

Natural Ears

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There are three things to consider when looking at ears:

1. The shape of the ear
2. The set on of the ear
3. The size of the ear

This is usually best done before the teething starts and at which time the ears can do some strange things. When looking at ears it is important first to take into account the shape of the ear. We want a neat V-shape ear. Some ears can be too rounded, and these do not usually sit properly and quite often go with a lower set hound type ear.

The ear should fold just above the top of the head and fall forward. This adds to the overall expression of the dog.

Personally I prefer a small to medium ear, but I would not completely rule out a dog with large well set on ears if the rest of the dog was extremely good. A dog with hound type ears or ear set, I would not consider a show prospect (or for those who are in a position to crop — it is illegal in Australia — then that is what I would suggest for that dog). However be sure to record the type of ear this dog had for consideration when it comes to using this dog in breeding programs.

I like to see a puppy who can use his ears well. That is he can easily lift or drop his ears depending on his mood. A natural ear dog who is alert can lift his ear to sit higher, but in a relaxed state his ears will be a little lower not in that alert state.

I consider the best age to assess puppies is 8 weeks of age. This is the best time before teething starts — and before the ears may start to do odd things.

Do we need to tape?

When the ears start to fold or fly the breeder needs to be watchful, and decide when something, if anything needs to be done. How does one decide its time to take action? If an ear turns in half or sits out like a rose ear for more than a week, yes you are right, it is time to take that action. I do not believe in gluing ears. I think this makes the ears worse. Usually what seems to happen if ears are glued is that the ear muscle builds up fighting against the pull of the glue on the tips and when it is undone, the ear muscle is stronger again and throws the ears about more.

However, we find taping the ears in the correct manner does not cause this effect. It is important when taping the ears that the tape is not placed on the tip of the ear, but across the middle or centre part of

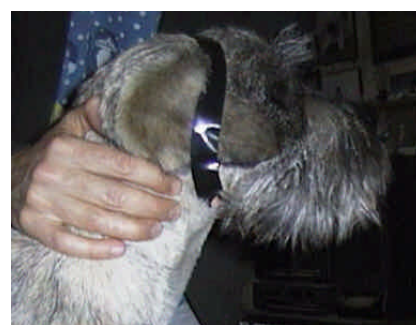
the ear. You are best to use the coloured electrical tape. This does not pull the hair off the ears or head when removed. The reason we do not tape the tip of the ear is that it too will cause the muscle to build in the ear. Tape across the centre section however, does not create as much pull on the ear muscle, so does not have that effect. The tape is usually set from the top of the head around across the middle section of the ear, under the neck/chin up to the other ear, around the middle section of that ear meeting at the top of the head.

As already mentioned puppies will have problems with ears when teething and this can also be the case with bitches in season. If you are worried about a puppy or adult flying an ear, it is always best to tape the ear just for a short period of time. It is best not to leave the ears taped for too long as remember the ear needs to breathe, otherwise you may set up an ear infection if left too long.

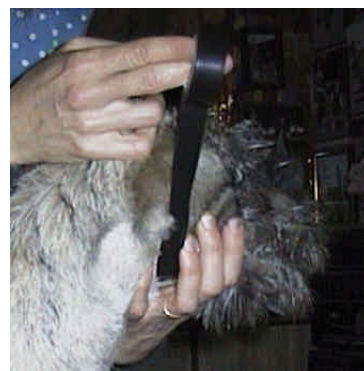
The correct ear set adds to a dog's expression. A lovely dog with poor ear set can be disadvantaged in the ring because of this. I like to assess the overall dog when looking at puppies. A dog with hound ears and/or low ear set I would probably disregard fairly quickly as a show prospect. A puppy which was flying its ears a little I would probably feel had more potential than the heavy eared dog. I think judges in Australia, whilst they consider ears, they tend to put more importance on over all expression. So therefore as previously stated the dog with the correct ear shape and set on of ear, will have a better chance of getting that true Schnauzer expression across to the judge. Because we do not crop ears, judges do not have the choice of whether to like a natural or crop ear. Instead they have to make the decision on the right size, shape and set of ears, just as we as breeders had to make that decision when we were choosing which puppy to keep.

We have not found the ears that difficult to establish. The bloodlines in our kennel are American based so therefore we have seen many of the things that breeders in the States are also seeing. We believe that good ears can be bred continuously from American stock. You need to look for those good ears as you are picking puppies and keep on breeding for that quality in following generations. Just like if one is trying to breed good coat or any other good quality, one needs to keep selecting for that feature.

For the purpose of this article I have included some photographs of puppies at various stages of ear development. These puppies are all from one litter and have been bred from parents who have come directly from USA bloodlines.



The first puppy has a lovely set of ears. Good carriage, nice shape. This puppy had been visiting for the day with his owners who had come for a stripping out lesson. So puppy is naked in these shots, but who could resist those beautiful ears? A fortnight prior to this picture being taken, his owners phoned me saying his ears were folding. They taped them for about three days and the ears have been great ever since.

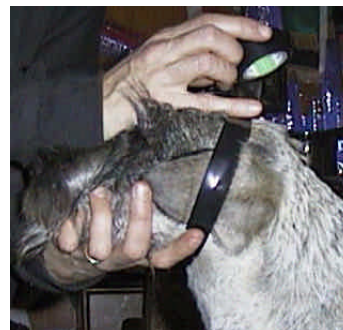


The next puppy is a litter mate to the first puppy. She is still losing her back teeth and her ears have decided to fold.

The next photo is the start of taping the ears. Starting at the top of the head and through the middle section of the ear.

Next photo the tape has gone under the neck, jaw area and starts coming up the other side.

Next photo the puppy has the tape going over the middle of the other ear to finish on the top of the head. Some puppies you may wish to put the tape around twice as they can be quite clever at removing it.



The next photo is removing the tape. Put the scissors under the tape at the top of the head and cut. Carefully remove the tape from around the ears and puppy's face.

Look, our ears are back to normal.

If anyone would like to discuss more with me about ears I am happy to help. Now that we have email it brings the world just that little closer:
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