



## **A LIVING ART FORM**

Our Bedlington Terriers are living art forms, forever changing and taking on beautiful new looks during their life cycles. The primary source of this evolution is the pigmentation of their skin and coat. The key words in our Breed Standard are very clear, “The topknots of all adults should be lighter than the body color” and “Darker body pigmentation of all colors is to be encouraged.”

Some fanciers have taken quite a leap, and have interpreted the phrase “to be encouraged” as “must”, and hence, a flurry of spirited controversy frequently erupts on chat lists and breed publications. Along with hereditary factors, pigmentation in our Bedlington Terriers is influenced by nutrition, climate, environment, age, hormones, drug treatment, coat care and general health to mention a few. One thing is certain, and that is a self-colored adult Bedlington, no matter how deep the pigment, is very incorrect.

Our Parent Club’s President-elect, Kristine Mullen, is also serving the Club as our Judges’ Education Chairperson. She is a breeder of long experience and high achievement, and has served the Bedlington Terrier Club of America in many capacities. Kris is my guest for this column, and here are her thoughts about Bedlington coat color:

“The Standard states: ‘Blue, Sandy, Liver, Blue and Tan, Sandy and Tan and Liver and Tan. In bi-colors, the Tan markings are found on the legs, chest, under the tail, inside the hind-quarters and over each eye. The topknots of all adults should be lighter than the body color. Patches of darker hair from an injury are not objectionable as these are only temporary. Darker body pigmentation of all colors is to be encouraged.’”

The color of Bedlingtons changes from being very dark as puppies to the light colors we see in adult dogs. The Standard only says that the topknots should be lighter than the body in adult dogs. However, most Bedlingtons go through stages in their lives where their coats are almost white. This can happen when they grow out of their puppy coat, or with bitches, their color can change when they go in and out of season. I think that the amount of time dogs spend outside can give them more pigment in their coat and skin.

My main purpose in writing about coat color is to make the point that a Bedlington should not be penalized for having coat color regardless of the age. There is no specific age in a Bedlington for the puppy coat color to change. I don’t like to see puppies penalized for keeping their coat color for a longer period of time, or conversely, lightening up too quickly. I have also recently seen a Judge withhold a ribbon on an adult do for having too much pigment in its body coat. According to our Standard, this should not happen.

As Judges’ Education Chairperson, I would like to see Judges reward darker body

pigmentation, not penalize it, regardless of the age of the dog. However, I do not want to see pigmentation rewarded to the point that it sacrifices the overall quality of the dog.”

Thank you, Kris. In our next column, we will gather the thoughts on this subject from our most prominent breeders, a group defined by our parent club awards policies as “Breeders of Distinction”.

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