

## Border Collie Breed Standard

### Herding Group

**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 hundreds of years 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 style and agility in equal measure with soundness and strength. 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. Any aspect of structure or temperament that would impede the dog's ability to function as a herding dog should be severely faulted. 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" for males, 18" to 21" for females. The body, from prosternum to point of buttocks, is slightly longer than the height at the withers with the length to height ratio being approximately 10:9. Bone must be strong, medium being correct but lighter bone is preferred over heavy. 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. Any single feature of size appearing out of proportion should be considered a fault.

### Head

Expression is intelligent, alert, eager, and full of interest. *Eyes* are set well apart, of moderate size, oval in shape. The color encompasses the full range of brown eyes, dogs having body colors other than black may have noticeably lighter eye color. Blue eyes (with one, both or part of one or both eyes being blue) in dogs other than merle, are acceptable but not preferred. Eye rims should be fully pigmented, lack thereof considered a fault according to degree. *Ears* are of medium size, set well apart, one or both carried erect and/or semi-erect (varying from 1/4 to 3/4 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 underjaw is strong and well developed. A domed, blocky or very narrow skull is faulty according to degree, as is cheekiness and a snipey muzzle. *Nose* color matches the primary body color. Nostrils are well developed. Lack of nose pigmentation is a fault according to degree. *Bite*: Teeth and jaws are strong, meeting in a scissors bite. Complete dentition is required. Missing molars or pre-molars are serious faults as is an undershot or overshot 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 from behind the withers to the slightly arched, muscular loins, 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. Loins moderately deep and short, muscular, slightly arched and with 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 proudly and waved like a banner, showing a confident personality. A tail curled over the back is a fault.

### 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 and legs that are too short in proportion to the rest of the body are a serious fault. The shoulder blades are long, well laid back and well-angulated to the upper arm. Shoulder blades and upper arms are equal in length. 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 hocks that may be either parallel or very slightly turned in. Dewclaws should be removed. Feet, although slightly smaller, are the same as front.

### **Coat**

Two varieties are permissible, both having close-fitting, dense, weather resistant double coats with the top coat either straight or wavy and coarser in texture than the undercoat which is soft, short and dense. The rough variety is medium in length without being excessive. 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 should not be penalized. The Border Collie's purpose as an actively working herding dog shall be clearly evident in its presentation. Excess hair on the feet, hock and pastern areas may be neatened for the show ring. Whiskers are untrimmed. Dogs that are overly groomed (trimmed and/or sculpted) should be penalized according to the extent.

### **Color**

The Border Collie appears in all colors or combination of colors and/or markings. Solid color, bi-color, tri-color, merle and sable dogs 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 and head are permissible but should not predominate. 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 Border Collie's most used working gaits are the gallop and a moving crouch (stealth) which convert to a balanced and free trot, with minimum lift of the feet. 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 is not long striding, yet covers the ground with minimum effort, exhibiting facility of movement rather than a hard driving action. Exaggerated reach and drive at the trot are not useful to the Border Collie. The topline is firm. 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. Any deficiency that detracts from efficient movement is a fault.

### **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 fear, dullness or resentment. Any tendencies toward viciousness, nervousness or shyness are very serious faults.

### **Faults**

Any deviation from the foregoing should be considered a fault, the seriousness of the fault depending upon the extent of the deviation.

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