

For the attention of Aimee Llewellyn, KC Health Information Centre

**Re: The Kennel Club's current and proposed items of concern for Bearded Collies:**

**1) Excessively long coats**

With reference to the above, may we pose a question? How can a long coat possibly be a health issue or have any affect on a dog's day to day life? We have a champion bitch with a long coat but it is not overly profuse. It is, however, extremely correct in texture and will dry within minutes of being soaked. By the very nature of its texture, it does not break and therefore maintains its length without any protection by us, i.e. she is exercised every day, in all weathers and over all terrain. She is, however, regularly and thoroughly groomed.

So, group judges are being made aware of this "health risk"?! In the opinion of many Beardie exhibitors and breeders these judges should be made aware of dogs which do not conform to the Kennel Club's own standard for Bearded Collies which calls for a dog with a length to height proportion of 5:4. Only one other breed in the Pastoral Group has a standard calling for more length of back.

Group judges should also be made aware of the fact that it is completely wrong for a Beardie to kick up in the rear when moving, thereby expending lots of wasted energy. They also need to know that the Beardie ribcage should not be short in length, and barrelled in shape. These two points alone are of far more importance than length of coat but, then, a long coat is easy for any judge to see and fault, assessing correct conformation takes knowledge and experience.

The Kennel Club's breed standard for the Beardie forbids trimming. Now judges are being asked to penalise long coats. We think you can draw your own conclusions as to what exhibitors may feel obliged to do.

**2) *Legs too short in proportion to length of body***

We fail to see how a short leg impacts on the health of a dog? The standard is quite clear in stating the proportions of a Bearded Collie. It is for a judge to penalise an exhibit he or she feels does not display the correct proportions according to the standard. It has nothing to do with the dog's health.

We should also like to protest at the cavalier treatment of our breed and the discourtesy shown by the KC to the Bearded Collie breed clubs. If it were not for the alert posted on Facebook, the majority of Beardie exhibitors and breeders would not have been aware of this latest ridiculous "health issue" until it had been imposed upon us. This is both unfair and undemocratic. We have been told, verbally, that these two points of concern have been raised following health surveys, meetings of group judges and feedback from judges at shows or in consultation with breed clubs. We think the onus is on you to let us have sight of such surveys. Furthermore group judges cannot have the experience of breed specialists to form such opinions and we know that all the breed clubs have not been consulted.

We have been breeding and exhibiting Beardies for 40 years, have bred nine UK champions, and many overseas, and bred the Top Winning Beardie in the UK in 2004 and owned the Top Winning Bearded Collie in 2005. In addition we bred the Top Winning Bearded Collie of all time in the USA. Six Beardies bred by us have won CCs at Crufts and with the crowning of the ninth Diotima champion in December 2011, we achieved the record of our seventh generation champion bitch.

If the Kennel Club really wants to be known for promoting healthy dogs, it has a duty to listen to grass-roots breeders and exhibitors and not "invent" health problems in breeds where there are none. Ethical Beardie breeders know that they have the guardianship of our wonderful breed and through their efforts over many years have produced a breed which is sound, free of any eye defects, has one of the best hip records and, most important of all, has a superb temperament. I think the KC should give us credit for this instead of trying to subvert our efforts.

***Marian and Stephen Appleby***

Diotima Bearded Collies

[www.diotimabeardedcollies.com](http://www.diotimabeardedcollies.com)