

THE MASTIFF

The Mastiff is one of the oldest breeds of dogs, most probably originating in the mountains of Asia. It is the ancestor of the giant breeds. Bas relief's of the Babylonian era depict Mastiffs hunting lions and horses. Phoenician traders probably introduced the Mastiff to England where the Romans found them and brought them back to fight in the arena. Marco Polo wrote of the court of Kublai Khan who kept a kennel of 5,000 Mastiffs used for hunting and dogs of war. Hannibal, when he crossed the Alps, left Mastiffs behind which crossed with local native breeds to produce St. Bernards, once called the Alpine Mastiff, and all the massive mountain dogs of Spain, France, Turkey, and the Balkans have Mastiff blood in their ancestry. Even the Chow carries his blood as does the Pug, which was originally a form of a dwarf Mastiff.

Of all the countries who used the Mastiff, it was the British who kept him to his purest form, and it is to them that we owe the Mastiff of today. They kept it to guard their castles and estates, releasing them at night to ward off intruders. Henry the VIII is said to have presented Charles the VI of Spain a gift of 400 Mastiffs to be used in battle. The Legh family of Lyme Hall, Cheshire, who were given their estate by Richard the II (1377-1399), kept and bred Mastiffs for many years, and reference is found in Stowe's Annual which shows that James the I (1603-1625) sent a gift of two Lyme Mastiffs to Phillip the III of Spain.

The first conclusive evidence of the Mastiff in the United States comes in the early 1880's when they began to appear at bench shows. World War I saw the decline of the Mastiff in the United States and England. World War II almost eliminated the breed in England altogether. At the end of the war, dogs were imported to England from Canada and the United States to re-establish the breed. Slowly but surely, as time passed, the breed became popular again.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND STANDARD OF THE MASTIFF

GENERAL APPEARANCE-The Mastiff is a large, massive, symmetrical dog with a well-knit frame. The impression is one of grandeur and dignity. Dogs are more massive throughout. Bitches should not be faulted for being somewhat smaller in all dimensions while maintaining a proportionally powerful structure.

BODY-Massive, heavy boned, with a powerful muscle structure. Great depth and breadth desirable. Fault - Lack of substance or slab sided.

HEAD-Massive, good breadth desired.

MINIMUM SIZE-Males - 30" and Females - 27 1/2"

SKULL-Broad and somewhat flattened; Forehead slightly curved; marked wrinkles, which are particularly distinctive when at attention; well marked but not abrupt stop; the distance between the stop and The occiput; cheeks powerfully muscled.

TEETH-Powerful; canines set wide apart; scissors bite preferred; moderately undershot jaw should not be faulted providing the teeth are not visible when jaw is closed.

EARS-Small, V-shaped; round at the tips; leather moderately thin, set wide apart, lying close to the cheek in repose; dark in color, the darker the better.

BROWS-Moderately raised; temple muscles well developed.

NECK-Powerful, muscular, slightly arched, medium length; moderately "dry" (not showing excess of loose skin)

SHOULDER-Slightly sloping, heavy, muscular

BACK-Muscular, powerful, straight

LOINS-Wide, muscular, slightly rounded of the rump

TAIL-SET-Moderately high; reaching to the hocks or a little below; tapering to the tip; hanging straight at repose; slight curve in action but not over the back

HINDQUARTERS-Broad, wide, muscular; second thighs well developed, leading to a strong hock joint

HOCKS-Set back; wide apart; turning neither in nor out

STIFLE-Moderately angulated matching the front. Fault-straight stifle

COAT-Double; outer moderately coarse; under dense, short, close lying. Should not be so long as produce "fringe" on the belly, tail, or hind legs. Fault - long or wavy coat.

NOSE-Broad, dark, the darker the better; not pointed or turned up in profile.

EYES-Set wide apart, medium sized, not too prominent; expression alert, kindly; brown in color, the darker the better, and showing no haw.

MUZZLE-Dark in color, the blacker the better; broad and cut off square. Fault - snippiness of the muzzle.

FACE-Short, broad under eyes; square; under jaw broad to end, slightly rounded.

FORECHEST-Deep, well defined.

CHEST-Wide, deep rounded; well let down between forelegs.

LEGS-Straight, strong, set wide apart, heavily boned; elbows parallel to the body.

FEET-Heavy, round, compact; toes well arched; pasterns strong, bent slightly; nails black.

COLOR-Fawn, apricot, or brindle. Brindle should have fawn or apricot as a background color which should be completely covered with very dark stripes. Muzzle, ears, and nose must be dark in color, the blacker the better with similar color tone around the eye orbits and extending upward between them. A small patch of white on the chest is permitted. Faults-Excessive white on the chest or white on any other part of the body. Mask, ears, or nose lacking dark pigment.

GAIT-The gait denotes power and strength. The rear lets should have drive, while the forelegs should track smoothly with good reach. In motion, the legs move straight forward, as the dog's speed increases from a walk to a trot, the feet move in under the center line of the body to maintain balance.

TEMPERAMENT-A combination of grandeur and good nature, courage and docility. Dignity, rather than gaiety, is the Mastiff's correct demeanor. Judges should not condone shyness or viciousness. Conversely, judges should also beware of putting a premium on showiness.

SCALE OF POINTS

GENERAL CHARACTER AND SYMMETRY	10
HEIGHT AND SUBSTANCE	10
SKULL	10
FACE AND MUZZLE	12
EARS	5
EYES	5
CHEST AND RIBS	10
FORELEGS AND FEET	10
BACK, LOINS AND FLANKS	10
HINDLEGS AND FEET	10
TAIL	3
Coat and Color	5
TOTAL	100