

## American Shetland Sheepdog Association

### To All Shetland Sheepdog Judges:

The ASSA would like to reiterate some of the points of our standard that we feel a judge must keep in mind while judging our breed.

Undue emphasis is being placed on showmanship in judging the Shetland Sheepdog. We believe that not only has quality been relegated to second place, but that the demand for non-stop showmanship is in fact changing the temperament of the breed from a "reserved" dog that is called for in the standard to a more aggressive, less compliant animal. We would like to stress that showmanship shall only be required in an amount sufficient for a judge to properly evaluate a Sheltie's quality. If a dog is not showing at the moment you are trying to assess his ears and expression, simply talking to the dog or making a non-threatening sound will usually attract his attention long enough for you to make a judgment.

We feel it is desirable for you to structurally examine Shetland Sheepdogs on a table, but the dog should not be expected to bait or show ears while on the table, nor is the table the place for you to judge the dog's overall appearance, general outline or expression. These things should be judged when the dog is on the ground.

While our standard treats dogs and bitches equally in regard to size, our standard states, "mane and frill should be abundant, and particularly impressive in males." Please allow for this coat distinction and do not penalize females when competing with more abundantly coated males. Also be aware that abundant coat does not imply excessive coat. This is still to be judged as a working dog and excessive coat would be counter to their performance as a herding dog in the field. A coat of correct harsh outer hair and soft undercoat should protect the dog from the elements, but not impede its work.

In judging any other color than the blue merle, a few specifics need to be clarified. Are the eyes dark and free of blue or merle flecks? The standard says, "**Color must be dark, with blue or merle eyes permissible in blue merles only.**" Therefore, a sable, sable merle, tri, or bi-black with blue or blue merle flecks in the eye(s) **is not acceptable!** If you think you have seen any blue or merle in the eye(s) of a Sheltie that is not blue merle, please change the angle at which you view the dog to be sure it is actually blue and not a reflection of light in the eyes.

The sable merle is not mentioned in the standard as one of the acceptable colors. It is genotypically a sable diluted by the presence of the merle gene. Sable merles exhibit a wide range of sable coat colors, ranging from a coat that appears to many observers as a sable, to a coat showing a blotchy appearance, to a coat that is best described as "calico" and may even have areas of blue. We do not ask judges to try to determine whether or not a dog is a sable merle, although some will be obvious to you. Our standard lists as faults in any coat color "washed-out or degenerate colors." When a sable coat is diluted by the merle gene, exhibiting what appears to be striping or other irregular patterning, it can be deemed degenerate, just as a dilute sable is considered washed out. These color faults should be penalized to the degree that they deviate from the ideal in any color.

The overall quality of the dog is most important, however, we appreciate your time and attention to the above mentioned points when judging the Shetland Sheepdog.