

Spring Is In The Air

Now that Winter is behind us, it is time to talk about Spring. Not the season, but spring as in the beautiful springy gait of a Bedlington Terrier!

The Bedlington Terrier standard clearly states *“Unique lightness of movement. Springy in the slower paces, not stilted or hackneyed. Must not cross, weave or paddle.”* This written description creates a mental picture of how the Bedlington should look when in motion. All too often judges either ignore this unique distinction of movement for our breed or they lack knowledge of it altogether. This is not a criticism, but the result of showing a breed that is less popular and often has a low number of show entries. And even though our Bedlingtons are terriers, their movement is quite atypical of their 4-square terrier group cousins. Circumstances of popularity and low entries have resulted in Bedlington movement that is more terrier generic - resembling that of the Smooth and Wire Fox Terriers. It is quite common to see *incorrect* Bedlington movement in today’s show ring. If judges continue to select dogs that do not have true

Bedlington movement, then over time other judges might follow suit and our breed could quite possibly lose its unique springy gait altogether. The Smooth, Wire, and Airedale have movement described as straight forward with forelegs hanging perpendicular and swinging parallel. These terriers have front legs that are suppose to move like a pendulum of clock (side view) Their gait is also rhythmic in motion. The description of movement for these terrier types clearly creates a different mental image than that of the Bedlington.

Form follows function, and understanding the structure of the Bedlington lends to understanding its unique springy gait. The front legs of the Bedlington (when viewed from the front of the dog) are straight and wider apart at the chest than at the feet - *remember the Bedlington is the only terrier that should stand with its front feet close together.* When viewed from the side, *the front legs should have a slight bend to pasterns which are long, sloping, and without weakness.* Correct structure of the pasterns is one component that generates spring to the Bedlingtons gait. Bedlingtons should never appear to “pound the ground” with its front feet or have heavy wrist action. Nor should they have limp weak wrist action causing a





more hackneyed motion. Viewed from the side, the Bedlington should never appear to have a short, quick front movement like that of the other long-legged terrier breeds cited earlier. The Bedlington front should move with a low forward reach and a graceful lift from the wrist. The front lifted leg should just float inches off of the ground, be set down soundly, and be followed by the other leg. The Bedlington reach is *generated from a forward extension of a laid back shoulder and not from the elbow*. When viewed from the front, the Bedlington should never appear out at the elbow. *Elbows should be tight to the body*. And the distance between the front feet, when set down, should fall to a more central point on the ground. And like most dogs, *Bedlings should never cross, weave, or paddle*.



Rear movement is derived from the Bedlingtons lithe and muscular hind legs (which are longer than the front legs) and from *the natural arch over the loin*. Remember, *the Bedlington body is slightly greater in length than height*. Bedlingtons are not square, as appealing to the eye as that may be. Watching the top line of the moving Bedlington

on a side view is one way of observing the spring in its gait. The top line should have a slight up-and-down motion to it and not appear flat. *Well angulated stifles with well let down hocks* create a vertical lift to the top line causing the springy motion, as well as, low graceful rear drive. Viewed from behind, a standing Bedlington should be true in the rear, meaning the feet should be the same distance apart as the hips. When moving, this distance stays about the same but at greater speeds, the rear feet will converge more to the center. However, *Bedlings should never cross over in the rear or be cow hocked*.

In order for the Bedlingtons unique springy gait to be observed correctly, it is very important that *the Bedlington be shown in the slower paces*. If a Bedlington is being shown at a running pace, the judge must ask “why”? What is being covered up? And where is the spring in its gait?

Understanding the requirements of the Bedlington Terrier standard is up to breeders. The future of the breed relies on them to produce the correct dog. When trying to improve on one or two attributes, other essential characteristics, like movement or gait, are often overlooked. If this happens, the unique and elegantly graceful, springy movement of the Bedlington Terrier may be lost forever. And the judges, who do know what they are looking for when graced with our breed, will never be able to see it in the show ring.

*Written by AKC Gazette Columnist
Laurie Friesen*