

Shetland Sheepdog



HEAD

Virtues and Faults



The Shetland Sheepdog in the breed standard under General Appearance describes:

“Small, long haired, working dog of great beauty, free from cloddiness and coarseness, action lithe and graceful. Outline symmetrical so that no part appears out of proportion to whole. Abundant coat, mane and frill, shapeliness of head and sweetness of expression combine to present the ideal.”



In the pre 1987 breed standard the following words were also used:

“that almost indefinable look of sweet, alert, gentle intelligence.”

Those words are still held very dear to many of us long term Sheltie Breeders today.

The Shetland Sheepdog in the breed standard under Head and Skull describes:

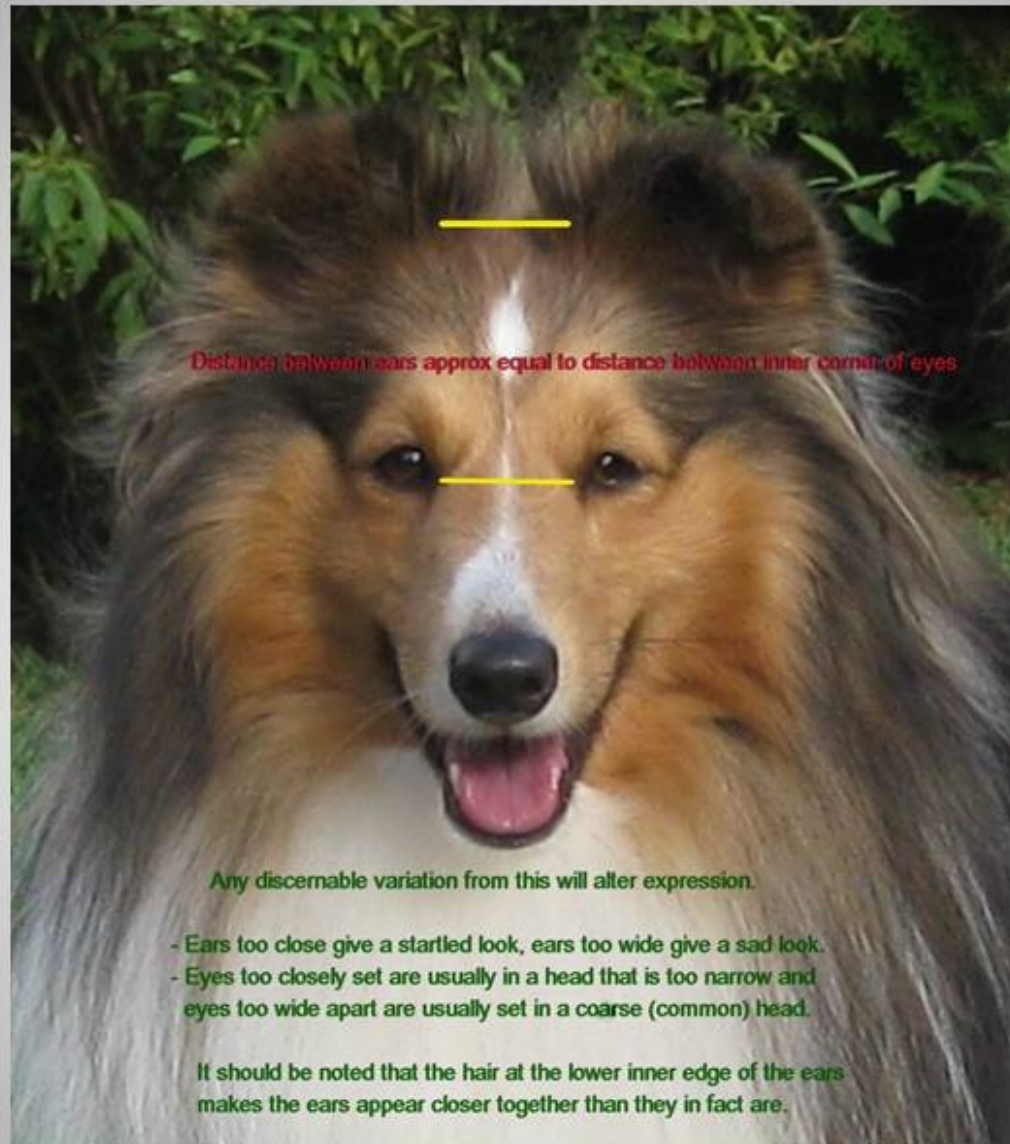
“Head refined and elegant with no exaggerations: when viewed from top or side a long, blunt wedge, tapering from ear to nose. Width and depth of skull in proportion to length of skull and muzzle. Whole to be considered in connection with size of dog. Skull flat, moderately wide between ears, with no prominence of occipital bone. Cheeks flat, merging smoothly into well rounded muzzle. Skull and muzzle of equal length, dividing point inner corner of eye. Topline of skull parallel to topline of muzzle, with slight but definite stop. Nose, lips and eye rims black. The characteristic expression is obtained by the perfect balance and combination of skull and foreface, shape, colour and placement of eyes, correct position and carriage of ears.”



When looking at a Sheltie head it should be apparent that the head and ears should fit within an imaginary isosceles triangle, **never** an equilateral triangle. The head is a long, blunt wedge shape!



The side view of the head should also portray a long blunt wedge shape, muzzle and skull of equal length. The inner corner of the eye being the midpoint of the head.



Distance between ears approx equal to distance between inner cornea of eyes

Any discernable variation from this will alter expression.

- Ears too close give a startled look, ears too wide give a sad look.
- Eyes too closely set are usually in a head that is too narrow and eyes too wide apart are usually set in a coarse (common) head.

It should be noted that the hair at the lower inner edge of the ears makes the ears appear closer together than they in fact are.



While this head and ears has some desired qualities, the wide ear set throws out the balance required. Essentially the head and ears would fit within an equilateral triangle.



This profile displays few desirable qualities. Often referred to as an 'old fashioned' head, the stop is too deep, eyes set straight in the head and skull is too deep through at backskull. There is lack of finish to the underjaw, the lips do not meet tightly.

Incorrect head types



The Shetland Sheepdog in the breed standard under Eyes describes:

"Medium size obliquely set, almond shape. Dark brown except in the case of merles, where one or both may be blue or blue flecked."





This blue merle has correct size, colour, shaped and set eyes. Only in a blue merle are blue or blue speckled/merled eyes allowed. Blue merles may also have brown eyes or a combination of any accepted colours listed here.

Correct Eyes



Incorrect Eyes



Too small



Too large,
too round



Too small, too wide set



Too light in colour



Too round



Too small

The Shetland Sheepdog in the breed standard under Ears describes:

“Small, moderately wide at base, placed fairly close together on top of skull. In repose, thrown back; when alert brought forward and carried semi-erect with tips falling forward.”



Approx 1/3 the ear length should fall forward forming the tip. The tip should face forward and never appear folded.

Correct Ears



Incorrect Ears



The Shetland Sheepdog in the breed standard under Mouth describes:

"Jaws level, clean, strong with a well-developed underjaw. Lips tight. Teeth-sound with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. A full complement of 42 properly placed teeth highly desired."



Correct lips and jaws

Incorrect lips and jaws



Lips not meeting, teeth showing



Working dogs of great beauty!



Sincere thanks to all the dedicated Sheltie breeders that gave permission to use photos of their dogs.

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The information provided in this presentation is for educational purpose and in the hope that such an important breed hallmark is recognised and perpetuated in future generations.

Deirdre Crofts – Deerod Shetland Sheepdogs - Australia

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