

# • BREED FEATURE • COLLIES

## They answered

A.1. Well over (3) decades. Reared on a sheep and cattle farm with numerous working dogs, I formed a deep affinity with working breeds. I assume it was this bond that inspired me to choose a working dog when I began breeding, and it wasn't difficult to find the dog that most "appears as a dog of greatest beauty." More recently, I have developed a deep devotion for their cousins, namely the Smooth coated variety.

A.2. The breed is as good now as



it's ever been, due in the main to the relentless stream of Collies imported into most every State in Australia. Since we imported the first two American collies in 1986; almost 30 years ago, there has been a major shift in mindset compared to the Australian imports of the past, all of which came from Europe, with the majority imported from the U.K. The influx of American Collies number

no less than 26, of which 11 have arrived in the last 2-3 years, with 3 more on the way. Interestingly, 7 of those 11 have come from the same kennel, as is another one of the 2 imminent arrivals. Additionally, no less than 6 shipments of frozen semen has been imported from the USA. Fortunately, for the Rough coats, there were (4) Smooth coats included in these USA imports, all impeccably bred from the cream of the crop.

There has also been 2 Canadian collies' imported, as is yet another imminent arrival, and 2 impending from Japan: all predominantly American bloodlines. Further, around the late 80's, early 90's, a small number of dedicated collie breeders in Europe: mainly in the Nordic countries, had also looked to America for new bloodlines. Consequently, as had transpired in Australia, the collie made quantum leaps in achieving vast improvements in most all facets of breed type, and also in regard to a number of health issues. Gradually this phenomenon drifted throughout Europe as other collie enthusiasts began to acknowledge their fellow breeders' valour and foresight. Meanwhile, a number of Australian breeders continue to import both collies and frozen semen from Europe. Ironically many of those bloodlines have varying degrees of American fusion, making for a greater uniformity of the Australian gene pool.

This diversity in the gene pool had several strong points in its favour, so when a pool of today's most prolific breeders worked in together they began producing collies that consistently conformed to the standard in type. These families are now into their 9th and 10th generation, and although the styles

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differ somewhat between breeders, they're all produced collies that fit the standard in type, albeit each breeder dogs are instantly recognisable by their individual style; yet immediately identifiable as coming from a certain family.

A.3.1) Headpiece: The head MUST be in accordance with the Breed Standard quote "Head properties of great importance. Expression most important. Too many of today's judges do not appreciate the importance of the collies head, and/or have not learned the essence of the headpiece, which is absolutely unique to the breed. Eyes; very important feature giving sweet expression: full of intelligence. Dedicated fanciers have often debated the subject on how best to educate our judges. Judges have a major impact on the look of our breed, and for better or for worse,

their placements and awards influence breeding programs. Judges must be objective, and they have a responsibility to recognise breed virtues and reward them. Judges require a "foundation of knowledge" of anatomy, history, and form and function, which all emphasize the respective roles of the breeder and the judge. A committed breeder is nothing if not passionate about their breed – more so, understandably, than most judges. The breeder is concentrating on a single objective, while the judge focuses on many. It is the breeders job to make educated decisions, using the "genetic palette" that is available in the breeding pool to paint the right picture for the judges and the future of the breed. However, a judge can impact a breed's direction with good decisions, and a good breeder can make a judging assignment a thrill. Judges must grasp the absolutes of breed type and the functional requirements that determine correct form. Judges can't put up what they don't see, and if breeders provide them with off-type dogs, they'll make the best of it. On the other hand when judges overwhelmingly favour a handful of dogs which might be of extreme style, breeders who want to win will choose to breed to those winner's. And so, if judges don't keep rewarding these off-type dogs, then breeders won't keep breeding them.

With all the material at hand, one might expect our judges to be among the most educated in all of dogdom. This, sadly, isn't the case. Why not? It is because studying and doing are not the same endeavours. It's not enough to read. One must see and get his hands on as many dogs as possible. The study sets the mind. Actual judging brings the mindset into reality. Both breeders and judges must know the subtleties of our breed, realizing that its "essence" is what makes the words of the standard come alive. It is interesting to observe a knowledgeable breeder/judge sort through a quality entry, because they will often reward animals that possess breed traits that are the most difficult to achieve.

The breed's history is important not only to breeders but also to judges as well. Judges need to know the origin and history of the Collie, how they were used, and what their temperaments were like and why they should closely resemble the descrip-

Smooth...Expression most important; in considering relative values it is obtained by perfect balance and combination of skull and forehead, size and shape, colour and placement of eye, correct position and carriage of ears.

A mid-point between inside corner of eyes (which is centre of a correctly placed 'stop') is centre of balance in length of head.

End of smooth, well-rounded muzzle blunt, never square. Underjaw strong, clean cut. Depth of skull from brow to underpart of jaw, never excessive (deep through).

Correct Head European Sketch by: Mia Ejerstad

North/South American style head

Head properties of great importance... Viewd from front or side, head resembles a well-blunted clean wedge, being SMOOTH in outline. Skull flat. Sides taper gradually & smoothly from ears to to end of black nose. without prominent cheek bones or pinched muzzle. Viewed in profile, top of skull and top of muzzle lie in two parallel straight lines of equal length, divided by SLIGHT, but perceptible 'stop' or break.

Common Profile faults I. II.

Correct Wedge

Correct Head

Correct Center of Stop & Depth Thru Head

Common Profile faults IV. V.

EYES: Very important feature giving sweet expression. Medium size (never very small), set somewhat obliquely, of almond shape and dark brown colour, except in the case of blue merles when eyes are frequently (one or both, or part of one or both) blue or blue-flecked. Expression full of intelligence, with quick, alert look when listening.



## *They answered*

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tions in the standard. This knowledge will give judges a better understanding and appreciation of the breeds correct physical look, movement and temperament. Most importantly judges must clearly understand that should the Collie lose the necessary characteristics of the breed, it is no longer a true Collie!

2) Type: The word “type” being a general term for those qualities that set each breed apart from the other has been a troublesome area of discussion from the earliest times. The idea of being able to breed different types assumes that there is more than one correct type in our breed. Inconsistency is the accepted rather than the exception. Although one standard maybe more explicit than others in describing breed “type” over another, notwithstanding that correct breed type is defined as conformity to the breed standard. Accordingly, there can be only one correct type – that being the one defined in the standard of the breed.

On the other hand “soundness” is the structural integrity of the Collie, the harmo-

nious balance of its parts. It is far more than just movement, although its movement can identify a sound animal. To put it simply, type is more or less static; it is the “essence” of the breed. Soundness is kinetic; it is fluid; it is the character of the breed in the flesh and in the motion. The fact is that the Collie is a breed where soundness cannot ever be divorced from type. The function of the Collie is such an integral element of what it is that athleticism equals aesthetics. The Collie who is not balanced and muscular and sound is not typey.

Type is far more than a pleasing head and expression. It is the essence of the breed that makes it unique, that defines the Collie, and that definition is of a balanced, symmetrical, medium-sized working dog, who in movement is powerful and full of drive, long in stride yet light and appears quite effortless.

3) Soundness & Condition: A working dog must be sound. Soundness of feet and legs is a top priority. We want a dog with a solid foundation on which we can continue to improve our breed, sound coming and going with strong reach and drive. Do not reward an unsound dog just because it has a superb head, or an abundant attractive coat. Whilst the Collie has an aesthetic value shared by few other breeds, soundness should always be one of your top priorities. Personally, I think of movement as “type on the run.”

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Condition: The Collie is a working dog. He should be shown in top physical condition, carrying no excess lumber. His work makes him an athlete and he should look and act like one. It is absurd to believe soundness can exist without fitness and condition. Summer coat drops should be recognised as such and not mistaken for poor condition.

Certainly the Collie in the conformation rings today are often more appealing to the eye, have more glamorous coats, and are much more highly show-trained than

some of their ancestors. Judges naturally seek out animals that are pleasing to look at and are well trained and groomed. But I ask that this question remain in your mind when making selections:

“If I were stranded alone in a harsh unyielding environment in the hilly counties of Scotland with a large flock of sheep, needing a dog who was hardy, quick witted, courageous and resourceful, which of these

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dogs would I choose?"

Find the dog that answers that question, and you'll be helping to preserve our breed as well.

4) Tail: The tail should be long with the bone reaching at least to the hock joint. Carried low when the dog is quiet, but with a slight upward swirl at the tip. It may be carried gaily when the dog is excited, but not over the back. The tail/rudder balances the dog and should be carried properly, if set well into the correct rounded croup.

When the tail is carried up high and/or over the back like a broom-handle, it indicates that the angle is incorrect, and the croup is flatter than it should be. Since the angle of the croup determines to a great degree the rear gait of the dog, it impacts on both the drive and the extension of the hind legs. As a consequence, the rear assembly is now out of balance with the front; altogether changing the balanced gait of the dog.

Invariably, this problem accompanies dogs with short tails. There is nothing more unsightly than to see a Collie running around a show ring with a short tail carried up like a flagpole. 5) PLEASE judge the SMOOTH Collie with the same passion and consideration as you do their Rough cousins. The quality of the SMOOTH collie is OFTEN superior to that of the Rough, yet time after time judges walk past the SMOOTH variety as if it's an inferior specimen not worth a second glance. Smooth collies are in big demand these days as valuable Service dogs, and also as easily maintained pets/companions for people living busy lifestyles in this 21st century. As a consequence judges need to look TWICE at this breed for their quality dogs that they are, especially considering they have no "draping coat" to hide even their minor imperfections.

A.4. The Collie head properties are of great importance. A dog with a magnificent coat, sound of mind, with a physical structure on the lines of strength and activity, can only be highly awarded when it accompanies the correct head properties. A.5. There are concerns in regard two most recent health issues affecting some bloodlines, namely Degenerative Myelopathy (DM), and Lupus. DM is a progressive disease of the spinal cord that causes weakness, and eventually inability to walk in the rear legs. In its early stages DM is commonly mistaken for "arthritis", "old age", "hip dysplasia" or "spine problems". There are tests to confirm if a dog is at risk for the disease, however not all dogs with the affected genes will develop the disease. The test can be most valuable to rule in or out DM. If the test is negative, the dog does NOT have DM. If it is positive for both mutations, the dog is at risk, and further testing needs to be done to diagnose the disease. There is no proven treatment, and the prognosis is grave. Lupus is a disease of the immune system, and again there is no proven treatment, and the prognosis is not good.

A.6. DON'T be impatient – well-bred pedigree puppies are not loaves of bread you can buy off the supermarket shelf, therefore ensure you buy your puppy from a registered breeder, and one that is insis-

tent, where possible, that you come out and meet ALL the collies in their kennel. Further, ask the breeder for references of other clients that own their collies, and check some of these references out. That way you know that you are buying from a reputable, experienced breeder, and one that has an interest as to who and where their puppies will spend the rest of their lives.

**Leah Ryan Vedamea**

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A.1. I have been involved in Collies for 30 years, I grow up with the breed and naturally fell in love with collies & as they say the rest is history.

A.2. Unfortunately I keep hearing that Collies are in trouble all over the world however I disagree as in this country there are still some excellent specimens of the breed in various kennels, however as the number of breeders & dogs dwindle they are fewer in number but that is to be expected as the big kennels of the past no longer exist. I feel that a number of breeders in this country have worked hard over the years importing dogs & blending them into the Australian bloodlines with some very good results. In the last couple of years there have been a number of new imports & bloodlines introduced into the country & I look forward with excitement as breeders continue to blend & mix these lines into our current ones. I think the future of our beautiful breed is in good hands & the breed with move forward with a new vigour & resurgence.

A.3. The first sentence of our breed standard states "The Collie should instantly appeal as a dog of great beauty, standing with impassive dignity, with no part out of proportion to the whole so judges should be looking for a well balanced dog with soft natural curves, giving a gracefully smooth outline. The head & expression is also of great importance, the head should be a clean, smooth blunt wedge with parallel planes of equal length, a slight stop, the underjaw should be strong, the head should inclined to lightness & never deep through from the eyebrow to underjaw. The expression is made up by the correct head, semi-erect alert ears & eye shape which should be set somewhat obliquely, almond shape of medium size, eyes that are either too small or large ruin the correct sweet expression that our breed is known for. Movement is another characteristic of the breed the Collie should be a sound mover with good reach & drive, their stride should be effortless & graceful they should cover the ground with minimum effort; they do converge to the centre line when speed is increased & should never roll, plait or crab. Temperament is also important a Collie should be friendly & able to stand his/her ground & should never be nervous or shy of people or other animals. The coat should fit the dog & not obscure the natural outline you are looking for a double coat with the outer coat harsh to the touch, the undercoat soft & furry nearly hiding the skin. The mane is quite abundant, front legs well feathered, tail & pants/skirt profusely coated, more is not always better as an over coated dog lacks working ability & the coat would ruin the outline & shape which takes away from the great beauty as mentioned in the first sentence of the breed standard. We must always remember what the breed was

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bred for originally & that form follows function the Collie is a working dog, I believe the points I have mentioned above all lead to that fact & all are very important points when judging the Collie (Rough).

A.4. I really would like the temperament to be mentioned in our breed standard as I feel it is a vital point as a true Collie temperament is like no other breed in the world. Anyone who has lived with a Collie knows how loyal & protective to their family a Collie is, there is no better friend to his family than a Collie.

A.5. The Collie does suffer from Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA) which can affect their eyesight however responsible breeders have all puppies tested by a qualified Ophthalmologist before they are 8 weeks of age. Like all breeds they can suffer from Hip dysplasia but again responsible breeders X-Ray breeding stock & breed with only individuals that have good hips. I have heard more recently that there are some auto immune problems starting to creep into the breed but over all Collies live to an average age of about 12-14 years & lead happy healthy lives when purchased from responsible breeders.

A.6. I would advise any potential puppy buying to do their homework as cheaper purchase price is not always cheaper, as it may cost more in vet bills etc in the long run. Above all make sure that they purchase their puppy from a responsible breeder, ask questions about health testing, temperaments etc.

**Donna Morris Swinbrad**

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A.1. I have lived with collies all my life being born into family with Collies. I purchased my first (and very own) Collie when I was 12. I bred my first litter in 1989.

I love the connection working breeds have with their handlers and I love the beauty, intelligence, sensitivity and nurturing nature of this breed in particular.

A.2. I believe our Collies of today compare very well with those of 10 years ago. I think the best one are even better than ten years ago especially in head characteristics. However, I don't believe we have the depth in quality that we use to have. Whether this is just a numbers game, I don't know. It is possibly due to kennels having a much smaller number of dogs than in times gone by. And there being fewer kennels, breeders and exhibitors overall.

A.3. Head characteristics and expression, outline and balance, movement and top lines, breed temperament and coat. This all adds up to Breed Type. It is difficult to prioritise these because just one or two of these elements, no matter how correct they are, will not give you a quality Collie however ...

### **Head and Expression**

The Standard only mentions the word "important" three time – and they are all do with the head - i.e. head properties being of great importance, emphasizing this even further by saying eyes - a very important feature and expression, one of the most important points.

The quality of the head should, in most cases, determine the quality of the collie unless it is really lacking in other features such as movement, balance, coat, temperament etc.

Some of the other head properties include balance of foreface and backskull, round muzzle, flat, smooth zygomatic arches with no flaring, a clean, well developed underjaw, no depth of head, flat back skull and a slight stop located in the correct position which is in the centre of the two parallel planes of the muzzle and backskull.

Most of the head features we want in the collies are hard to retain in a breeding program because they are controlled by recessive genes so they must be guarded and bred for generation after generation. Most other countries give a much greater importance to head qualities than we do here in Aust. and I think (apart from the kennels running with current fads that we are seeing in England with shorter, broader heads) most of the Collies overseas have a more uniformed head than what we are seeing here in Aust. too – particularly the USA at the present time. There are so many different shapes and styles in Aust. that it must be hard for a judge to determine what is correct. However that doesn't mean the head should be ignored – just the opposite in fact. It means judges should be more determined to learn and find the correct ones.

Having said all that, a Collie will still lack breed type even if it has the best head in the world if it is attached to a poor moving or a seriously unbalanced body.

### **Outline and Balance**

The outline gives a great deal of in-

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formation about the structure of dog. You should be able to recognise a Collie from its outline alone. The balance of all the structural elements determines the function and fitness of the collie for its original job of a sheepdog. This can be witnessed in its outline.

### Movement

The Standard says that movement is a distinct characteristic of the Collie. This is significant. The Collie is a working dog and as such needs the ability to move in a way that allows the job to be done with the least effort and least chance of injury.

A Collie (coming toward you) is described as moving with the feet comparatively close together. Compared to what? Obviously, other breeds, and particularly the herding breeds. The Collie should move closer in front than other breeds – the Standard says so - but it also says plaiting or crossing, [of the front legs or feet] are highly undesirable. This means the feet should not cross over the centre line.

Viewed from the rear the hocks from the hocks joints to the ground are parallel, powerful and full of drive. This is NOT a single tracking action [Note: Some breeders and judges think this is describing a static stance, but this is a description of movement in the Standard. The Collie Standard is not the only dog Standard that talks about parallel hock in movement]. There is no way a dog can have parallel hocks and single track – these are mutually exclusive actions. Collies are the only breed I can find that have a single tracking front and a parallel tracking rear – this is what makes the collie movement a “distinct characteristic of the breed”. There are other breeds that have parallel hocks on the move. Unfortunately most breeders, let alone judges, do not understand this concept and we continually hear the Collie described as a single tracking dog – both front and rear. Our current extended breed Standard even says this! The American’s changed their Standard, asking for a single tracking Collie and removing “a distinct characteristic of the breed” from their breed Standard in the 1980’s – but that is in America.

From the side the action is smooth, light, with reasonably long strides, and appears quite effortless. Reasonably long strides confirm the body ratios (slightly longer than tall). e.g. Not as long in body as a Beardie – so therefore the stride will not be as long, but with longer strides than a Belgian, who is built square.

Light and effortless movement confirms the balance of the structure of the dog. An unbalanced dog will appear cumbersome and awkward. This is where topline comes in. Balance can also be easily seen in the topline. Collie literature tells us when a Collie moves it

should be able to carry a cup of tea on its back without spilling a drop. A correctly balanced Collie will move with a completely level and strong topline. It will not roll across the shoulders and/or hips – regardless of the amount of coat the dog carries - and the topline will not bounce up and down. The best moving dogs, when looking at their toplines, look like they are being pulled along on wheels, - that is how little movement there is in the topline of a correctly balanced Collie. As a working dog, balance is of great value. This allows all parts to work equally, in correct union and gives the dog its functionality. The dog is much less likely to suffer from injuries and less likely to break down. A dip in the topline behind the shoulder indicates unbalanced front and rear angulation. Roached toplines also indicate front and rear angulation imbalances and possibly croup anomalies. This is why I say look for toplines – it will tell you a lot about balance. Balance also gives beauty to the eye of the beholder – the rough Standard calls for beauty. So it is necessary to consider all elements.

### Breed Temperament and Coat

These elements are fundamental to the definition of a Collie too, and are well described in the Standard. Sharpness or a “dog not at home” or timidness doesn’t fit with this breed.

Coats: While the Rough’s coat does add glamour and can impact on the balanced look of the dog, function must be the prime concern – so texture and waterproof coats are more important than the amount of coat or indeed the colour of the coat. When it comes to Smooths, I have had a judge tell me that “Smooth should have coats that are short and smooth like a Dalmatian’s coat”. Where does it say this in the Standard? It doesn’t! It says the coat on the smooth is harsh. The length of the hair is not mentioned length at all. As long as the dog looks and would be described as a short coated dog, the coat is of correct texture, is a double coat and waterproof then length of the hair, whether it be 1cm, 2cm, 3cm, 4cm etc., is unimportant.

While it is necessary to consider all elements, recognizing and rewarding the virtues is a tougher assignment than penalizing the faults. It is the virtues we need to progress us in the next generations.

A.4. I have given this question a lot of thought. As Standards go, the Collie Standard is a very descriptive and makes for a clear picture of how a Collie should look and act. I don’t think I would add anything to the Standard. I have had many discussions with judges and other breeders and there have been times when it was evident that some are not that conversant with the Collie Standard. So instead of adding more, we just need to be more familiar with and try to develop a profound comprehension of what is already written.

A.5. Unfortunately all breeds have their problems, and the Collie is no different. However we can be thankful that on the whole our breed is relatively healthy. The most common breed problem is Collie Eye Anomaly (CEA). While CEA is

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endemic within the breed it does have a saving grace in that it does not cause pain, the vast majority of collies will not have eye sight deficiencies and will live normal lives even if they are affected with CEA. We also have tests to diagnose CEA and some genetic understanding of the expression of CEA which will allow us to make progress in controlling the severity of this disease and eventually allow the breed to carry a much lower incidence of this anomaly.

There are a number of other concerns within the Collie breed but these tend to run in families rather than the breed as a whole and some are reasonably isolated: The most noted ones are HD, lupus – both systemic and discoid, skin conditions, arthritis and epilepsy.

A.6. Research the breed and understand all the characteristics of a Collie. Budget for TIME and money for a dog in your life. After this, research the breeders and find one you can connect with – they will be your backstop for many years. Don’t expect a collie to be “just like Lassie”. That takes time and training. Enjoy a wonderful breed.

**Mim Bester Baqilodge**

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A.1. I became involved in the collie breed in 1967 when my husband and I were looking for a family pet. We went to Sydney Royal to have a look at the dogs on show and as it turned out one of my customers that frequented the pharmacy I worked in was Australia’s top collie breeder. How fortunate was I to fall into the hands of Glad Osborne. Glad was the best mentor anyone could have and she tort me to think for myself, learn the breed standard and research as much as I could about the dogs of the past.

We chose the Collie Rough because of its gentle nature, high intelligence, and ease to live with, and total devotion to its family.

A.2. We do not have the numbers being exhibited these days as we did 10 years ago. I do think that head quality has definitely improved however I find that many current dogs lack the conformation that is called for in our breed. That lovely flow of gentle curves from the head to the tail

is disappearing and the dogs are becoming more upright in stature. Movement on most of the collies exhibited is of a consistently higher standard than in the past.

A. 3. 1. Conformation.

2. Head, this is a head breed.

3. Movement, this is a very distinctive feature of our breed. It should be a long easy stride, single tracking with speed.

4. That the legs should be placed well under the body showing the correct angles that the breed standard calls for.

5. The coat should fit the outline of the body.

A. 4. I think our breed standard is very explicit. You just need to know it thoroughly and apply it correctly and try



never to deviate or move the goal post to suite ourselves.

A. 5. The collie is quite a healthy breed. We do have a hereditary eye problem that any conscientious breeder tests for. I do think any dog that is bred from should be hip x/rayed and scored before being bred from. Like all breeds now that genetic testing is available we are learning a lot more. As a breeder of long standing it would be wonderful if we could produce perfect specimens but in the real world that just doesn’t happen. Look at the human race.

A. 6. If possible go and have a look at the breeders situation and the family of dogs in their yard. You have to like what you see. Find a breeder that will give after sale service. Don’t impulse buy and think carefully if this breed is the right one for you and in turn that breeder should want to know the situation their puppy is going to as well and be satisfied with the purchaser.

**Gaye Jones Cathkin**

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