

· BREED PRIORITIES · SEALYHAM TERRIER

BY NIKKI RIGGSBEE

The Sealyham Terrier was developed in the middle of the nineteenth century by Captain John Edwards to work with his Otterhound pack. The breed derived its name from the Captain's Sealy Ham estate in southern Wales. While no records were kept, it is assumed that he used an extinct white terrier, the Dandie Dinmont Terrier, and the West Highland White Terrier, among others to build his breed. Noted for his white color, fall of hair over his face, and low slung strong body, the Sealyham is one of the more biddable terriers.

We found thirty-six Sealyham Terrier experts to invite to take a survey on their breed's priorities. Nineteen agreed initially, although one changed her mind. Prioritizing breed features can be a challenge, especially for those who are not judges. Yes, we want to focus on the whole dog. But judges, when dealing with live dogs in the ring, must put them in order by quality. They must decide whether to put the correct outline animal over one who moves better, or vice versa. Or the beautiful head over the one with a correct coat texture and color, or the reverse. These are parts of the whole dog, and it is invaluable to know which way experts lean in choices for their breeds. In the end, eleven experts submitted surveys. Those who participated average more than thirty-one years in the breed.

Sealyham Terrier Virtues

The Sealyham experts ranked a list of virtues taken from their AKC standard from most to least important. Below is the list in order by the average of the experts' placements, with one being the most important.

1. Length from withers to set-on of tail approximates height at withers
2. Action sound, strong, quick, free, true, level
2. Topline level
4. Hindquarters very powerful, protruding well behind set-on of tail
5. Shoulders well laid back and powerful
6. Body strong, short-coupled, substantial
7. Brisket deep, well let down between forelegs
8. Forelegs strong, with good bone, straight as consistent with chest well let down between them
9. Head long, broad, powerful, without coarseness
10. Coat weather-resisting, soft, dense undercoat and hard, wiry top coat
11. Neck muscular without coarseness, with good reach, refinement at throat



This discussion is not intended to promote fault or part judging. One should always evaluate a whole dog as a package. One develops and improves his picture of excellence by deciding what to emphasize for each breed. They say that evaluating dogs is a matter of what you will forgive. Having priorities can help with that process.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns? Contact AKC Judge Ms. Nikki Riggsbee at this email address: Nriggsbee@aol.com

12. Bite level or scissors
13. Feet large, compact, round with thick pads, toes well-arched, pointing straight ahead; forefeet larger
14. Eyes very dark, deeply set, fairly wide apart, medium-sized, oval, keen terrier expression
15. Ears folded level with top of head, forward edge close to cheek
16. Tail docked, carried upright

Four virtues garnered a majority of nine experts in agreement. The group picked the bottom quartile for "Tail docked, carried upright" (16th), with six ranking it sixteenth. "Feet large, compact, round with thick pads, toes well-arched, pointing straight ahead; forefeet larger" (13th) had nine opinions clustered in 12-15. "Forelegs strong, with good bone, straight as consistent with chest well let down between them" (8th) was ranked 6-9, and "Shoulders well laid back and powerful" (5th) 3-5. The unusual issue here was that three of these were not at or near the top or bottom of the lists where the biggest agreement typically is.

Three others had eight in agreement: "Hindquarters very powerful, protruding well behind set on of tail" (4th) (2-5), "Neck muscular without coarseness, with good reach, refinement at throat" (11th) (7-10), and "Eyes very dark, deeply set, fairly wide apart, medium-sized, oval, keen terrier expression" (14th) (11-15). "Neck" (11th) had three other surveys placing it between 12-15, lowering its relative rank.

"Length from withers to set-on of tail approximates height at withers" (1st) was in first or second place on seven surveys, with three others ranking it fifth or six. "Topline level" (tied at 2nd) was in the top quartile for seven, with three others at 6-7. Seven experts had "Ears folded level with top of head, forward edge close to cheek" (15th) in the bottom quartile, with the remaining four 10-12.

The smallest majorities agreed on "Action sound, strong, quick, free, true, level" (tied at 2nd) (top quartile), "Head long, broad, powerful, without coarseness" (9th) (6-9), and "Coat weather-resisting, soft, dense undercoat and hard, wiry top coat" (10th) (9-11). Three others put "Coat" (10th) 13-14.

Only three features didn't get majority opinions. "Body strong, short-coupled, substantial" (6th) was in the top three for five experts with four ranking it 5-7. "Brisket deep, well let down between forelegs" (7th) was 6-9 on five surveys, with three 11-14. A similar split had "Bite level or scissors" (12th) 11-13 for five and 6-9 for three.

Additional input would break the tie at second. "Shoulders" (5th) and "Body strong/short/substantial" (6th) had averages less than one-tenth of a point apart as did "Brisket" (7th), "Forelegs" (8th), and "Head long" (9th); so they, too, could shift relative rank.

The average of "Body short/strong/substantial" (6th) was more than two-and-a-half points from "Brisket" (7th), confirming the importance of the first six virtues. Almost two points difference between the averages of "Head long/broad" (9th) and "Coat" (10th) confirmed the relatively less importance of the bottom seven.

Sealyham Terrier Faults

The survey also asked the experts to prioritize a list sixteen faults taken from or derived from the Sealyham Terrier AKC standard. Below are the faults in sequence by the average of the experts' priorities, with 1 being the biggest problem.

1. Lacking sound, strong, quick, free action
2. Topline roached or swayed
3. Lacking extraordinary substance
3. Lacking power and determination
5. Upright or straight shoulders
6. Overshot or undershot
7. Forelegs bowed or out at elbow
8. Ribs not well-sprung
9. Cowhocks
10. Stifles not well-bent or hocks not well let down
11. Head length not roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ height or not longer than neck
12. Deviations from height & length measurements (e.g. about 10½ inches)
13. Flat feet
14. Prick, tulip, rose, or hound ears
15. Light, large or protruding eyes
16. Heavy body markings or excessive ticking

All of the experts put "Heavy body markings or excessive ticking" (16th) in the last quartile, seven placed it at the bottom. No other virtue or fault had that much agreement.

Three faults had eight experts concurring: "Upright or straight shoulders" (5th), "Cowhocks" (9th), and "Light, large or protruding eyes" (15th). "Light/large eyes" was in the bottom quartile for the majority, but another three ranked it 7-10.

Six faults had agreement on seven surveys. "Lacking sound, strong, quick, free action" (1st) was in the top quartile on seven, with five first placements, while another three were 7-10 which lowered the average. Seven put "Topline roached or swayed" (2nd) in the first quartile; the rest ranged from 5-13. "Forelegs bowed or out at elbow" (7th) was 8-1 for the majority, but the other four had it 3-5.

"Head length not roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ height or not longer than neck" (11th) was 11-14 for seven, with the others 2-9. Seven also ranked "Flat feet" (13th) and "Prick, tulip, rose, or hound ears" (14th) 12-15. "Flat feet" (13th) was 8-10 on another three surveys, while "Bad ears" (14th) were in the second quartile on another three.

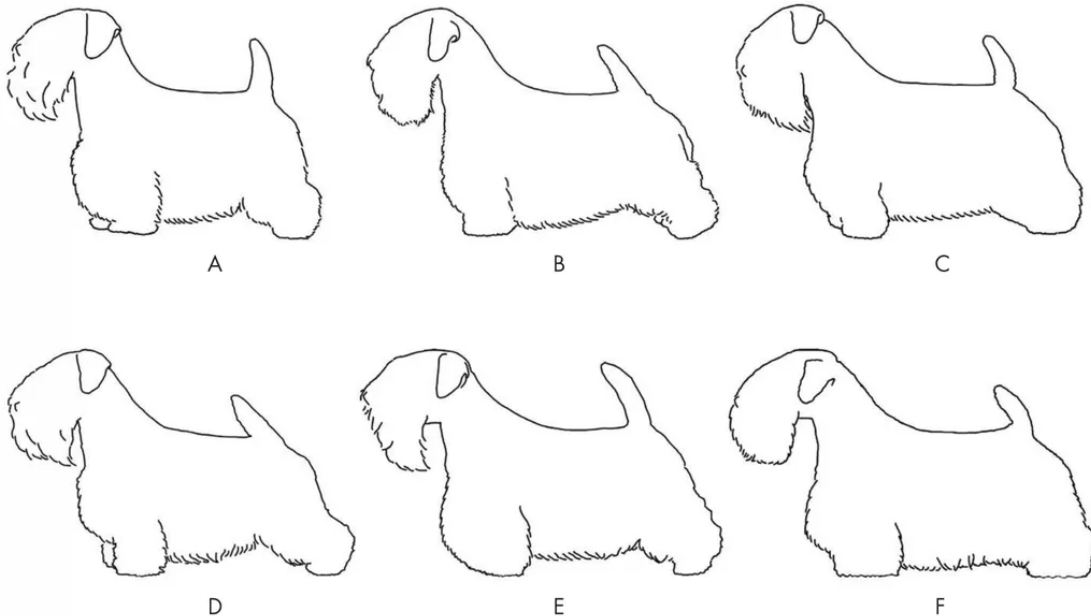
The smallest majority agreed on "Lacking extraordinary substance" and "Lacking power and determination" (both tied at 3rd) putting them both in the top quartile, with another three in the third quartile. "Ribs not well sprung" (8th) was 8-11 for six experts, but 4-7 for another five. "Deviations from height & length measurements (e.g. about 10½ inches)" (12th) was 14-6 on six experts, but three placed it first or second, improving its average.

Two faults did not have majorities. "Overshot or undershot" (6th) was 4-7 on five surveys and 1-2 on three. "Stifles not well-

Sealyham Terrier Outlines

Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex

DOGS



bent or hocks not well let down" (10th) was ranked in the second quartile by five experts, with another five putting it 11–14, moving it lower on the list.

More surveys would likely break the tie at three. "Flat feet" (13th) and "Bad ears" (14th) had averages less than one-tenth of a point apart. On the other hand, "Heavy body markings" (16th) averaged two-and-a-half points lower than "Bad eyes" (15th), confirming the markings as least important.

The eleven Sealyham experts produced more agreement than most surveys of other breeds, giving additional confidence in the results. Thirteen of the virtues and fourteen of the faults had majorities concurring on their relative value.

The experts were also fairly consistent between the two lists. They were mostly consistent on movement, topline, shoulders, forelegs, feet, eyes, and ears. They were somewhat less consistent on substance and head length. Rear was fourth as a virtue, ninth and tenth as faults. Proportion had the greatest variation—first as a virtue, but twelfth when incorrect.

Outlines

The experts were asked to judge two sets of Sealyham Terrier outlines as they would classes in a dog show and place them first

through fourth. The outlines were made from photos of good real Sealyham dogs and bitches, so none is perfect. Not all were in identical positions, and the placements might change if the experts could see them in person, get their hands on them, and watch them move.

The male with the best average placement score and tied with two other dogs on the most first placements among the dogs was Sealy "B." Those who liked him said "good proportions, some elegance, not overdone," "short back, nice shoulder layback, tight elbows, beautiful head silhouette," and "very good proportions, balanced, attractive, elegant, well-set neck, lovely topline, high-set tail with well constructed rear, balanced head, excellent ear placement."

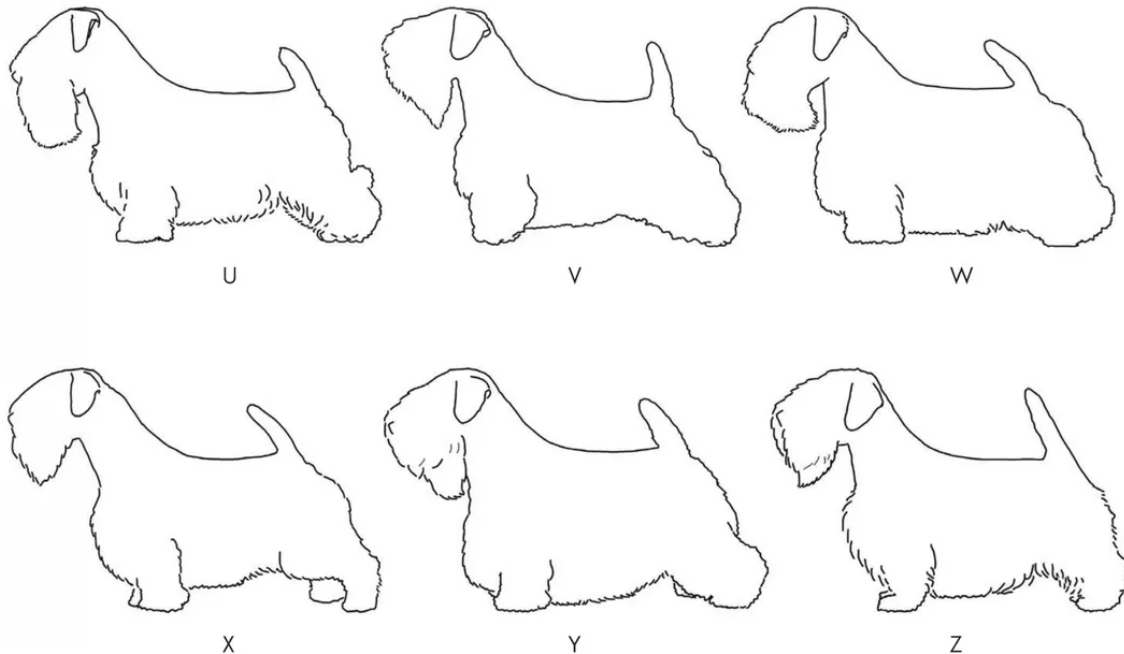
The second-best male in average placement score and tied for the most first placements among the dogs was Sealy "F." Comments on him included "appears to have correct proportions (ground to withers = withers to tail set, neck 2/3, head 3/4)," "balance, nice head, correct shoulder, forechest, tail set and rear shelf, low to the ground," and "balance, head, shoulders, layback, and forechest."

The bitch with the most first placements and best average placement score was Sealy "Y." Those who placed her first noted "bitches lacking overall compared to dog silhouettes," "best

Sealyham Terrier Outlines

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BITCHES



overall look," "strong bitch, very nice outline and proportions, balanced, very good topline and tailset, nice length of head, good ear placement, a bit flat skull," "low to the ground, correct Sealyham type," and "good head planes, nice rear, good tail."

The second-best bitch in first placements and average placement score was Sealy "W." Those who chose her said "balanced in all aspects," "well balanced, better front assembly, looks like she will move well, "proportion, shoulder, nice head and ear," and "head, neck, and shoulders."

"W" and "B" were each named Best of Breed three times; "Y" was BOB twice. "Y" had the best placement average of all twelve and the most first placements (5) of any outline. This might have been because she was better or because the bitch competition wasn't as strong as among the dogs. So, I'm not sure who should be Best of Breed. All of the dogs except "C" and all bitches except "V" and "X" were placed first on at least one survey. All outlines were left out of the ribbons at least once except for bitch "Y." Dog "E" was most often unplaced followed by dog "A" among the dogs. Bitches "V" and "X" were most often unplaced among the bitches.

Essential Characteristics

The experts were asked to list four to six characteristics that were essential for a good Sealyham Terrier. Most often named

was movement, with reach and drive, and with power and determination. Next was balance and level topline. Other requirements noted were strength/power (power is listed many times in the standard), shoulder placement/layback, height/length proportions, tail set/carriage/shelf, and coat quality.

On face and expression, the group wanted deep set, dark, oval eyes, long muzzle, skull not too broad, and ear size and placement.

They were concerned that judges put up Sealyhams that were not low to the ground, those with gay or low set tails, dogs with poor coat quality or with the shape created with coat. Movement issues, too, should not be rewarded.

Additional Notes

The Sealyham Terrier experts offered the following suggestions for students of their breed.

- Look for strength, a dog that can move swiftly for his size.
- The dog was bred to work in the field and go to ground after formidable quarry.
- He must possess a strong determined attitude. Do not confuse ill temper with self-possession; they should be approachable.
- Coats change, but conformation doesn't. Some Sealys are groomed to perfection, but many are excellent dogs with correct coats, but groomed by people with less time and

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experience.

- The word “power” is in the standard seven times. Look for dogs who could kill badgers, otters, and fox.
- Evaluate what is under the coat.
- Substance and depth of chest are important. Put your fist under the chest to confirm proper depth.
- We are seeing many oversized Sealys that could not do the job they were bred for.
- Go over as many specimens of this breed as possible. It is one of the most difficult breeds to condition and show.
- A correct, short-legged Sealy works harder in thick, long grass or lumpy ground than an incorrect Sealy with longer legs.
- Feel to see that the foreface is full under the eye.
- Coat: quality over quantity; rate the coat, don’t overvalue grooming
- Head is important—especially its proportions and expression, but it is not a head breed.
- Long and low, but not long backed
- Look for good proportions and clean movement rather than flashy show dogs.
- With such small numbers, don’t throw out Sealyhams with minor faults: mismarks, a tooth out of place, natural tails.
- For the purpose of the breed, the dog needs movement, substance, proportions, weather-resistant coats, and attitude.
- The breed has a wonderful Illustrated Standard that should be read and re-read.
- A Sealyham is “a square within a rectangle,” square length/height ratio, rectangular in silhouette with length of head, forechest, and rear behind the tail.
- FCI standard allows more flexibility of size in either direction; the small gene pool depends on imports, so consider the whole dog, not just the size.

Thanks so much to the Sealyham Terrier experts for sharing their knowledge.