

Bearded Collies
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Let's Not Lose "Beardieness"

One of the most glorious aspects of enjoying Bearded Collies is seeing them in motion. It is a gift to witness their inner spark gleam from their eyes as they play, herd, jump, chase, and move around the ring.

Owners and breeders are aware of this gift. This "Beardie spark" is what makes owning one or several of the breed a truly special experience. This "Beardieness" is not just attitude or expression but mostly action of the Bearded Collie's body that springs from the spirit within it. The breed's movement is a quality that is unique and worth fighting for, and it is the responsibility of breeders to ensure that it is not only preserved but also strengthened.

The breed's origin and history are important to its current physical reality. This herding breed should have the strength and flexibility to move effortlessly and tirelessly. If they are not in proper physical condition, they lose some of their Beardieness. Remember that Beardies should have the energy and structure to work for hours at a time.

Beardies competing in any type of activity should be in proper physical condition. Unfortunately, this necessity for maintaining and advancing the breed's uniqueness has been lost by some. I'm sure this phenomenon has occurred in other breeds as they grow and become involved in more activities. The Beardies I see competing in agility and herding are generally in proper physical condition for the breed. In the Best of Breed ring, however, most of the dogs lined up appear to be distant cousins of the breed, with saggy toplines and loose legs.

Owners and breeders are responsible for ensuring that their conformation entries are in the proper physical condition. Aside from staying true to the breed and its function and history by presenting your dog in top physical condition, you also enhance your chances of winning. Isn't that why you entered the show in the first place?

As a breeder-owner-handler, when I entered the conformation ring, the goal was to be the best in the lineup—to have the best conformation and be the best trained, the best groomed, and the best conditioned. Have the goals changed? You should enter the ring with a dog that possesses all aspects of Beardieness. One with a saggy topline and loose legs does not qualify as such.

Be aware that your dog's physical conditioning is key to exemplifying the breed's uniqueness, more so than having a long, heavy coat. Demand of yourself and your handlers that your Beardie specials are in top condition. This is important in preserving the energetic, life-loving herding breed you love and maintaining its Beardieness. —

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