

BORDER TERRIER ANNOTATED STANDARD

This annotated standard is to benefit those interested in judging the Border Terrier. The official Border Terrier Club of America Breed Standard is in **bold** , commentary follows in regular. An Introduction is included for explanation of breed purpose.

INTRODUCTION

The Border Terrier is a "working terrier", bred since at least the 18th century in Northumberland and on the Scottish borders of the United Kingdom. The border farmers, shepherds and sportsmen required a game terrier of sufficient length of leg to follow a horse. This dog must be able to run with the foxhounds, to go to ground after foxes and to maneuver in tight places, and defend himself when necessary.

The breed had other names, depending on the locality. However, in the 1800's the name Border Terrier triumphed because of its long association with the Border Foxhounds and the fact that the breed had been kept pure by the Robeson and Dodd families. Although it is generally accepted that they are related, the Border has no resemblance to the present day Bedlingtons and Dandie Dinmonts. Today one will occasionally see a Border that has the soft topknot characteristic of those two breeds.

The American standard is a more explicit and descriptive copy of the British standard. It is intended to be a word-picture of the ideal Border Terrier.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

He is an active terrier of medium bone, strongly put together, suggesting endurance and agility, but rather narrow in shoulder, body and quarter. The body is covered with a somewhat broken though close-fitting and intensely wiry jacket. The characteristic "otter" head with its keen eye, combined with a body poise which is "at the alert" , gives a look of fearless and implacable determination characteristic of the breed.

Since the Border Terrier is a working terrier of a size to go to ground and able, within reason, to follow a horse, his conformation should be such that he be ideally built to do his job. No deviations from this ideal conformation should be permitted, which would impair his usefulness in running his quarry to earth and in bolting it therefrom. For this work he must be alert, active and agile, and capable of squeezing through narrow apertures and rapidly traversing any kind of terrain. His head, "like that of an otter", is distinctive, and his temperament ideally exemplifies that of a terrier. By nature he is good-tempered, affectionate, obedient, and easily trained. In the field he is hard as nails, "game as they come" and driving in attack. It should be the aim of Border Terrier breeders to avoid overemphasis of any point in the standard as might lead to unbalanced exaggeration.

The Border is a natural terrier. His breeders strenuously resist any attempt to follow fads or emphasize a particular feature. He is not stylized or over groomed in any exaggerated fashion. What you see is what you've got.

A Border should not have:

- * Heavy or spindly bone
- * Loaded shoulders
- * Cobby body
- * Straight stifles
- * Flat feet

Borders should not have sculptured coats, trimmed beards, or fluffed-up front legs in an attempt to look like highly trimmed breeds. This is unseemly in a no-nonsense dog.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Weight: Dogs, 13-15.5 pounds, bitches, 11.5-14 pounds, are appropriate weights for Border Terriers in hardworking condition. The proportions should be that the height at the withers is slightly greater than the distance from the withers to the tail, i.e. by possibly 1-1.5 inches in a 14-pound dog. Of medium bone, strongly put together, suggesting endurance and agility, but rather narrow in shoulder, body and quarter.

Many Borders exceed the suggested weights as few, if any, are in hardworking condition. If two specimens are equally good, preference must be given to the one closest to the standard. Smaller Borders are often overlooked by judges who prefer a more substantial animal. Borders that are too big have lost breed character.

HEAD

Similar to that of an otter. Eyes dark hazel and full of fire and intelligence, moderate in size, neither prominent nor small and beady. Ears small, V-shaped and of moderate thickness, dark preferred. Not set high on the head but somewhat on the side, and dropping forward close to the cheek. They should not break above the level of the skull. Moderately broad and flat in skull with plenty of width between the eyes and between the ears. A slight, moderately broad curve at the stop rather than a pronounced indentation. Cheeks slightly full. Muzzle short and "well filled". A dark muzzle is characteristic and desirable. A few short whiskers are natural to the breed. Nose black, and of good size. Teeth strong, with a scissors bite, large in proportion to size of dog.

Look at a Border's head from the front and in profile. The look and shape of the head distinguish a Border from other terriers. Moderately broad and flat are the key words in the standard. Like the otter head, the Border is refined, not excessively broad or coarse in the skull. The breadth is carried through to below the eyes to give the width and space for the large punishing teeth. The strong masseter muscles give the Border's face a cheeky appearance. The eyes are set wide apart and there is a fill under the eyes. The stop is moderate with little drop-off. An adult Border's skull is flat, not domed. The proportions of a Border's head are 2/3 from the occiput to the stop and 1/3 from the stop to the nose.

The muzzle is strong and in proportion to the head. Some dogs with very hard coats lack furnishings which detract somewhat from their expression. A few whiskers lend character to the head and are typical. A dog should not be penalized for lack of whiskers, because it is always possible they were lost when the dog was working underground or came in contact with wire fencing. A profuse beard is neither necessary or desirable.

The eyes are dark and set well apart. Their expression ranges from friendly placidity to fiery keenness. A large, round or protruding eye can be easily damaged and is faulty. Light eyes or those set too closely together detract from the desired expression.

The Border must have a punishing jaw and large teeth with no missing incisors. The upper teeth fit closely over the lower jaw in a scissors-like grin. Correct teeth are very important. Teeth that are too small are of no use to a working terrier. Undershot or overshot mouths are highly undesirable and are major faults. The lips fit closely over the teeth.

V-shaped, dark ears show the expression to best advantage. Dark ears are preferred. The ears are not set on too high, do not break above the line of the skull and do not lie Fox Terrier-like above the eyes. Round, heavy, hound-like ears, as well as fly-away ears are incorrect. The ear leather drops close to the cheeks, protecting the inner ear when the dog is working. The size of the ears are in proportion to the head.

The nose must be black and of good size. Any color other than black is faulted. Nostrils should be well open for optimum air intake.

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

Neck clean, muscular and only long enough to give a well-balanced appearance. It should gradually widen into the shoulder. Back strong but laterally supple, with no suspicion of a dip behind the shoulder. Loin strong.

Body deep, fairly narrow and of sufficient length to avoid any suggestions of lack of range and agility. The body should be capable of being spanned by a man's hands behind the shoulders. Brisket not excessively deep or narrow. Deep ribs carried well back and not oversprung in view of the desired depth and narrowness to the body. The underline fairly straight. Tail moderately short, thick at the base, then tapering. Not set on too high. Carried gaily when at the alert, but not over the back. When at ease, a Border may drop his stern.

The neck is well set on, long enough to allow freedom of head movement. It should be fairly strong and muscular. A

short necked dog with a stuff appearance is usually too thick in front and too deep in the brisket.

The body must be built to go through narrow spaces. The dog cannot be too wide in front, or oversprung in rib because he would not be able to get through crevices, or worse he would get stuck trying. He must be able to travel over rough terrain, which is why reasonable length of leg and agility are required. Do not mistake deep body to mean a deep brisket. A certain amount of depth is necessary for heart room but the whole body should be rangy, narrow in the shoulder and loin with little tuck-up. The spring of ribs desired in short-backed breeds is out of place in the Border whose ribs are carried well back. They should neither be oversprung or slab sided. The phrase "spanned by a man's hand" comes from the huntsman's way of measuring. There are great differences in the man's and woman's hands. The object is to estimate if the dog has the desired narrowness to enter a fox hole. To try this, place your hands behind the dog's shoulders with the middle fingers meeting underneath the dog.

The Border's tail is natural and is never docked. Its length should complement the size of the dog. A long, narrow whip-like tail is undesirable. The shape is often referred to as being like a carrot, thick at the base and tapering to the end. It appears as an extension of the backbone and should never look as if it has been stuck up at the end of the body. Carried gaily does not mean a sickle carriage, which is a fault. Depending on the mood of the dog, the tail can be carried at half-mast or at one or two o'clock position. Moderate carriage usually goes with a sensible, clever, cheerful disposition. The tail is strong and handy to grab when the occasion warrants.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders well laid back, and of good length, the blades converging to the withers gradually from a brisket not excessively deep or narrow. Forelegs straight and not too heavy in bone and placed slightly wider than in a fox terrier. Feet small and compact. Toes should point forward and be moderately arched with thick pads.

The shoulders are long and sloping, the blades converging to the withers gradually from a brisket not excessively deep or narrow. The shoulders are long and sloping with legs set farther back than in a Fox Terrier. This gives the Border a chesty appearance rather than a straight line when viewed from the side. The Border is an active dog and needs freedom of movement. The shoulders are never loaded because this could cause faulty movement and also cause a dog to get stuck in a hole. Upright shoulders, or legs set too far forward are usually accompanied by a short neck and will be penalized. Exaggerated, deep briskets interfere with freedom of movement and are undesirable.

The forelegs are the same distance apart at the elbows as at the feet. Set on the corners of the body, the legs are straight, not out at the elbows or tied in under the body. A wide fronted dog is at a distinct disadvantage in entering a hole or tight place. There should be no more than a hand's width between the front legs.

HINDQUARTERS

Muscular and racy, with thighs long and nicely molded. Stifles well bent and hocks well let down. Feet as in front.

There must be plenty of drive in the movement of the Border. The thighs are well muscled and the stifles well bent. The hocks are neat and low-set at a right angle to the ground. The hindquarter angulation and musculature should be such that a plumb line dropped from the furthest point of the buttocks passes through the point where the foot joins the pastern. The loin is strong and muscular.

COAT

A short and dense undercoat covered with a very wiry and somewhat broken topcoat which should lie closely, but it must not show a tendency to curl or wave. With such a coat a Border should be able to be exhibited almost in his natural state, nothing more in the way of trimming being needed than a tidying-up of the head, neck and feet. Hide very thick and loose fitting.

The Border Terrier coat adds another dimension to his business-like character and appearance. It must be a double coat for protection on the job. A lack of an undercoat is faulty, and a soft, fluffy coat is also faulty. Coat texture is more important than coat length, it should be hard and wiry to the touch. Coat length varies greatly among dogs in the ring, but there should be enough coat to ascertain that it is indeed a double coat. The tweedy jacket coat is preferred. Borders should never be overly trimmed to resemble other breeds. Excessive grooming should be

penalized.

The Border is the only terrier that should have a thick and loose fitting skin (hide or pelt). This is crucial because it protects the dog from injury inflicted by his quarry, other dogs, underbrush, etc. A judge must not hesitate to grasp a handful of skin in back of the shoulders (without pinching), and lift it. This does not hurt the dog, in fact Borders are quite used to it. A thin, light skin is a fault.

COLOR

Red, grizzle and tan, blue and tan, or wheaten. A small amount of white may be allowed on the chest but white on the feet should be penalized. A dark muzzle is characteristic and desirable.

Color is immaterial and all colors are equally acceptable, except white, which is only permissible on the chest in small amount. The reds vary from a light red to a rich dark red (like a fox) with dark ears and muzzle. The grizzle and tans have tan legs, sometimes called saddlebacks, are not seen as frequently. They might seem to be black and tan, but silver hairs as well as red or fawn hairs grow through to give a speckled appearance (in an adult dog), which is correct. The wheaten is straw colored and is not seen in America, and few are reported in Britain. Most Borders have a ring of contrasting color a little way down the tail. This is perfectly normal. Dark ears and muzzle are most desirable.

GAIT

Straight and rhythmical before and behind, with good length of stride and flexing of stifle and hock. The dog should respond to his handler with a gait which is free, agile and quick.

A Border's gait has been compared to that of a hunter whose sole purpose is to get over rough ground as rapidly and economically as possible. It is not a hackney gait. Good reach and drive are essential with front legs swinging easily from the shoulders. A dog should not toe in or out, or paddle. Moving too close behind, cow hocks or straight stifles all interfere with rear movement. There should be ample push and follow through.

TEMPERAMENT

His temperament ideally exemplifies that of a terrier. By nature he is good-tempered, affectionate, obedient and easily trained. In the field he is hard as nails, "game as they come", and driving in attack.

Those who label Borders lacking in spirit because they do not spar are unfamiliar with true Border type. Border Terriers are not aggressive terriers. They are bred to get along with other dogs because they must work as part of a team. A quarrelsome disposition is a serious fault. Any border who is quarrelsome and aggressive should be suspected of having improper Border temperament. As for the Border's true spirit, it is best seen when he is facing vermin, or when he is attacked.

SCALE OF POINTS

Head, Ears, Neck and Teeth.....	20	Back and Loin.....	10
Legs and Feet.....	15	Hindquarters.....	10
Coat and Skin.....	10	Tail.....	5
Shoulders and Chest.....	10	General Appearance....	10
Eyes and Expression.....	10	Total.....	100

CONCLUSION

The Border is a rugged individualist and friendly fellow, and most probably has been out working vermin, romping with children, or lying at his owner's feet in front of the fire the day before you see him in the ring. There is no difference in type, balance or temperament between fierce hunter and amiable companion.

The Border usually likes to swim, given the opportunity. Perhaps he remembers that his ancestors in Britain were used on otters with the Otter Hounds. The Border's Terrier mouth is a formidable weapon and is vital to his survival. The fierceness with which he hunts native woodchucks comes from ancestors that hunted badgers. Some dogs who have had the freedom associated with hunting may take a dim view of trotting around the show ring at the end of a lead, but Border Terriers are adaptable to most situations and willingly do as they are asked.

The Border Terriers is sound, well-proportioned and balanced, and is a sensible, sensitive and devoted companion for all ages.

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