

Norwich Terriers, 2-14

Title: Creating the Illustrated Guide to the Standard of Norwich Terriers

I thought to myself, “How hard can this possibly be?” and raised my hand volunteering to chair the Norwich Terrier Club of America’s committee to create a new illustrated guide to the standard of Norwich Terriers. Little did I know! Now, two years later, our project is complete, some 500 booklets have been mailed, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Reflecting on “lessons learned,” here are some things that contributed to our success, as well as things that could have gone better. Hopefully, our experience will help others embarking on a similar project.

Our original purpose was to create a tool to “to impart something of value to Norwich breeders, owners, judges, and exhibitors.” So, we formed a committee. Although many were qualified, I selected three individuals with a proven record of breeding correct Norwich, who were respected by club members and willing to work hard. The composition was also shaped by a desire for geographic diversity—but in hindsight, this was not such a good idea since face-to-face meetings were difficult.

A talented artist is critical to success and should be identified as soon as possible. Cathy Nelson (Pennywise Dandie Dinmonts) had all the requisite qualifications, plus experience with illustrated standards. After getting her on board, we obtained NTCA board approval for the project. Having talked with other clubs, I knew that too many cooks in the kitchen would be a recipe for disaster. Besides, it would be challenging enough to get our little committee to agree on the perfect Norwich Terrier! The Board agreed that they would want to review and approve the new text in the booklet, but would trust the committee with the rest.

We decided that the booklet should be convenient for judges (catalog-size on sturdy paper). Large drawings would focus on the correct Norwich Terrier, and smaller drawings would depict the most common incorrect characteristics. Cover artwork by an NTCA member captured the Norwich personality. The official standard—approved October 1981 and relatively unchanged since the first English standard—served as the outline. Writing the expanded text proved to be more difficult than we anticipated. The idea was to amplify the official standard -- clarify, but not embellish. Though we mostly succeeded, in one instance we went beyond our official standard amplifying, “white marks are not desirable” by adding “a small white mark on the chest is allowable”.

Remember, you don’t want the artist to fire you! We discussed how changes would be handled up front. Because the pencil drawings were done on vellum, only small changes were possible. By far, the biggest “lesson learned” was the importance of supplying excellent source materials for the artist. We had decades of old show photos, but show photos may not work! For example, we needed a side profile with the camera lens aimed exactly at the middle of the dog’s body. We took photos at shows, but in hindsight, better source material with correct camera positioning was needed. Even with good materials, drawing the ideal Norwich is daunting. What is the ideal? Our standard is written on the positive, there are no disqualifying faults, and some points are clear (“Level topline.”), but there are lots of modifiers. For example, “Body moderately short.” What exactly is “moderately,” or “slightly,” or “medium?” Needless to say, we toiled with many details and ended up making a number of changes. Thankfully, the artist did not fire us.

In summary, this project was a great challenge, but ultimately a success. The keys? A talented artist, a dedicated committee and a supportive club Board. Copies of the finished product are available at <http://norwichterrierclub.org/category/ntca-store>.

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