



· BREED PRIORITIES · SMOOTH FOX TERRIERS

by Nikki Riggsbee

Until 1984, the Fox Terrier was one breed with two varieties in AKC – Smooth and Wire. At that time, AKC recognized the Smooth Fox Terrier and Wire Fox Terrier as separate breeds.

For this project, the Smooth Fox Terrier standard was used to derive the lists of virtues and faults, and photos of Smooth Fox Terriers were used to produce the outlines. Both Smooth and Wire Fox Terrier breeder-judges were invited to participate in the survey. The input from those who bred only Wires didn't change the consistencies, or inconsistencies, in the composite results compared to those who bred Smooths. Seventeen of the twenty judge contributors were Smooth breeders.

The breeder-judges participating in the survey include those who judge only Fox Terriers, some who judge several breeds, and others who judge one or many groups. They average more than 32 years in the breed and have been judging Fox Terriers for over 10 years on average. The group includes many who have judged the breed at the national and other specialties.

Virtues

The breeder-judges were given a list of desired breed characteristics from the Smooth Fox Terrier standard to prioritize from the most important to the least important. The responses were averaged, and the list below is in sequence by the breeder-judges' average priority, with 1 being the most important.

1. Stand like a cleverly made hunter, covering a lot of ground
2. Shoulders long and sloping, well laid back
3. Short back
4. Height at withers the same as length of body
5. Skull should be flat and moderately narrow
6. Gay, lively and active appearance
7. Little apparent difference in length between the skull and foreface
8. Stern set on rather high and carried gaily
9. Forelegs straight down to the feet and being short and straight in pastern
10. Length of back from withers to root of tail not exceeding 12 inches
11. Legs carried straight forward while traveling
12. Feet round, compact, and not large
13. Long thighs and muscular second thighs
14. Topline of the folded ear well above the level of the skull
15. Eyes and rims dark in color
16. Well ribbed up

When determining how consistent the breeder-judges were in their placements, I count how many ranks are within 4 placements of each other, for example between 1-4, or 2-5, or 3-6, or 4-8, and so on. When many judges' ranks for a characteristic are clustered this way, they are considered to generally agree on the importance of the

characteristic. The more scattered the rankings, the more inconsistently they value that feature.

The Fox Terrier breeder-judges had majority agreement on eight virtues. Thirteen surveys agreed on “Stand like a cleverly made hunter, covering a lot of ground” (1st), more than on any other feature.

Seven other virtues had eleven experts concurring: “Skull should be flat and moderately narrow” (5th), “Little apparent difference in length between the skull and foreface” (7th), “Stern set on rather high and carried gaily” (8th), and the last four – “Long thighs and muscular second thighs” (13th), “Topline of the folded ear well above the level of the skull” (14th), “Eyes and rims dark in color” (15th), and “Well ribbed up” (16th).

The “Ear fold” had six rank it midpoint or better, raising its position. “Eyes” actually had more rank it lower, with nine placing it last, but the others thought it more important, raising its relative rank.

Two of the virtues had half the group in agreement. “Short back” (3rd) was one of those with ten placing it highly, although six placed it below average in importance. Half also agreed on “Forelegs straight down to the feet and being short and straight in pastern” (11th) being relatively less important, but seven had it around midpoint or higher.

Nine valued “Shoulders long and sloping, well laid back” (2nd) in the top quartile; another five had it a bit less important, while six had it middling or below. “Height at withers the same as length of body” (4th) was in the top quartile for nine, but six had it a quartile lower. “Gay, lively and active appearance” (6th) had a similar distribution.

“Length of back from withers to root of tail not exceeding 12 inches” (10th) was above average in importance for nine experts, but eight put it in the last quartile. Nine had “Feet round, compact, and not large” (12th) below average in value, and five more had it close to the bottom.

Many of the virtues were ranked all over on the different surveys, even when a small majority or plurality clustered with a similar opinion. As a result, the average for the top rated virtue was 4.950, and the average for the one at the bottom of the list was 11.5.

Faults

The breeder-judges also ranked a list of Fox Terrier faults taken directly or derived from the standard. The following is the list of faults in sequence by the average rank, from most serious to least serious, with 1 being the most serious.

1. Back with appearance of slackness
2. Yellow eyes
3. Too short in the leg
4. Forefeet tending to cross or weave
5. Cheeks full
6. Short second thigh and a straight stifle
7. Cow-hocks
8. Foreface “dish” or falling away quickly below the eyes
9. Ears hanging by the side of the head
9. (tie) Leggy
11. Brindle, red or liver markings
12. Lacking a strong forward thrust or “snatch” of the hocks
13. Chest broad
14. Head less than 7 inches

15. A “Pipestopper” tail

16. Belly and underside of the thighs bare

Even more than with the virtues, the individual priorities on the faults varied all over. Only two faults had majority agreement. All but a few placed “Belly and underside of the thighs bare” (16th) in the last quartile. The smallest majority ranked “Brindle, red or liver markings” (11th) in the last quartile, but seven thought it very important, raising its position.

Half of the experts thought “Cheeks full” (5th) around middling, but six had it decidedly more serious. “Short second thigh and a straight stifle” (6th) had a similar distribution. On the other hand, ten put “Chest broad” (13th) around middling, but seven thought it quite less serious. “Head less than 7 inches” was in the last quartile for half the surveys, but eight ranked it around middling.

“Back with appearance of slackness” (1st) was near the top for nine, and six had it in the second quartile. Nine also agreed on “Yellow eyes” (2nd) being very serious, but the remaining experts’ opinions were scattered, so it ranked second rather than first.

“Ears hanging by the side of the head” (tied at 9th) also had nine faulting it strongly, but seven placing it well below average lowered its placement. Nine agreed on “Leggy” (tied at 9th) being a bit below average as a problem.

Most of the others had split opinions. “Too short in the leg” (3rd) was very important for eight, but below average for seven. Eight ranked “Forefeet tending to cross or weave” (4th) fourth through seventh or seventh through tenth, with five putting it in the top quartile. Eight had “Cow-hocks” (7th) as quite important, but five placed it middling. “Foreface ‘dish’ or falling away quickly below the eyes” (8th) was moderately serious for eight, but much less of a problem for six. Eight experts thought “A “Pipestopper” tail” (15th) not an issue, but seven put it in the third quartile.

Additional input could change the relative ranking of some faults whose averages were quite close. It would break the tie at nine. “Too short legs” (3rd) and “Forefeet cross” (4th) and “Cheeks full” (5th) were less than a tenth of a point apart as were “Straight stifle” (6th) and “Cowhocks” (7th) and “Brindle, red, liver” (11th) and “Lack of thrusting hocks” (12th).

Essential Characteristics

The breeder-judges were asked to name four to six characteristics that a Fox Terrier must have, the primary characteristics that they look for when they judge.

A good head, including proper ears and ear set and expression, was mentioned by almost all of the judges. Balance was listed by nearly as many. Movement with emphasis on down and back was frequently named. Terrier attitude was critical, as was a 15 ½ inch square body with a short back. Feet were important, as was tail set with the shelf beneath and behind the tail.

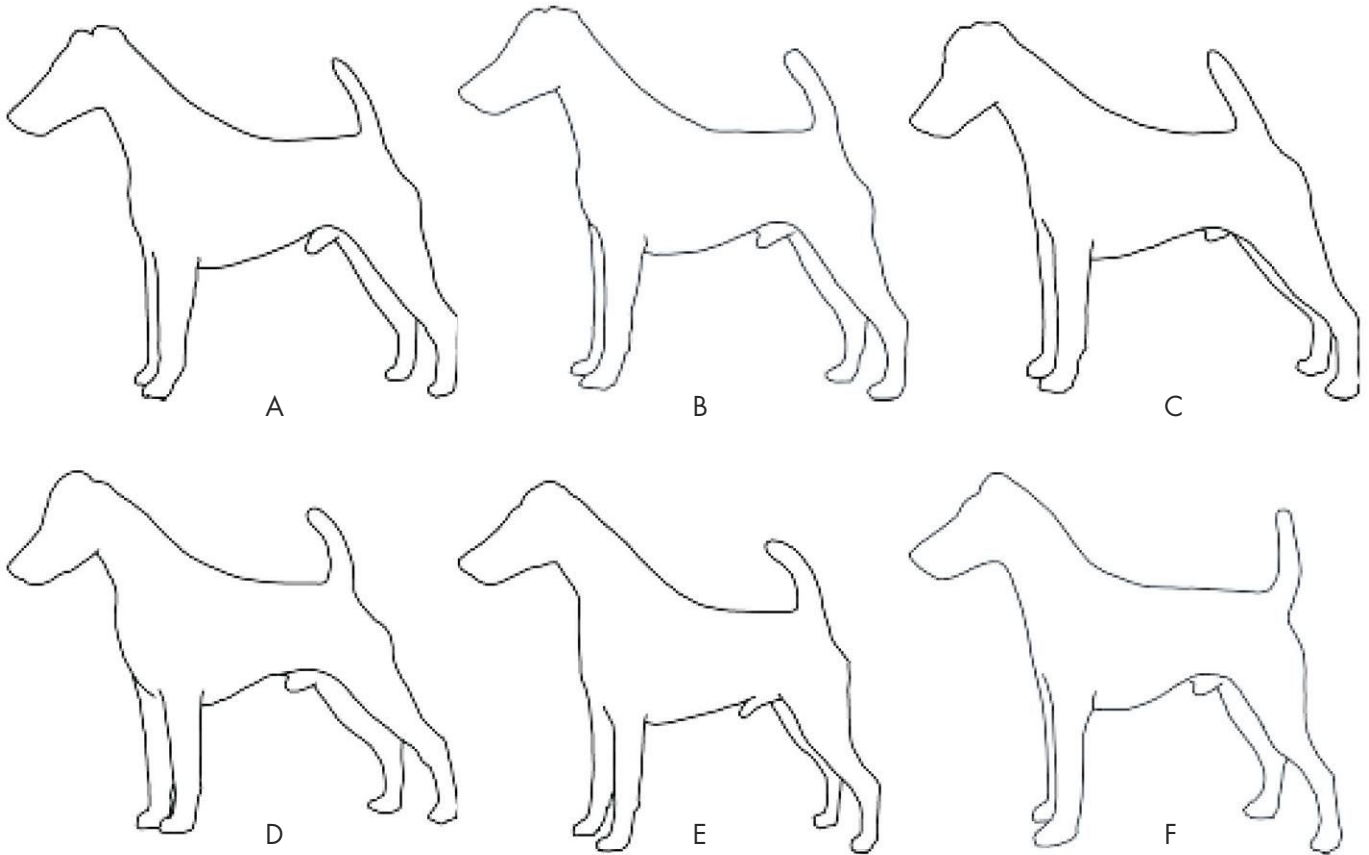
Outlines

The breeder-judges placed six Fox Terrier dogs and six Fox Terrier bitches as they would a dog show class, but based on outlines only. The outlines were drawn from photos of real dogs, so none was perfect. The placements might change if the judges could see the dogs in person and see them move. The breeder-

Fox Terrier Outlines

Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex

DOGS



judges' placements of the outlines were averaged to determine their collective selections. There was greater agreement on the outlines than on the lists above.

The top male based on the best average placement among all the twelve was Fox Terrier "C." Those who selected him said he had "a good head, short back, & strong rear," "compact, muscular, correct proportions," "good height to length, and body depth to leg length," "high wither, good layback, high tail set," "good length and tilt of pelvis & good shelf," and "good outline, underjaw, and hocks."

Fox Terrier "A" had the next best average placement among the dogs and was placed first more often than any other Fox Terrier male, including dog "C." Those who liked "A" said he had "balance, good bone, body, and head," "good neck, short back, good tail set and angulation," correct "muzzle length, angulation, ear placement and carriage, shoulder layback," and "good feet."

Fox Terrier bitch "W" had the best average bitch placement and was ranked first more times than any other Fox Terrier outline, male or female. Those who selected her said that she had "an outline (that) looks like a bitch," "was a well rounded bitch, good shelf behind tail, good back, nice head," "was correct in all ways," "was an easy winner," "square," "better proportion and more

correct angulation," and "a bit overdone, but all the parts are there, a bitch to take home and breed." Some noted that her tail was too short, but that it was a man-made issue.

The bitch with the next best average bitch placement score was Fox Terrier "V." Those who picked her said she had better "overall balance," and "head and ears, layback, and feet."

There was more consistency in placing the dogs than the bitches. The top two males, "C" and "A," got most of the 1st placements and were placed in the ribbons by all of the breeder-judges. On the other hand, "B," "E," and "F" were never placed 1st, and "F" was always out the first 4 placements.

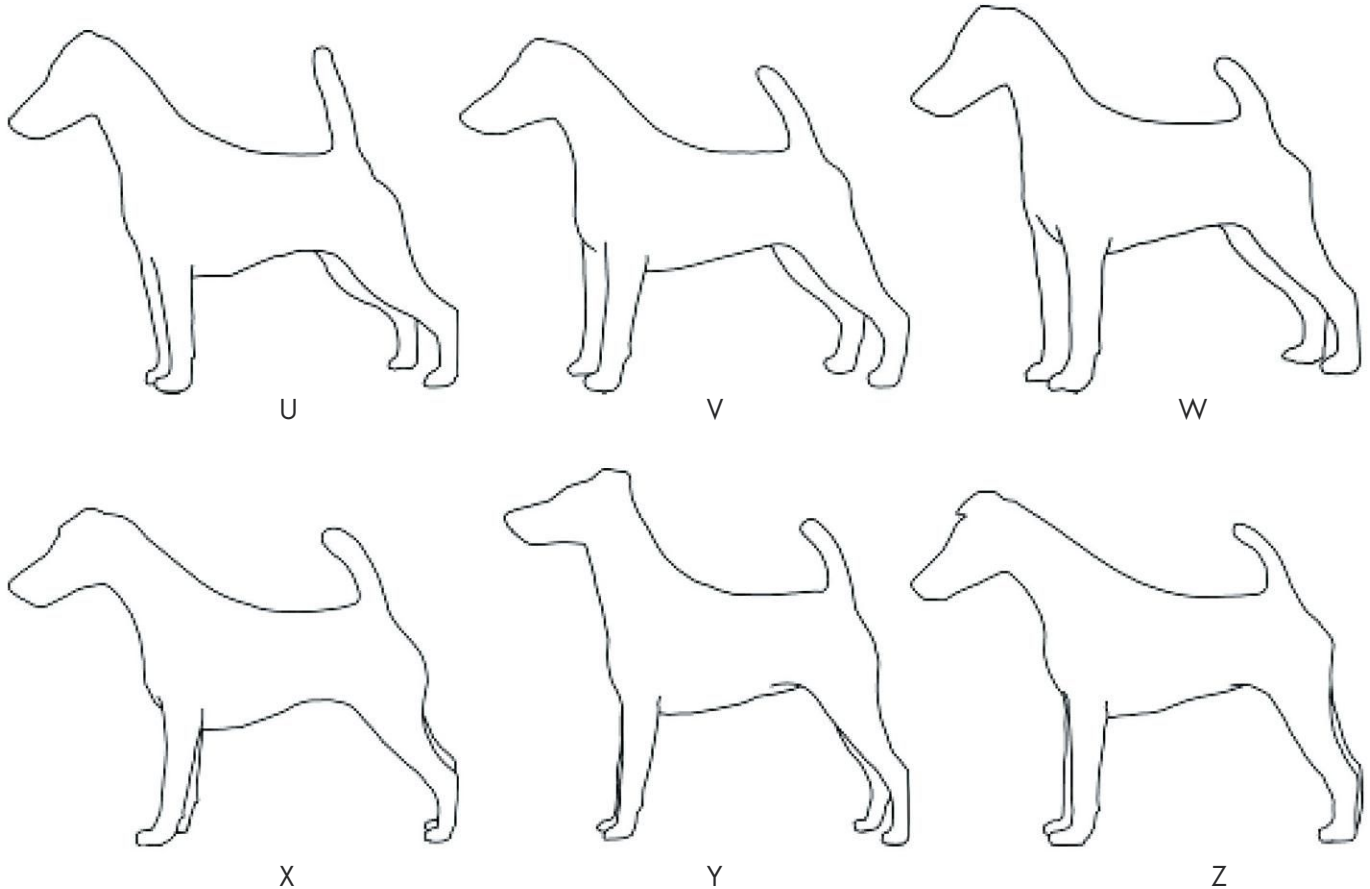
With the bitches, "W" was placed 1st by almost half of the group. All but "X" were placed first by at least two other judges, and only "X" was always out of the ribbons. The bitches may have been closer in quality, where the dogs had clearer winners.

BOB was a hard decision. Six breeder-judges, more than any other, chose Fox Terrier "A" as BOB, who was second place among the males based on average placements. The top male on average placements and the best average placement overall was dog "C" who was named BOB five times. Bitch "W," with the most first placements, was picked as BOB only by three of the twenty judges. So, you decide.

Fox Terrier Outlines

Pick Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex

BITCHES



Additional Comments

Some of the comments offered by the Fox Terrier breeder-judges regarding judging the Fox Terrier:

- Good fronts are harder to obtain and maintain than good rears.
- A weakly put together terrier will not be able to do the job it was bred to do.
- Refined, long-backed dogs with ultra-refined heads and features are NOT correct.
- The best dog is the one that fits together the best, appears balanced, and is not extreme in any one area.
- The head, ears, and expression are very important in judging these breeds.
- The dog should be square, not an upward rectangle.
- Today's judges do not understand what an English Hunter looks like. It isn't a thoroughbred; they should picture a Cob Pony.
- The word "elegant" is not in the Smooth standard, but is used constantly when comparing and judging.
- The Fox Terrier has the perfect "terrier front." The whole shoulder assembly is set forward on the body, leaving no forechest and the "stiff" movement seen. They should have

good layback, flat forechest, and the front legs are not set under the dog's body.

- Attitude is what it is all about.
- I want to see a Fox Terrier that is alert and ready for action and able to do the job for which they were originated.
- The elusive gate is such a characteristic of the SFT structure that when you see it, you'll never forget it – it is the culmination of correct structure.

Thanks to the Fox Terrier breeder-judges who participated in the survey and shared their expertise.

This discussion 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 must have and what will be forgiven. Discussing priorities can help in learning how to better evaluate a breed.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns? Contact AKC Judge Ms. Nikki Riggsbee Email: nriggsbee@aol.com