughout the life of the dog. Generally, there is little problem between telling the blacks and blues (American Tourister® luggage-colour!), though I have seen a few blacks with faded pigment and a similar number of blues with over-dark pigment, which made for some interesting discussion. However, between the fawns and browns, there seems to be no end of problems, especially since the rich reddish-brown colour of the older

generations of brown Beardies (the brick-red or “dried blood” colour) has become increasingly hard to find. Likewise, the true fawn—called “Isabella” in some other breeds (Dobes, for instance) too often has become dilute to the point of unrecognizability. Faded pigment in both these colours is widespread, compounding the uncertainty. In addition, spotty pigment is especially prevalent in these two colours, though I find it in blacks and blues too often as well. It is increasingly hard to find a fully pigmented dog of *any* colour one whose nose and lips are completely filled, and sometimes, where even the roof of the mouth is solid-coloured. As breeders, we should pay more attention to this problem.

Many Beardies these days have level bites. I personally have never heavily penalized a dog for having one—though again, all things being equal I would prefer the dog with a correct scissors bite to one whose bite was level. I think the Canadian standard is superior here to our American one. Although much is currently being made about missing premolars, one could not fault them per the American’s sappy statement, “full dentition is desirable”, especially in the showing. In the whelping box I feel strongly that all teeth should be there, and I would not breed to or from a dog or bitch that had a real problem with multiple missing teeth. My personal belief is that just as man’s development shortened the length of jawbone and concurrently lessened the room for the final set of molars (those pesky wisdom teeth!), the shortening of foreface and jaw in Beardies currently will eventually make it harder and harder to fit a full complement of teeth properly into the mouth.

Neck:

The neck must be of a fair length, muscular, and slightly arched.

Vocabulary—

Withers—the highest point of the shoulders, immediately behind the neck

Reaction:

Obviously, “of a fair length” is the tricky bit here, because some may prefer a longer appearing neck than others to seem pleasing especially since there is some discrepancy on the “proper” length of body, as well. In any case, one does not give a dog a neck by putting the choker up under its ears, grasping it mightily in the right hand, and yanking the dog up on its toes just before the judge’s eyes sweep by. I’ve been told several times that all dog necks are virtually the same in length (allowing for the overall size of the dog) and that it is only the shoulder set that causes the neck to *appear* longer or shorter as the withers “creep” up or down the

spinal column. I agree that in most cases poor shoulders and layback are the culprits responsible for a “stuffy” neck. This even the rankest amateur should be able to feel as one slides one’s hands down the neck across the withers and on to the back—as a definite bump or thickening at the withers which will stop the smooth flow of the movement. On the other hand, I have owned dogs and judged others that I would swear simply had longer or shorter necks—absolutely nothing wrong with the shoulder at all.

Forequarters:

The shoulders should slope well back, a line drawn through the center of the shoulder blade should form a right angle (90 degrees) with the humerus. The shoulder blades at the withers should only be separated by the vertebrae but must slope outwards from there sufficiently to accommodate the desired spring of rib. The legs are straight and vertical, with good bone, and covered with shaggy hair all-round. The pasterns should be flexible without weakness.

Vocabulary—

Layback—The angle of the shoulder blade as compared with the vertical

Articulation—A joint or juncture between bones or cartilages in the skeleton of a vertebrate; a movable point between rigid parts of any animal

Angulation—The angles formed by a meeting of the bones; mainly, the shoulder, upper arm, stifle, and hock

Right angle—a 90° angle

Withers—The highest point of the shoulders, immediately behind the neck

Spring of ribs—curvature of ribs for heart and lung capacity

Pastern—commonly recognized as the region of the foreleg between the carpus or wrist and the digits

Loaded shoulders—When the shoulder blades are shoved out from the body by overdevelopment of the muscles

Hackney action—The high lifting of the front feet, like that of a hackney horse—a waste of effort

Reaction:

It is interesting that in this section the Canadian standard addresses the 90° angle and the American one the 45° of the front assembly. Some prominent judges maintain that they have never actually felt a dog with a 45° layback. I concur that it is almost impossible to do today. More and more Beardies are becoming upright or straight in shoulder. However, you must be careful that you are not confusing the two angles cited in the standard. Number one, the 45° one, is the angle of shoulder layback—the shoulder blade as compared with the vertical; number two, the 90°

one, is the angle of the upper arm (i.e., the humerus) as compared to the shoulder blade. Number one sometimes affects the apparent length of neck of the dog, as the withers “creep up” along the spinal column. Together they help account for the dog’s ability to reach out in front with strength and authority.

Other things which affect this front movement are the flexibility of the dog, its overall athleticism, and the balance it maintains in regard to the rear angulation. A straight shoulder or insufficient angle in front may actually allow the dog to extend farther than it would with the correct proportions. However, both its strength and efficiency would be affected. Often this hyperextension is used as a plus in the showing—the epitome of the flashy “big mover”; however, a showdog is not necessarily a working dog—and to maximize endurance and flexibility, the optimum angles should be adhered to. Another consideration to insure the optimum functionality of the shoulder is that the lengths of the upper arm and the shoulder blade should be approximately the same. This necessitates the upper arm be relatively long. A short upper arm often results in the movement we call “hackneying,” and does not allow for the proper forward extension of the front leg.

Generally the acceptable width in an adult Beardie between the top of the shoulder blades as they lie in against the withers is taken to be no more than two fingers’ width. As the dog gets older, however, *usually* this distance will substantially increase, either with muscular development, extra (over-) weight, or some other consideration, and gives rise to the phrase “loaded” shoulders. This is easily spotted as a lump at the withers (in less coated dogs, you may see “wrinkles” of skin/fat); and easily felt when you slide your hands down the neck onto the back, as it stops the smooth flow of the line of the neck.

The outward slope of the shoulder blades to “accommodate the desired spring of rib” is often misinterpreted. First of all, what exactly *is* the “desired spring of rib”? Beardie ribcages can be troublesome for judges and novices alike. First there is a curve to the rib from the withers downward to just past midpoint down the chest; then there is a definite straightening of the rib as it *slightly* curves inward to encase the heart and lungs. This straightening takes place where the boney part of the rib hinges into the cartilage part. The ribcage is neither barrel (round) ribbed nor slab-sided (flat with too little spring). The shoulder blades, then, must slope sufficiently to allow this configuration. If there is too little spring, the width between the top of the shoulder blades will generally be too great, and the ribcage itself will be too narrow overall. If there is too much spring the width between the top of the shoulder blades may be more acceptable, but the ribcage will feel over-round. Why

does this matter? Because the shape and size of the ribcage affects the way the front legs are positioned and the way in which they move.

Too many Beardies today have either an insufficient amount of bone or too much. The former makes for a dog much like an oversize Tibetan Terrier; the latter for one like a downscale OES. Beardies should never appear to be delicate or unable to turn in a good day's work, nor should they appear ponylike . . . both problems which abound in today's showing.

The pasterns act as shock absorbers; flexibility and strength are necessary to allow the Bearded to move with agility, grace, and speed. This flexibility also allows the "stopper pads" at the back of the foot to come into contact with the ground when executing the movements of a working dog increasing the Bearded's ability to turn, stop, and change direction with authority and surefootedness. I believe that about 30° is a good average angle for Bearded pasterns, providing the necessary spring without much danger of breaking down.

Body:

The length of the back should come from the length of the rib cage and not that of the loin. The ribs are well sprung but angled back, making the rib cage appear flat, and the chest is deep, giving plenty of heart and lung room. The back must be level and the loins should be strong. The level back blends smoothly into the curve of the rump and must not fall away in croup.

Vocabulary—

Loin—Region of the body on either side of the vertebral column between the last ribs and the hindquarters

Hindquarters—Rear assembly of dog (pelvis, thighs, hocks, and paws).

Rump—The upper rounded part of the hindquarters of a quadruped mammal; buttocks

Croup—The back part of the back, above the hind legs

Reaction:

The loin presents its own set of problems. While there *is* a definition for the loin, the main difficulty seems to be how to quantify the area. This is complicated by the long Bearded ribcage (suitable for a LONG dog), which is angled slightly backward, so that the bottom of the ribs extend further back toward the rear of the dog than do the tops which are attached further forward to the vertebral column. There is also the problem of where exactly on the "hindquarters" (see definition

above) to measure the back point of the loin against—the pelvis, thighs, PAWS?!? One way of measuring the loin is (facing forward) to put both hands from above on the dog's loin area, with the thumbs set on the vertebral column, and the fingers extending down the dog's sides. Then spread the fingers until the forefinger touches the ribcage and the little finger touches the bend of the rear leg. If it is necessary to spread the hand completely, the loin is too long. If no spread, or very little, is necessary, the loin is adequate. Note that this is a measurement only of relativity and it is dependent on a variety of variables: the size of your hand, how the dog is stacked, etc. Another way is to actually try to measure the distance between a chosen point and another chosen point, using (usually) the width of your hand as an indication of length of loin. This is dependent on the same variables, as well as which two points you chose. My own feeling is that length of loin is most appropriately used in a relative sense, and especially as it pertains to the length of ribcage. I have felt unfortunate Beardies whose loins (no matter *how* they're measured) are literally longer than their ribcages.

Why all this fuss about something so confusing anyway? First of all, the loin is the weakest point of the back. Further forward, the Beardie's musculature and other tendons and ligaments, have all that nice long ribcage to attach to; the spinal column has that nice long ribcage to be supported by; the whole front assembly is intricately interwoven to provide support and strength (most of a Beardie's weight, some 60% or so, is supported by the front assembly). The poor loin area depends only on the vertebral column as an anchor; and much like with our own poor lower backs, that area is the easiest place for a breakdown to occur. And yet, it is this same loin area which allows the Beardie to perform those sometimes amazing feats of agility and flexibility we have all seen and which comes in so handy in the field. It allows the Beardie to twist and turn. However, when the area is too long—i.e., weak—too often the back gives out before the spirit, and we see a bad topline, even in a young dog.

Frankly, it is hard to picture a completely flat back which does not fail away at least slightly at the croup. Some mention of tailset should be made in conjunction with the croup. A Beardie should have a LONG level back, without sag, there should be no slope downward toward the rear. Generally, the “ideal” croup angle is taken to be about 30°—the same as many other herding breeds, including the Collie. If the croup is too flat, the dog cannot reach under itself with its rear legs to provide the proper pendulum for adequate drive. A flat croup is often accompanied by a too high tailset. If the croup is too steep, the dog cannot thrust about behind, instead, it appears to be moving tucked under itself.

As in the American standard, most curious to me is the phrase, “the loins are strong.” If this pertains to the loin area discussed above, why is it separated from the original reference? It seems as if it is pertaining to a completely different thing—the haunches?

Hindquarters:

The hindquarters are well muscled with good second thighs, well-bent stifles and low hocks. Below the hock, the leg falls at a right angle to the ground and, in normal stance, will be just behind a line vertically below the point of the buttock. The distance between the hocks should approximate the distance from hock to ground.

Vocabulary—

Stifle—The part of the hind leg between the thigh and the second thigh. The dog’s knee. Thigh—The hindquarter from hip to stifle.

Hindquarters—Rear assembly of dog (pelvis, thighs, hocks and paws).

Hock—The tarsus or collection of bones of the hind leg forming the joint between the second thigh and the metatarsus; the dog’s true heel.

Hocks well let down—Hock joints close to the ground.

Cowhocks—When the hocks turn toward each other.

Reaction:

Years ago, it used to be that we saw a lot of poor rears in Beardies, while the fronts were at least adequate. Today, at least we see fewer and fewer dogs with cowhocks. The main problem now with rears is inadequate angulation, or straightness in stifle. This would be even more apparent if fronts were better, since the hallmark of a good-moving dog is BALANCE between front and rear. That is to say, for a Bearded to really move well (and typically) front angulation should be as close to rear angulation as possible. (This need for balance also accounts for why some Beardies who are equally inadequately angulated front and rear move “better” than those with super fronts and lousy rears or vice versa.) This inadequate angulation *generally* comes from a shortness in stifle. Just as proper front movement requires a long upper arm for reach, proper rear movement requires a long stifle for powerful drive and thrust. Interestingly enough, instead of exhibiting an extra-long hock, to compensate for the shortness of stifle, many (if not most) Beardies with the problem are still well let down in hock. This means that the rear legs are simply too short all over, and cannot possibly follow the standard’s dictate on “normal stance . . .” without adversely affecting the dog’s topline. Another problem for most novices and judges is that Beardies, properly made, tend to move

closely in the rear. It must be remembered that the Beardie is a lean, relatively narrow dog, and wide movement in the rear is certainly more worrisome than closeness. Many get closeness and cowhockiness confused, but they are not the same thing at all. A narrow dog will tend to move narrowly, and can even appear to brush parallelly from hock to foot without being atypical, incorrect, or cowhocked, so long as the hocks do not turn in toward each other, or the feet turn out (or inward, as is sometimes the case with too wide a rear movement). Something that doesn't always get attention: hocks can be too short as well as too long. Short hocks, like long ones, detrimentally affect the way the Beardie moves, by providing an inadequate fulcrum effect in conjunction with the stifle and, therefore, inhibiting the dog's drive.

Feet:

The feet are oval in shape with the soles well padded. The toes are arched and close together, well covered with hair including between the pads.

Reaction:

The hair should not be trimmed between the pads; it acts as protection. The only other consideration I can think of here is that two things can affect the *apparent* shape of the feet: the length of the hair on them, which, if too long, can certainly make the foot appear strangely shaped (I do not advocate trimming, though dogs kept on carpet or inside all the time certainly pose a problem as the hair does tend to go overboard when it is not worn off naturally) and the markings on the legs. If you have a dog with very dark markings right to the top of the foot, and then white "shoes" only, rather than "stockings" or "socks" this can cause the eye to think the foot is too long or big for the leg.

Tail:

The tail is set low, without kink or twist, and is long enough for the end of the bone to reach at least the point of the hock. It is carried low with an upward swirl at the tip while standing. When the dog is excited or in motion the tail may be extended or raised, but must not be carried forward over the back.

Vocabulary—

Tail set—How the base of the tail sets on at the rump.

Tail carriage—The position in which the tail is held, especially in motion.

We all know that there are Beardies (as well as dogs of other breeds) who have had their tails surgically altered to make their *carriage* more acceptable, i.e., usually lower, in the showring. This should not be condoned. Moreover, a poorly altered tail looks far worse than an unaltered one. More importantly, it is grossly unfair to

those enthusiasts who wish to use a stud dog, whose tail has been fixed but whose owner neglects to tell the potential fee payer, and to the buyers of puppies whose mother and/or father may *look* perfectly fine, especially to the novice, but who have, in fact, very little chance of acquiring a puppy with a proper tailset because of the sire and/or dam's undisclosed cosmetic surgery. Even if their puppy's tailset is fine, what a surprise in the next generation, especially if they breed to an altered dog, either knowingly, believing theirs to be "strong enough" to carry through, or entirely unwittingly.

Note carefully that there are two major considerations concerning tails: the *set* and the tail *carriage*. Even surgery cannot alter where the tail is set on. Many people complain about a dog's tail "set" being too high when in actuality, the set is fine, but the dog *carries* its tail too high. Tail set is tied into the slope of the croup, and as such, can be said to at least partially affect the rear movement. Aside from visually throwing off the balance of the dog, too high or low a tailset can throw off the actual balance of the dog—there is some evidence to support the "rudder" or "ballast" effect theory to how dogs use their tails in executing certain kinds of movements. The worst combination, of course, is having too high a set *and* too high a carriage, but generally speaking, I see as much of one or the other as I do both. The tail is a good indicator of a Beardie's mood and overall temperament. How sad it is to see one with its tail tucked firmly underneath its rear . . . a sure indicator of *something* being wrong. I would much rather see a dog "flying" its tail a bit too high because of high spirits or because a stud dog smells a bitch in season across the ring, and have never penalized such an overhigh *carriage* so long as the set is in its proper place.

Gait:

Seen from the side, a correctly moving dog appears to flow across the ground with the minimum of effort. Movement should be supple, smooth, and long-reaching, with good driving power in the hindquarters and feet lifted just enough to clear the ground. The forelegs should track smoothly and straight. Each hind leg should move in line with the foreleg on the same side. The back should remain level and firm.

Vocabulary—

Drive—A solid thrusting of the hindquarters, denoting sound locomotion.

Reach—Length of forward stride taken by forelegs without wasted or excessive motion.

Single tracking—All footprints falling on a single line of travel. When a dog breaks into a trot, his body is supported by only two legs at a time, which move as alternating diagonal pairs. To achieve balance, his legs angle inward toward a

center line beneath his body, and the greater the speed, the closer they come to tracking on a single line.

Reaction:

I have read that half or more of the Beardie's composition can be judged in its movement. I certainly agree that movement will show up a number of conformational faults and strengths. However, rather than judging predominantly on the movement of the dog it really is necessary to actually put your hands on it—to confirm or deny what your eye has perceived. Some dogs feel better than they move; others move better than they feel. Balance is the key to visually perceived good movement, but balance alone does not mean that the required angles, lengths, etc., are in place and only a hands-on examination can tell you that. When all the pieces are in place, in the correct proportions, you will have your lithe and flexible movement which enable the dog to make the sharp turns and sudden stops required of the sheep dog. Remember, though, that the field and the showring may not necessarily require the same things.

For any working dog, it is imperative that there be no wasted motion; conservation of energy means an added ability to perform, for longer periods of time, and with less stress and strain. The Beardie's typical glide is an optimal movement for a working dog, to say nothing of an eye-pleasing gait. Here in North America, a brisk trot is considered to be the ideal speed at which to judge a dog's movement; too often the trot turns into a race around the ring. In England, the Beardies are usually moved more slowly, a speed which I find more pleasing, and certainly easier to judge—speeding blurred feet being very difficult to focus on.

The Beardie tends to single-track.