

BREED COLUMNS

HERDING GROUP



Bearded Collies

WHAT ARE THE CHANCES?

It's a quiet day. Nothing happening. A good day to bathe the Beardie.

A short time later you have her in the tub, sopping wet and suds from stem to stern. What are the chances that (A) the FedEx man will arrive at your door with the package you've been anxiously awaiting, signature required; (B) the phone will ring and ring and ring; or (C) there is a loud crash from the kitchen and the sound of glass shattering?

Or your Beardie has emerged from the bath sparkling clean but still

somewhat wet. What are the chances (A) someone will open the door, and she'll dash out for a roll in the dirt; (B) she'll sneak into your bedroom to take a nap on your bed with her slightly soggy body; or (C) it will rain for the next three days, and she'll look like she's never been near a bath?

Or your girl produces gorgeous pups but only comes into season once a year. That time is near. What are the chances the stud dog you'd picked for her (A) is being campaigned and is on the other side of the continent at present; (B) has been sold to a new owner who lives in the

Czech Republic; or (C) has gone sterile?

You've found a suitable mate for your Beardie, and you're awaiting the birth of a promising litter. What are the chances the litter will be due (A) the date of your only child's wedding, (B) Christmas Day, or (C) the week of the national specialty?

Your female presents you with a handsome litter of three black boys and three brown girls. What are the chances prospective buyers will request (A) brown boys, (B) black girls, or (C) blues or fawns?

Your male is looking especially handsome, so you optimistically enter him in a six-day show cluster. What are the chances he (A) will roll in burrs and scratch out half his coat before you realize, (B) will notice your female has come into season and stops eating until he looks anorexic, or (C) will start limping for no discernible reason? (Don't worry. The limping will clear up the day after the shows end.)

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Just when you've decided there's nothing in the ring who can defeat your special, what are the chances (A) he'll be bored by the whole business and mope around the ring, (B) he'll relieve himself in the ring, or (C) he'll lose to a 6-month-old at her first show?

A friend has a family emergency and has to leave town. Out of the goodness of your heart you agree to look after her dog while she's away. What are the chances the dog will (A) come down with kennel cough the following day, (B) come into season, or (C) be so miserable missing her mom that she'll chew up your new sofa?

You've been training your Beardie for her debut in Novice obedience, and she's letter perfect. You walk into the ring, and (A) when you say "sit" she looks at you as though she's never heard the word, (B) she does the entire heeling exercise on the right side and six feet in arrears, or (C) she does everything perfectly until the Long

Down—which she does on her back with all four feet waving in the air.

With any luck, you have progressed to Open obedience. What are the chances your boy will (A) walk through the broad jump, stepping carefully between the boards; (B) happily retrieve the dumbbell but return it to the judge; or (C) drop perfectly on the recall—but not until his nose is almost touching your toes?

So, have any of these things happened to you? Or is it just me?

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Belgian Malinois

THE WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE

When I left off in the June 2024 issue, I had just introduced the height data that I collected on Malinois and other Belgians. Height requirements are well documented in our standards, and don't depend on much of anything except

genetic predisposition (early nutrition is likely not a problem in this subpopulation). Remember, we are working our way around to considering whether our Belgians have the right amount of "substance"—or, as the Belgian Sheepdog standard used to put it, "timber."

To me, "substance" is a word that describes the range of builds from delicate, reedy, and fine-boned to "built like a tank," with heavy bone. Dogs of the same height could be this different. Consider the Whippet and the Australian Shepherd, which have approximately the same height range but do not have the same amount of skeletal and bodily heft. While each might be appropriate to its function and standard, they do not have the same amount of "substance." A dog of the same height may be built more or less heavily. Presumably, even for dogs of the same height this would show up as a weight difference. Indeed, to compare two breeds of similar

