

What About That Front?

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Cardigan breeders and breeder-judges often say: "The front is the hallmark of the breed." Yet it seems to be the part that is the most difficult to "get."

The correct Cardigan front is not out at the elbows; the ankles don't collapse inward; the paws shouldn't turn out beyond 30 degrees; the chest is not flat between the legs; the legs are not straight and set far apart. The prosternum is not flat; the shoulders are not straight; the prosternum and the elbow should not be so close together that the dog sets up over himself. The ribcage should not be flat.

The correct Cardigan front has a wrap that *cradles* a well let-down chest. The chest should fit into your cupped hand with an obvious rounded "point;" we call this an inverted egg. The pasterns should be sturdy and relatively short. The paws should remain within the 30 degrees suggested for ideal turnout. The prosternum should be pronounced, like the prow of a ship, and the distance between prosternum and elbow should make up *approximately* one-third of the body length. Shoulder and upper arm are supposed to be set at an approximate right angle, with good layback, and the flowing neck ties into the shoulders *behind* the elbows. Ideally, the upper and lower arms are equal. The ribspring should be rounded and generous. The deep chest should flow in a curve up to the ribcage, blending easily.

In motion, from the side, a correct front allows for good reach. The forward-back rotation of the shoulder will show equal reach, and matching extension under the ribs. In motion, from the front, the legs *tend* toward one another as if to single-track, but are too short to actually do so. Movement should be clean coming, with sturdy legs; short pasterns aid the appearance of strength and correctness. Legs should neither be too close, nor too wide, and without pronounced twist at the ankles. Leg bone should be moderate, but appear sturdy enough to match the mass of the body. And while the Cardigan front carries more weight and mass than the rear, it should not be so heavy as to mimic muscle-bound body builders.

Rather than judging Cardigans only in the ring, a visit to a herding trial will show why the Cardigan is built as he is, and why correct structure is vital. The rear propels the front, the front allows for physical balance as the Cardigan works like a cutting horse, moving quickly and efficiently from side to side. Because of the

mass in the front end, the turned out paws aid balance as the dog moves laterally.

The next time judges, provisionals, and prospective judges visit the CWCCA National Specialty, they should seriously consider attending the herding trials.

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