

The Bedlington Coat Part 2

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My first Bedlington was a rescue; his pedigree was a mystery. Breeders would often comment on his nice dark color, coat texture, and that he looked “English”. Not knowing exactly what “English” meant, I took it as a compliment. However, I became frustrated that my Bedlington didn’t have the full white coat seen in magazines of some show quality Bedlingtons. Those were top winning dogs, so that type of coat had to be correct, right? Even the official AKC Bedlington Terrier poster dog shows a fuller white coat. So my Bedlington must be of bad breed type or else something must be wrong with him, right? I once had his thyroid checked to see if that was the problem with his coat. How naïve I was back then! My rescue Bedlington had a great coat.

History shows Bedlingtons losing coat color as competition at dog shows strayed from the first word “dog” and more toward the second word “show”. Breeders began to prefer fuller thicker coats on their Bedlingtons because that type was showier, easier to sculpt with scissors, and better to hide faults under. The problem with that coat type was usually lack of color. With only 5 points (AKC Scale of Points) awarded for coat, breeders back then might have been more focused on other aspects like heads or body which carry greater point values. And they knew that Bedlington coats change color throughout the lifetime of the dog. Born black or dark brown and lightening up as they mature is not the end of color transition. Adult body color still changes. For example, a Bedlington that is lighter during winter may have a darker body coat during summer. And a bitch in season may be darker than any other time of year. These scenarios



Darker body color is to be encouraged in the Bedlington Terrier

are perfectly normal and may be why coat was assigned low points upon evaluation of our breed.

Bedlington color comes from two types of coat hair - hard guard hairs and soft linty hairs. Although both types carry color, the hard guard hairs tend to be darker but less abundant. The Standard tells us “a very distinctive mixture of hard and soft hair” but does not define the word “mixture”. The word itself is debatable and prompts a controversial subject among breeders. Is 10% hard hairs to 90% soft hairs considered a mixture? Or is 50% to 50%? Not even



The topknot should be lighter than the body color on adult Bedlington Terriers

Webster’s Dictionary defines a mixture in percentages but rather in other debatable terms like “blend” or “combination”. Therefore any mixture of hair must be acceptable until the definition is made clearer. However, the Standard does state in undebatable terms “topknots of all adults should be lighter than the body color” and “darker body pigmentation of all colors is to be encouraged”. So whether the adult dog is blue, liver, or sandy, a Bedlington should not be white or one color all over. There should always be some definition of color between the topknot and body of the dog.

The subject of coat color in the Bedlington will always be controversial, but our breed would be better served by acknowledging color fluctuates in adult dogs and agreeing that darker body color is choice. Along with this, one should see a mixture of coat hairs and top knots lighter than body color in the Bedlington.