

The Shetland Sheepdog

A Presentation for Judges

American Shetland Sheepdog Association
Judges Education



American Shetland Sheepdog Association

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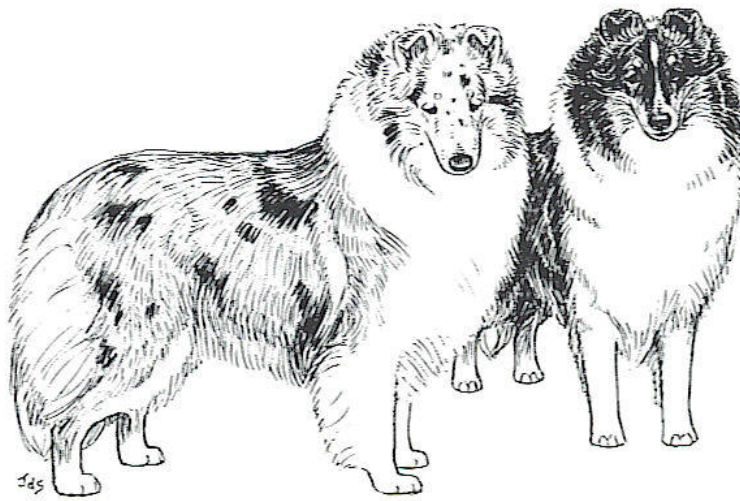
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Thank you

- To Jean D. Simmonds, breeder-judge and artist, creator of all the drawings used in this presentation, from her book The Sheltie Guide, A Comprehensive Study of the Shetland Sheepdog. ***Drawings are not to be reproduced without permission of the artist.***
- To the many talented photographers whose pictures are used here, without which this presentation would not have been possible.





Based on what you know or think about Shelties so far – write down answers to the following:

1. In one sentence, or in a few words, describe the essence of the Shetland Sheepdog.
2. The Sheltie's outline and proportion are best described as.....
3. What most distinguishes the Sheltie from any other breed?
4. The Sheltie's expression is best described as.....
5. What words best describe Sheltie movement?



Throughout this presentation,
passages from the Shetland
Sheepdog standard are given
in *italics* and quotation marks.

“.....the resemblance between the Shetland Sheepdog and the Rough Collie is marked.....”

but the Sheltie is a distinct breed with its own heritage



So where did the Sheltie come from?



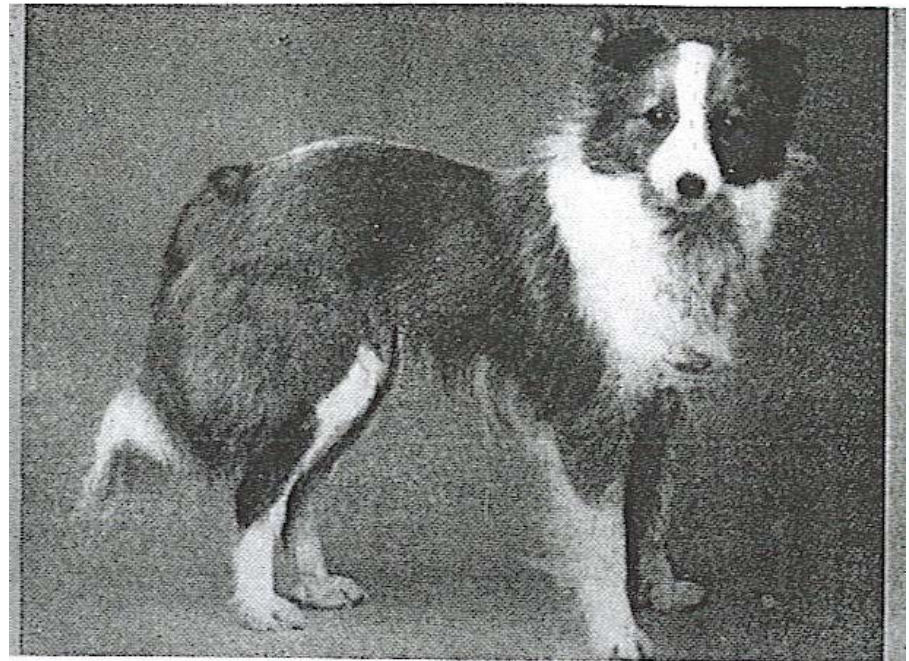
Copy of engraving by John Irvine, Lerwick.

- The breed originated in the windswept, damp Shetland Islands, north of Scotland.
- This is a view of Lerwick, Shetland Islands, from an early engraving. Note the small dog, very likely an early Sheltie type.



- Early Sheltie history is not well documented.
- Shelties evolved from a mixture of small spitz type dogs – including early Pomeranians - and toy spaniels, with later additions of Scottish herding dogs.
- An English author writing in 1908 described the Shelties as being from 6 to 10 pounds in weight.
- Pictured in a photo from 1909 is C. F. Thompson, a pioneer of the breed in Scotland, with Inverness Patricia.

- Early Shelties were typically around 10 to 12 inches in height.
- Starting in the early 1900's crosses with the show Collies of the time were done to improve type.
- Zesta, photographed in 1913, was bred in Shetland and was highly regarded as the best specimen seen up to that time





An example of “show Collies of the time.....”, less extreme and somewhat smaller than the modern Collie. Pictured is Ch. Anfield Model, 1902. Small Collie females were used in combination with Sheltie males.



CH. ANFIELD MODEL (1902)
by Ch. Parbold Piccolo ex Bellfield Beauty,
by Ch. Wishaw Clinker.

Type in the Collie was fairly well established by 1912. This was not true of the Sheltie, as can be seen from this photograph of Chestnut Lassie. Pictured in 1924, she was considered to be one of the typiest Shelties of the time. Through her son Chestnut Rainbow she is behind (far behind) most American Shelties today.



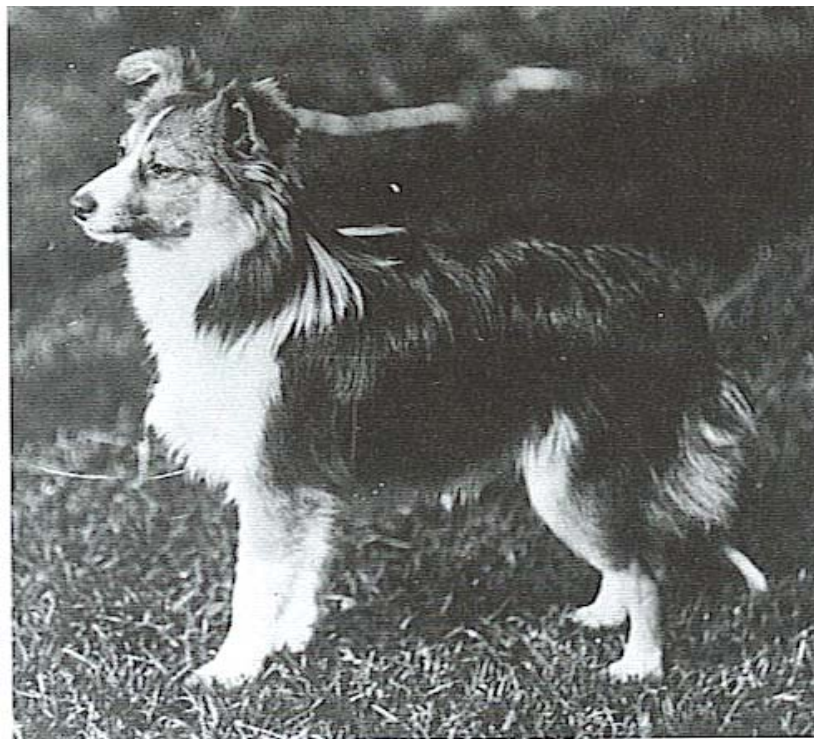


When you judge the Shetland Sheepdog, the most important thing you need to remember from the breed's history is:

Because of the mixture of breeds and cross-breeds that went into creating the Sheltie, the “drag of the breed” runs in two different directions:

One – back towards the spaniel and spitz

- Undesirable characteristics such as broad skulls, rounded skulls, prominent cheekbones, deep stops, head too short for body, large heavy ears, full round eyes, snipy or pointed muzzles, short legs, diminutive toylike specimens
- Pictured is a pre-Collie cross Sheltie, Thule Norna



Two – “too much Collie” in the wrong ways – “overdone”

- Head too long for body, no stop or overfilled stop, diverging head planes (from Borzoi cross into Collie), leggy and rangy, too tall
- Pictured c. 1930's is Ch. Kim O' Page's Hill, who almost certainly had Collie blood very near in his pedigree.



Nonetheless, the Collie crosses did much to improve type

The Shetland Sheepdog Today



Overall Appearance.....

“The outline should be so symmetrical that no part appears out of proportion to the whole.....”



The outline should be one of balance and graceful curves.

“Dogs should appear masculine.....”



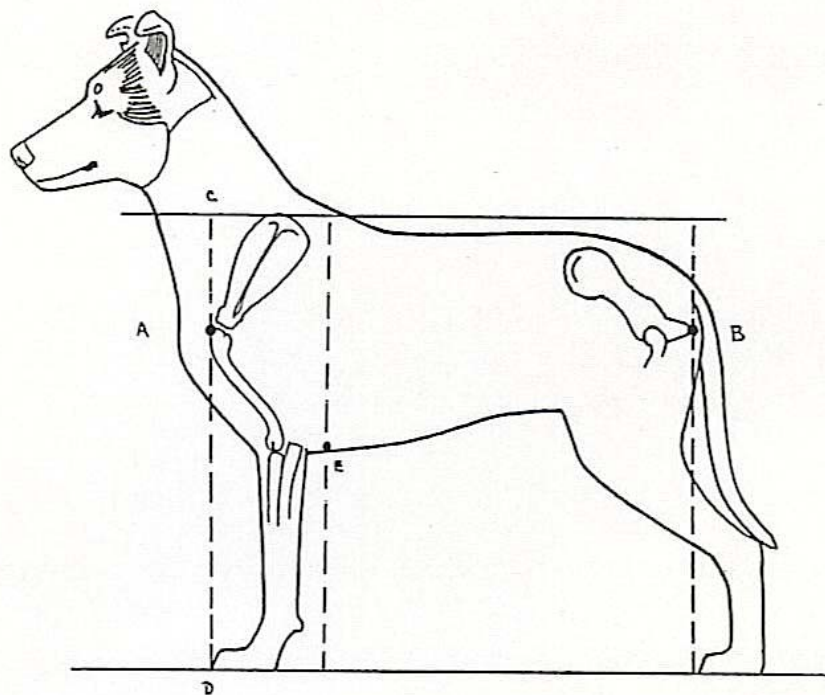
“.....*bitches feminine.*”



Size

- The Shetland Sheepdog is defined in part by its size.
- The American standard requires that Shelties be between 13 and 16 inches, with **no preference by sex** and no ideal size given.
- Shelties BELOW 13” or ABOVE 16” are to be DISQUALIFIED.
- If in doubt as to whether a Sheltie is within the standard for height, PLEASE MEASURE!
- If a Sheltie measures within the standard, it can not be “too large” or “too small.” 13” and 16” are within the standard.

Proportion: “the body should appear moderately long....from shoulder joint to ischium, **BUT** much of this length is actually due to the proper angulation and breadth of the shoulder and hindquarter, as the back itself should be comparatively short.” (emphasis added)

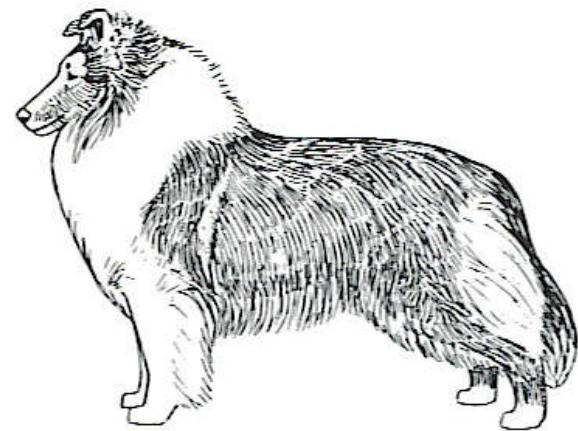
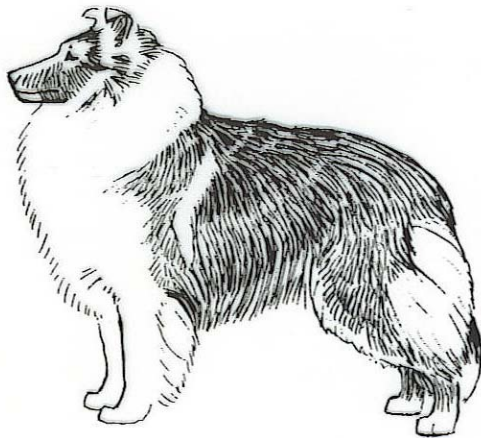


BALANCE AND PROPORTION

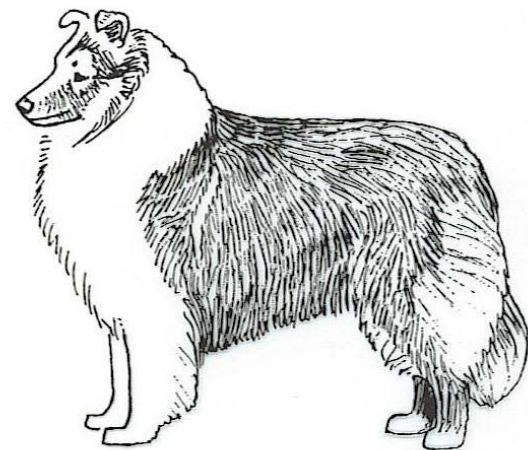
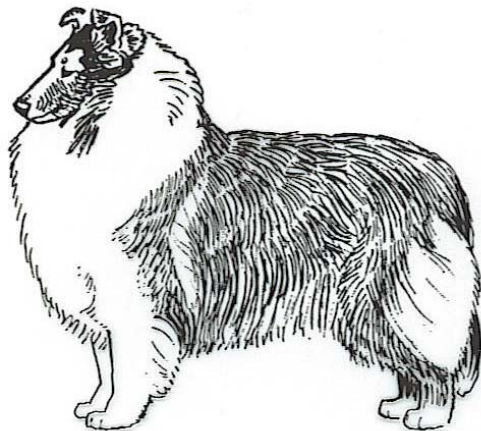
An English source suggests that body length is 1/10 greater than height. Using this guideline, with shoulder joint (A) and ischium (B) as reference points, a sketch of these proportions is presented. Height is established from ground to top of shoulder (C-D), with elbow equidistant between (E).

Outline and proportion.....this





.....not these.....



These are balanced.....



These are not.

On left, leggy, square, with insufficient neck;
top right, too long; bottom right, all out of
balance with straight front, little neck.



Heads and Expression

- More than any other feature, head and expression sets the Sheltie apart from any other breed - even the Collie.
- No matter how well built a Sheltie is, if it has a poor head, it lacks an essential type characteristic, and can not be a good specimen of the breed.
- This can be a difficult area to understand so we'll spend quite a bit of time on it.



“The head should be refined and its shape, when viewed from top or side, should be a long blunt wedge tapering slightly from ears to nose.”



- Long (but not too long to fit the dog)
- Blunt (not pointed)
- Tapering slightly (not a wedge of pie)

Viewed from the top.....

“long blunt wedge tapering slightly.....”



Correct wedge from above



Too Little wedge.
Too collie-like

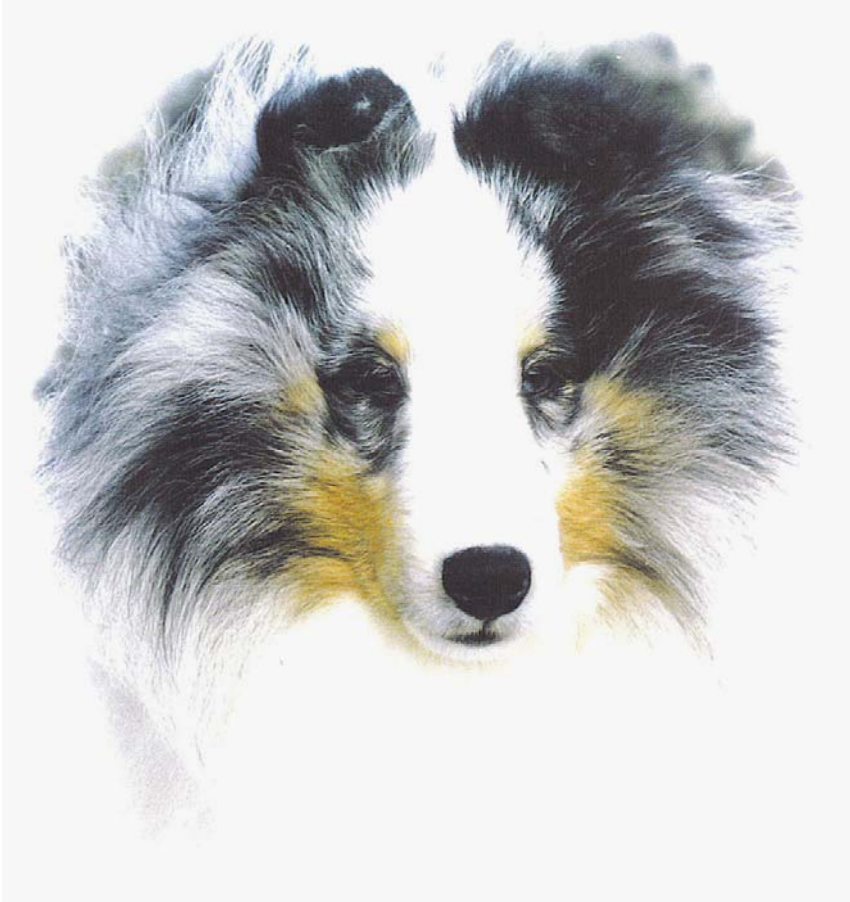


Total absence of wedge.
Two-piece head.



Too much wedge.
Wider backskull.

“cheeks should be flat and should merge smoothly into a well-rounded muzzle.....”



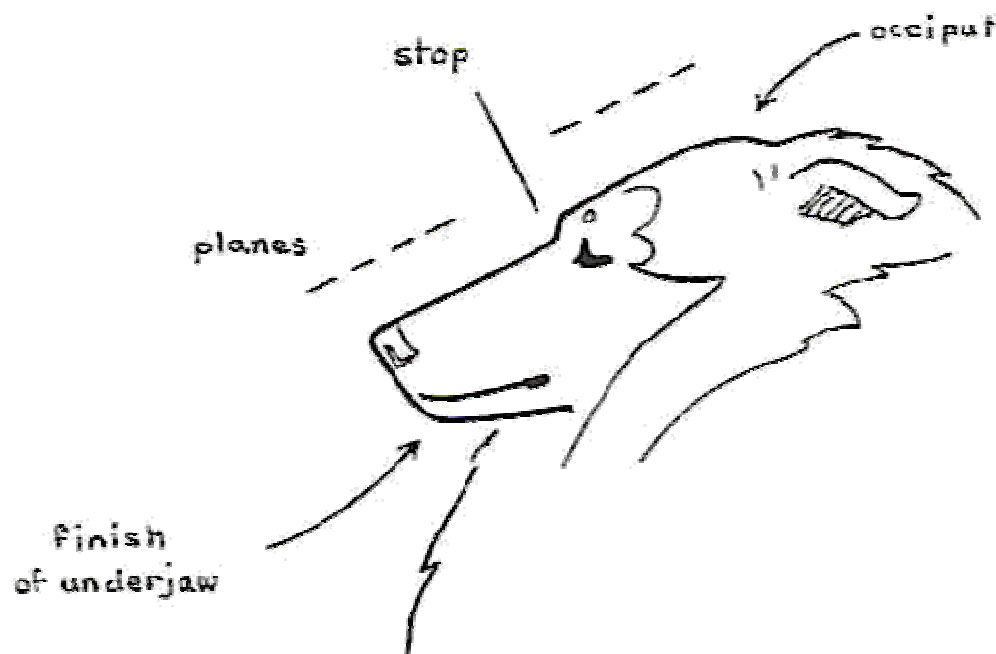
Ideally, the muzzle blends seamlessly into flat clean cheeks to create a “one piece” head.



“Top of skull should be flat.....skull and muzzle should be of equal length....in profile the top line of the skull should parallel the muzzle.....(with) a slight but definite stop.....the...underjaw, rounded at the chin, should extend to base of nostril”



Notice that the flat, straight line of the top skull goes all the way to the occiput without receding or dropping off. The underline of the profile is clean and light without excessive depth. The stop is “*slight but definite.*”



PROFILE

“Viewed from the side....a long blunt wedge tapering slightly.....”

WEDGE



Correct wedge in profile.



Too much wedge, creating depth from brow to throat. (Often lacking finish to underjaw).



Too little wedge. Terrier-like profile.

Good profiles with nice finish of underjaw – and note the lovely straight, clean lipline on the dog on the right (a nuance). It is possible to have too deep an underjaw and/or one too squared off at the chin, rather than a softly rounded finish.



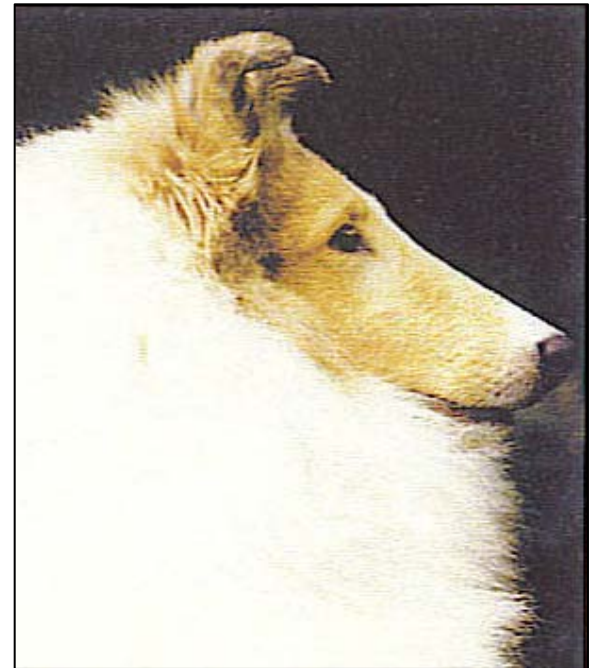
The balance point of the head is the inner corner of the eye, where the correct stop is placed.



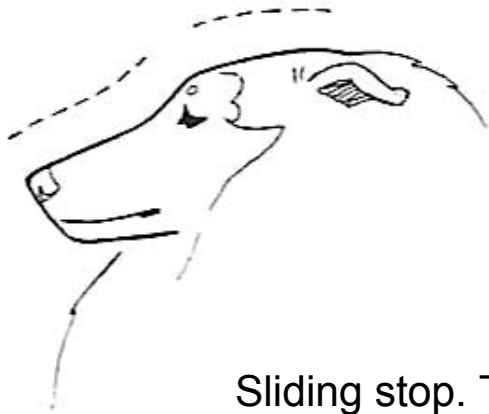
The Sheltie's stop is to be ***“slight but definite.”***



In comparison, the Collie's stop (at right) is described as “very slight but perceptible.”



Undesirable faults of head profile



Sliding stop. Two-angled (receding backskull). Drop-off at nose.



High over eyes, rounded skull, slight "dish" to top of muzzle. "Sharkey" – pointed end to wedge. Lips do not meet properly.



No Stop. Fill between eyes. Prominent occiput. "Throaty" (broken throat line).

Some of the problems you may see in the ring



Smooth Fox Terrier appearance due to greater depth at end of underjaw.



Too much bulk to entire head. Cumbersome appearance.



Two-angled with receding backskull. Sliding stop. Too high above eyes. Lacking underjaw.



Domed or rounded topskull. Too thick from brow to throat. Poor finish to underjaw.

It's not mentioned in the standard, but what's this business about the "corners" of the skull?

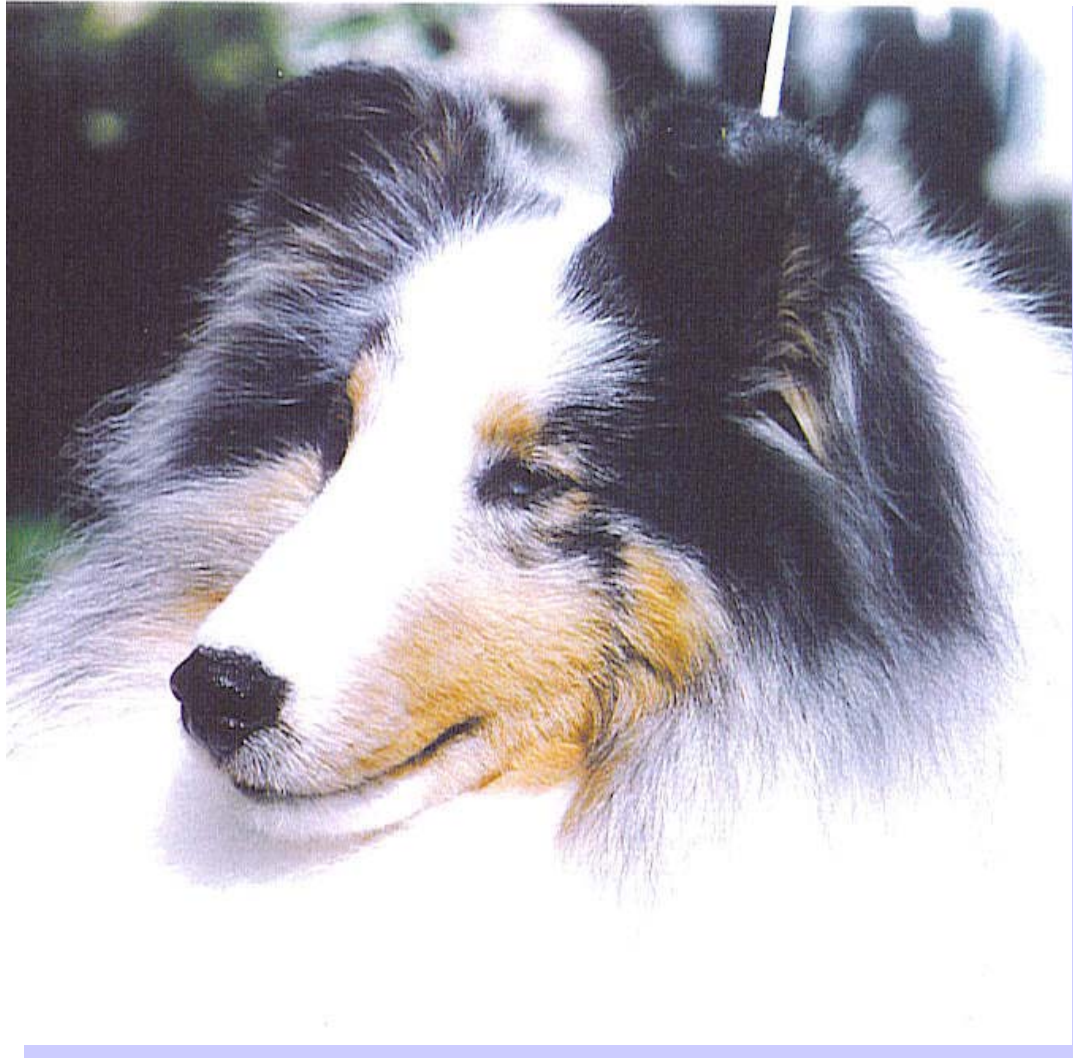
- Ideally, the sides of the skull are smooth with flat zygomatic arches, and the top of the skull is flat and smooth with no bumps above the eyes
- Where the horizontal plane of the topskull meets the vertical planes of the sides of the skull, there should be a suggestion of "corners" rather than a rounded look



Good flat topskull. Smooth on top; soft "corners" turning over smooth zygomatic arch (bones at side of skull).

“Eyes medium size with dark almond-shaped rims.....color must be dark, with blue or merle eyes permissible in blue merles only.”

(emphasis added)



“.....the expression should be alert, gentle, intelligent and questioning.”



Brown eyes should be very dark, with the pupils not visible.



Do not penalize a Sheltie for having blue eyes, as long as the eye shape and set and the expression are good.



“alert, gentle, intelligent and questioning”



These eyes appear too round and not well set in the skull.
Compare this face with.....



.....these.



(Below, Ch Sea Isle Serenata, c. 1959.)



Expression can be seen at different angles.



Mouths and Bites

- The Shetland Sheepdog standard calls for a scissors bite.
- ***FAULTS: “Overshot or undershot, missing or crooked teeth.”***
- As missing teeth are a fault, judges should check side teeth.
- Some Shelties are missing many teeth – not just one or two.
- A few Shelties have wry bites.
- ***“Upper and lower lips must meet and fit smoothly together all the way around.”***
- ***FAULT: “Teeth visible when mouth is closed.”*** You will see some Shelties whose lips do not meet in front.

Ears

- ***“small and flexible, placed high,three fourths erect, with tips breaking forward.”***
- ***“set and use of the ears”*** contribute to expression...but
- Breeders work hard to train puppy ears....the ears you see in the ring may not be what would have occurred without human intervention.
- So – do not overvalue “perfection” in ears.



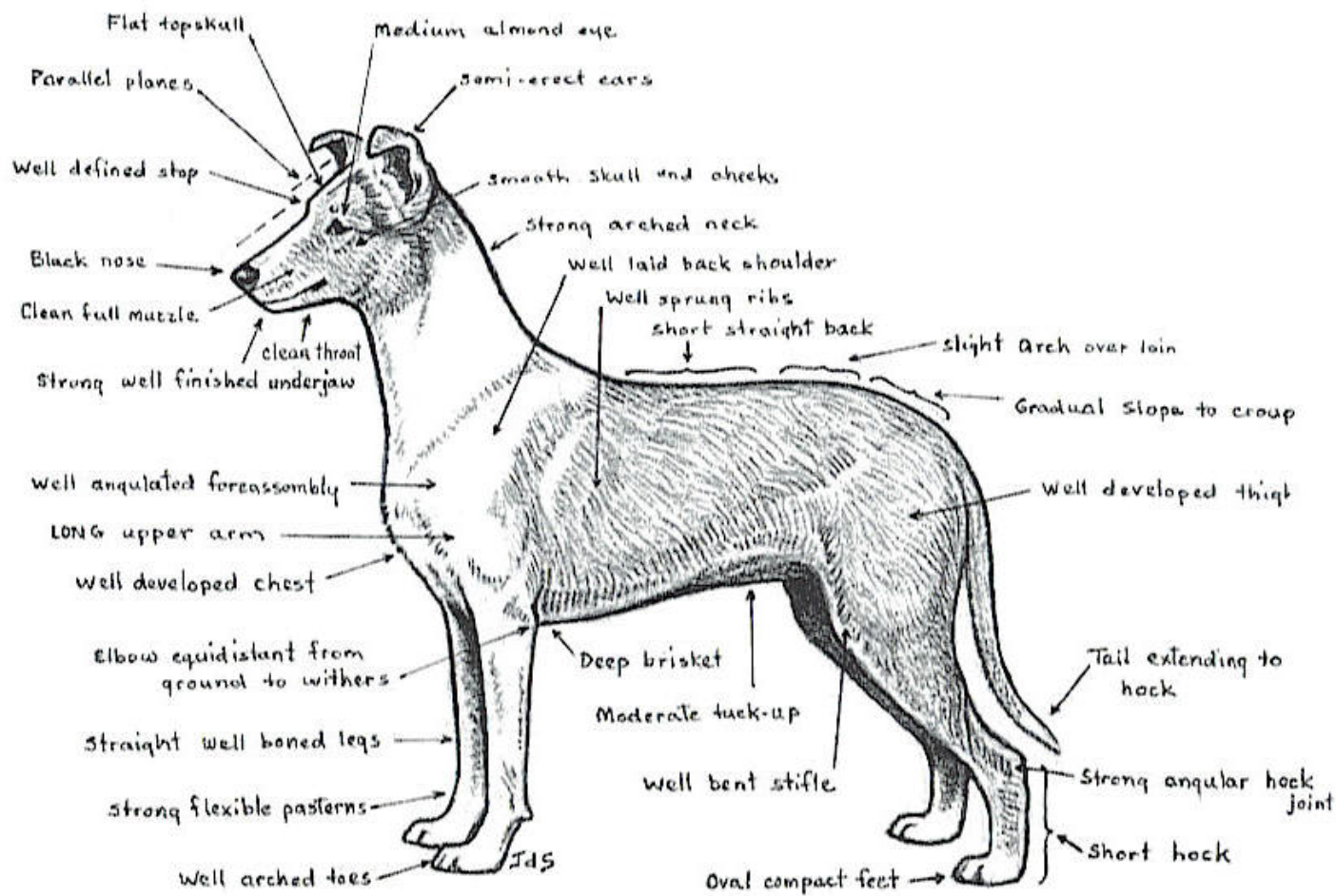
Some of our best have had less than “perfect” ears!



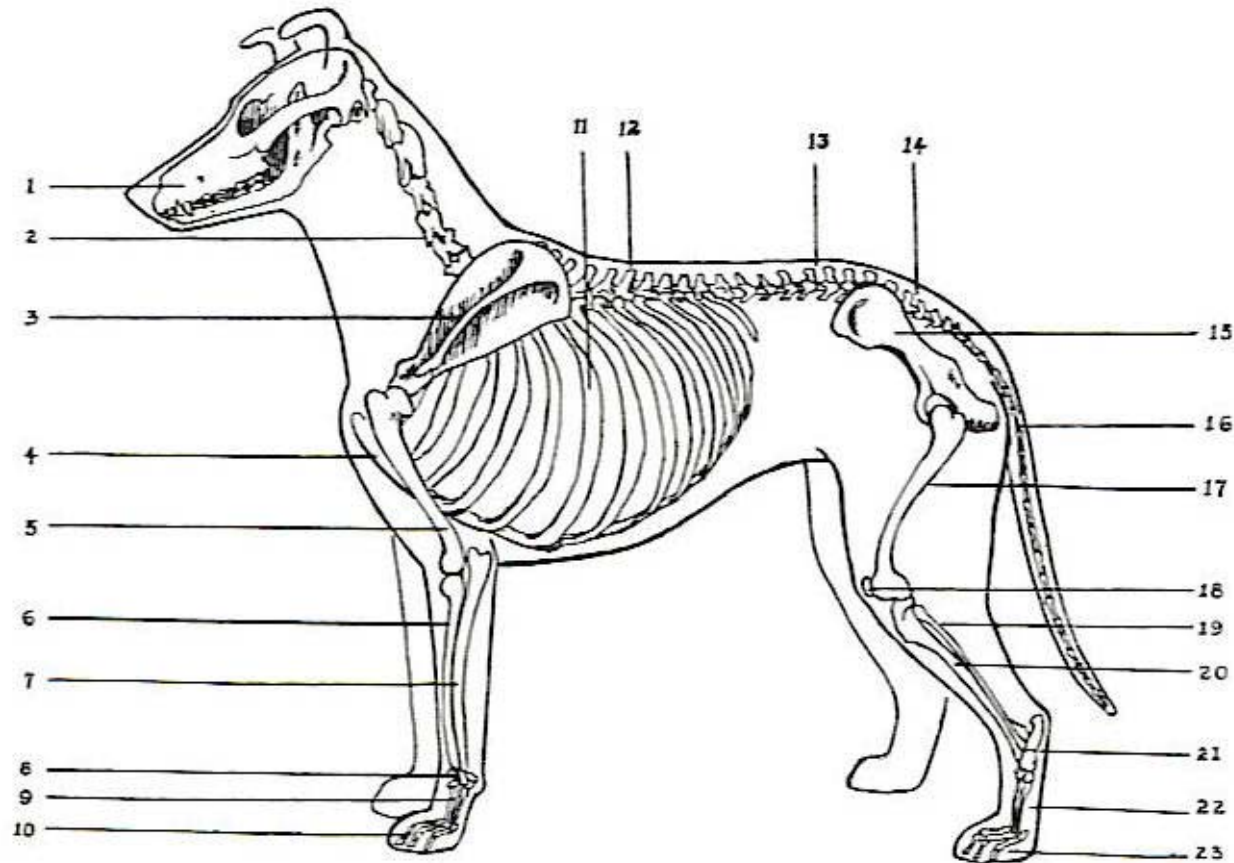
These ears are just fine and in no way detract from the overall beauty of these Shelties.



Sheltie structure



Remember this? “...the body should appear moderately long....but much of this length is actually due to the proper angulation and breadth of the shoulder and hindquarter, as the back itself should be comparatively short.”



The Skeleton.

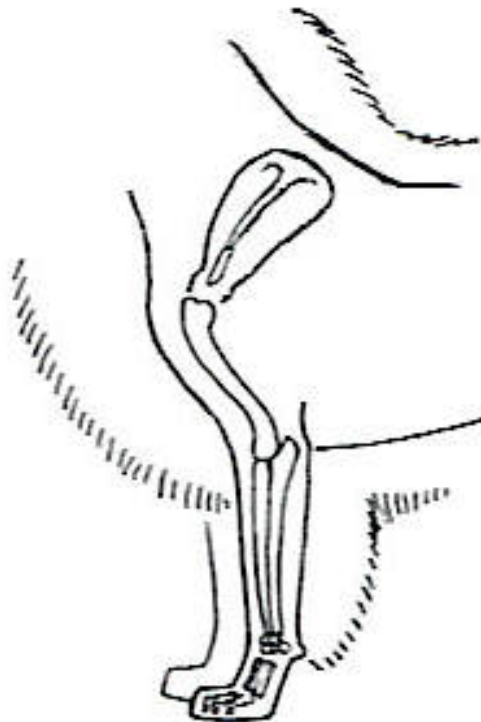


***“The neck should be....
arched and of sufficient
length to carry the head
proudly.”***



***“The back should be
level...”***

- ***“....the brisket reaching to point of elbow.”***
- ***“The ribs....well sprung, but flattened at their lower half....”***
- The standard does not mention forechest, but faults a narrow or shallow chest.
- A well angulated front assembly and deep chest, as the standard calls for, will be accompanied by some forechest.



If the angulation of the forequarters is good, the front legs will be beneath the withers.



“Elbow joint should be equidistant from the ground and from the withers.”



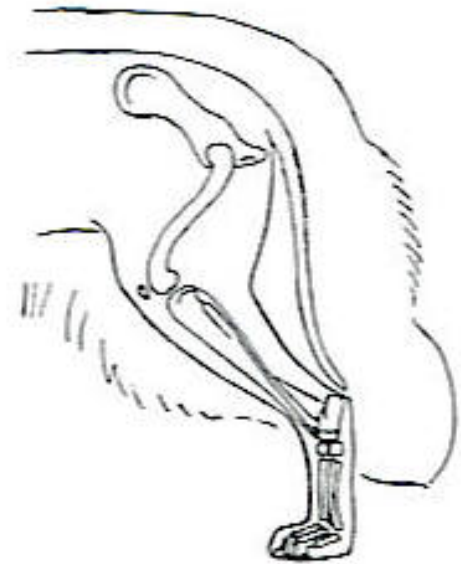
“...the croup should slope gradually to the rear.....”

The “*slight arch at the loins*” should not be visible.

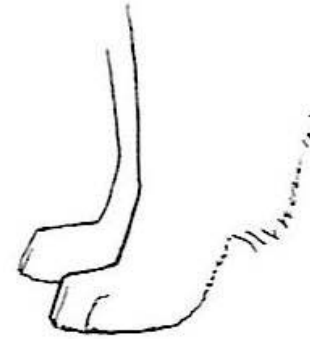
The tail bone should reach to the hock joint.



“The thigh should be broad and muscular.....distinctly angled at the stifle joint.....the hock should be clean-cut.....(and) short”



- Pasterns should be “*sinewy and flexible.*”



- **BONE**: The standard calls for “strong” bone and faults light bone, but does NOT call for “heavy bone.” Heavy bone is not a virtue in an agile, graceful, athletic herding dog.
- Modern grooming practices mean you must feel for the amount of bone.

“Feet (front and rear) should be oval and compact with the toes well arched.....”

Oval feet are a good compromise between speed and stamina.



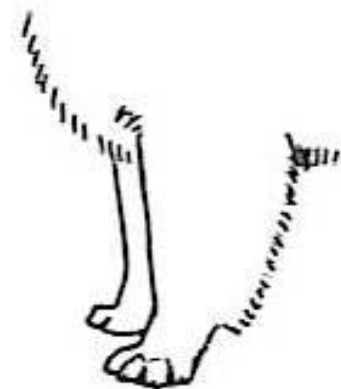
Correct feet



Cat feet

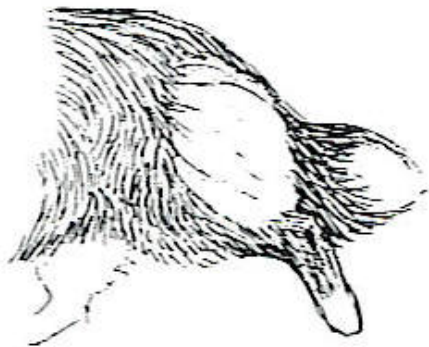


Hare feet

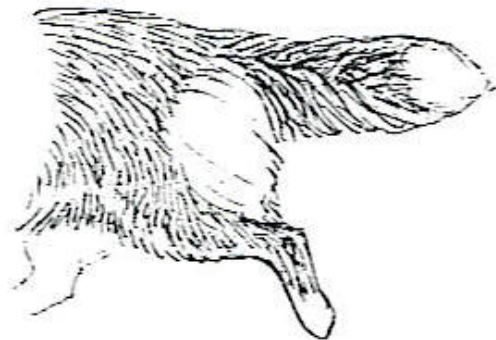


Splay feet

Tail Carriage



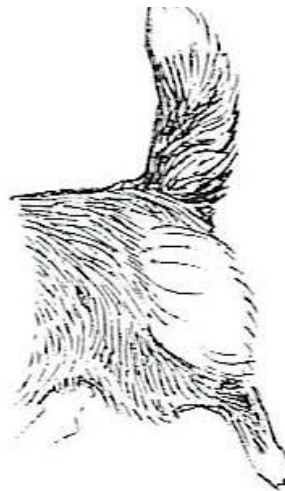
Correct carriage: low with outward curve.



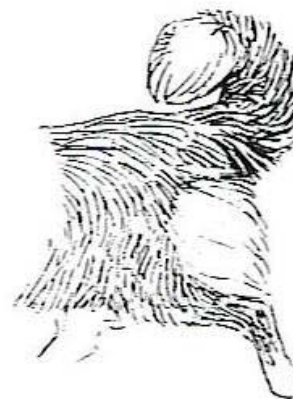
Also correct: lifted, rudder fashion, yet not above level of back.



Poor set. Slightly swirled. Minor fault.



Carried above level of back. Serious fault.



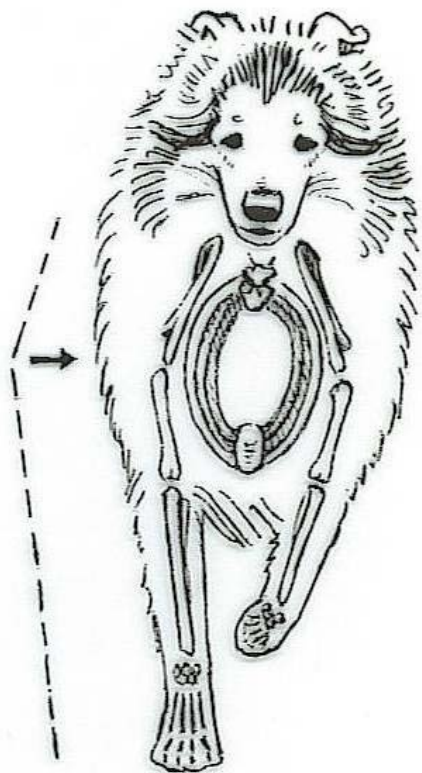
Curled over back. Extremely undesirable.

“The...gait... should denote effortless speed and smoothness.....”

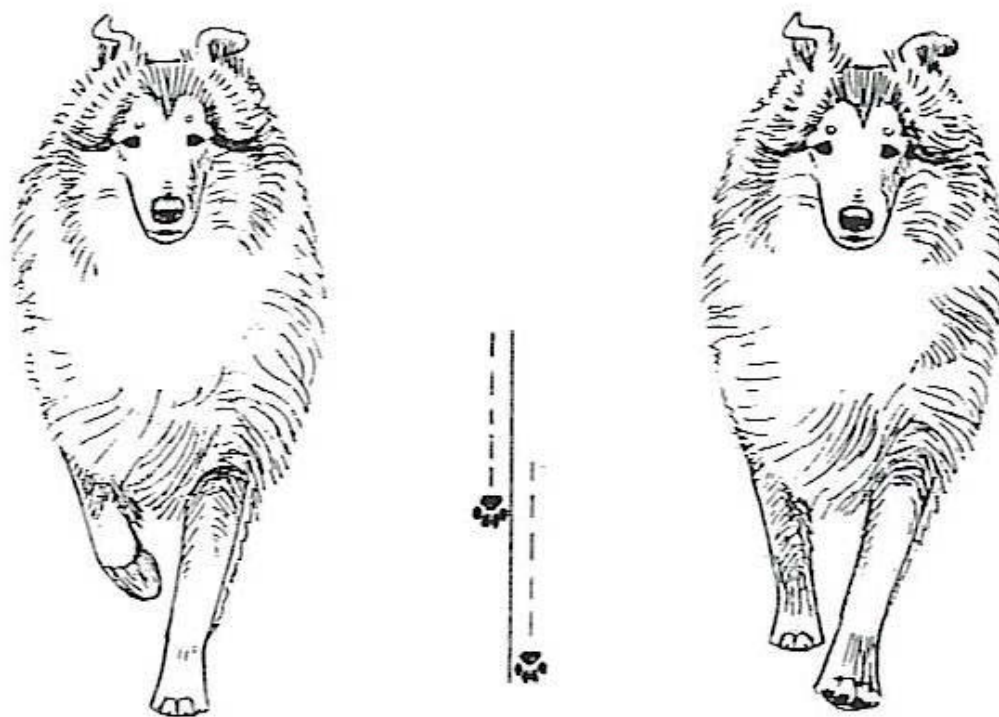
Feet should travel close to the ground.



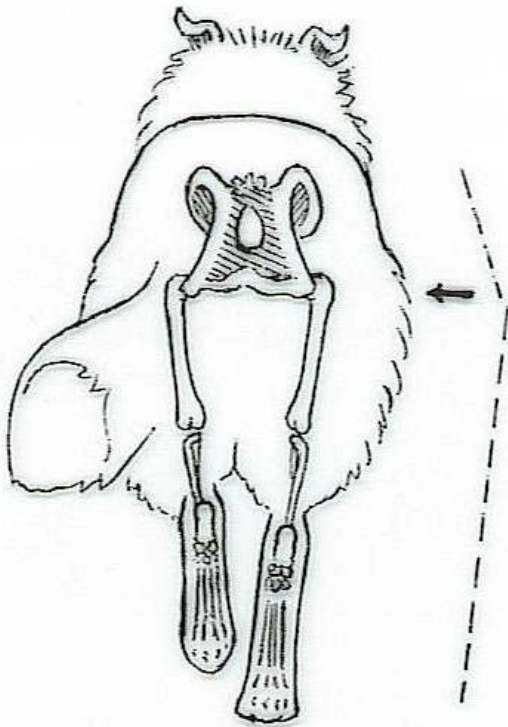
Proper Sheltie balance and structure should produce proper movement.



As speed increases, the legs converge “....until at a swift trot...the tracks left show two parallel lines of footprints actually touching a center line at their inner edges.”



“The drive should be from the rear, true and straight.....”



“.....allowing the dog to reach well under his body with his hind foot and propel himself forward.”

Head carriage is forward rather than up.



“The coat should be double, the outer coat consisting of long, straight, harsh hair; the undercoat short, furry, and so dense as to give the entire coat its ‘standoff’ quality.”



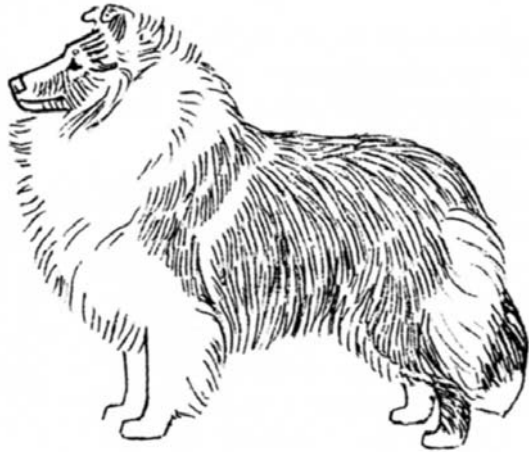
Coat

- Quality of coat is more important than quantity.
- The coat should be well fitting and weather resistant.
- Bitches often carry less.
- It is possible to have too much coat, or too bushy a coat.
- Soft or cottony coats are not functional.
- Coats are seasonal!

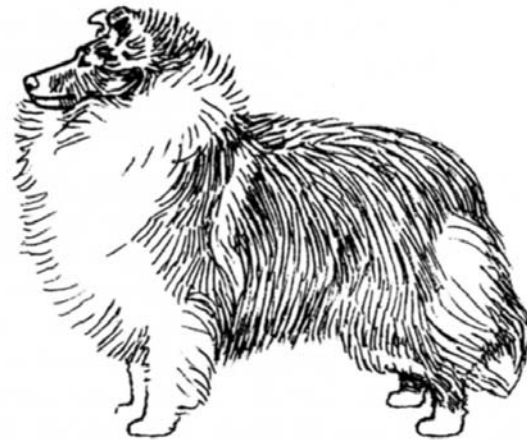


Pictured is a 2 year old bitch in summer dress.

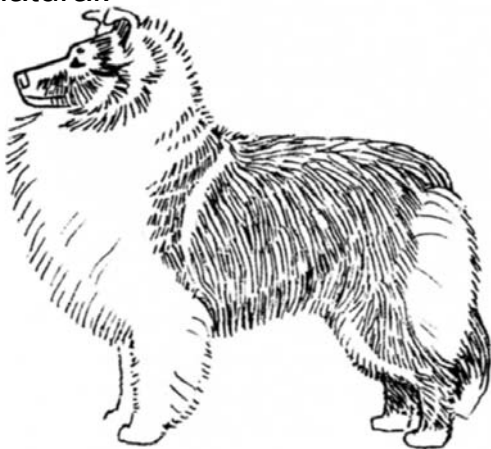
Artful trimming and thinning of the coat changes appearance and may fool the eye. What you see may not be what your hands tell you is actually there



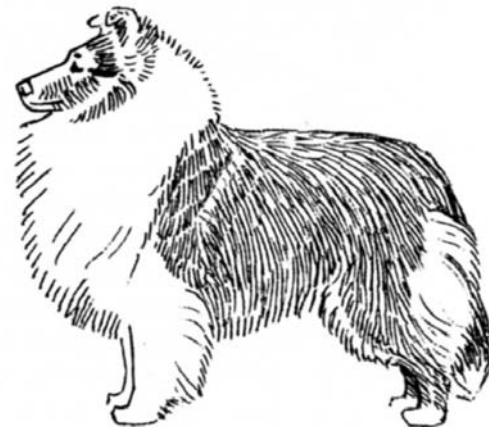
A nicely coated animal. Good length, natural.



Too hairy – a Sheltie should not look like a fluffy Pomeranian.



Obvious scissoring on back of neck and across shoulders..



Outline unnaturally even. Neck hair shorter on back. Obviously trimmed all over.

Color



- Standard colors are “***Black, blue merle, and sable (ranging from golden through mahogany); marked with varying amounts of white and/or tan***”.
- This wording includes sable and white, tri-color, blue merle, and black and white (“bi-black” pictured), which is one of the original colors of the breed, and blue and white (“bi-blue”).

“Specimens with more than 50 percent white shall be so severely penalized as to effectively eliminate them from competition.”

- When the present standard was written and passed in 1952, the ASSA membership voted to have disqualifications for size and for Shelties that were more 50% white, but the AKC would not permit the club to have both.
- The writers of the standard therefore retained the disqualification for size, and wrote the passage on predominantly white Shelties so that it would have the same effect as a disqualification.



Sable and white



Tri-color and “Bi-black”



Blue merle (with tan)



“Bi-blue” (without tan)



Strictly frosting on the cake - Markings

- Markings do not matter – unless faulty.
- Other than more than 50% white, the only faulty markings listed are ***“conspicuous white body spots.”***
- A full white collar is pretty – but not important.
- A symmetrical blaze is pretty – but not important.
- White legs are pretty – but not important.
- Markings, including merling on blues, may however mislead the eye. Judges should view both sides of the Sheltie.

None of these markings should be faulted.



“Cryptic blues”

- A “cryptic blue” is a blue merle that is so heavily black that the blue may be hard to find.
- Some have even less blue than the bitch shown here, a champion from the 1970’s.



Sable merles

- Sable merle is not listed in the standard. It results from breeding sables to blue merles.
- Sable merles exhibit a wide range of coat color, from one that appears to many observers as sable, to blotchy, to “calico.”
- The standard faults “washed-out or degenerate colors.”
- If a sable merle coat exhibits striping or other irregular patterning, it may be deemed “degenerate.”
- Regardless, any Sheltie that is not BLUE merle or bi-blue, must have two solid brown eyes.
- **“Blue or merle eyes (are) permissible in blue merles only.”**

These are all sable merles and show the range of color.



Judging the Sheltie



Before they appear in the show ring.....they look like this:



Beware of "too much too soon"Shelties need room to fill out as they mature.



Above are 2 sable bitches at 6 & 5 months, and the left hand one at maturity,
Below a blue dog at 13 months, and at maturity.
Note they even appear to have "grown bone." All champions.



In the ring.....

- The Sheltie may be reserved with strangers but should not be timid
- A Sheltie may not look you in the eye – Shelties respond best to their owners/handlers
- Shelties should not be expected to “show” non-stop – you do not need to see ears continually up
- Shelties should move freely on a loose lead at a moderate speed



Examination



- The Sheltie is not historically a “table breed” but we now prefer that they be examined on a table.
- Shelties are a “hands on” breed – you can’t judge them just by looking at them.
- Learn how to go over heads properly. Head qualities are very important and exhibitors expect judges to examine them.
- Do not hesitate to dive into the coat and find the underlying structure of the dog!
- Sheltie expression should be assessed when the dog is on the ground – NOT the table.

To review:

When judging the Sheltie, first look for.....

- **Balanced, curvy, “symmetrical” outline**
- **Slightly longer than tall**
- **Agile, athletic appearance – not cumbersome, stuffy, or cloddy**



Next look for....typey heads and expression with.....

- A refined, balanced “one piece” head that fits the dog
- *“Long blunt wedge tapering slightly.....”*
- A softly rounded muzzle blending smoothly into flat clean cheeks
- Very dark (except in blues which may have blue or merle eyes) almond shaped eyes set well in – not on - the skull
- A sweet, alert, inquisitive expression

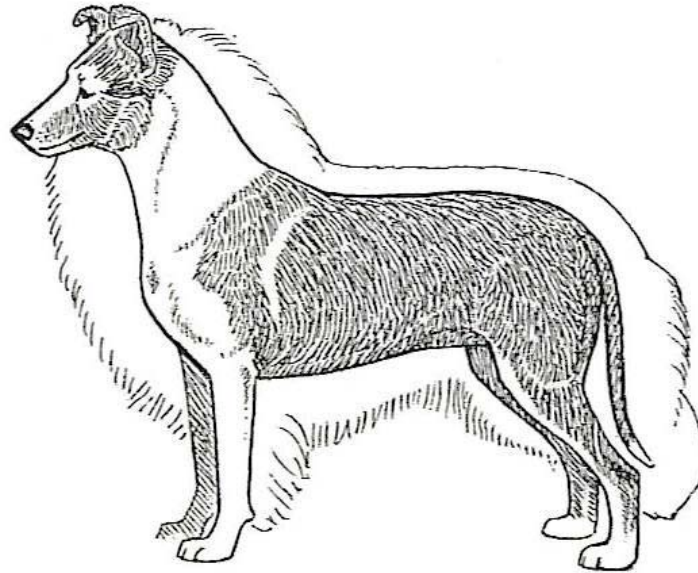


And.....



- *“Long blunt wedge tapering slightly.....”*
- Overall lightness of profile
- Parallel planes
- A smooth, flat topskull, carried all the way back to the occiput
- A slight but definite stop, placed at the inner corners of the eyes
- A well developed underjaw with a softly rounded finish

And look for.....



- Proper front assembly, including depth of brisket and spring of rib
- Desired breadth of fore and hind quarters
- Comparatively short back
- Slightly sloping croup
- Tail bone to hock joint
- Moderate bone
- Compact oval feet

And.....look for Shelties that move lightly and easily



- Shelties should not mince or take baby steps
- Shelties should never plod or trudge
- Shelties should be graceful and agile
- (And some Shelties think they can fly)

We hope you will enjoy judging our favorite breed.



