

JUDGING THE AIREDALE TERRIER



by ANNE BARLOW

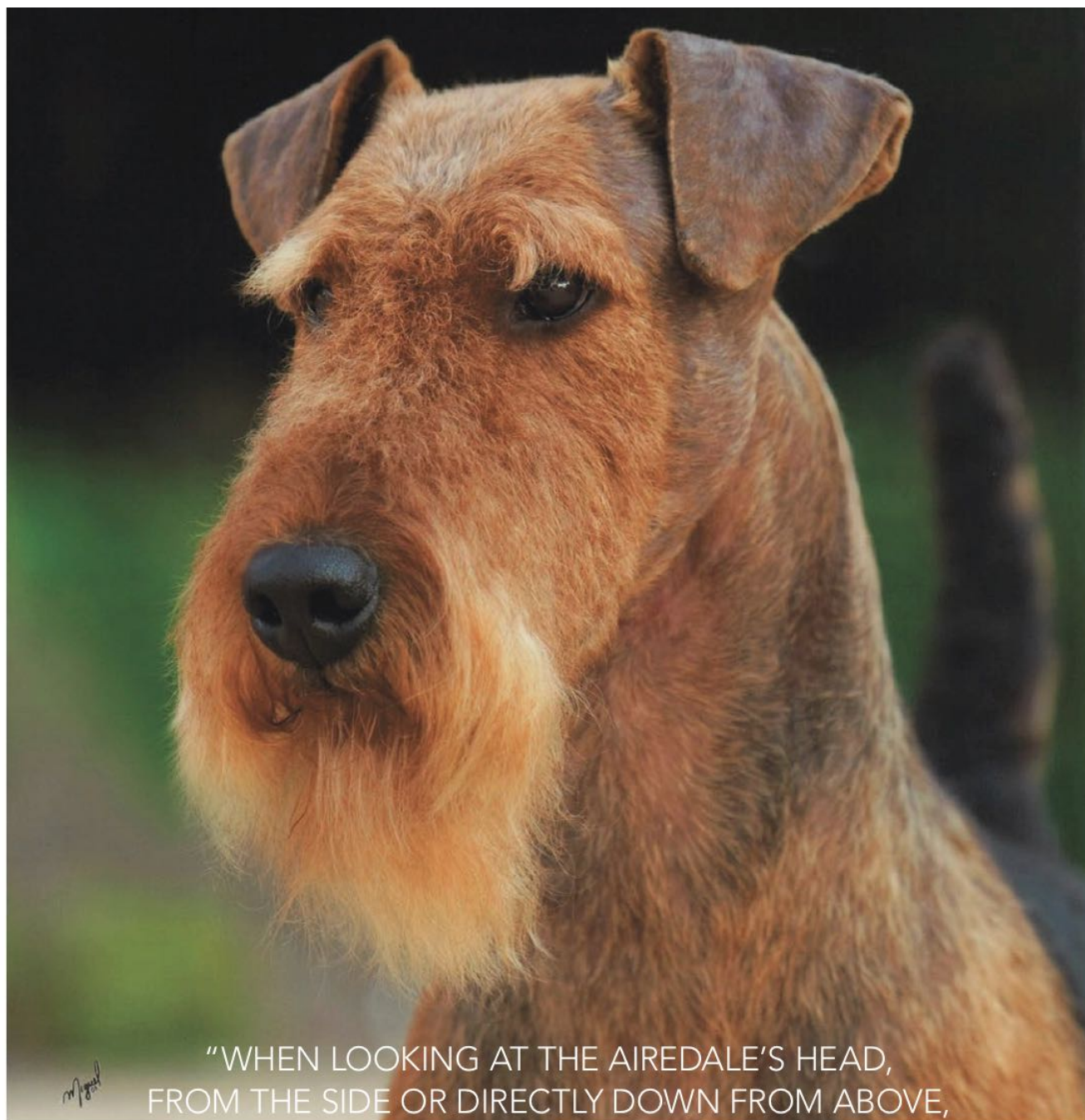
The Airedale Terrier is an elegant but sturdy dog. So begins the opening sentence under the general characteristics section in “The Airedale Terrier: the Official Standard Discussed and Clarified” first published many years ago by the ATCA. I open with that sentence because it has guided my thought processes in regards to what I look for in both my breeding program and while judging the breed. An Airedale has to have the size and substance to do his original job as a hunter of small game but he should be striking to look at, too. Sturdiness is, I think, the easier of the two terms to visualize and describe. The right amount of bone and muscle for the dog’s size and enough of it for him to do

his job. He was bred to hunt on land and in the water so in my opinion, the Airedale should be strong, solid, hard muscled, with “skin tight, not loose” in order to more safely tangle with prey. The Airedale standard addresses what I consider to be sturdiness in several other places: he should have “strong and muscular hindquarters”, “muscular loins”, a “foreface that is powerful, strong, and muscular”, “strong teeth”, forelegs “with plenty of bone and muscle”, “thighs long and powerful, muscular second thighs”. The Airedale is indeed a lot of dog in a medium-sized package.

Elegance is a little more difficult to describe and apply to that sturdy dog we just talked about! To me, the Airedale should fill your eye, make you look at him!

I believe what makes the Airedale structurally elegant comes about from properly placed graceful curves and straight lines on his body—and if those curves are where the straight lines should be and vice versa he quickly becomes common and cloddy looking. So, where on the Airedale’s body should there structural straight lines be and where should there be structural curves that conform to the breed standard?

First the straight lines. The straight lines that are a MUST in this breed start on the head. His head and expression are a hallmark of breed type. When looking at the Airedale’s head, from the side or directly down from above, you should see straight lines. From the side look for a level skull, one that is “long and flat”, a head that



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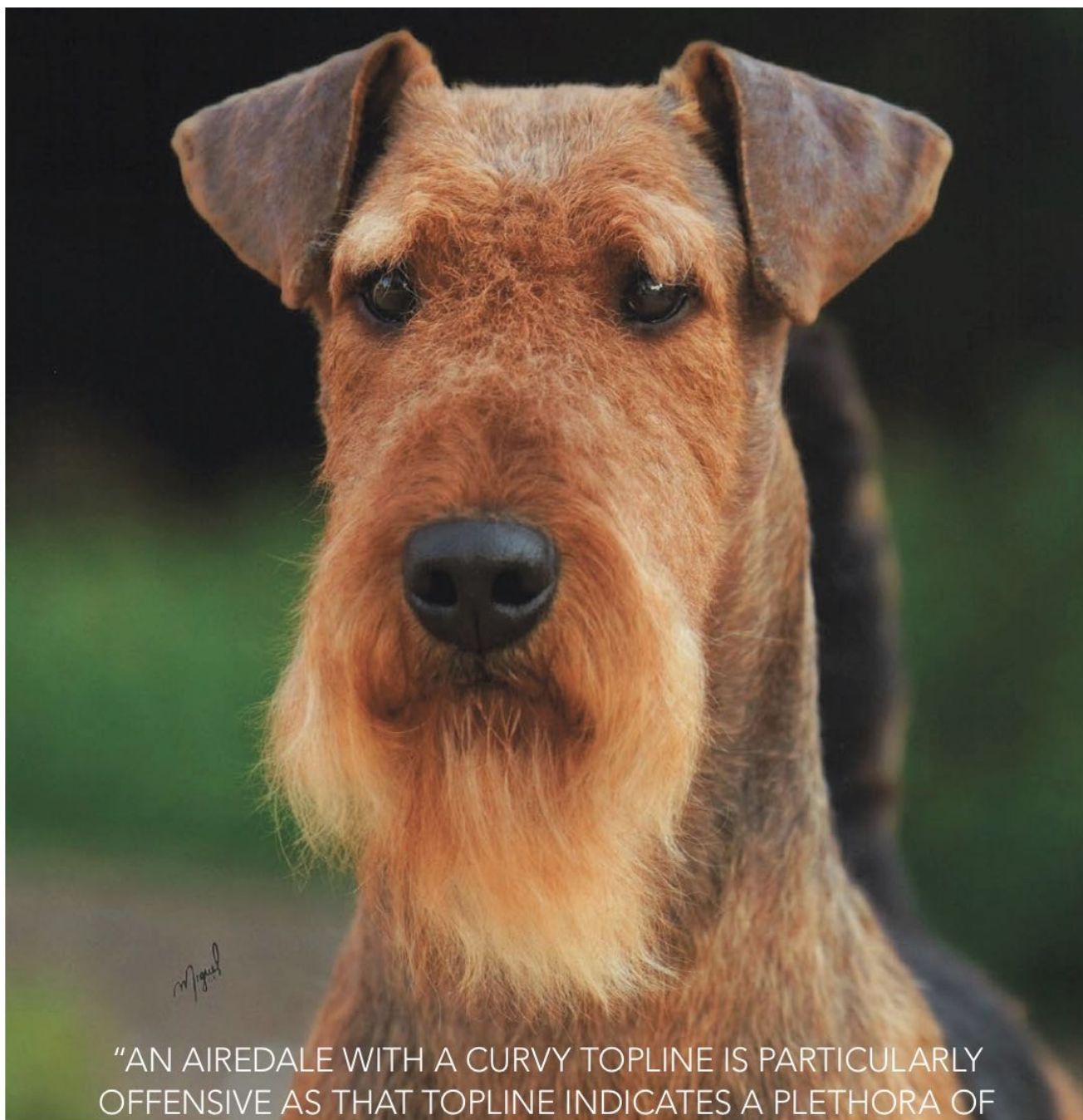
has a "hardly visible stop", a muzzle that follows the planes of the skull and that has "little apparent difference in length" from the skull. Often aptly described as a brick. Looking down from above, his skull and flat cheeks flow evenly into his muzzle—a brick from on top, too! If the Airedale is "down faced" with his nose pointing more at an angle to the ground or is "cheeky" with prominent cheek muscles, curves have replaced straight lines and the hallmark head disappears. It should be noted that the Airedale's teeth should be large—he is a predator. When you cup his jaw in your hand it should feel solid and

strong and should easily fill your hand. His bite has to be crushing to the prey he hunts. There should be no lightness in his jaw, small canines or missing teeth. We do not have a disqualification in our standard for any reason but obviously a dog that hunts for a living should ideally have full dentition and those teeth should be large enough to mean business!

A bit about expression. The Airedale has a "small dark eye full of Terrier expression" and his ears should be "carried rather to the side of the head, not pointing to the eyes, small but not out of proportion to the head... the topline of the folded ear should

be above the level of the skull". These ears should not look like Fox Terrier ears which are set higher on the head with tips pointing more to the center of the eye. Ear sets of this type make for a very foreign and incorrect expression on an Airedale. His ears shouldn't be large and houndy either.

The next straight line, seen in profile, is on the front of the dog. Starting where the underside of his jaw meets the front of the neck and runs down to his toes. You should not see a prominent keel or fore chest on the Airedale. If you do, once again a curve has replaced a straight line and is incorrect, ruining the



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classic silhouette. On to the topline and to straight lines that are very crucial. The Airedale's back should be "short, strong and level"! No dips in the back. His croup should be level! Never should there be a rounding or curving of the croup. This results in a low tailset when the "root of the tail should be set well up on the back". An Airedale with a curvy topline is particularly offensive as that topline indicates a plethora of serious structural faults. He shouldn't be confused with the Loch Ness Sea Monster!

The Airedale's underline should be a straight line running from the elbow up

slightly to where the loin joins the hip. This straight line should be gradual and continuous—no acute angles or curves. And lastly, when looking at the Airedale when standing in front of the dog, his flat shoulder muscles should blend into his "perfectly straight forelegs". The shoulder muscles should not curve noticeably out from the body and back into the elbow area—this results in a cloddy, heavy, loaded appearance in the front.

On to the properly placed structural curves. The Airedale's shoulder blades should be "long and sloping well into the back". The well laid back shoulder

allowing for a slightly arched neck "of moderate length"—a curve starting where the head meets the neck and flowing smoothly into the shoulders. Shoulder blades that don't slope well into the back and have little layback cause the neck to end in an abrupt sharp angle as it meets the shoulder blade—resulting in a straight line where there should be gentle curve.

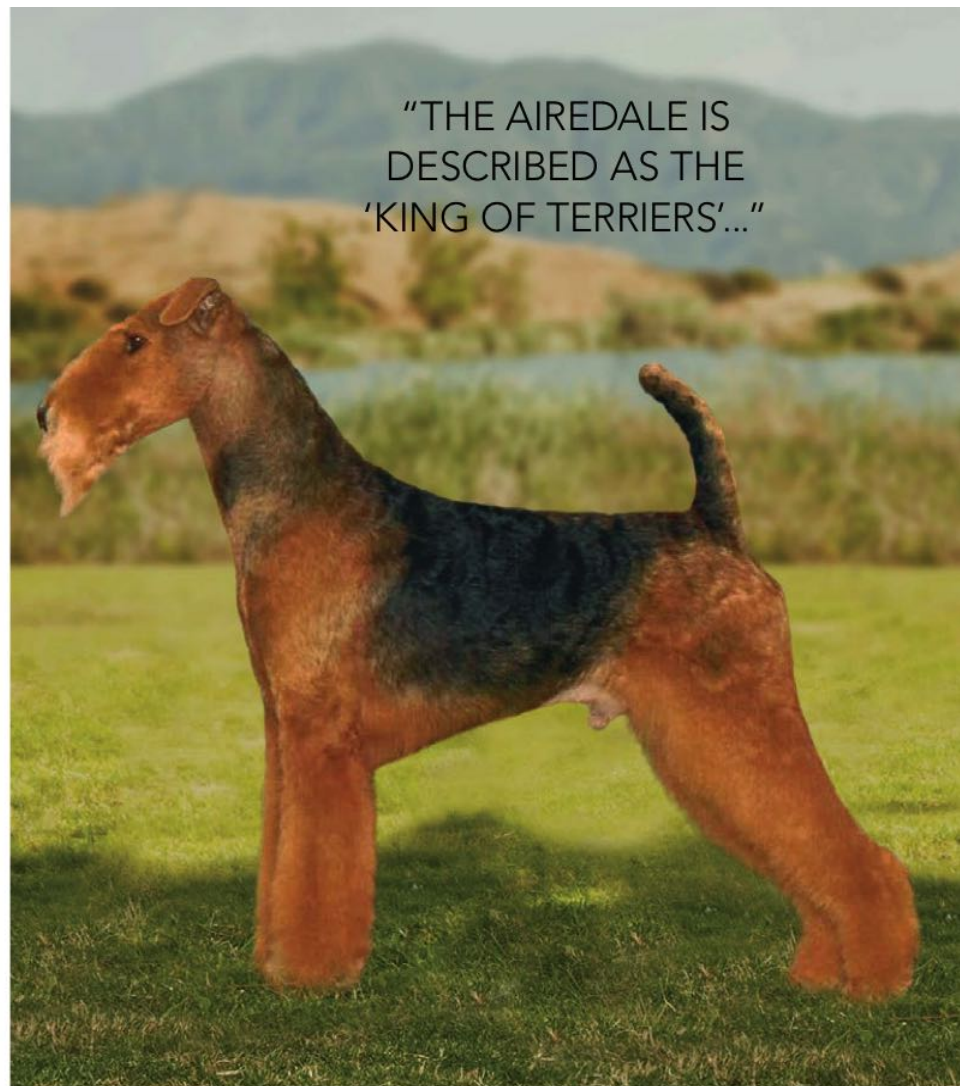
Again, an important aspect of the Airedale's signature silhouette is ruined when the shoulder blades are steep and don't allow for the arched neck's smooth transition into the back.

There are two more very important places we should see curves on an Airedale and those occur on the back end of the dog. The Airedale's tail "should be set well up on the back" and behind that tail there should be plenty of junk in the trunk! In other words, nice buns out behind that tail. The point of his buttock should extend well beyond his tail which creates a good rounded rear end when viewed from the side. If the angle of the pelvis is too steep the point of the buttock is lowered resulting in a low tailset and flat butt with no shelf behind the tail—a straight line when viewed from the side. Additionally, the Airedale's "stifles should be well bent" which contributes greatly to his ability to drive off his rear. So you should see the curve of the butt flow into the curve of the stifles. Straight stifles impair his ability to move effortlessly and cover ground. But neither should the Airedale be "overdone" in the rear with his thigh and second thigh too long and his stifles too well bent. This results in a dog that moves high in the rear when viewed from the side. And one that can't move himself in a straight line coming at you—a sidewinder.

Try a simple exercise by closing your eyes and reversing the important straight lines into curves and vice versa. Not a pretty picture! Certainly not the picture of a well put together elegant Airedale.

The exclamation mark to his structural elegance is his Terrier attitude and presence—the panache that makes a beautifully put together dog one you can't take your eyes off of! The Airedale is described as the "King of Terriers" primarily due to his attitude and poise. He should present a commanding presence in the ring and be willing to stand his ground when facing a competitor. Please spar this breed! It is the best way to see the "King of Terriers" temperament tested and no amount of stacking, baiting and cajoling can make an Airedale look his best—he can only do that on his own. He should never back down from another dog, nor should he be overly aggressive toward them either. He should appear comfortable and confident in his surroundings.

Regarding his tail, "it should be of good strength and substance and of fair length". I believe that the standard is trying to describe a docked tail that is long enough to provide balance and an overall square appearance to the dog. The breed has always been shown in this country with a docked tail, it is our custom. Please preserve it. An undocked tail on the



"THE AIREDALE IS DESCRIBED AS THE 'KING OF TERRIERS'..."

Airedale is very unsightly and ruins the overall appearance of the dog. What about size? The standard states that "dogs should measure approximately 23 inches at the shoulder and bitches slightly less". But that "being much over or under the size limit is a fault which should be severely penalized." You will likely never encounter an adult Airedale that is much under the standard height (especially in the Specials ring) but you will likely see exhibits from time to time that are simply too large. We don't have a disqualification for height so feel free to use dogs that are somewhat taller than 23 inches if all else suits your eye. Just don't penalize a 23 inch dog for "being too small" when in the ring with ones that are 24 inches or taller if everything else about that dog makes you say "yes". And don't reward a bigger dog simply because he is larger. Ideally, the coat "should be hard, dense, and wiry", the jacket should be "black or a dark grizzle" with the rest of the dog a "tan" color. Conditioning and presentation are an important part of the Airedale's appearance and presenting an

Airedale in a properly stripped coat is a must. You should not reward scissoring or clipping on any part of the body with the exception of the underbelly which is usually clipped.

Remember, the Airedale was bred to hunt over ground and in the water so he should move effortlessly, with good reach and drive. His front paw should easily extend beyond his nose when in full stride with good extension behind. Look for the front and back feet to meet in the middle of the dog while in stride. I saw a number of long backed dogs this past Montgomery and their feet placement while in stride made this all the more evident. You will see bouncy toplines on the long backed dogs, too. Going away from you his hocks should move parallel to each other and not close together. Coming at you "the forelegs should swing perpendicular from the body, free from the sides, the feet the same distance apart as the elbows". In summary, he should move around the ring in a powerful purposeful way with no excess movement anywhere on the dog. He should be a tight efficient package in motion. ■

JUDGING THE AIREDALE TERRIER

Edited By Scott Boeving

Part I

A Tool for Judges: Newly Revised Airedale Terrier Illustrated Standard

By ATCA Illustrated Committee
with April Clyde, President

The Airedale Terrier Club of America (ATCA) has long recognized that that conformation judges can benefit from breed specific information that expands on the content contained in the official breed standard. To help judges acquire this additional information, ATCA offers several options. Formal Judges Education Seminars are provided regularly throughout the country and informal ringside mentoring opportunities are readily available at regional and national Airedale Terrier specialty shows. Information about these sessions can be obtained from the club secretary whose contact information is found on the ATCA website at Airedale.org.

Another excellent source of breed specific information is provided by the ATCA publication "The Illustrated Standard of the Airedale Terrier 2012" This recently released booklet replaces the original Illustrated Standard and contains information about desired and undesired breed characteristics; pictures and illustrations of Airedale Terriers. Within the next few months, copies will be mailed to all approved and provisional Airedale Terrier judges. This article offers a preview of the Illustrated Standard and contains pages from the publication on key breed points including overall breed description; information about head, skull and ear; and information about size and movement.

The Airedale is a medium-sized, well-boned dog, and at all times a terrier in appearance and attitude. He is a well-

balanced, square dog with height at the withers being about the same as the length from shoulder point to buttock – appearing neither short in the front legs nor high in the rear. None of the dog's features is exaggerated—the general impression is one of moderation blending sturdiness and elegance (neither Welsh Terrier nor Wire Fox Terrier in appearance). The male has a masculine appearance without being "common" and the female has a feminine appearance without being fine-boned or looking the least bit fragile. "Bitchiness" in dogs and "dogginess" in bitches is most undesirable. As the largest terrier, the Airedale should reflect the "King of the Terrier" status with an alert and self-confident demeanor. His head and tail are held high and he is interested in and inquisitive of all situations. He is intelligent and steady and is unafraid of strangers and self-assured in the presence of other dogs.

Structure and attitude can be best evaluated by a controlled "spar" of two or three dogs at a time with enough space between them so they remain on four feet with their necks arched and ears alert. The spar affords the judge the opportunity to evaluate the topline, tailset, ear carriage and attitude. This impression is only revealed during the spar and cannot be duplicated by stacking or baiting the Airedale. The

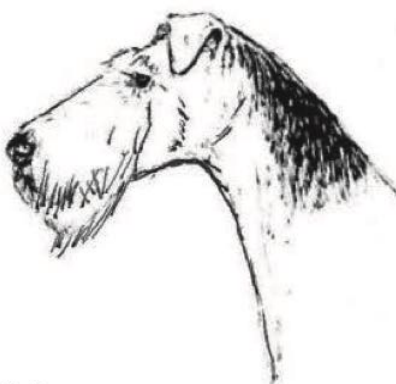


Fig. 1.



spar should be a mandatory component of judging at specialties and when entries are sufficient.

Head

Should be well balanced with little apparent difference between the length of skull and foreface.

Skull

Should be long and flat, not too broad between the ears and narrowing very slightly to the eyes. Scalp should be free from wrinkles, stop hardly visible and cheeks level and free from fullness.

Ears

Should be V-shaped with carriage rather to the side of the head, not pointing to the eyes, small but not out of proportion to the size of the dog. The topline of the folded ear should be above the level of the skull. Hound ears are a fault that should be severely penalized. See Figure 1.

Desired Characteristics

When viewing the head, the eye should be used as the mid-point and the skull behind the stop should be the same length as the muzzle in front of the stop. The head should be long, but in proportion to the rest of the dog—typically a short backed, cobby dog will have a shorter head than a dog of the same height possessing a longer

body and neck. Some refer to the head as being shaped “like a brick”; having a rectangular appearance when viewed from the front or the side. When viewed from the side, the top of the head from the occiput to nose should appear to form a straight line. The underjaw should be strong and the muzzle should give a sense of fullness. The sex of an Airedale should be apparent from the head; the dog’s clearly masculine and the bitch’s clearly feminine.

When the dog is alert, the inner edge of the ear should lie close to the skull, pointing toward the ground or outside corner of the eye. The ear should have lift, and fold above the top level of the skull. The Airedale ear is highly mobile, not fixed in a stationary position. The ear is best evaluated when two dogs face off against each other, see Figure 2.



Fig. 2.

Undesired Characteristics

The head of an Airedale should never be on two planes or angles which will show the dog to be down-faced. Such a head viewed from the side shows the nose pointing down rather than straight ahead in line with the back skull. There should be no prominent bumps on the top of the skull and no cheekiness seen when the head is observed from either the side or the front. There should be no wrinkles on top of the skull even when the dog is alert or facing another dog. The head should be elegant, but the skull should not be so narrow that the head looks weak, or in the case of males, unmasculine.

A high or Fox Terrier type of ear which points toward the middle or inside corner of the eye is wrong for the Airedale. A flying ear held away from the head is also incorrect. Airedales should “use their ears” when facing other dogs—the ear muscles

should be tense so that the ears react. Ears that hang relaxed when the dog faces another are incorrect. Ears with little lift which break at or below the level of the skull give the impression of houndiness. Hound ears are a fault in the Airedale Terrier. See Figure 3.



Fig. 3. Incorrect – down faced and cheeky.

Part 2 “Evolution”: The First Airedale Standard

In 1880 Vero Shaw’s grand illustrated Book of the Dog was published. This is the first dog book to mention our breed by its current name, Airedale Terrier. This book also contained the first written breed standard. I thought it would be of interest to many of you to see where we began as a breed by not only including the standard, but also the accompanying illustration of Thunder, the dog “chosen” to represent the written standard. Please note that Thunder was owned by Mr. Reginald Knight, author of this first standard. When published this caused an uproar amongst the majority of Airedale Breeders who felt Mr. Knight wrote this standard to fit his dog, not having bred the dog to the ideas laid forth by other fellow exhibitors trying to set the “type” for this evolving breed. This standard was discounted by the majority of breeders upon publication, and in response a new standard was crafted and endorsed by the Kennel Club. It’s funny to read about the “dog game” being played between these two groups over 125 years ago. They sparred as well as the Airedales they showed. Current-day breeders enjoy the look back in time to the formation of

our breed and realize that passions ran just as deep as they do now on what is correct type for an Airedale Terrier.

The Standard

Head: Flat, and of good width between the ears. Muzzle: Long, and of good strength; the nose being black, the nostrils large, and the lips free from ‘flews.’ Mouth: Level; teeth large and sound. Eyes: Small, bright, and dark in colour. Ears: Thin, and somewhat larger, in proportion to the size of the dog, that a Fox-terrier’s; carried forward, like the latter’s, but set on more towards the side of the head, and devoid of all long, silky hair. Neck: Strong rather than neat, and free from dewlap and throatiness. Shoulders: Well sloped. Chest: Moderately deep, but not too wide. Hind quarters Square, and showing a good development of muscle. Thighs well bent.

Back: Of moderate length, with short and muscular loins. Ribs: Well sprung and rounded, affording ample scope for the action of the lungs. Legs: Straight, and well furnished with bone. Feet: Round, and with no tendency to ‘spread.’ Tail: Stout, and docked from 4” to 7”. Coat: Broken or rough, and close and hard in texture. Colour: A bluish-grey of various shades, from the occiput to root of tail; showing a ‘saddle back’ of same, also a slight indication on each cheek; rest of body a good tan, richer on feet, muzzle and ears than elsewhere. Weight: From 40 to 55 lbs. for dogs, and from 35 to 50 lbs. for bitches.

Points for Judging Airedale Terriers, from 1880 Standard

Head (including eyes)	10
Ears	5
Muzzle & Jaws	5
Body	10
Legs & Feet	5
Coat	10
General Appearance	5

Total	50
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Declaration

In December of 1879, "I agree to the above standard, and will base my decisions on it" was signed by the following judges and breeders: W. Lort, Fron Goch Hall; J. Percival, Birmingham; John Inman; S. W. Wildman, Bingley; John Fisher; Edward Sandell; J. Speed; John Crosland, Junr, Wakefield; Charles W. Brinsley; T. Kirby; and Reginald Knight, Chappel Allerton.

"The standard having received the support and approval of the above and other judges and breeders, it is to be hoped that others will endeavor to reconcile their views to it, and that the Airedale Terrier will not suffer, as so many other Terriers have done, from a plethora of types, each judge at the same time advocating his own particular prejudices to the injury of the breed."

Part 3 Proven Versatility

By Scott Boeving

There is no question that a well-groomed Airedale in the show ring is truly a thing of beauty. On his toes, his alert stature will take your breath away. On the other hand, in World War I, the Airedale Terriers were used as Red Cross dogs, messenger and patrol dogs saving thousands of lives. Over 2,000 Airedales were used in World War II, as well. Our present-day Airedale has all of the ability and intelligence that was prevalent in the beginning, but with more refinement in appearance. And he is still, today, more worthy than ever of his title, "The King of Terriers."



Mr. Knight's Standard of the Airedale Terrier

Part 4

The Airedale Terrier – A Hunting Dog?

By Karen Copley

In the mid-1800s, practical Northern English farmers needed a game dog that would go after vermin as well as bring in food for the table. Thus, they developed the Airedale Terrier. Developed to be an independent thinker, an auto-pilot of sorts, he was even able to poach dinner from the local land owners' stock if requested. They were used to guard, herd and watch the children all in the same day, making them one of the most multi-talented dogs ever bred.

The Airedale's introduction into North America in the early 1900s encouraged an expansion of their farm skills and hunting skills to include them in the pursuit of "big game" such as bear and wildcats. Still today, the breed is known for having a very strong hunting instinct, with few dogs better equipped for shooting in the cover or in the open. The Airedale's speed, endurance and imperviousness to climactic conditions fit him for almost all hunting conditions.

In the March 1921 issue of *Outing*, the breed was honored for "being an excellent retriever, particularly from the water."

Today the Airedale is an active hunting companion for both large and small game, and all varieties of fowl. The Airedale has the distinguished title of the original "three-in-one" gun dog equally able to handle upland birds, waterfowl and fur-bearing game. Airedales are currently competing for AKC titles in the Spaniel tests and competitors have obtained many successful titles in the three years that they have been approved to compete.

The breed also competes in tracking events; AKC Tracking and Non-AKC Sanctioned Fur tracking. The fur tracking events are especially fun for the dogs. Scent is laid, and they must track to find the quarry, usually a caged raccoon. The dog finding the raccoon and announcing his find by an excited series of barks heralds successful completion of the fur track.

Part 5

Where Have All The Airedales Gone?

(portions reprinted with permission of The American Airedale)

By Lisa Berglin

During the last few years we have all seen the decline in our Airedale entries. Many in the fancy chalk this up to various reasons including a downturned economy, busy families, a labor intense breed, hybrid mixes, aging dog enthusiasts and a lack of newcomers into the dog world.



While at Montgomery County last year, the ATCA Historian was able to talk to other Airedalers from different countries and they, too, reported the same problems. Sensing some concern, but not knowing the depth of the problem, our historian decided to compare three different indicators of breed numbers. The period compared included from the year 2000 to the year 2010. The first was Montgomery County Entries. While the numbers tend to "put us to sleep" they are paramount in importance for future considerations. Our breed entries dropped a whopping 52% in comparing the entries separated by just 10 years. Digging deeper, I counted the ATCA membership from our last 2 year books – each book covering ten years ending in Year 2000 and Year 2010. The drop there was 24%.



Now to the statistic that is potentially harmful to our very breed. The number of Airedale litters registered with AKC. That dropped by 38% in the last decade. You may ask, "Why does that number matter?" This is the opinion from our club historian's view. Over the last few decades the Airedale breed has enjoyed a steady growth in the numbers of breeders and dogs produced. However, this has not always been the case. We have risen from near obscurity at the turn of the century; to number one breed status in the Twenties to a precipitous drop back down in numbers in the 30s. Along with the breed's numbers dropping, so did the ATCA membership as well as the show entries. Airedales as a breed began recovering after WWII and by the 60s were steadily climbing back. How this was achieved, and how our modern world differs from that time, challenges me to be the proverbial "canary in the coal mine" about this looming issue that could affect our breed's future.

Even during the lowest of population lows, Airedales have always been blessed with breeders who had the same diehard tenacity and stubbornness of the breed we love. Pockets of those breeders, located all around the world, hunkered down, and even when showing became an unaffordable luxury, and membership to a breed club too expensive, they kept on having litters. They probably could only breed somewhat locally and on a smaller scale, but somehow they kept their lines going. So while the breed contracted in numbers, the breeders who remained were forced by economics and geography to stay close to home in their stud dog choices. They may not have lived close to a Crufts or Westminster winner, maybe the best they could do was a littermate, a son or daughter, possibly a grand kid to add that "Flyer"

to their pedigree. When times got better there were plenty of diverse lines to help restart the breed again. They exited the downturn, continuing on with the same healthy vibrant breed which has continued to this day.

Now, in the last decade we have seen a decline in the litters produced which in and of itself is not the biggest concern. It's what I call the new "Double AA" addition to the equation, Airplanes and Artificial Insemination, that's potentially troubling. These wonderful new technologies can allow the Airedale gene pool to be shared in such a way that if our numbers continue to decline, we may lose the diversity that carried the breed through the downturns of the past. Today, when we all fall in love with the same beautiful dog from the magazine, all of us around the world has the ability to use him. No longer are we forced to pick only a related dog, we can have "THE" dog! This is not a huge problem when the breed has a diverse and large group of breeders doing their "own" thing, but if we were to drop to 1930's breed numbers and have but a few likeminded breeders who all love the same bloodlines, who's to say what shape the Airedale breed will come out on the other side. I'm not sure anyone really knows. However, diversity is what will keep a breed healthy even when numbers plummet.

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Additionally, much of the valuable breed knowledge is preserved through mentorship. The challenge is finding mentors willing to invest the time and effort to be a mentor. Many exhibitors quickly learned the value of engaging an experienced breeder/exhibitor and remain engaged to learn the basics, only to lose focus, to result in keeping their knowledge at only the basic levels. A teachable spirit is definitely required on the part of the one being mentored.

So, it is up to us, the breeders of today, to take a serious look at what we have in our home and kennel, and value what makes us different from a genetic standpoint. In a time now when many older breeders have or are considering leaving the hobby; is there anyone in the wings who will continue their lifelong breeding program? Do they have anything that most would consider an "unusual or rare" pedigree? Maybe those lines should be saved or incorporated somehow?

The answers to these questions do not come easily, but the decisions of today, will directly affect our breed tomorrow. That is why I wanted to start the conversation now. A frank and honest discussion of the future of our breed may be warranted in the next decade, and it is my hope that today's article will at least get you thinking that far down the road. I hope our breed does not end up on the rare breed list someday, but if it does, I hope the ones who continue to love the Airedale as much as we do today, will thank us for keeping the breed as beautiful, healthy and diverse as it was in its "heyday."

The future is now. Do your part. Celebrate and preserve what makes your line of dogs unique and special. The result will be a healthy, vibrant, versatile breed for decades to come. ■