

Judging the Cardigan

by Edweena "Teddy" McDowell

"Keep in mind this agile dwarf dog IS CAPABLE OF BOTH SPEED AND ENDURANCE"

The Cardigan outline/silhouette is breed specific. I like to line the dogs along one side of the ring and step back about twenty feet, more if there is room, to evaluate their silhouette. I am looking for the three LS: Low, Long and Level. Low to the ground, length of body L:H=1:8:1 (prosternum to rear of hip) and level top line. While the dogs are lined up, I try to find the best dog that reflects the general appearance as stated in the standard.

Under GENERAL APPEARANCE the standard says, "Low set with moderately heavy bone and deep chest. Silhouette is to be long in proportion to height, culminating in a low tail set. The tail should have a fox-like brush appearance."

I will let the dogs move once around the ring and have the first handler set his dog on the table. I wait on the side of the table (checking flow of neck, top-line, soft curve of the croup and underline) until the handler is ready for my exam

As I approach from the front of the dog, I am looking for the egg-shaped front. I want to see a moderately broad chest tapering to a deep brisket well let down between the forelegs. I want to be able to cup my hand around the brisket. I will make a fist and place it under the prosternum. If I am unable to get my fist (I have a petite hand) under him, the dog's station (10.5 - 12.5" at the withers) is too short. The Cardigan's chest has to be able to clear rugged rocky ground without bumping his keel. At the same time I look to see if his feet turn out slightly. A lot of the Cardigan's weight is in the front and on top of his shoulders, his feet may turn out up to 30 degrees (eleven o'clock to one o'clock) to balance his front end assembly. They are well rounded and not splayed. If he has a good front wrap, his wrist will be somewhat closer together than his elbows.

I then move to the head piece. The skull is wide and flat tapering towards the eyes. The cheeks are flat with some chiseling under the eye and where the cheek meets the fore face. The ratio of muzzle to skull should be 3:5. Muzzle and skull are parallel. The Cardigan's muzzle is rounded but not blunt, tapered but not pointed. There is a definite but moderate stop. The eyes are medium to large with dark rims. They are widely set and the color should be in harmony with his coat. The Standard states a scissors bite is preferred. Overshot, undershot or wry bites are serious faults. I like to find a good, well filled-in under jaw. Then I look for one of the hallmarks of the breed: those truly wonderful BIG ears! Slightly rounded at the tip, good strong leather, moderately wide at the base and in proportion to the size of the dog. The ears are always carried erect (exception when moving).

Now it is time to go to the side of the table. While placing my hand at the top of the Cardigan's head, I let my hand go down the gentle curve of the neck past the shoulders and down the back. I want to feel curves and more curves. Next, I go back to the shoulder and feel the layback. Is it well set on? Does it fit into his strong shoulder? Do the elbows fit snug against the ribs? Does the top of the withers line up with the elbows and down to the back of the front foot? Is the prosternum prominent? Is the top line level? Does the length

of this dog come from the rib cage or is his loin too long? The loin should be no longer than 3 - 3½". Unprotected organs can easily get damaged from a kick. Does he have a moderate tuck up with a well-defined waist? Are the hindquarters muscled and strong but slightly less wide than the shoulders? Is there a good turn of stifle? Do his hind feet have a slight oval-like appearance? I really want to check the croup for a slight downward slope to the tail set. The set should be low on the body line and the tail should reach to the hock. Before I let the dog off the table I feel his coat. It should be medium length, doubled (weather-resistant) and dense. I do not care for an overly groomed/trimmed dog. The standard says "Trimming is not allowed except to tidy the feet and, if desired, remove whiskers." The coat should lay flat. Too many dogs are being shown with coats blown open. The coat should be smooth.

The Cardigan should move effortlessly. Viewed from the front, he inclines slightly inward to compensate for his short legs. He should not elbow out nor should he appear too close or wide. The side gate should be smooth and flowing with good reach and drive. He should be able to hold his top line and be free from choppiness. Going away, he should reach well under himself with powerful drive, neither too close nor too wide. Remember, the Cardigan will tend to converge as he increases his speed. Keep in mind this agile dwarf dog is capable of both speed and endurance. He is intelligent, quick thinking and a clown.

Authors Personal Note: I prefer to think he is the SMARTEST herding dog in the group.