

## JUDGING THE ROUGH COLLIE by Anne Hollywood

**When I was asked to contribute my first feelings were ...I am not qualified ... I don't know enough... and who am I to tell others what is correct and what is not.**

**All I can tell you today is that I have been showing and breeding Rough Collies since the early mid 1970's. I learned a lot from watching, listening and asking questions of some of the most knowledgeable, clever and successful breeders in the UK at that time who gave me so much help and guidance.**

**So today I want to tell you how, as a judge, I feel the Rough Collie should be assessed.**

### **YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION AS A JUDGE**

As a judge, the very first thing that should impress you about the Rough Collie standing, in profile, is elegance.

It should scream it's breed and not one part of it should be out of balance to the whole. You should then look at the dogs' front and back to see how well the dogs stands naturally.



### **Front**

The front Legs should be straight without turning in or out, neither too far apart nor close together. Front feet should be relatively small with short nails and good arched toes, slightly oval in shape but never round.

### **BACK**

The back feet should be less oval and slightly longer. This is because the front feet reach out to touch the floor well in advance of the body and the rear feet use the slightly long toes to propel themselves forward.

You would then look at the rear stance and the feet should not be directly under the dog but very slightly further back but not too far and the hocks should be straight.

### **THE HEAD**

This is one of the most important points of the Rough Collie and the hardest to achieve absolute perfection in.

By placing your hands flat along the sides of the head from the tip of the nose to the back of the skull there should be no gaps between your hands and the head along the side. No lumps or bumps nor flare just a clean smooth wedge.

### **THE STOP**

The stop, i.e. the part where the skull and the nose meet has been the most discussed point of the Rough Collie and has caused more arguments than anything else in the breed. The problem is in interpretation of the breed standard.

The overall balance of the head is what decides where the stop will be. The head should be two level planes when viewed in profile. A flat skull is one plane and the muzzle i.e. nose is the other. Where they break is where the stop belongs. If the break is too low down the nose or too high; then the balance of the head is wrong, and the expressions lost. The standard asked for slight but perceptible stop but again this is down to peoples' own interpretation.

If you judge Border Collies you will see they have a very deep stop, a Borzoi for example has the opposite to a 'stop'.

Yes, you do want a 'break' that you can feel and see but don't let the amount of coat on the dogs' head make you think the stop is too deep. It is important to place your hand on the skull to make the coat flat and you will see exactly how deep or not the true stop is.

What you don't want is a 'scooped' out stop or what is called a dish faced stop. You don't want a stop that is too low nor too high. It must be between the point of the eyes that is next to the nose and the foreface and should be of equal length between these points.

## **EARS**

The ears should be semi erect and on the top of the head but not touching in the middle, the inside of the ear should be level or just above the level with the side of the skull and although they may be relaxed and held back at times, on examination they should be semi erect when asked or baited. Some exhibits may be reluctant to use the ears, but this can be rectified by the judge holding the ears in the correct position to be able to see the expression.

## **EXPRESSION**



The expression on a Rough Collie is the most difficult to explain until you actually see it. Some say it should be 'dreamy' as if they have just woken up, some say it should be alert and interesting, some say they should smile. All I can say is that when you see the sweet expression you will know it. It comes from the correct overall balance of skull to muzzle along with the placement of the eyes which means there should be a straight line from the outside of the eye to the outside of the base of the ear. So, the eye should set slightly oblique but never extreme as this can give a rather mean look.

The eye should be almond in shape but can be fuller as long as the expression is sweet, but it should never be starry, nor straight across and not too wide apart.

The eye should be dark in colour, never light. The exception is with Blue Merles that can have blue eyes either both or one dark and one blue but always with a soft gentle expression.

### **MOUTHS and MUZZLE**

From a balanced head you should have a long lip line. By this I mean the lip line should go a good way back and teeth should be seen easily when lifting the lip.

The teeth should have the lower incisors just behind the upper incisors and a slight space is not a serious fault.

If the lip line is short the whole balance of the head is changed and the dog will appear to be 'deep' through i.e. from the top of the skull to the under-jaw where the head joins the neck will be exaggerated, it will look heavy and cloddy and lose the clean lines of an elegant head.

The muzzle should be smooth and rounded over the stop.

Obviously, a male should have a more masculine foreface, but this should still be in balance with the skull. Never over strong in a bitch and never too narrow.

Lack of under-jaw will often go together with teeth that 'lean' forward and this is not attractive nor correct.

### **FRONTS**

The front assembly is where the 'reach' comes from when the Rough Collie is on the move. The chest should not be narrow between the front legs. It should be rounded and moderately covered with muscle. The legs should fit snugly down from the shoulders with legs neither turning in or out when standing.

The upper arm should not be short. Where the upper arm meets the shoulder, blades is where the neck begins. If the upper arm is short the shoulder blades will be shorter than required and by not having the required slope the whole front will be incorrect.

The gap between the shoulder blades at the top should not be too wide as this often means they are narrow at the bottom. Two to three fingers between the shoulder blades at the top is usually what makes the width between the front movement correct for the breed with the front feet fairly close on the move but not turning in or out and with really good reach.

When you are feeling the shoulder assembly the dogs feet should be just underneath the top of the withers.

An imaginary line from the top of the withers to the floor can you tell where the neck starts. So, if the upper arm is too short the neck will also be short, and this takes away all the elegance of the Rough Collie.

### **NECK - CHEST - RIBS**

The neck is very important to the overall elegance of the Rough Collie. You want a well-muscled neck of good length and well arched.

The length of the neck comes from the shoulder placement if that is wrong so is the neck. No matter how wonderful a Rough Collie's head is if it is stuck on top of a short neck the whole dog is out of balance and the elegance is just not there.

The rib cage should be reasonably deep, and you should be able to feel the ribs...just.



### **LOIN and Topline**

This section of the Rough Collie is the bit that seems to be misinterpreted by so many exhibitors. When judging you see dogs and bitches that look as if they have a very weak sagging top line. This can often, but not always be a fault in the preparation of the dog for exhibition. The standard asks for a 'slight rise' over the loins. Many people ignore the word 'slight' and brush the coat up over the loins and exaggerate the 'rise'.

Always remember a 'slight' rise over the loin can be felt and not always 'seen'.

A good judge should be able to feel the 'slight' rise.

Of course, the other reason for the top line to be dipping is a dog with an over long back. The only thing joining the rib cage to the pelvis is the spine and a dog that is over long in back will be putting extra demands on the dogs' spine which, in itself is only able to take so much weight.

If the dog is overweight this not only spoils its movement but its outline and its well-being.

### **THE REAR END**

Finally, we come to the hips and rear legs of the dog. The back legs should be powerful and extremely well-muscled.

The stifle should never be straight but be well bent and strong and well-muscled. When you feel the muscles of the upper thighs they should react to your touch and feel strong and resistant.

You should NOT be able to feel your fingers on both sides of the thigh touching! This is a terrible fault and shows a dog who has never had enough free running to build muscle.

The hind legs, as previously mentioned, propel the whole body forward, the toes are just a bit longer to give grip and hold and without great muscle tone this doesn't happen.

### **IN THE SHOW RING**

Watching a well exercised Rough Collie is a joy. A correctly made Rough Collie should appear completely comfortable on the move with good length of stride and should be able to cover the ground with ease.

They should have a light effortless easy movement with plenty of reach from the front and power from the rear and preferably a long tail carried straight out behind them.

When on the move the head should be held forward and the tail should be held level with the body out behind giving an almost strait line from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail. A tail held higher is not considered a fault but over the back definitely is.

If the dog is too short in back the rear leg can't extend far enough forward under the body to give the powerful yet fluid easy movement required.

The back leg will meet the front leg on its way through and the dog will have to take short steps.

Seems obvious doesn't it but unfortunately not all exhibitors watch their own dogs moving.

Watching Rough Collies ducking and diving in a paddock as they play and chase their kennel mates is a joy to see. They should be able to turn at speed easily and this is how they build muscle. If they are short in back, they are not able to attain speed with ease nor comfort and certainly could not keep sheep etc. under control.

## MY THOUGHTS

**Always remember no dog is perfect. If it was, we would not need to go to dog shows.**

**As a judge I feel my job is to find the faults of the exhibits, acknowledge them and then put them to the back of my mind and look for the virtues**

**Unless the fault is a serious one, I judge a dog on its virtues.**

**If in doubt when judging a mediocre class with no serious faults but no outstanding virtues, clear your mind as you slowly walk away from the line up of the collies.**

**Then judge the class on the elegance of the dogs in front of you.**

**As a judge, the very first thing that should impress you about the Rough Collie standing, in profile, is elegance.**

**It should scream it's breed and not one part of it should be out of balance to the whole.**

**Because first and foremost it must look like it's breed.**



**(With winners at ENE 2007 & 2016)**

Anne Hollywood.

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