



Official Standard of the Border Collie

Preamble: The Border Collie originated in the Border country between Scotland and England where the shepherds' breeding selection was based on biddable stock sense and the ability to work long days on rugged terrain. As a result of this selective breeding, the Border Collie developed the unique working style of gathering and fetching the stock with wide sweeping outruns. The stock is then controlled with an intense gaze known as "eye", coupled with a stalking style of movement. This selective breeding over time developed the Border Collie's intensity, energy and trainability which are features so important that they are equal to physical size and appearance. The Border Collie has extraordinary instinct and an uncanny ability to reason. One of its greatest assets is the ability to work out of sight of its master without commands. Breeding based on this working ability has made this breed the world's premier sheep herding dog, a job the Border Collie is still used for worldwide.

General Appearance: The Border Collie is a well balanced, medium-sized dog of athletic appearance, displaying gracefulness, power and agility in equal measure. Its hard, muscular body conveys the impression of effortless movement and endless endurance. The Border Collie is extremely intelligent, with its keen, alert expression being a very important characteristic of the breed. Those aspects of structure, movement or temperament that enhance the dog's ability to function as a herding dog are virtues that should be strongly rewarded. The Border Collie is, and should remain, a natural and unspoiled true working sheep dog whose conformation is described herein. Honorable scars and broken teeth incurred in the line of duty are acceptable.

Size, Proportion, Substance: The height at the withers varies from 19 to 22 inches for males, 18 to 21 inches for females. When viewed from the side, the body from the point of shoulder to point of buttocks is slightly longer than the height at the withers. The length to height ratio is approximately 10:9. Correct bone must be moderate, strong and oval. Overall balance between height, length, weight and bone is crucial and is more important than any absolute measurement. Dogs must be presented in hard working condition. Excess body weight is not to be mistaken for muscle or substance.

Head: Expression is intelligent, alert, eager, and full of interest. **Eyes** are set well apart, of moderate size, oval in shape. Any eye color is acceptable, but blue eyes in dogs other than merle are not preferred. Eye rims should be fully pigmented. **Ears** are of medium size, set well apart, one or both carried erect and/or semi-erect (varying from one-quarter to three-quarters of the ear erect). When semi-erect, the tips may fall forward or outward to the side. Ears are sensitive and mobile. **Skull** is relatively flat and moderate in width. The skull and muzzle are approximately equal in length. In profile the top of the skull is parallel with the top of the muzzle. Stop moderate, but distinct. The **muzzle** is strong, tapering slightly to the nose. The sides of the head should taper smoothly into the muzzle. The underjaw is strong and well developed. Nose should be fully pigmented. Nostrils are well developed. A full complement of strong healthy teeth should meet in a scissors **bite**.

Neck, Topline, Body: **Neck** is of proportional length to the body, strong and muscular, slightly arched and blending smoothly into the shoulders. **Topline** - Back is level with a slight muscular rise over the loin, falling to a gently sloping croup. **Body** is athletic in appearance with a deep, moderately broad chest reaching no further than the point of the elbow. The rib cage is moderately long with well sprung ribs. Loin is moderately deep and short. Underline should have a slight but distinct tuck up. The tail is set on low and is moderately long with the bone reaching



at least to the hock. The ideal tail carriage is low when the dog is concentrating on a given task and may have a slight upward swirl at the end like a shepherd's crook. In excitement it may be raised, but the base of the tail should not curve forward over the back.

Forequarters: Forelegs should be parallel when viewed from front, pasterns slightly sloping when viewed from side. Because sufficient length of leg is crucial for the type of work the breed is required to do, the distance from the wither to the elbow is slightly less than from the elbow to the ground. The shoulder blades are long and well laid back. Shoulder blades and upper arms are equal in length and meet in a right angle as nearly as possible. The prosternum is easily felt but not pronounced. There is sufficient width between the tops of the shoulder blades to allow for the characteristic crouch when approaching and moving stock. The elbows are neither in nor out. Feet are compact, oval in shape; pads deep and strong, toes moderately arched and close together with strong nails of moderate length. Dewclaws may be removed.

Hindquarters: Broad and muscular, in profile sloping gracefully to the low set tail. The thighs are long, broad, deep and muscular. Stifles are well turned with strong well let down hocks. Proper length of hock is approximately one-quarter to one-third the height of the dog. When standing with the hocks perpendicular to the ground the toes of the rear feet should be in line with the point of buttock. Rear feet should be parallel, but may toe out slightly when freestanding. Feet are compact, oval in shape; pads deep and strong, toes moderately arched and close together with strong nails of moderate length. Dewclaws should be removed.

Coat: Two varieties are permissible, both having close-fitting, dense, weather resistant double coats with the top coat either straight or slightly wavy and coarser in texture than the undercoat which is soft, short and dense. The rough variety coat may vary in length without being excessive. Proper texture is more important than length. Forelegs, haunches, chest and underside are feathered and the coat on face, ears, feet, fronts of legs is short and smooth. The smooth variety is short over entire body, is usually coarser in texture than the rough variety and may have slight feathering on forelegs, haunches, chest and ruff. Neither coat type is preferred over the other. Seasonal shedding is normal and must not be penalized. Excess hair on the feet, hock and pastern areas may be neatened for the show ring. Whiskers are untrimmed. Dogs should be presented naturally, without excessive trimming or sculpting.

Color: The Border Collie appears in all colors or combination of colors and/or markings. All colors are to be judged equally with no one color or pattern preferred over another. White markings may be clear white or ticked to any degree. Random white patches on the body are permissible but should not predominate. The predominant ear color should match the primary body color. Color and markings are always secondary to physical evaluation and gait.

Gait: The Border Collie is an agile dog, able to suddenly change speed and direction while maintaining balance and grace. Endurance is its trademark. The head is carried level with or slightly below the withers. When shown, Border Collies should move on a loose lead and at moderate speed, never raced around the ring with the head held high. When viewed from the side the trot covers the ground effortlessly with minimum lift of feet. The topline is firm with no roll or bounce. Front reach and rear drive are symmetrical, with the front foot meeting the ground directly under the nose and the rear foot pushing back without kicking up. When the rear foot is coming forward, it should reach to the spot just vacated by the front foot. Viewed from the front, action is forward and true without wasted motion. Viewed from the rear, hindquarters drive with thrust and flexibility with hocks turning neither in nor out, moving close together but never



touching. The legs, both front and rear, tend to converge toward the center line as speed increases. Exaggerated movement is not efficient, and therefore is not useful to the Border Collie.

Temperament: The Border Collie is energetic, intelligent, keen, alert, and responsive. An intense worker of great tractability, it is affectionate towards friends but may be sensibly reserved towards strangers. When approached, the Border Collie should stand its ground. It should be alert and interested, never showing shyness, fear, dullness or resentment.

Faults: Any deviation from the foregoing should be considered a fault, the seriousness of the fault depending upon the extent of the deviation, and the degree to which working ability would be impacted.

Approved: April 21, 2015

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