

## **SHETLAND SHEEPDOG**

*A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.*

Most recent changes to this Standard has an effective date of 01/01/2026

### **ORIGIN**

Great Britain.

### **UTILISATION**

Companion dog and Sheepdog.

### **BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

*[ed. For interest, from Wikipedia: The Shetland Sheepdog]:*

Unlike many miniature breeds that resemble their larger counterparts, this breed was not developed simply by selectively breeding the Rough Collie for smaller and smaller size. The original sheepdog of Shetland was a Spitz-type dog, probably similar to the modern Icelandic Sheepdog. This dog was crossed with mainland working Collies brought to the islands, and then after being brought to England, it was further extensively crossed with the Rough Collie, and other breeds including some or all of the extinct Greenland Yakki, the King Charles Spaniel, the Pomeranian, and possibly the Border Collie. The original Spitz-type working sheepdog of Shetland is now extinct, having been replaced for herding there by the Border Collie. Shelties were used for herding until commercial livestock farming required larger breeds. When the breed was originally introduced, breeders called them Shetland Collies, which upset Rough Collie breeders, so the name was changed to Shetland Sheepdog. During the early 20th century (up until the 1940s), additional crosses were made to Rough Collies to help retain the desired Rough Collie type.



*Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library*

### **GENERAL APPEARANCE**

Small, long-haired working dog of great beauty, free from cloddiness and coarseness, action lithe and graceful. Outline symmetrical so that no part appears out of proportion to whole. Abundant coat, mane, and frill, shapeliness of head, and sweetness of expression combine to present the ideal.

### **CHARACTERISTICS**

Alert, gentle, intelligent, strong, and active.

### **TEMPERAMENT**

Affectionate and responsive to his owner, reserved towards strangers, never nervous.

### **HEAD & SKULL**

Head refined and elegant with no exaggerations; when viewed from top or side, a long, blunt wedge, tapering from ear to nose. Width and depth of skull in proportion to length of skull and muzzle. Whole to be considered in connection with size of dog. Skull flat, moderately wide between ears, with no prominence of occipital bone. Cheeks flat, merging smoothly into well-rounded muzzle. Skull and muzzle of equal length, dividing point at inner corner of eye. Topline of skull parallel to topline of muzzle, with slight but definite stop. Nose, lips, and eye-rims black. The characteristic expression is obtained by the perfect balance and combination of skull and foreface; shape, colour, and placement of eyes; correct position and carriage of ears.

#### **Eyes:**

Medium size obliquely set, almond shape. Dark brown except in the case of merles, where one or both may be blue or blue-flecked.

### Ears:

Small, moderately wide at base, placed fairly close together on top of skull. In repose, thrown back; when alert brought forward and carried semi-erect with tips falling forward.

### Mouth:

Jaws level, clean, strong with well-developed underjaw. Lips tight. Teeth sound with a perfect, regular, and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. A full complement of 42 properly placed teeth highly desired.

## **NECK**

Muscular, well-arched, of sufficient length to carry head proudly.

## **FOREQUARTERS**

Shoulders very well laid back. At withers, separated only by vertebrae, but blades sloping outwards to accommodate desired spring of ribs. Shoulder joint well-angled. Upper arm and shoulder blade approximately equal in length. Elbow equidistant from ground and withers. Forelegs straight when viewed from front, muscular and clean with strong, but not heavy, bone. Pasterns strong and flexible.

## **BODY**

Slightly longer from point of shoulder to bottom of croup than height at withers. Chest deep, reaching to point of elbow. Ribs well-sprung, tapering at lower half to allow free play of forelegs and shoulders. Back level, with graceful sweep over loins, croup slopes gradually to rear.

## **HINDQUARTERS**

Thigh broad and muscular, thigh bones set into pelvis at right angles. Stifle joint has distinct angle, hock joint clean cut, angular, well let down with strong bone. Hocks straight when viewed from behind.

## **FEET**

Oval, soles well-padded, toes arched and close together.

## **TAIL**

Set low; tapering bone reaches at least to hock; with abundant hair and slight upward sweep. May be slightly raised when moving but never over level of back. Never kinked.

## **GAIT / MOVEMENT**

Lithe, smooth and graceful with drive from hindquarters, covering the maximum amount of ground with the minimum of effort. Pacing, plaiting, rolling, or stiff, stilted, up and down movement highly undesirable.

## **COAT**

Double; outercoat of long hair, harsh-textured, and straight. Undercoat soft, short, and close. Mane and frill very abundant, forelegs well-feathered. Hind legs above hocks profusely covered with hair, below hocks fairly smooth. Face smooth. The coat should fit the body and not dominate or detract from the outline of the dog. Smooth-coated specimens highly undesirable.

## **COLOUR**

- Sable: clear or shaded, any colour from pale gold to deep mahogany, in its shade, rich in tone. Wolf-sable and grey undesirable.
- Tricolour: intense black on body, rich tan markings preferable.
- Blue Merle: clear silvery blue, splashed and marbled with black. Rich tan marking preferable but absence not penalised. Heavy black markings, slate or rusty tinge in either top or undercoat highly undesirable; general effect must be blue.
- Black and white.
- Black and tan.

\* White markings may appear (except on black and tan) in blaze, collar, and chest, frill, legs, and tip of tail. All or some white markings are preferable (except on black and tan) but absence of these markings not to be penalised.

\* Patches of white on body highly undesirable. Any other colour or combination of colours unacceptable.

## **SIZE**

### Height at withers:

**Males:** 37cm (approx. 14½");

**Females:** 35.5cm (approx. 14")

More than 2.5cm (1") above or below these heights highly undesirable.

## FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

*N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.*



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**When judging this breed at FCI International Shows, use:**

**FCI Standard No 88: SHETLAND SHEEPDOG**

**FCI Classification: Group 1 – Sheepdogs & Cattle dogs (except Swiss Cattle dogs)**

Section 1. Sheepdogs

Without Working Trial.