

## Judging the Cardigan Welsh Corgi

by C. Patrick Ormos, USA

Given that we only have about 2 1/2 minutes in North America under our current rules to evaluate each dog in front of us, what can we possibly hope to do?

Well - I don't really believe it's all that hopeless. But, our 2 1/2 minute deadline does underline the absolute primacy of home work. If we don't know, ahead of time, what we are looking for, then it is impossible to do a decent job in 2 1/2 minutes! I do a much more efficient and competent job with the breeds I know thoroughly, than with the breeds I only know partially. Homework counts - a great deal!

So, what would this homework entail? First, a thorough knowledge of the standard. What does the standard actually say versus what do I think it says, or should say. I find it helpful to also compare the AKC standard to the UK standard (which is also the FCI standard) simply so that I have a better understanding of the breed from a world-wide perspective. Note that this would prove to be very complicated in some other breeds where breed type has diverged widely. However, this is not the case with Cardigans. A good Cardigan is a good Cardigan anywhere in the world.

Second, I would prepare my eye to quickly visualize and see breed type. The use of photographs, old movies, advertisements (with a grain of salt, of course), etc. are all helpful in doing this. Attendance at specialties, especially Nationals, is also of great importance.

Third, I would go through the standard and summarize its most important characteristics. If I were taking notes, what would I want to underline and highlight? I always pay careful attention to proportions, as those are an important clue to breed type in any breed. Length to height? Where measured? Depth of chest? Elbow placement on the chest, under the chest, at the edge of the chest, etc.? Is this a square breed, a rectangular breed? What does the front/rear assembly look like? Head and expression? I occasionally make notes on the standard as to what I find really important. I always underline disqualifications.

Fourth, I try to go back and review the breed in my memory. What are the good points of the breed overall, what is the "drag" of the breed? What do I need to look for?

Given all that homework, now I am ready to begin judging,

- (1) The first thing I do is take a good look at all the dogs in the ring. This visual evaluation will tell me a great deal about both type and basic structure.

Overall, how does this class rank? Is it a class of really good dogs, mediocre dogs, mixed?

Does the individual dog have correct breed type? Is it lacking in breed type? What is the height to length ratio? Is the dog stuffy? Does it carry a good length of neck? What does the front look like? How is the rear? Is the head correct? Without touching the dog I can make a number of preliminary judgements.

The Cardigan Welsh Corgi should be long in relationship to its height. It should have a long, arched neck, a strong head with large ears, a proper Cardigan Welsh Corgi front, short hocks with plenty of angulation culminating in a fox-like tail.

- (2) Then I take them around once or twice, depending on the size of the ring. In a large class I will begin to place them in my head at this point. If necessary I will divide the class before I take them around. Then I will go to the individual examination.

As they go around I look for major things:

- A. front extension
- B. rear follow-through & under reach
- C. top line movement
- D. coordination

The Cardigan Welsh Corgi is a herding dog. Therefore it must move correctly: fluidly with power. A bouncing herding dog will tire quickly. A short-stepping stiff herding dog will tire quickly. It is imperative to remember that this dog has a function! The movement of the front should reach out strongly at full extension, as close to the ground as possible. The rear push should culminate in a full extension rearward. Many Cardigan Welsh Corgi do not extend much past the tail set. This is incorrect. The drive will be transmitted forwards through a strong, yet resilient, back. A Cardigan Welsh Corgi which bounces as it goes around the ring is incorrect.

(3)

Individual examination is done on a table. Not because this is a dainty little toy - but because it is much easier on the judge's back! I start once again by taking a good look at the over all dog. Then, I begin at the head. Please approach this breed from the front and not from the side. A proper evaluation of the Cardigan Welsh Corgi head piece and expression is not possible from the side view alone. What does it look like from the front? Bright eyes, nice big ears with rounded tips - can I run a triangle through middle of eyes to just inside the tip of the ear? Is the skull flat between the ears? Is there a domed eye ridge? Is it a good bite? I then measure the head proportions using my fingers.

The standard calls for a ratio of 3 (muzzle) to 5 (skull). This is measured from the occiput to the stop and from the stop to the nose tip. I find this a little difficult to do since the "stop" is a subjective description. However, from occiput to inside corner of the eye (you can feel a little indentation in the upper inside corner called the supra-orbital notch) is approximately equal to the distance from the notch to the nose. (note: the total head length will usually also equal the shoulder blade

I then move my hands down the legs. Does the elbow fit cleanly? Does the radius/ulna have a definite curve to it? Is the foot straight ahead, does it point out slightly, or is it east and west? What shape is the foot? A correct Cardigan Welsh Corgi foot is large and rounded, not oval. Then I begin to go down the ribs. What kind of ribbing does the dog have, flat, round, oval,

pear shaped? It should be pear shaped. How's the topline? Note that the topline should be level, and parallel to the plane of the table. The Cardigan Welsh Corgi should NOT be high in the rear. Feel the coat as you pass your hands down the body, check the undercoat, skin color, and length of the loin. A long, weak loin is incorrect.

How does the rear assembly fit together? Once again, the length of the pelvis and the femur should be equal and about the same as the shoulder blade. The thighs should be broad and well-muscled. The hocks should be short and strong, and perpendicular to the table.

As we come around to the rear, are the hocks parallel? Check the tail set - is it correct, i.e. just below the topline? To check this I hold the tail out level and put my thumb where the tail set should be. It should fit in there quite nicely. There will be a gradually falling line from the topline down through the croup and tailset. Is tail length adequate? (at least to hock)

(4) All this time we have also been judging temperament. How has the dog been reacting to our examination? How will he react on the floor? The Cardigan Welsh Corgi is a strong, solid-tempered breed. Shyness or snappiness is not correct.

(5) Gaiting: whatever pattern you use the Cardigan Welsh Corgi should tend towards single tracking as speed increases. Legs and feet should move in straight lines - though not parallel coming and going. There should be purposeful strength and power during movement. The legs should not hitch or pause during movement, nor cross over, nor have any wasted motion. Topline will be level during motion with some flexibility. A dog which bounces up and down noticeably is incorrect. The tail should stream out behind the dog, not curled up over the back, nor be tucked up underneath the dog. An excited dog, especially if it is a young male in the ring with other males, will carry the tail high, i.e. above the line of the back. However, it should not be curled over the back, giving the impression of a teapot handle. Neck and head should be slightly higher than the topline at full extension.

In sum, the Cardigan Welsh Corgi is evaluated in terms of type, temperament, structure, and movement. The Cardigan Welsh Corgi is a self-confident little dog. Some "stand-offishness" is tolerated, but shyness or viciousness is not acceptable. His structure is that of a herding dog. He

should be built in such a way as to optimize gaiting and flexibility. Movement should be fluid and powerful.

Type is the essence of a breed. The Cardigan Welsh Corgi should exhibit long, flowing curves and lines with no harsh angles, giving an impression of a long, low, powerful dog with elegance and style. A chunky Cardigan Welsh Corgi is not typey. A stuffy Cardigan Welsh Corgi is not typey. A coarse or over-refined Cardigan Welsh Corgi is not typey. A Cardigan Welsh Corgi which looks like a Pembroke Welsh Corgi is not typey. The two breeds should never be confused.

A note about color. There are no color preferences in this breed! Some judges and some breeders have unfortunately used color as a means of differentiating the Cardigan Welsh Corgi and the Pembroke Welsh Corgi, thus preferring brindles and blues, and inappropriately penalizing reds and tri's. This is completely wrong! A good Cardigan Welsh Corgi is a Cardigan Welsh Corgi regardless of color.

Put a good Cardigan Welsh Corgi against a good Pembroke Welsh Corgi. The differences are obvious. The heads are very different. The front and rears are very different. The Cardigan Welsh Corgi is much bigger than the Pembroke Welsh Corgi. The similarity in name does not denote any similarity in breed. Like all achondroplastic dogs they share some similarity . . . but no more than a Skye Terrier does with a Dandie Dinmont Terrier.