

Judging The Border Terrier

By Robert Naun

Many judges have difficulty in judging the Border Terrier because of the emphasis on function as a working terrier. Most terrier standards put more emphasis upon appearances, with the exception of the Parson Russell Terrier.

In Britain in the earliest written standard of the breed we have (1920), and in the American standard in the early 1940's, this emphasis was in the Border Terrier standard. Dr. Merritt Pope, the prime mover in working towards recognition of the breed in the US and his friend

the perfect working terrier in a breed standard. They abhorred the fancy terriers they were seeing in the show ring.

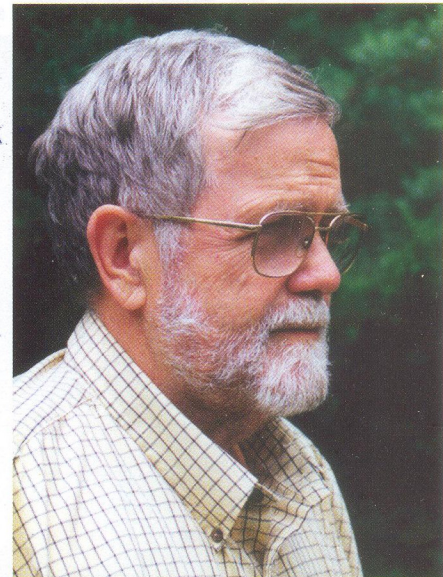
The descriptive terms they used to describe the Border Terrier are few in number. They wanted a head that resembled that of an otter, in particular a river otter head. They wanted a dog that would be spannable by a man's hands, a method used by old time hunters to evaluate the ability of a dog to go to ground. They consistently talked about the Borders' ability to run with horses and to get along with hounds. Given this, the Border should not spar.

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Mr. McBain, were disturbed by changes made to the Scottish Terrier standard for the purpose of improving its chances for winning in the show ring. For Dr. Pope a well-designed and functional machine was a beautiful thing to observe, and they wanted to apply this concept to the functional purposefulness of a terrier. He and his committee were attempting to design

For working terriers the ribs should not be over sprung. They should have ribs well back with a flexible loin which would allow the terrier to turn around more easily when down the hole after the fox, this also helps to give more stamina to a dog doing a days' work.

Finally, they wanted a double-coated dog that could work under the hard con-



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ditions of the English/Scottish border country, and not a fancy smooth coated terrier.

When beginning to judge the Border Terrier in the show ring, the judge should observe the Border outline. It is on the table that the judge can begin to evaluate the functioning ability of the Border to work. Approaching from the front the judge should be looking for shoulders that are smooth and relatively narrow. The space between the legs should not be narrower than that of the fox terrier “approximately 3 inches or 3 finger” and no larger than 4 inches (approximately four fingers). The Border's legs should be straight and not turned in or out. He should not be loaded in shoulders, which would interfere with his going to ground.

Looking at the head itself, there should be very little



1970 Master of Hounds, Border Otterhounds



Border Head

stop with proportions of 2 to 1 from the occiput to stop with the muzzle one third to tip. It is moderately broad and flat with plenty of width between the eyes and the ears and a slight, moderately broad slope at the stop rather than a pronounced indentation. The muzzle is short and well filled. The ears should be in proportion to the head, v-shaped and moderately thick with dark ears preferred. (Some judges cover the ears when examining the head to get a better view of an otter like head.) The ear breaks below the level of skull and should be in proportion to the head.

The Border's eyes are dark and moderate in size with fill under the eyes. Its strong masseter muscles gave the Border a cheeky appearance. Too short a muzzle will produce bulging eye a la a Brussels Griffon. The Border's nose is black and of a good size. The Border's teeth have a scissors bite with no deviation allowed, large for the size of the dog.

The Border Terrier neck is well set on and long enough to allow the freedom

of head movement. The Border Terrier shoulder blades are long and well laid back with the length of the shoulder blade and upper arm being approximately equal and converging at the withers. The space between the forelegs is equal at the elbows and at the feet. The length and angulation of the shoulder and upper arm results in the legs being set further back and under the withers rather than as in the Fox Terrier – giving the Border a somewhat chesty look when viewed from the side. Unlike the Fox Terrier and other fancy terrier breeds, the Border has a somewhat strait underline.

To properly evaluate a terriers' abil-

ity to go to ground, it must be spannable. To span a terrier a judge must place his hands behind the elbows, raising only the front from the table, compressing the chest gently. Ideally, his thumbs should meet at the spine and his fingers should meet under the terrier.

Dr. Pope called the Border "the smallest tall long-legged terrier". This was necessary for his working in the border between England and Scotland in order to be able to keep up with the horse and the hounds over rough ground. A short legged, over sprung, wide, deep chested Border would not be able to do the work he was bred to do. Border dogs should weigh 13-15.5 pounds, bitches 11.5-14 pounds in hardworking condition. It is rare now, in

the era of couch potatoes and expensive dog foods, to find a Border in the hardworking condition previously seen in the working terriers in the Border country. Proportions should be the height at the withers is slightly greater than the dis-



tance from the withers to the base of the tail, by about 1-1.5 inches.

The same rough terrain and climate requires a double coat for protection on the job. The tweedy broken coat is preferred. A lack of undercoat must be faulted. The coat should be hard and wiry. There must be evidence of a double coat. If there is no evidence, it must be assumed it does not exist. Borders should never be overly trimmed to resemble other breeds. Excessive grooming should be penalized.

A useful tool for the working Border is his tail, shaped like a carrot, thick at base and tapering to a point. It is often used by the huntsman to pull the Border out of the foxhole. Ideally it comes off the back at a forty-five degree angle, but upright, or level carriage, is also acceptable, but never over the back.

The topline of the Border is not mentioned in the standard. The original drafts of the standard spoke about a slight rise

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Br. & Am. Ch. Workmore Waggoner, WC, a red Border Terrier, winner of 5 National Specialties over 5 years.

over the loin. The drafters feared that judges would exaggerate this phrase. The prohibition of a dip behind the withers was the only comment put in the standard about the topline.

The Border is the only terrier that has a loose and thick fitting skin (hide or pelt). This is crucial because it protects the dog from injury inflicted by his quarry, other dogs or underbrush. The judge should not hesitate to grasp a handful of skin in back of the shoulders and lift it.

The Border's rear is muscular, thighs long, stifles well bent and hocks well let down. Rear angulation should be complementary to that of the front.

The Border Terrier coat can come in red, grizzle and tan, blue and tan and wheaten. None are preferred as function is not affected, however altering coat color and trimming with scissors are not appropriate for a working terrier. ■



Checking the hide



Spanning the Border Terrier