



BARBARA SCHWARTZ

Confessions of a "head-hunter"

The values that a judge brings into the collie ring are based upon his own past experiences, taste and interpretations of the standard. The standard must be a guide. Too often judges rely upon fads, and do not re-examine the standard. My own background is primarily as a breeder, since 1961, and as a judge of collies since 1970. The things I value most in the ring, after temperament, are beauty, type, balance and movement. The beauty of a collie cannot be found without head. The head is what makes a collie unique as a breed, different even from the Shetland Sheepdog. If the recessive qualities that make up the desired collie head are lost ... we have lost the essence of the collie.

Trudy Mangles in her book *The Evolution of the Collie* says:

"... All the parts of the collie head are important to the whole. The good breeder of today and the good judge, will not tolerate extreme faults or defects in head structure"

She goes on to say, "The head is the feature which distinguishes the superior from the ordinary In no other breed of dogs is the head as important in evaluating superiority as it is in the collie."

A judge looks at a class of collies. None will be perfect. Each has faults and virtues. The overall balance and beauty of the dogs make the initial impression on the judge. This may or may not be the lasting impression upon closer examination. The type, balance and beauty of the dog will eventually be the deciding factor in the judgment, but between the initial impression and the final decision come many choices as to the importance of certain faults and virtues. Every judge wants to place only beautifully headed, breathtakingly balanced, correctly built and effortlessly moving dogs. The reality of the ring forces us to make

compromises. To make placements, we must evaluate degree and severity of faults and virtues. Trudy Mangles said: "The artistic quality (of judging) is best seen in those judges who are able to select their specimens on the basis of their abundance of good qualities, not on the absence of faults." I must confess, in the final judgment, I must go with beauty: I am a head hunter.

The collie standard is made up of 24 paragraphs; 13 describe the head properties; four are on coat; seven on body, legs and tail; one each on general appearance and on gait. If a judge is to use the standard as his guide, the most value should be placed on the area that is stressed: The Collie Head. Historically this has been true, too. Dr. Bennett in *The Collie* states:

"... It is evident to all who have watched our present day judges work in the ring, both in England and America, that it is the head properties that count, a dog excelling in these selections although indifferent elsewhere, having a much better chance of winning than one indifferent here, but excelling elsewhere"

He even had a point scale for judging in which "the head, eyes and ears which constitute the entire head, is allowed 50 points or one-half of the whole 100 points."

Thus when judging, collie head faults must be weighed as more serious than body faults; not that any serious fault should be overlooked.

The standard repeatedly stresses the importance of head faults. Faults in the rest of the body are not emphasized as to their severity. "BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEAD CHARACTERISTICS, PROMINENT HEAD FAULTS ARE SEVERELY PENALIZED." (Cont. on Page 26)



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(Continued from Page 25)

There is strong scientific justification for this emphasis. As a breeder, I must be more influenced by those faults that are difficult to obtain and harder to breed out. The genetically recessive traits that are desirable must be rewarded. The collie body as described by the standard is:

"... firm, hard and muscular, a trifle long in proportion to the height. The ribs are well-rounded behind the well-sloped shoulders and the chest is deep, extending to the elbows. The back is strong and level supported by powerful hips and thighs and the croup is sloped to give a well-rounded finish. The loin is powerful and slightly arched"

This description could be used to depict a wolf, a coyote or a fox—any of the wild canines. The collie is not a short, or square dog. It is not asked to be "cobby". It does not have an unnatural body configuration. What is desired in the collie body is a shape that would be found wild in nature.

The feet are described:

"... The forelegs are straight and muscular with a fair amount of bone considering the size of the dog. A cumbersome appearance is undesirable. Both narrow and wide placement are penalized. The forearm is moderately fleshy and the pasterns are flexible but without weakness. The hindlegs are less fleshy, are muscular at the thighs, very sinewy and the hocks and stifles are well bent."

Again a picture of a natural animal found in the wild. Nowhere in the standard is there mentioned the desirability of "short hocks". (There really is no such thing, since the hock is the joint. Most people are referring to the rear pastern when using the term "short hocks".) This fetish with short rear pasterns is a fad that

comes from some breeders who desire to make the collie an unnatural square dog. A rear pastern that is in balance with the length of the stifle is what is found in nature and is what will produce the correct collie gait.

The "gait is sound." The collie should move in a free, effortless stride—a gait that will allow the animal to cover ground efficiently and easily. It is the gait of a wild canine, able to cover all types of terrain effortlessly.

"... When the dog is moved at a slow trot toward an observer its straight front legs track comparatively close to the ground. The front legs are not out at the elbows, do not 'crossover', nor does the dog move with a choppy, pacing, or rolling gait. When viewed from the rear, the hind legs are straight, tracking comparatively close at the ground. At a moderate trot, the hind legs are powerful and propelling. Viewed from the side, the reasonably long 'reaching' stride is smooth and even, keeping the back line firm and level"

It could also be a beautiful description of a wolf covering ground:

"... As the speed of the gait is increased the collie single tracks, bringing the front legs inward in a straight line from the shoulder toward the center of the body and the hind legs inward in a straight line from the hip toward the center line of the body. The gait suggests effortless speed combined with the dogs herding heritage, requiring it to be capable of changing its direction or travel almost instantaneously"

All that is asked for in the correct collie gait and body is what nature has created in her wild canines. The body structure is a natural one. Since that which functions best in nature is generally inherited as a

dominant—correct collie body structure and movement are dominant to incorrect ones. There are plenty of bad moving and poorly built collies around. But these have been caused by man's selections. Faddish taste for "cobby" dogs with "short hocks" and corresponding straight-fronted "cute" collies have caused an abundance of poor movement problems. If allowed to revert to the wild, the dog would move free and easy.

If a bad-fronted dog is bred to a good-fronted one, usually the fronts on the puppies will be better than the front of the poorer parent. Many will be absolutely correct. Correct body structure is a dominant and can be improved in one generation of proper breeding. There will be degrees of faulty structure inherited, but generally all the pups will be an improvement on the poorer specimen.

The collie head properties, those qualities which make a collie a collie, are emphasized in the standard because of their illusive character. The long, lean, light, balanced head with its smooth outline and full muzzle must constantly be sought for in breeding. The "full of sense expression" which is a combination of eye placement, shape, size, color, chiseling and ear placement, must be of primary importance in breeding and judging. Barbara Roos in her book, *Concept Collie*, said:

"... When we appreciate the myriad aspects contributing to expression, perhaps we can better understand the displeasure exhibitors have when judges, lacking the intimate exposure and knowledge of a collie head, continually select collies that have a 'common look'"

The standard says that "because of the importance of the head characteristics, prominent head faults are severely penalized." The breeders of the past, that penned our standard knew that genetically, everything desired in the collie head is recessive. Those positive values sought

(Continued on Page 27)

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in the collie head can be lost in one generation of poor breeding. They are extremely difficult to regain again.

The standard states:

"... The head properties are of great importance.... When considered in proportion to the size of the dog, the head is inclined to lightness and never appears massive ..."

This lightness is a recessive trait. Most wild canines have moderately deep heads when viewed from the side. One poor breeding can create a deep head, even in pups whose one parent is light headed.

The sides of a collie's head "taper gradually and smoothly from the ears to the end of the black nose, without being flared out in backskull or pinched in muzzle." In nature, wild canines have short broad backskulls and even shorter narrow muzzles.

In profile the collie head has "parallel straight planes of equal length, divided by a very slight but perceptible stop or break." Wild canines have backskulls that are domed and longer in length than is the muzzle. Stops in nature are moderately deep and pronounced.

In the standard of the collie it says, "A large, round, full eye seriously detracts from the desired 'sweet' expression." Yet nature puts just such an eye on her wild canines. "Eye faults are heavily penalized" in our standard.

Canines in the wild have prick ears, while the desired collie ears are "drawn well up on the backskull and are carried about three-quarters erect, with about one-fourth of the ear tipping or 'breaking' forward. An ear fault is penalized heavily."

The "expression is one of the most important points in considering the relative value of collies It may be said to be the combined product of the shape and balance of the skull and muzzle, the

placement, size, shape, and color of the eyes, and the position, size and carriage of the ears." According to the standard, "The collie cannot be judged properly until its expression has been carefully evaluated."

All of these desired head qualities are recessive. If breeders are not vigilant in their selection for these points, our collies will revert back to nature, having rounded or domed skulls, sloping at the sides; short, wide backskulls with snippy muzzles and deep stops. The eyes would be set facing forward, shepherd-like, round in shape, and light to medium

brown in color. The ears would be erect—fox-like in appearance. Altogether a very "common" look.

As a breeder-judge following the dictates of the standard, head faults must be more severely penalized than are other faults. NO HEAD—NO COLLIE.

Edwin Pickhart, famed all-around judge, but collie man first, last, and always, said it best:

"... Give me head, eye, ear and expression; the rest I can get from mutts"

I guess I am in good company when I confess . . . I am "a head hunter".



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