

# Bird's Eye View

## An American Breeder-Judge's Perspective

By: Rodney Herner

I would like to give you an insight into what goes through a judge's mind as you walk into the ring with your Manchester Terrier. The judge is required to compare your exhibit to the description of the Standard of Perfection that was put together by your National club . The closer your dog comes to this description, the better chance you have of winning.

The judge's first view of your dog, as you walk into the ring, is the over all outline. All breeds have a distinct outline, or silhouette, which should be readily recognized as an important breed characteristic. Judges' first impressions are formed when that outline is viewed. These impressions can be lasting.

The outline of the Manchester Terrier should appear to be sleek, but sturdily constructed, with adequate bone density that is not overdone, so that an appearance of elegance is portrayed. The outline should not appear to be that of a square breed, but rather one that should measure a greater distance from point of shoulder to ischium than from the highest point of the withers to the ground.

The head should be rather long , well filled , and with a strong underjaw. Ears should appear to be erect, cropped, or button, depending on the variety of the Manchester.



Photo by Cindi Lee



Photo by Savotefare

The chest should reach to the elbows with a curving arch reaching to the abdomen, giving a graceful, elegant look to the outline. The front legs, which should appear to be the same length elbow to ground as is the distance from elbow to withers, should be set well under the dog with adequate bone. The rear legs should be carried well back with muscular upper and lower thighs equal in length. The stifle should appear well turned and hocks are well let down. Feet should be examined on the table.

The line from the neck to the tail should also be graceful with the slightly arched neck blending smoothly into sloping shoulders. The topline, should show a slight rise over the loin. The rise should be above the lumbar vertebrae. If the rise is over the thoracic vertebrae, it is too far forward and would be considered a roached topline. The topline ends with a slightly sloping croup that flows into the tail set. The tail should be carried in a slight upward curve, but not over the back.

These are the features that go into creating that “Manchester Terrier Silhouette” the judge is looking for, even before you take your first step. Once you take that first step, the dog’s movement will validate the correct or incorrect angulation and musculature of your entry.

What is needed to achieve correct Manchester Terrier gait? The standard calls for gait that is free and effortless. Several things are required to attain this. In order to get good reach of the forequarters without an incorrect hackney or goosetstep gate, the shoulder blade (scapula) and upper arm (humerus) must be equal in length. With the shoulders well laid back, ideal angulation of these bones would put the elbow directly under the withers. When the humerus is shorter than the scapula, a condition that is present in many breeds today, the front stride is shortened and the swing of the blades is restricted resulting in shorter steps. Likewise, in the rear, inadequate angulation (bend of stifle) would prevent the strong driving power needed to match the front reach. During movement, the judge will also look for head carriage that is up and out, the slight rise over the loin must be evident, and the tail should be carried in a slight upward curve, but never over the back.



Photo by Sunshine Portraits



Photo by Dean Dennis Photography

So, before you even get your dog on the table, all of the above have already been noted. Some judges prefer to place the dog on the table first thing. I feel it is much better to let the dog loosen up a bit before the table examination. A true outline of the dog is not always apparent on the table. I never judge topline on the table. In the next issue I will try to tell you what the judge’s eyes and hands are searching for while your dog is on the table.

*Rod Herner bred Manchester Terriers for more than 30 years under the Renreh prefix, producing multiple group, Best in Show and Specialty winners, including the only Toy Manchester Terrier ever to win the Toy Group at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. Now retired from breeding, Rod continues to be actively involved in the dog world as a licensed AKC judge.*

# *Bird's Eye View*

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In my previous article, I explained what goes through the judge's mind as you walk into the show ring and as you move your dog. In this article I will explain what the judge's eyes and hands are searching for during the table examination.

As you set up your dog on the table, the judge should be a distance away taking a profile look. He/she will be looking for a slightly longer than tall silhouette. The judge will also check to see if the distance from withers to elbow and elbow to ground is equal. The table view of these points is more accurate at an outdoor show, as grass length can obscure the true proportions.

From this profile view, the judge can determine whether or not the Toy or Standard is within the size range called for in the standard. If any entry appears to be oversized, the judge will call for a scale and weigh the exhibit. If the Toy is over 12 lbs., the judge will excuse the exhibit and mark his/her book weighed out/excused. In the United States, this is not a disqualification as the "oversized Toy" could be entered as a Standard in the future. If the Standard weighs over 22 lbs., the judge will mark his/her book disqualified- weighed out.





Next the judge will approach the dog from the front and check to see that the front is not too wide and that the shoulders appear well laid back. A convex or bulging line, seen from the front would indicate loaded shoulders. The dog's chest should be well coated. Judges will fault a thin or sparse coat on the chest. Bone density, which should be adequate, but not coarse, will be noted from this view. Straight front legs with upright pasterns and a tight cat foot, with the two middle toes being longer, can be checked next.

Examination of the head comes next. The judge should approach the head with an outstretched hand, palm up, offering a gentle, non-menacing gesture. From a frontal view, the judge is looking for dark almond shaped eyes, a flat skull that is not too wide, and a well filled muzzle with strong underjaw, giving a blunted wedge appearance to the head. The bite is checked next and, as the standard states, either a level or scissor bite is correct. Although our standard calls for full dentition, I would advise all judges NOT to pry open the jaw and count teeth, as you would for a Doberman. A simple raising of the lips to check the bite and to check for premolars will suffice. I do not penalize a missing pre-molar or two, but I do think that any missing incisors are a much more serious fault. The full front grouping of teeth are an integral part of the grabbing and holding of vermin, which is the breed's primary function.

I haven't forgotten the ears. Manchesters use their ears as a major indicator of their mood; therefore, we cannot expect to always see the true ear shape and carriage on the table. Of course, the judge will note that the Toys ears are only naturally erect. Any other ear on the Toy disqualifies. The Standards ears are naturally erect, button, or cropped, with no preference among them. The last check point for the head should be done from the side. Equal length of skull and muzzle with a slight stop and parallel lines of both should be found.

The judge should now move to the side and run a hand down over the neck, checking for a nice arch that blends smoothly into well laid back shoulders. Any abrupt angle here would indicate a steep shoulder angle, which could adversely affect the appearance of neck length and, of course, will certainly affect the front movement, as mentioned in the previous article. The coat should be short, dense, glossy, but not soft. We check to see that the forelegs are well under the brisket. Next, the length of the shoulder blade and the upper arm should be measured. This is accomplished by placing one finger (right hand) on the highest point of the shoulder blade and one finger each (left hand) on the point of shoulder and the elbow. These two bones should be equal in length.



Next, both hands will be gently smoothed over the ribs, checking to find a good spring of ribs that flatten in the lower end. At this point, elbows should be checked for tightness to the chest. The ribs should extend well back. A well arched tuck up should be evident starting at the deep brisket. Although the breed should be slightly longer than tall, the length should never be in the loin. The standard calls for a topline that rises slightly over the loin. This is a feature that, I believe, is best judged on the floor. Tail set and length can be checked now. The judge should check for a sloping croup. We don't want to see a Fox Terrier tail set high on a level croup. The tail, which should be well coated, is now checked for length. The tip should not go beyond the hocks. Tail carriage should be judged on the floor. Stifles are now checked for adequate angulation.

From the rear, the judge now checks for well muscled thighs and well let down hocks that turn neither in nor out. Thighs should also be well coated. Rear feet should also be cat like, but the middle toes are not longer as are the front toes.

As there is a lengthy section on color in our standard, correct color and markings must be checked by the judge. This is certainly best done during the table examination. All of the tan markings should be a rich mahogany tan. All markings should be well defined with no bleeding of black into tan. Any color other than black & tan disqualifies.

The judge will check for the following markings:

- *Head*- a small tan spot over each eye and on each check. The muzzle is tanned to the nose. Tan extends under the throat, ending in the shape of the letter “V”.
- *Chest*- Tan spots, called “rosettes” on each side of the chest, above the front legs
- *Front legs*- Black “thumbprint” patch on the front at the pastern. A distinct island of black is best. Black “pencil mark” lines run on the top of each toe.
- *Rear legs*- Black “pencil marks” as in front. Tan running up inside to stifle joint.
- *Rear*- Tan under tail & on the vent.

The judge must know that white on any part of the coat is a serious fault and becomes a disqualification if the white forms a patch of ½ inch or more.

All of the above features are checked by the judge during the table examination. It must be done quickly, as the judge is expected to complete the total judging of each dog in no more than two and one half minutes. We judges strive to be expedient, while all encompassing.

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Photo by Martin Hershberg