

· BREED PRIORITIES ·

BEDLINGTON TERRIER



BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

LEFT:

CH. JOLINES BEAU BRUMMELL

Bred by Joe & Patricia Elder

Owned by Joe & Pauline Waterman

This article is not intended to promote fault or part judging. Nor is it to imply that any characteristic called for in the standard is unimportant. Judging, and breeding, is about prioritizing and about what the judge or breeder will forgive. Discussing priorities can help in learning how to better evaluate a breed.

“Is that a lamb?” Bedlington Terrier fanciers are probably as cordially sick of hearing that as you are about the clichés about your breed. With its shape, size, and coat, its appearance is unique among terriers, and among most other breeds too, sharing its curves with the Whippet.

It was developed in northern England from terrier breeds in the area plus several other breeds as well. The Bedlington claims the oldest non-broken pedigree going back to 1782. The breed excelled at hunting and could chase down game as well as go to ground and even work in water. The strain of long-legged terriers owned by Squire Trevelyan became the Bedlington breed, named after the town. Interestingly, a short-legged early version of these dogs became the Dandie Dinmont Terrier.

Thirty Bedlington Terrier experts were invited to take a survey on their breed to identify the priorities when evaluating breeding stock. Twenty-one agreed to participate, and fourteen sent completed surveys. The contributing experts have been in the breed for thirty-nine years on average, with several having more than fifty years involvement. Those who judge have been doing so for nearly twenty years on average and have officiated

at their national and other breed specialties.

Bedlington Terrier Virtues

The experts ranked a list of sixteen characteristics taken from the Bedlington Terrier AKC standard based on how relatively important each is when evaluating an individual in conformation competition. Below is the list, in sequence, by the average of the experts' rankings, with one being the most important.

1. Head narrow, deep, rounded, shorter in skull, longer in jaw
2. Back has good natural arch over the loin, definite tuck-up
3. Body slightly greater in length than height
4. Graceful, lithe
4. (tie) Chest deep, flat-ribbed
6. Forelegs straight, wider apart at chest than at feet
7. Neck long, tapering
8. Unique lightness of movement
9. Eyes almond-shaped, small, bright, well sunk, set oblique, fairly high
10. No stop, unbroken line from crown to nose

11. Tail set low, scimitar-shaped, thick at root, tapering to a point
12. Long hare feet with thick, well-closed-up, smooth pads
13. Ears triangular, rounded tips, set low, hanging flat, 3" at greatest width
14. Aroused, particularly alert, full of immense energy and courage
15. Coat mixture of hard and soft hair, crisp, not wiry, having a tendency to curl
16. Darker body pigmentation of all colors

Nine of the virtues garnered majority agreement and another three had half agreeing; remember that majorities are a bit harder to get with an even number of participants. Twelve of the experts concurred on "Back has good natural arch over the loin, definite tuck-up" (2nd) and "Darker body pigmentation of all colors" (16th). One fewer had "Head narrow, deep, rounded, shorter in skull, longer in jaw" (1st) in the top quartile.

Nine experts similarly valued "Tail set low, scimitar-shaped, thick at root, tapering to a point" (11th) and "Coat mixture of hard and soft hair, crisp, not wiry, having a tendency to curl" (15th). "Tail" (11th) was 11–14 for the bigger group, but four experts putting it around the middle improved its relative rank.

The smallest majorities agreed on "Neck long, tapering" (7th), "Eyes almond-shaped, small, bright, well sunk, set oblique, fairly high" (9th), "Long hare feet with thick, well-closed-up, smooth pads" (12th), and "Aroused, particularly alert, full of immense energy and courage" (14th). "Neck" (7th) was middling for eight, but five had it 4–6. "Eyes" (9th) was 4–7 on eight surveys, but 11–14 on another five. Eight ranked "Hare feet" (12th) 12–15, but four were closer to midpoint. "Temperament" (14th) was in the bottom three placements for the majority with another three ranking it eleventh. When temperament isn't a problem, it is often ranked lower in the Virtues list.

Half the group agreed on "Chest deep, flat-ribbed" (tied at 4th), "Forelegs straight, wider apart at chest than at feet" (6th), and "Ears triangular, rounded tips, set low, hanging flat, 3" at greatest width" (13th). "Chest" (tied at 4th) was ranked 4–7 by half, with another four between 8–10. "Ears" (13th) was in the bottom quartile on half the surveys, and the second quartile on four.

Most of the remaining virtues had split opinions as well. Six experts put "Body slightly greater in length than height" (3rd) in the top quartile, with another six 6–9. Six of the group ranked "Graceful, lithe" (tied at 4th) first, but five had it in the third quartile. "Unique lightness of movement" (8th) was important (2–5) for five, but less so (7–10) for another five. "No stop, unbroken line from crown to nose" (10th) ranked 7–10 on six surveys, with the rest all over.

Additional input would break the tie at fourth. It might also affect "Longer than tall" (3rd) whose average was very close to the two at four.

The biggest majorities tend to be with those features valued the most or the least. But sometime the items in the bottom half of the list manage to get more majorities. This may be that more agree on what is lower in importance, but feel strongly about several different characteristics that are quite important but not at the

top. Those characteristics then jockey for positions in the list.

Bedlington Terrier Faults

The survey also included a list of sixteen faults taken from or derived from the Bedlington Terrier standard for the experts to prioritize based on how serious each issue is when evaluating dogs. The faults are listed below in sequence by the average of the experts' ranks, with 1 being the biggest problem.

1. Gait stilted or hackneyed
2. Shelly or coarse
3. Shoulders not flat or sloping or with excessive musculature
4. Bite not level or scissors
4. (tie) (Gait) Cross, weave, or paddle
6. Chest not deep
7. Head with cheekiness
8. Hind legs not longer than forelegs
9. Stifles not well-angulated
10. Lacking well-muscled quarters
11. Tail carried over back or tight to underbody
12. Ears not set on low
13. Nostrils not large or well-defined
14. Dogs under 16" or over 17½"; bitches under 15" or over 16½"
15. Topknot of adults not lighter than body color
16. Wiry coat

The biggest majorities, eleven, agreed on "Topknot of adults not lighter than body color" (15th) and "Wiry coat" (16th), with both in the last three positions. Ten of the group similarly valued "Shoulders not flat or sloping or with excessive musculature" (3rd), "Stifles not well-angulated" (9th), "Nostrils not large or well-defined" (13th), and "Dogs under 16" or over 17½"; bitches under 15" or over 16½" (14th).

The smallest majority concurred on "Gait stilted or hackneyed" (1st) and "Tail carried over back or tight to underbody" (11th). "Tail" (11th) was 11–13 for eight, but four ranked it 3–6, putting it higher in the list.

"(Gait) Cross, weave, or paddle" (tied at 4th) and "Ears not set on low" (12th) had half in agreement. "Bad gait (up and back)" (tied at 4th) was midpoint on seven surveys, but five ranked it first or second. The same bigger number had "Ears not set low" (12th) less serious (10–13), but four had it more of a problem (6–9).

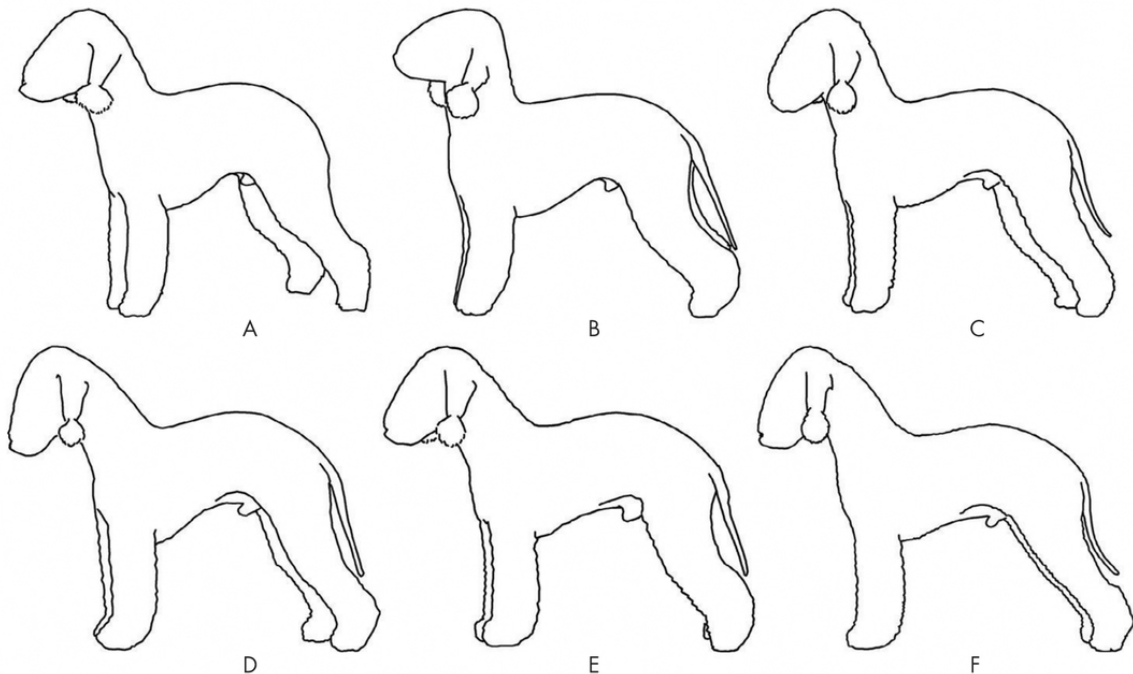
Several faults managed a plurality of six agreeing, but with split opinions: "Shelly or coarse" (2nd), "Bite not level or scissors" (tied at 4th), "Hind legs not longer than forelegs" (8th), and "Lacking well-muscled quarters" (10th). "Shelly/coarse" was in the top quartile for six and the second quartile for five. "Bad bite" (tied for 4th) was also in the top quartile for six, but another six were in the third quartile. Six put "Rear not muscled" (10th) in the second quartile, while another four were in the third quartile. "Hind legs not longer" (8th) split three ways: six were 6–9, five were 2–5, and, three were 10–12.

"Chest not deep" (6th) also split three ways, with five in the

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Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex

DOGS



top quartile, five in the second quartile, and four in the third quartile. Five experts ranked "Head with cheekiness" (7th) as serious (1–3), but five others not so much (11–13).

Additional input should break the tie at four and could affect sixth place "Chest not deep" with an average close to the tied faults.

The group was fairly consistent when features were included on both lists. Coat and color were less important. Chest, ears, and tail were similarly positioned on both lists. Movement was higher when faulty.

Outlines

The Bedlington Terrier experts evaluated two sets of outlines, one of dogs and one of bitches, and placed them as they would a class at a dog show, and then selected Best of Breed. The outlines were made from photographs of very good to excellent Bedlingtons. They pictured real dogs, so none was perfect. The experts' placements were made based on outline alone and might well change if they could see the dogs in person, get their hands on them, and watch them move.

For the first time, two Bedlington dogs had the exact same

placement average score – dogs "C" and "E." Dog "C" was placed first more often, so he will be the dog winner. Those who chose "C" first said "slightly longer than tall, shorter hock, croup falls off nicely," "beautiful outline," "head a bit coarse, but all the parts fit," "good depth of chest, nice rise over the loin, moderate in body structure, low ear set, eye placement looks like a nice long foreface, standing up on toe," and "and well balanced (or well groomed)."

Comments on "E" included "longer than high, excellent head, enough angulation, racy outline with enough neck," "nice general dog, not underdone or overdone," and "good shoulder and rear angulation, good topline."

Bedlington "Y" had the best average and first placements among the bitches. Those who selected her said "better head," "hare feet, longer than tall, good tail set," "neck flows into laid back shoulder, good depth of chest, high tuck-up, low set ears," "best balanced," and "racier body."

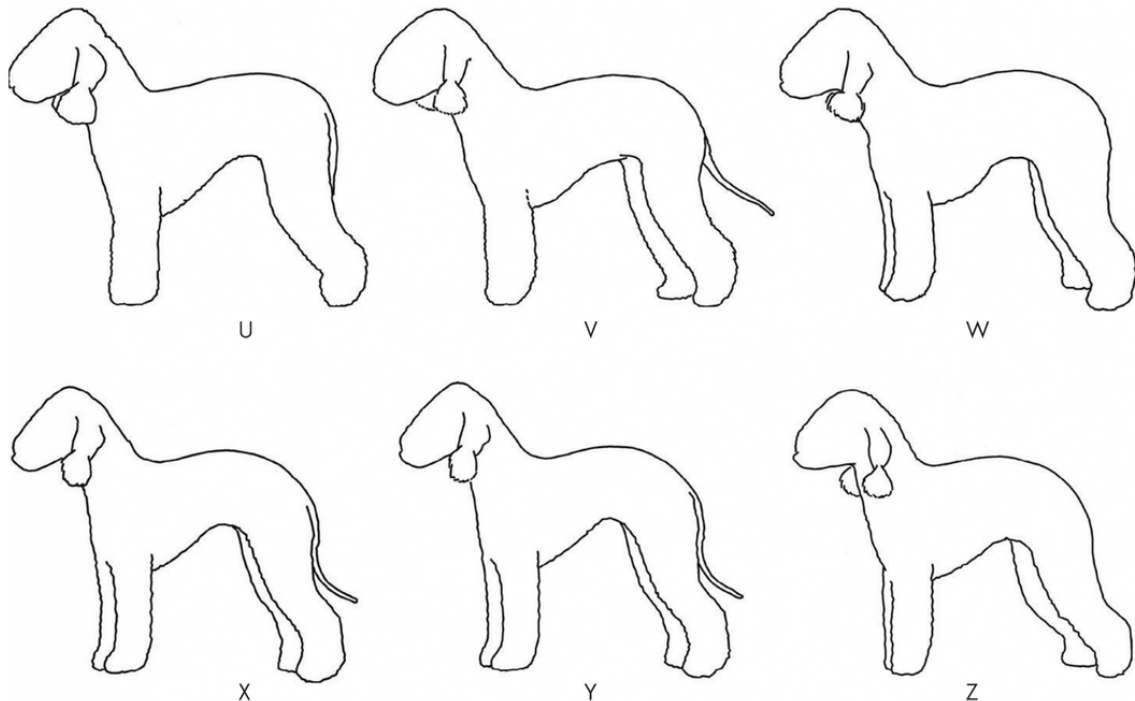
The experts commented on second place "X" as follows: "good depth of chest, high tuck-up, low set ears," and "excellent head, hare feet."

Bitch "Y" had the best placement average and the most first

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Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex

BITCHES



placements (eight) of all the outlines, but was selected Best of Breed only once. All others named Best of Breed were dogs, including "C" five times. I'm not sure if "C" is better than "Y" or if "Y" had little competition from the other bitches.

Dog "C" was placed first five times; dogs "E," "F," and "D" were placed first three times each. Bitch "Y" placed first eight times. Second place bitch "X" was first only once, but was second eight times which gave her reserve based on placement average.

Every outline was out of the ribbons at least once. Dogs "A" and "B" and bitches "U" and "Z" were not placed first by any expert.

Essential Characteristics

The survey asked the experts to list four to six characteristics that a good Bedlington Terrier must have. Movement was named most often—light, lithe, springy, covering ground efficiently, not stiff or hackneyed. Next most often named were topline and head. The topline should have a moderate rise over the loin and keep that shape while moving. The experts pointed out more details of the good head: narrow, long, lean, small eye

with fill under the eye, ear set and width, strong jaw, and longer foreface. Several of the head features were also mentioned individually. The front assembly was noted, unusual with the front legs shorter than the rear and closer together at the feet than at the elbows. Coat was also mentioned, that it should be stand-up and springy and crisp.

Additional Notes

The Bedlington experts provided some additional suggestions for students of their breed.

- This breed's front is like no other terrier. The "V" front affects its movement coming at you.
- Do not tolerate thick, dumpy specimens.
- In repose, the Bedlington is mild and gentle, until aroused.
- Look for good length of leg, good length of muzzle and head, good reach of neck.
- Remember that this breed is not sparred.
- The chest is deep with "slabby" sides. There must be room for heart and lungs.

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- The coat must stand up and feel springy; too many coats are too soft.
- The breed is designed to hunt. Canine placement affects how the dog catches and holds quarry. Misplaced canines usually accompany a weak underjaw.
- The head is of great importance. It is a head breed. Find the best head.
- The rise is over the loin; it isn't a roached or wheel back.
- Don't judge hair; judge the actual structure and movement. Movement is ground covering and has spring, not bounce.
- Correct size and refinement are critical.
- A Bedlington is a series of curves.
- Remember it is a working terrier; it doesn't work on its head. The jaw and feet are important.
- The coat should be no longer than an inch on the body. Look for dogs trimmed to be elegant, athletic, and showing off their conformation. They are not Bichon Frise.

Thanks so much to the Bedlington Terrier experts for contributing their knowledge to this project. I learn so much from each survey. Each one helps me focus on the breed's most important features; I hope others learn from them, too.