

Bedlington Terrier: a lamb with a heart of a lion.

Text: Adelina Rogowska-Wrzesinska
(breed responsible in Danish Terrier Club);
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The Bedlington is an unusually looking terrier. Its soft and light coat combined with the characteristics grooming style make him resemble a little lamb - symbol of gentleness and humility.

But the appearance is very deceptive. At home Bedlington terrier is calm and relaxed; outdoors, when encouraged, is full of energy, courage and perseverance like a lion.

I am not a poodle!

For a layperson Bedlington terrier very often resembles a poodle. Thus as a Bedlington Terrier owner you might often hear a friendly comment on the street "What a funny poodle!" Do not be disappointed; your dog will respond to all strangers with a friendly tail wag and that will give you an opportunity to explain that it is a terrier.

The "gypsy dog"

The exact origin of this breed is a mystery. From recorded historical writings we know that it stems from the Border Country of England and Scotland. The dogs were popular among travelling handyman, mainly Gypsies. The dogs would "borrow" food for their owners from the surrounding woods and fields and at the same time would keep populations of rats and other small animals under control.

They were so effective that the Gypsies would lend their dogs to farmers to keep the rats away during harvest. The breed was valued for its ferocity, with reports of the dogs fighting and winning over badgers and foxes.

An important quality of those early Belington's was their ability to stay calm and unnoticed (no barking) in the limited space of Gypsies wagon-homes. No one would like to reveal his illegal hunting weapon.



The strong hunting instincts and the ability to dwell in confined spaces made the dogs also very attractive for the local coal miners.

The dogs were taken into the mines to eliminate rats. It is said that the miners were highly attached to their dogs.

“In Newcastle and its environments almost every man has a “poop” and that “poop” is certain almost to be a Bedlington. In the company of his trusty tyke, the miner when off duty is supreme happy. They hunt or poach together, fight together, sleep together, and not unfrequently drink together, “ (The Illustrated Book Of The Dog, Vero Shaw, 1879)

Luckily, the "gypsy dog" came to the attention of Lord Rothbury of the town of Bedlington in Northumberland County. He became such an enthusiast of the little dog that the breed became known as Rothbury's Terrier (or Rothbury's Lamb).

The first dog to be called a "Bedlington Terrier" was whelped in 1825. Joseph Ainsley of Bedlington acquired a bitch, Coates Phoebe, who was bred in 1825 to produce the first Bedlington Terrier. The dog was Ainsley's Piper, who started to hunt at 8 months and continued to bring down the most ferocious of otters and badgers even in his blind and toothless old age.

The Bedlington breed was eventually taken under the wing of professional breeders, with the breed being registered and exhibited in 1877. Since then, the Bedlington has moved beyond its unsavoury past and become a staple dog for many proud apartment dwellers and dog exhibitors worldwide.

Built to run

Bedlington Terrier is a medium size dog, lithe and muscular. His arched loin with curved topline and long legs suggest that he is capable of galloping at high speed. They are built to run and they love doing so. Therefore the Bedlington Terrier needs access to a safe area where he can play and wallow and run at the breath-taking speeds.



Agile and graceful, Bedlington Terrier moves in a distinct manner, in slower paces his steps will be light and springy, in full speed the movement becomes rolling. Even at high speeds he can turn almost in a spot. No other terrier can move so fast and with such elegance.



Milder-mannered, less rowdy, and calmer indoors than most terriers.

The Bedlington has all the amazing jumping, happy and active temperament of a terrier. But they come with a bonus; they are less rowdy and milder mannered than most of terriers.

To understand the characteristics of Bedlington terrier's temperament we have to look back in time. As mentioned before the ancestors of Bedlington were dogs of poor and hard working people.



They never lived on farms or hunted in large groups. They were rather attached to a single men or a family living with them in their homes. They would hunt mostly alone, sent secretly by their owner to bring a rabbit from the woods. They would be kept away from the eyes of strangers, thus barking rowdy temperament was certainly not preferred.

Bedlington terriers temperament has shifted significantly during the breed's development and history. At the beginning it was an active hunting dog that could also participate in dogfights, so a very sharp terrier temperament was preferable. With time the breed has developed towards a companion dog described by their owners as well functioning, calm, cheerful and lively.

Bedlington Terrier - facts

Size: Medium

Male: 41-43 cm; 8-10 kg (FCI standard)

Female: 38-41 cm, 8-10 kg (FCI standard)

Life Span: 12-17 years (occasionally more)

Litter Size: 3-6 puppies

Colour: Blue, liver, or sandy with or without tan.

Coat: Soft, medium length; requires thorough brushing once a week and grooming every 4-6 weeks

Shedding: Almost no shedding

Living Area: Adapt to various living conditions; do very well indoor and in small apartments, but do not mind open spaces and countryside life style; need access to safe area where they can play and run at high speeds.

Climate: Neither cold winter nor a hot summer is a problem. However in heavy rain their coat will become completely soaked and the dog will be become cold.

Behaviour: Agile and lively; indoors remain rather calm, when outdoors and encouraged to play will turn into powerful racing machines.

Children: Well suited for families with children; playful and responsive.

Barking: Are not noisy, may bark at strangers and unexpected noises.

Training: Intelligently obedient, respond well to positive and systematic training; thought may show signs of stubbornness.

Exercise: Are not particularly demanding, a daily walk is necessary to keep them healthy and fulfil their urge to speed.

Diseases: Copper Toxicosis (genetic tests are used to eliminate affected dogs from the breeding programme) Progressive Retinal Atrophy (associated with old age).

Because of its somewhat sinister origin the Bedlington Terrier is rather calm and quiet indoors. Once outdoors and aroused, it changes from a docile couch potato to dauntless explorer and racing machine. It is in substance a working terrier that has the strength to withstand heavy use, both at longer distances and in high short runs during hunting. They are not noisy, yappy dogs, but do bark at unknown sounds, and strangers at your door.



A flexible dog for active and busy families

Accidentally, the characteristic features of Bedlington that were favoured 300 years ago when the breed was established are also valued by active and busy families of today.



You get a dog that is strongly bonded with its owner and family, and shows little jealousy for other people or animals. It is joyful and full of energy, but at home when you want to relax or are busy with daily duties it will not nag you for attention or damage your house from boredom. And even if everyone in the family is busy and you need to leave your dog alone for several hours it will not complain. It will wait patiently for you to come back and will welcome you by jumping, licking and belly showing. No one can welcome you home so joyfully!

There is no need to worry about your guests or visitors that may drop by unexpectedly. They are also affectionate and welcoming to whoever comes to visit you, wagging their tails and behinds, ready for the “scratch me” game that can go on for hours.



Bedlington terriers are wonderful with children, playful and alert, yet patient and forgiving; they will never ever snap your kids during play. You can safely leave them alone and they will play for hours with a ball or a stick. They are also generally peaceful with other pets. However, with their terrier heritage, one should expect that running animals would be chased.

They are intelligently obedient. Sometimes, can be demanding and stubborn, but do respond well to training that is positive and persuasive. This sensitive and intelligent breed should not be handled harshly or jerked around.

They are curious and enthusiastic, willing to be a great companion, to participate in whatever activity its owner chooses.

They will join you faithfully in sport, agility, and especially going-to-ground activities.



With little training your dog will have strength enough to follow you during your daily jogging or on longer walking tours or even shorter biking or roller skating trips. And if you choose to take it to the beach it will indulge in water joyfully and join you in swimming activities. Typically they will also be happy to accompany you on a boat or in a kayak.



Oh, he is so soft!

Bedlington Terrier has a very characteristic coat without undercoat; it consists of thin and thick hair. It is incredibly soft and once you touched him you will want to do it again and again. They also do not have the typical smell of longhaired dogs.

They almost do not shed. You can safely cuddle them on your way to work without having a single hair sticking to your clothes. However they require regular brushing to prevent flitting. It is important to teach your dog brushing routine from very early age. Make it an important interaction between the owner and the dog, and you will both enjoy it.

An important part of Bedlington care is grooming. Their coat needs to be cut every 6-8 weeks, and to obtain the lamb-like appearance a great deal of effort has to be put in it.

Your puppy will be black or brown

Bedlington Terriers come in three colours and two marking patterns. The colours are Liver, Blue and Sandy. The patterns are solid, or with tan markings. As adults, the tan-marked dogs look identical to the solids for the most part, as the markings blend into the lighter adult coat.



Bedlington Terriers are born dark - blues are born black, liver and sandy dogs are born dark brown. As they grow their coat becomes lighter and lighter.

As 1 year old, many dogs look almost white. But white is not a listed colour in the breed standard. By two years old, they should have colour on their bodies, with lighter heads, and legs.

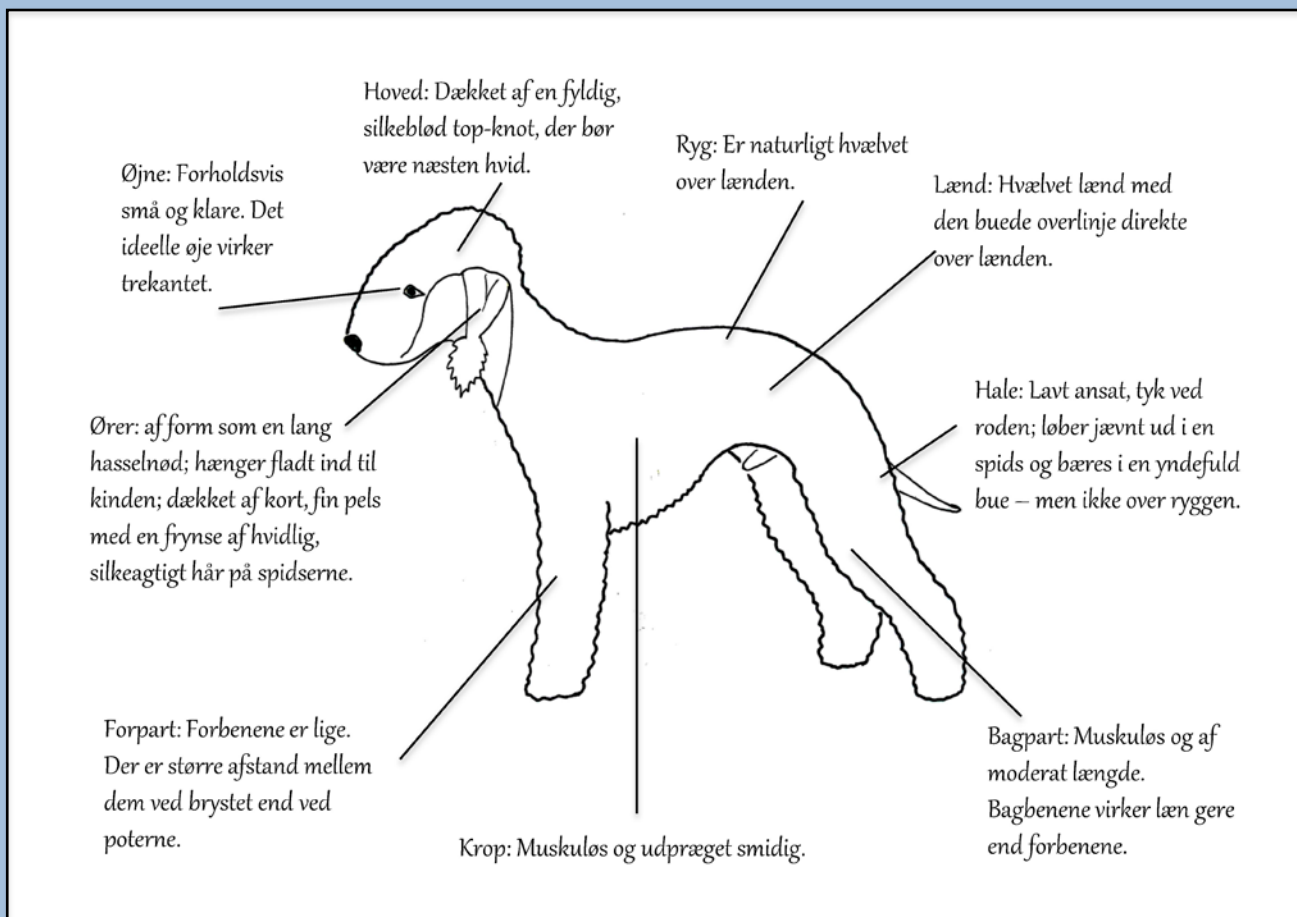


One of the very interesting aspects of the breed is how their colour is constantly changing, ever so slightly. Blues will be shades of grey. Liver is a sort of purple-brown colour, while sandy is more of a taupe. In summer when exposed to sunlight their skin becomes darker to provide protection from UV light. In winter, the skin will lighten, but the thick hairs become more pronounced and the coat gets more coloured. When a Bedlington is cut or bruised, their coat may grow out in their birth colour on that spot. It will turn to adult colour over time.

Bedlington terrier enjoys good health and vitality.

Bedlington Terriers are in general healthy dogs. They have a good life expectancy, and a large number of individuals will become more than 14 years old and only very few will die before the age of 10.

In the past, Bedlington Terriers suffered from two serious hereditary diseases. In 1930ies and early 1940ies in USA it suffered from cracked pads/corned feet (hyperkeratosis). Work was undertaken to breed out this affliction. Unfortunately, in the mean time, a new disease hit the race. Whether this would have occurred anyway is not clear, but it seems likely that the selective breeding conducted to eliminate hyperkeratosis highly accelerated development of copper toxicosis.



Copper toxicosis is an inherited disease. Abnormally high amounts of copper accumulate in liver leading to liver damage and inflammation. Ultimately this results in liver failure and death. Currently there is no cure for the disease. Historically starting from 1970ties the disease devastated the breed. Because the symptoms are usually prevalent in adult dogs between age of 2 and 6 many affected animals have been unconsciously used for breeding and the disease spread in the population. Studies conducted in the 1980's and 1990's, indicated prevalence of copper storage hepatotoxicosis from 33% (in the UK) to up to 66% (in the USA) in Bedlington terrier populations (Herrtage et al 1987, Sevelius & Jönsson 1996). Luckily for the breed, today, there exist genetic tests that allow identifying healthy, diseased and carrier animals. Kennel clubs recommend testing both parents and only healthy animals or single gene carriers are allowed to enter breeding programs. This significantly reduced the number of affected animals and the future Bedlington owners can minimize the risk of purchasing an affected puppy.

Where can I see a Bedlington terrier?

Today, it is hard to spot a Bedlington on a street in Denmark. There is a handful of admirers of this breed around the country but only 9 dogs are registered in Danish Terrier Club (2015). There is no active breeder in Denmark at the moment. Though one or two dogs can be met on the major dog shows across the country. On the contrary the breed is much more popular in its country of origin (UK) where around 500 dogs are registered in the Kennel Club. Also Sweden and Norway can be proud of having decent populations of these dogs. A number of very good breeders can also be found in France, Germany, Australia and USA.

Bedlington clubs in selected countries

Skandinaviska Bedlingtonklubben

<http://www.skbk.se>

National Bedlington Club

<https://sites.google.com/site/nationalbedlington>

Bedlington Terrier Club of America

<http://www.bedlingtonamerica.com/index.html>

Facebook Group: Bedlington terrier in Denmark

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/817831141574748/>



If you want a dog that:

- Has a convenient size, not too small and not fragile.
- Is unusual-looking.
- Is fast, agile, and graceful.
- Does not shed.
- Is calmer indoors than some other terriers.

A Bedlington Terrier may be a dog for you.

If you don't want to deal with:

- The dynamic terrier temperament.
- Providing enough exercise and activities to keep them fit and healthy.
- Chasing instincts.
- Potential stubbornness.
- Regular brushing and clipping of the coat.

A Bedlington Terrier may not be right for you.