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20/3/'12

The Kennel Club,
Health Information Manager,
Aimee Llewellyn

Dear Sir/Madam,

Regarding the proposed items of concern for Bearded Collies:

My Background and Experience:

I have owned and shown Bearded Collies almost all my life. I bought my first bitch in 1971 but I was studying the Breed for a year or so prior to this.

I have been the owner/breeder of the following British Champions:

Ch. Mignonette of Willowmead at Orora born 1972 (BOB Crufts 1976, Top Bearded Collie 1975/1976 Ch. Show Group winner, and Reserve Group Winner, won extensively under the main All Breed and Breed judges of the day, including Joe Braddon, Bobby James, Tom Purvis, George Leatt, etc; etc.)

Ch. Orora's Sugar Bush born 1974

Ch. Orora's Blue Basil born 1975

Ch. Orora's Huckleberry born 1976 (Ch. Show Reserve Group winner, Joe Braddon)

Ch. Orora's Frank born 1977 (BOB Crufts age 10. Top Bearded Collie 1983 and 1984, sire of Crufts Best In Show Winner. Named by many Bearded Collie judges to be the best ever Beardie in the KC Kennel Gazette. Ch. Show Group Winner, won extensively over an eleven year period.) Frank was probably the best moving Bearded Collie ever and he was most definitely NOT leggy in proportion.

Ch. Orora's Impetuosity born 1979 (a Ch. Show Group winner, Jean Lanning)

Ch. Orora's Sugar Plum of Hajacan born 1974

Ch. Orora's Bushkin of Weardon born 1978

Ch. Orora's Laughing Water born 1983

Ch. Chriscaro Chrystal at Orora born 1982

Ch. Orora's Chalcedony born 1989

Break from showing later '90's and beginning of '00's.

Ch. Orora's Mercury born 2007 (Top Bearded Collie Male 2009)

In addition, I have bred a number of other CC winners, Crufts first-prize winners and overseas Champions.

I have judged Bearded Collies at Championship show level since 1978. I have judged in Holland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Canada from 1978 – 2012.

I wrote an article on movement that is largely considered to explain correct Bearded Collie proportions and movement and has been used extensively to train aspiring judges, from its publication in the 80's Bearded Collie Club newsletter, to the present day.

I was invited by the Kennel Club to judge Bearded Collies at the Crufts Centenary Show. I had a record entry and was the last judge to preside over both sexes. I had a personal written message following Crufts, from Mr Mike Stockman MRCVS, thanking me for the quality of my judging.

I also award CC's in Afghan Hounds and have been involved in breeding/owning 5 British Champion Afghan Hounds, and Reserve CC winners in Briards and Lhasa Apsos. I have also judged Stakes and Import Register Classes at Ch. Shows.

In any estimation, I feel it is reasonable to assume I have some idea of the requirements of the Breed, the look of early Beardies and the changes that have occurred since.

Regarding length of coat:

Since my earliest Bearded Collies, who were two generations, in breeding, from the original Bothkennar dogs and even had some gaps in their pedigrees for unknown heritage, my dogs have grown long coats.

This coat was never achieved by special grooming and my dogs have always run free on all terrain and done all sorts of normal, doggy things such as dragging through brambles and hedges. I have always expected my Beardies to live long, happy, healthy, non-veterinary intervened lives.

I have never believed in very frequent or unusually careful grooming.

My dogs just grew longish coats. The three with the longest coats were Ch. Mignonette (1972) (who was largely original Bothkennar breeding), Bilberry Magic of Orora (1972) (bought from a Scottish farmer) and her son Ch. Huckleberry (1975).

LENGTH of coat is not the main change to Bearded Collie coat over the years.

The change has been in **TYPE** and **DENSITY** of coat. The current coats are not as coarse and contain a **FAR greater density of hairs**, both over and under coat hairs.

In addition there is more artificial shaping, trimming and straightening than is desirable, according to the standard.

Focusing on LENGTH of coat will encourage trimming.

If the Kennel Club wishes to get Bearded Collies back to looking like their ancestors, they need to put DENSITY of coat on the watch list and mention the unsuitability of TRIMMING and SHAPING coats. I am uncertain how this can be done fairly as judges sometimes incorrectly believe dogs are trimmed. I do not trim for example but have been accused of this, by people who do not understand the differing coat patterns in the breed.

Regarding Length of Leg:

It Baffles me as to why this has been highlighted.

There is a current trend in the Breed of an unsuitable and untypical degree of legginess and shortness of back. Some Beardie males are nearer to Briard in proportion and type.

It MUST be fairly obvious that, in a Breed which is longer than it is high, with a ratio of 5:4, if the dog is in the correct proportion, moves correctly, is the correct size and is not deformed, IT IS CONSTRUCTIONALLY IMPOSSIBLE THAT IT HAS LEGS THAT ARE TOO SHORT.

There is certainly an optical illusion that can be created, in that the legs LOOK shorter than they actually are, with certain markings and/or the fluffy coat of youngsters. However, if one has the basic ability to assess actual, overall, coatless proportion, this optical illusion can be overcome. In fact, only upright upper arm, incorrect proportion or size will give a dog more length of leg.

Calling for more length of leg will encourage the following:

Upright Upper arms

Incorrect length to height proportion

A move away from the original proportion of the Bearded Collie

Increase in size

Trimming of the coat

Health Problems that DO EXIST and that a Judge COULD See:

Bearded Collies do have some significant health issues.

TEETH

Faulty mouths have often been overlooked by All Breed judges. It would therefore be of benefit to the Breed if you would concentrate on this serious health issue.

Bearded Collies are prone to weak and narrow under jaws. Unlike coats and legs, this DOES represent a health issue. Canine teeth are often, especially on young stock, set too narrow and upright on the bottom jaw so that they jut into the top gums or even palate. I think we can safely say that this IS unsuitable and that this IS a health issue.

There is a Veterinary Surgeon in the UK who will, and does, practice orthodontic treatment to correct this deformity.

Dogs with this deformity are shown and win, with it corrected and without. I first withheld prize cards for this deformity in 1989. The problem has become considerably worse over the years.

Perhaps the Kennel Club would like to think about Mouth Defects as a **genuine area of health concern**.

PIGMENTATION:

Some breeding lines are considered 'slow in pigment'.

It seems to be considered reasonable amongst some breeders to wait for the pigmentation to come in and then breed from the dog.

The result is that progeny are produced which NEVER achieve full pigmentation.

I was unlucky enough to produce one of these dogs. He had missing pigment on his nose. He developed Collie nose and went through great distress and pain due to it. I believe the lack of pigment contributed to his inability to withstand sunlight. He was produced by, unknowingly, using to a dog who carried the lack of pigmentation. We, obviously, did not breed on down that line.

Constructional Issues:

If the Kennel Club wishes to concentrate on construction there are a variety of anomalies from which they might like to protect the Breed:

DISASSOCIATED FRONT TO HIND ANGULATION
ROUNDED RIBCAGES
SHORT BACKS
HIGH SET TAILS
KICKING UP OF REAR FEET ON THE MOVE

All of the above are current problems in the Breed. The majority of Breed specialists would like to see All Breed judges penalise these faults.

Perhaps the Kennel Club would like to consider the above points.

It is only fair to say that I have a judging appointment at Birmingham City in August of this year and one in The Czech Republic. I should mention to you that, if you decide to place length of leg on your concern list, I will honestly have to question my ability to judge under KC rules and regulations as this would seriously compromise my ability to make informed and correct decisions on placements.

It should be remembered that NONE of the long-standing and knowledgeable All Breed Judges who have known and judged the Bearded Collie through its history are alive today. They NEVER looked for a leggy Beardie in their placings.

Lastly, please provide me with the evidence/research you are using to prove that a typical length to height proportion and length of coat represents a health risk to my Breed.

Yours faithfully, (for now)

Bryony Harcourt-Brown