

BULLMASTIFF BREED PROFILE

This Breed Profile has been specifically prepared for the Dogworld Web Site and concentrates on the Southern African Bullmastiff. It covers the following categories:

- A comprehensive evaluation of the KUSA Breed Standard
- Conditions known to affect the Southern African Bullmastiff
- Some notable Southern African Bullmastiffs
- The importance of the brindle gene
- The Breed Show Ring and how to judge the Bullmastiff / Bullmastiff puppy

Unless stated otherwise, with applicable references, the content of this Breed Profile is the work of Nicky Robertson. All photographs used in this article were either taken by her with the knowledge and permission of the owner / handlers of the dogs or have been used with the knowledge and permission of the dogs owner / handlers.

Dr Quixi Sonntag checked the veterinary articles for correctness.

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THE OFFICIAL BULLMASTIFF BREED STANDARD OF THE KENNEL UNION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA AND THE AUTHOR'S EVALUATION THEREOF

The Kennel Union of Southern Africa and the Kennel Club (UK) use the same Breed Standard, which is word for word the same.

General Appearance

Powerful build, symmetrical, showing great strength, not cumbersome, sound and active.



Here it is the phenotype that is being discussed. Does the dog look like a Bullmastiff? Are these words sufficient for the Judge appraising the dog to conjure up a picture and to form an opinion as to the requirements for a good Bullmastiff?

In my opinion this single sentence could vaguely describe just about all the breeds in the Working Group and is hopelessly inadequate in describing the Bullmastiff. The American Kennel Club Breed Standard and the Canadian Kennel Club Breed Standard are much more specific, and perhaps it is time that the KUSA Breed Standard be revised and likewise include more detail.

Gilbert & Brown refer to type being “the opinion of the observer”.¹ In other words the Judge, in reference to judging in the breed show ring, is doing more than picking a winner. He or she is actually determining the breed phenotype instead of the breeders doing this, and to do this correctly, needs more than just a few vague words. If the Judge is ill informed about the breed because the Standard is lacking in detail, it can be disastrous for the breed.

Characteristics

Powerful, enduring, active and reliable

Is the dog mentally and physically equipped to perform those functions for which it was designed originally? These attributes as pertaining to the Bullmastiff are difficult to judge in a show ring.

Powerful: This is a subjective component decided by the Judge’s interpretation of the word “powerful” in relation to the look of the dog. The Judge can only assume the dog is powerful because the Breed Standard says he must be. There is nothing against which to test this power.

Enduring: Some people may interpret endurance as being able to gait round and round the ring effortlessly. That is - the peak of physical fitness. However endurance in a Bullmastiff is also

¹ Gilbert, E.M. & Brown, T.R. *K9 Structure and Terminology*, p.99

being able to sit or stay for hours in any kind of weather, day or night, awaiting orders to complete a task. Bullmastiffs have incredible patience.

Active: When ordered to, the Bullmastiff must be able to mobilise himself and carry out the task required. Originally it was to neutralise the poacher's dog and to "down and hold" the poacher. In the 21st Century this task would be modified accordingly.

Reliable: The Bullmastiff should be totally trustworthy whether guarding and defending or socialising and loving.

These are remarkable achievements for any dog.



Temperament

High spirited, alert, faithful.

Does this mean that a dog that does not show these features in the Breed Show Ring has a "bad temperament?"

Bill Walkey describes the Bullmastiff as a "steady stable animal, completely lacking in excitability"² and the American Kennel Club Breed Standard uses the following words "Fearless and confident yet docile. The dog combines the reliability, intelligence and willingness to please required in a dependable family companion and protector."³

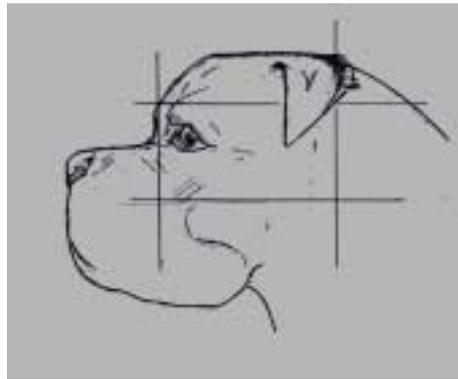
So little has been written about the Bullmastiff's temperament, but I feel we need more than just three words to describe this wonderful dog's temperament.

² Walkey, Bill. *The Bullmastiff Fancier's Manual*, p. 136

³ *American Breed Standard*.

Head and Skull

Skull large and square, viewed from every angle, fair wrinkle when interested but not when in repose. Circumference of skull may equal height of dog measured at top of shoulder; broad and deep with well filled cheeks. Pronounced stop. Muzzle short; distance from tip of nose to stop approximately one-third length from tip of nose to centre of occiput, broad under eyes and sustaining nearly same width to end of nose; blunt and cut off square, forming right angle with upper line of face, and at the same time proportionate with skull. Under-jaw broad to end. Nose broad with widely spreading nostrils; flat, neither pointed nor turned up in profile. Flews not pendulous, never hanging below level of lower jaw.



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The question here is why did the Bullmastiff's head have to be large and square? To find the answer let us go to the dog's original function – to “down and hold” the poacher. The poacher had everything to lose, including his life, so he was prepared to fight with anything and everything at his disposal, including his feet, sticks, clubs and stones. The dog had to be able to withstand this onslaught without losing his senses. What better then than a “fortified” square box? The square muzzle attached to the head being another “fortified” square box and the steep attachment (the stop) in between the two, another part of the excellent construction, with excellent frontal vision for the dog yet another great advantage. The strong well-muscled broad cheeks were to enable the dog to hold his prey without tiring, as were the broad nostrils for breathing. The neat flews of course short and well out of the way of the grip. For practical as well as aesthetic purposes the flews, eye rims and nose should be a dark colour bordering on black. This colour prevents sunburn and insect attraction and the sun's rays are also not reflected into the dog's eyes.

The wrinkle on the head “fair wrinkle when interested but not when in repose” was of vital importance as the change alerted the gamekeeper to the presence of intruders without a sound being made. The gamekeeper would sit with his hand on the dog's head.

The circumference of the skull is required to equal the height of the dog measured at the withers and, not mentioned, the length of the dog measured from the withers to the tail set on. This provides the finished picture of a well-balanced and symmetrical dog.

The head of the Bullmastiff also determines the breed type and a Bullmastiff without its characteristic large square head is simply not a Bullmastiff and should certainly not win in the breed show ring.

⁴ Rostron, Alan and Mave. Bullmastiffs. An Owner's Companion, p. 45



Unacceptable



Acceptable



Unacceptable



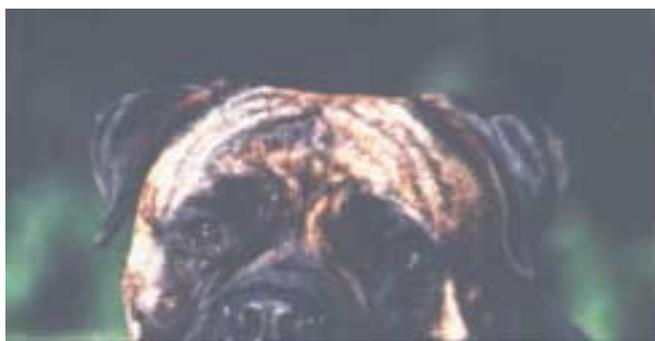
Acceptable

Eyes

Dark or hazel, of medium size, set apart the width of muzzle with furrow between. Light or yellow eyes highly undesirable.

As the dog had to avoid detection from the moonbeams reflecting off his eyes in the night, the darker they were, the better. The size of the eye should be in proportion to the head, keeping in mind that an abnormally large eye would be more susceptible to injury. The shape of the eye is not mentioned in the Breed Standard but all the experts agree that they should be almond shaped.

The position of the eyes, slightly to the sides of the head was deliberate, so that if the poacher clobbered one eye the dogs other eye would suffice.



Acceptable eye and ear shape and position with good crown line

Ears

V-shaped, folded back, set on wide and high, level of occiput giving square appearance to skull which is most important. Small and deeper in colour than body. Point of ear level with eye when alert. Rose ears highly undesirable.

The ears should be small to avoid them being grabbed and used as leverage. The set on – wide and high – enabled the Gamekeeper to place his hand between the ears and hence feel the changes in the dog's attitude.

I think “folded back” could be altered to “a v-shape ear folded forward with the crease level with the crown line when alert, and with the inner edge lying close to the cheek. There should be a slightly rounded tip which should be level with the eye when alert”. No irregularities are desired and this includes the rose ear - a reversion to the Bulldog – and any unwanted folds in the cartilaginous lobes of the outer ear.



Unacceptable ear set

Mouth

Level desired but slightly undershot allowed but not preferred. Canine teeth large and set wide apart, other teeth strong, even and well placed.

A good bite was desired to enable the dog to hold his prey. If the canines are therefore set wide apart, the muzzle width would obviously correspond. This important fact is much neglected and all too often Judges put up dogs with level incisors but with a narrow jaw and hence setting of teeth, which are often crammed into the mouth and poorly supported. A full compliment of 42 teeth is essential.

There is also the interpretation of the word “slightly”. The Canadian Breed Standard classes anything more than a ¼ of an inch undershot as a serious fault. I think this is a good guideline to use.

Neck

Well arched, moderate length, very muscular and almost equal to skull in circumference.

The specific length and immense strength of the neck were (are) needed for stability, support and leverage when holding on to prey. Short stocky necks, as seen in some Bullmastiffs, are synonymous with steep shoulders and are thus undesirable.

Forequarters

Chest wide and deep, well let down between forelegs, with deep brisket. Shoulders muscular, sloping and powerful, not overloaded. Forelegs powerful and straight, well boned, set wide apart, presenting a straight front. Pasterns straight and strong.

The Bullmastiff is a knock-down-and-hold-dog and he uses his weight, size and chest to do this. However the entire front assembly of the Bullmastiff is very rigid from the withers, where the trapezius muscle is firmly attached to the scapula spines and the tips of the thoracic vertebrae, down to the pasterns that are required to be straight. So unless the anatomical structures have some give in them, the momentum caused by movement and followed by 59kg of weight is going to cause problems, either at the shoulder joints, elbow joints or at the pasterns. As it would be improper for the Bullmastiffs shoulders to move like a cat landing on all fours where the shoulders move right out of their original position to absorb the impact, I would suggest that some slope in the pasterns of the Bullmastiff be permissible for the same reason. A 5–10 degree slope as seen from the side would be acceptable and still allow the dog to function correctly. The pasterns should still appear straight when viewed from the front.

In the KUSA Breed Standards of the other Mastiff Type Breeds such as the Dogue de Bordeaux, Fila Brasileiro, Neopolitan Mastiff and Tibetan Mastiff, the metacarpal region (the pastern) is allowed to be slightly sloping. It is only in the Mastiff and Bullmastiff that a straight pastern is required.

What the Breed Standard should also be saying is that bone length should be proportionate for the scapula and humerus, with suitable angulations at the shoulder joints. 90 – 95 degrees would be adequate and would allow for a good front reach. More angulation than that would present a steep front and a restricted reach.

The width between the scapulae at the withers is another important matter and is related to the shoulder muscles. The latter should not be overloaded, that is too well developed, hence pushing the scapulae out of position, which in turn can cause a gait impediment due to the subsequent incorrect front angulations. This can easily be checked by placing two fingers (approximately the correct width required for a Bullmastiff) between the tips of the scapulae at the withers.

Judges and breeders should also have the correct concept of the difference between coarseness and well boned. The average circumference of a foreleg, with the measurement taken just below the elbow on an adult male, should be approximately 25cm.

The elbows should be level with the sternum, well held in but not so much as to restrict movement and facing to the rear.



Acceptable front



Unacceptable front

Body

Back short and straight giving compact carriage, but not so short as to interfere with activity. Roach and swaybacks highly undesirable.

The five dorsal or thoracic vertebrae (T9-13) are considered to be the true back in anatomical terms. Does “back short” in the Standard refer to the T9-13 area or the back line? The back line is from the withers to the croup.

Any dog with a short compact back or back line will be restricted in its movement in comparison to dogs that have a leeway. The KUSA Breed Standard for the Rottweiler allows for a 15% increase in body length as opposed to height, but still wants the dog to be compact. Too often we see the dogs with a slightly longer back winning because they simply have the better gait. Perhaps an amendment in the Bullmastiff Breed Standard is needed here as well.

Roach and swaybacks are indicative of a structural fault. This not only influences the straight back / back line and aesthetic look of the dog but most importantly the movement. If the dog cannot move properly he cannot be effective in his work.

There is no mention in the Breed Standard of the depth of the body from withers to sternum in relationship to the length from the sternum to the ground. The Breed Standard does say that the dog should be symmetrical, so do we assume that the body depth and the leg length are equal? I think so! Nor is there any mention of any shape or design to the ribs, which should, in fact, be well sprung or well arched so as to contain the vital organs of the heart and lungs. This shape has a direct influence on the capabilities of the working Bullmastiff. And should the dog be flat ribbed, he would not have the endurance and stamina that is required of him.

The underline (the contours of the abdominal floor and brisket) is also not mentioned. Should this anatomical detail be as straight as the back / back line, or should there be a slight rise in the contours as they meet up with the hindquarters producing what is termed “a tuck up” in canine terminology. All the Bullmastiffs I have ever seen have had some sort of SLIGHT “tuck up”. It blends in with the requirements of a flank with a fair depth and wide and muscular loins.



Acceptable back/ back line



Unacceptable back / back line



This back / back line is too long and is unacceptable.

The Hindquarters

Loins wide and muscular with fair depth of flank. Hind legs strong and muscular with well developed second thighs, denoting power and activity, not cumbersome. Hocks moderately bent. Cow hocks highly undesirable.

Firstly and most importantly the hindquarters must be in proportion and balance to the front quarters. Lack of balance between the front and back is responsible for gaiting impediments and destroys the aesthetic look of the dog. Generally speaking, for ideal rear angulations, the pelvis and femur should be of equal length, with the tibia and fibula just a fraction longer. The pelvis should be approximately 30 degrees to the horizontal and the femur approximately 100-110 degrees to the pelvis. The tibia and fibula should also then be approximately 100-110 degrees to the femur. This would give ideal (and moderate) angulation to the stifle, and would thus clarify what should be mentioned in the Standard. Bullmastiffs that are not angulated as described above can have a steeper angulation at the stifle, for example 90 degrees, and a longer tibia and fibula which will cause their hocks to be well clear of their body, instead of being just clear of the back thigh. There can also be greater angulations at the junction of the femur and the tibia and fibula, for example 130 degrees, which would give a straighter stifle. Both these variations will impact on the flexibility of the stifle and hence the dogs movement.

With reference to the other Mastiff breeds incorporated in the KUSA Breed Standards, the only ones that specify how the stifle must be, are the Neopolitan Mastiff which asks for a moderate stifle, and the Tibetan Mastiff which says the stifles must be well bent. This is an important fact and it is omitted from the Standard, which is quite disturbing.

Is all this too complicated? There is a simple manoeuvre, which can be carried out if necessary. Simply take the point of hock and lift it to meet the ischial tuberosity. If these two points meet it can be assumed that the bones are the correct length.

In his book *The Bullmastiff – A Breeders Guide*⁵ David Hancock calls for the stifle to be under the iliac crest and the hocks to be just clear of the back of the thigh. This would certainly compound the symmetry, balance and proportion of the Bullmastiff.

The second thigh, comprising the semi-membranosus and the gastrocnemus muscles needs to be well developed to enable sudden propulsion and / or action. The loins not only need width, but

⁵ Hancock, D. *The Bullmastiff. A Breeder's Guide*. Vol.1, p. 93.

also elasticity for twisting and turning. From behind, the hocks should also be seen as straight, facing forward and well apart with the metatarsals straight to the ground as seen from the side view. The hocks should also have a moderate bend of approximately 120 degrees and be relatively near to the ground. Remember the Standard asks for endurance in the dog, and to quote Gilbert and Brown “Long hocks, high initial speed; short hocks, endurance.”

Cow hocks and excessive bowlegs restrict movement and are therefore undesirable.



Acceptable hind quarters Unacceptable hind quarters

The Feet

Well arched, cat like with rounded toes, pads hard. Dark toe nails desirable. Splayed feet highly undesirable

The dog had difficult terrain to operate in – rocky ground, bushes, gullies and so on. These adverse surfaces needed the full surface of the foot to move on and not just the digital pads. Splayed feet would obviously hinder the dog.

The Tail

Set high, strong at root and tapering, reaching to hocks, carried straight or curved, but not hound fashion. Crank tails highly undesirable.

If the dog does not have an abnormal slope to the pelvis (a 30 degrees slope is recommended) does it really matter how the tail is carried? Yes it does. The tail must be of the correct length and shape as it is used for steering and counterbalance as the dog moves.

Excessive dominance off his own territory, as demonstrated by a gay tail in the show ring is not a desired characteristic of the Bullmastiff, as is a tail tucked between the hindquarters. This would indicate subservience and nervousness.

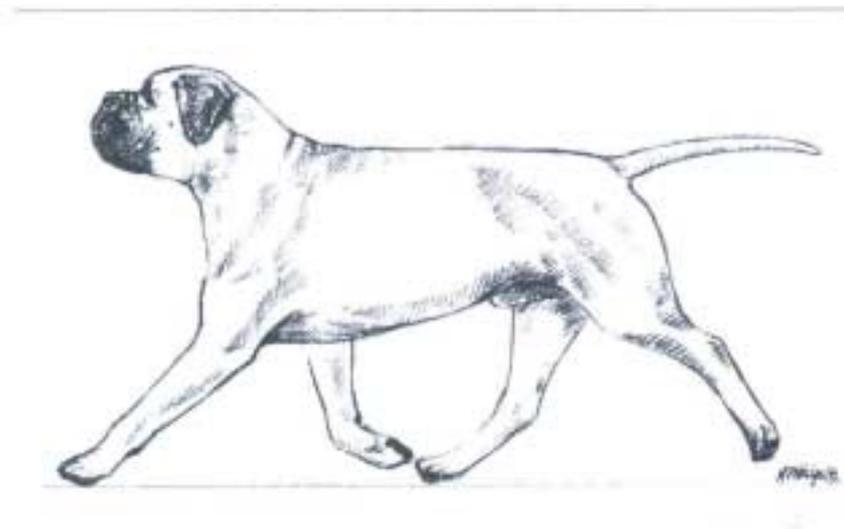
Gait

Movement indicates power and a sense of purpose. When moving straight neither front nor hind legs should cross or plait, right front and left rear leg rising and falling at the same time. A firm back line unimpaired by powerful thrusts from hindlegs denoting a balanced and harmonious movement.

Here the Breed Standard asks for a harmonious trot with no gait impediments. A trot is a two-time gait of diagonal sequence as mentioned. This particular trot is unique to the Bullmastiff, whose movement cannot and should not be compared to the movements of the other dogs in the Working Breeds Group. The speed of the trot is irrelevant. Let the dog move at his own speed. In fact all good judges know that faults can be picked up easier when the trot is slower and the lead is loose.

There should however be good reach and drive both fore and aft with the required balance and harmony. Excellent muscle tone all over, observed as the dog moves, will indicate that the dog is active and not sedentary. Some Bullmastiffs tend to pace when they have to gait excessively. This can be either from habit or as a method to relieve muscles weary from trotting, or simply to avoid leg interference because the back / back line is too short.

Note: The Occipital Foramen (the hole where the spinal cord goes into the skull) in the Bullmastiff - which is generally referred to as one of the modified brachycephalic breeds - is situated lower for example, than in the sight hounds. This means that in fact the Bullmastiff SHOULD lower his head to withers level or just slightly below, when he moves. This should never be penalised during judging.



Is this Bullmastiff gaiting correctly? ⁶

The Coat

Short and hard, weather resistant, lying flat to body. Long silky or woolly coats highly undesirable.

Remember that this dog had to sometimes sit or lie for hours in inclement weather. Any coat other than weather resistant would have been unsuitable and a hindrance.

I think the word “dense” should also be incorporated into the Standard. The dog needed (needs?) protection against bushes and thorns. Long, silky or woolly coats are a throw back to undesirable elements in the past and require a lot of maintenance. Fortunately not many of these kinds of coats are seen in South Africa today.

⁶ Shastid and Roach, J and G, The Bullmastiff: Peerless Protector, p.36

Colour

Any shade of brindle, fawn or red, colour to be pure and clear. A slight white marking on chest permissible. Other white markings undesirable. Black muzzle essential toning off towards eyes with dark markings around eyes contributing to expression.

The colour purity mentioned in the Standard does not come about by chance. It is the brindle gene that is considered to be the key to the colouring, and breeders who continuously use the clear colours will eventually lose the purity and clarity of colour. This can be seen as distinct darker shading over the coat and as a gradual loss of masking on the muzzle and around the eyes. This should not be confused with the brindle carrying the masking gene, which may be poor.

Originally the Gamekeepers favoured the brindle coloured coat as this dog could lie well camouflaged in the vegetation, the black muzzle and dark ears further aiding him to remain undetected even when his head was lifted up to sense, smell or sight the poacher.

White markings, apart from the aesthetic point of view, were undesirable, as white does not lend itself to camouflage in dense vegetation. The red and fawn colourings are delightful but purely a “fashion statement” and in my opinion not relevant to the original function of the dog.



Size

<i>Height at shoulder</i>	: Dogs	: 64-69 cm (25 – 27 ins)*
	: Bitches	: 61-66 cm (24 – 26 ins)*
<i>Weight</i>	: Dogs	: 50-59 kg (110-130lbs)
	: Bitches	: 41-50kg (90-110lbs)

Any dog over or under size should be exceptional if chosen in the Breed Show Ring. Height and weight must be in proportion and the dog must be balanced and substantial enough. A bitch, even at 66cm should look feminine.



Weedy, light and unsubstantial



Height, weight and size proportional

Faults

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

These are rather vague words and I feel the Standard should be more specific, for example severely fault or disqualify the following:

Pronounced reversal of sexual characteristics

Fearful, nervous, unreliable or vicious dogs

Complete lack of cosmetic markings

Dogs that are too light / racy / weedy / rangy or cobby

Head not square or large enough

A very narrow muzzle

Too large or too small in size with more than a 2cm variation. Measurements to be done at the withers.

Yellow eyes

Note: Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

* These sizes were changed by the Kennel Union of Southern Africa 2001.

AMERICAN BREED STANDARD

General Appearance

That of a symmetrical animal, showing great strength, endurance and alertness, powerfully built but active. The foundation breeding was 60% Mastiff and 40% Bulldog. The breed was developed in England by gamekeepers for protection against poachers.

Size, Proportion, Substance

Size. Dogs 25 to 27 ins. at the withers, and 110lbs to 130lbs. weight. Bitches 24 to 26 ins. at the withers, and 100 to 120lbs. weight. Other things being equal, the more substantial dog within these limits is favored. Proportion. The length from tip of breastbone to rear of thigh exceeds the height from withers to ground only slightly, resulting in a nearly square appearance.

Head

Expression. Keen, alert and intelligent. Eyes. Dark and of medium size. Ears. V-shaped and carried close to the cheeks, set on wide and high, level with occiput and cheeks, giving a square appearance to the skull, darker in color than the body and medium in size. Skull. Large, with a fair amount of wrinkle when alert; broad, with cheeks well developed. Forehead. Flat. Stop. Moderate.

Muzzle. Broad and deep, its length, in comparison with that of the entire head, approximately as 1 is to 3. Lack of foreface with nostrils set on top of muzzle is a reversion to the Bulldog and is very undesirable. A dark muzzle is preferable. Nose. Black, with nostrils large and broad. flews. Not too pendulous. Bite. Preferably level or slightly undershot. Canine teeth large and set wide apart.

Neck, Topline, Body

Neck. Slightly arched of moderate length, very muscular, and almost equal in circumference to the skull. Topline. Straight and level between withers and loin. Body. Compact. Chest wide and deep, with ribs well sprung and well set down between the forelegs. Back. Short, giving the impression of a well balanced dog. Loin. Wide and muscular and slightly arched, with fair depth of flank. Tail. Set on high, strong at the root, and tapering to the hocks. It may be straight or curved, but never carried hound fashion.

Forequarters

Shoulders muscular but not loaded, and slightly sloping. Forelegs straight, well-boned and set well apart, elbows turned neither in nor out. Pastern's straight, feet of medium size, with round toes well arched. Pads thick and tough, nails black.

Hindquarters

Broad and muscular, with well-developed second thigh denoting power, but not cumbersome. Moderate angulation at hocks. Cowhocks and splay feet are serious faults.

Coat

Short and dense, giving good weather protection.

Color

Red, fawn or brindle. Except for a very small white spot on the chest, white marking is considered a fault.

Gait

Free, smooth and powerful. When viewed from the side, reach and drive indicate maximum use of the dog's moderate angulation. back remains level and firm. Coming and going, the dog moves in a straight line. Feet tend to converge under the body, without crossing over, as speed increases. There is no twisting in or out at the joints.

Temperament

Fearless and confident yet docile. The dog combines the reliability, intelligence, and *willingness* to please required in a dependable family companion and protector.

CANADIAN BREED STANDARD

(Note: Faults are classified as Serious or Minor, as indicated as (S) and (M) respectively. Note that MINOR faults are either points which would not of themselves contribute to unsoundness in the dog, or are the result of poor conditioning, which might be controlled, and are not likely to be hereditary.

Origin and Purpose

The Bullmastiff was developed in England by gamekeepers for protection against poachers. The foundation breeding of the modern pure-bred was 60% Mastiff and 40% Bulldog. It is a guard and companion dog, and should be loyal, obedient and thus suitable for training.

General Appearance

The Bullmastiff is a powerfully built, symmetrical dog, showing great strength and activity, but not cumbersome; upstanding and compact in appearance, with breadth and depth of skull and body, the latter set on strong, sturdy, well boned legs. The height measured vertically from the ground to the highest point of the withers, should nearly equal the length measured horizontally from the forechest to the rear part of the upper thigh, and should slightly exceed the height at the hips. Bitches are feminine in appearance, of somewhat lighter bone structure than the male, but should still convey strength.

Faults: (S) Lack of balance. Poor or light bone structure. (M) Lack of muscular development. Ranginess.

Temperament

The Bullmastiff should be bold, fearless and courageous, a dependable guard dog; alert and intelligent.

Faults: (S) Viciousness. Shyness. (Such dogs should not be used for breeding) (M) Apathy and sluggishness.

Size

Height at the highest point of the withers Dogs 25 to 27 ins; Bitches 24 to 26 ins.

Weight: Dogs 110 to 130 lbs; Bitches 100 to 120lbs. It is important that weight be in proportion to height and bone structure to ensure balance.

Faults: (S) Over maximum height. Under minimum height. (M) Over maximum weight. Under minimum weight.

Coat and color

a) Coat: short and dense, giving good weather protection.

Faults: (S) Long soft coat. (M) "Staring", which means poor condition.

b) Color: Any shade of red, fawn or brindle, but the color to be pure and clear. A small white marking on chest permissible but not desirable.

Faults: (S) White markings other than on chest (M) Black shading on body, legs or tail (of reds and fawns).

Head

a) Skull: The skull should be large, equal in breadth, length and depth, with a fair amount of wrinkle when the dog is interested; well developed cheeks. The skull in circumference may measure the height of the dog. Forehead flat, with furrow between the eyes. Stop definite.

Faults: (S) Narrow skull. Shallow skull. (M) Domed forehead. Insufficient stop.

b) Muzzle : The muzzle should be short, broad and deep, in the same proportion as the skull. The distance from the tip of the nose to the stop should not exceed one-third of the length from the tip of the nose to the center of the occiput. Broad under the eyes and nearly parallel in width to the end of the nose: blunt and cut off square, appearing in profile in a plane parallel to the line of the skull. A black mask is essential. The nose should be black, flat, broad with widely spreading nostrils when viewed from the front. Flews not too pendulous. The lower jaw broad.

Faults: (S) Muzzle too long, too narrow, pointed or lacking in depth. Muzzle too short; nostrils set on top; nose pointed, upturned or laid back; lower jaw narrow. (M) Lack of wrinkle; flews too pendulous.

Disqualifications: Liver mask. No mask.

c) Teeth: Preferably level bite or slightly undershot. Canine teeth large and set wide apart; other teeth strong, even and well placed.

Faults: (S) Teeth overshot. Teeth more than 1/4 inch undershot. Wry mouth. (M) Irregular or poorly placed teeth. Small teeth.

d) Eyes: Dark or hazel, and of medium size; set apart the width of the muzzle.

Faults : (M) Light eyes. Eyes too close together, too large, too small.

Disqualification: Yellow eyes.

e) Ears: V-shaped and carried close to the cheeks; set on wide and high, level with the occiput, giving a square appearance to the skull which is important. They should be darker in color than the body, and the point of the ear, when alert, should be level with the eye.

Faults: (S) Rose ears (M) Ears too long or too short. Lack of darker color.

Neck

Well arched, of moderate length, very muscular, and almost equal in circumference to the skull.

Faults: (S) neck too short; too long. Neck weak and scrawny.

Forequarters

Proper angulation and proportionate bone lengths of the forequarters are very important. The shoulder bone should slope foreword and downward from the withers at an angle of 45 degrees from the vertical. The humerus (upper arm) should form a right angle with the shoulder bone, 45 degrees from the vertical. The shoulder bone and humerus should be approximately equal in length. The length of the foreleg from the ground to the elbow should be a little more than half the distance from the ground to the withers, approximately 52%. The shoulders and upper arms should be muscular and powerful, but not overloaded. Forelegs powerful, with round heavy bone, vertical and parallel to each other, set well apart; elbows set close to the body. Pasterns straight and strong. Feet of medium size, not turning in or out, with round toes, well arched. Pads thick and tough. nails black.

Faults: (S) Lack of proportion in bone. Shoulders too steep. Shoulders overloaded. Elbows turned in or out. Lack of bone in forelegs. Forelegs bowed. Weak pasterns. Splay feet. (M) Feet turned in or out. White nails.

Body and tail

a) Body: Compact. Chest wide and deep, with ribs well sprung and well set down between the forelegs. Back short and level, muscular; croup slightly arched, with fair depth of flank.

Faults: (S) Body too long. Shallow chest. Narrow chest. Lack of rib-spring. Sway back. Tip of hip bone higher than withers. (M) Too much tuck-up.

b) Tail : Set on high, strong at the root and tapering to the hocks. It may be carried straight or curved.

Faults: (S) Screw tail. Crank tail. Tail set too low. (M) Tail carried hound fashion. Too long. Too short. Too heavily coated.

Hindquarters

It is important that structure, angulation and proportionate bone lengths of the hindquarters be in balance with the forequarters. The pelvis (hip bone) should slope backward and downward from the spine at an angle of 30 degrees. The femur (upper thigh bone) should form a right angle with the pelvis. The lower thigh bone (stifle) should set an angle of 45 degrees to the vertical. The pelvis and femur should be approximately equal in length. The ratio of the lengths of the femur to the tibia-fibula, to the hock should be approximately as 4 : 5 : 3. The length of the lower leg, from the ground to the hock joint, should be a little less than 30% of the distance from the ground to the top of the hip bones. The lower leg should be vertical to the ground. The hips should be broad, in balance with shoulders and rib cage. Hind legs strong and muscular, with well developed second thighs, denoting power and activity, but not cumbersome, set parallel to each other and well apart, in balance with forelegs and body. Feet: as in forequarters.

Faults: (S) Lack of proportion in bone. Poor angulation at hip-bone. Narrow hip structure. Stifle too straight or over angulated. Cow hocks. Cowed hind legs. Splay feet. (M) Feet turned in or out. White nails.

Gait

The gait should be free, balanced and vigorous.. When viewed from the side the dog should have good reach in the forequarters and good driving power in the hindquarters. The back should be level and firm, indicating good transmission from rear to front. When viewed from the front (coming toward) or from the rear (going away), at a moderate pace, the dog shall track in two parallel lines, neither too close together nor too far apart, so placed as to give a well balanced movement. The toes (fore and hind) should point straight ahead.

Direction to exhibitors and to judges: The dog should be moved in the ring at a sufficient speed to show fluidity of movement and not at a slow walk.

Faults: (S) Rolling, padding or weaving when gaited. Any crossing movement, either front or rear. Stilted and restricted movement. (Dogs with structural weakness as evidenced by poor movement should not be used for breeding).

Disqualifications: Liver Mask. No mask. Yellow eyes.

CONDITIONS KNOWN TO AFFECT THE BULLMASTIFF IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

As there is so very little information held in the Bullmastiff Club of Southern Africa's data bank, it is difficult to speak with any accuracy about the true picture in respect of the problems facing the Bullmastiff in Southern Africa. There are however, breeders who discuss their kennel problems with each other without reporting them to the Club, and word of mouth in turn passes these on. Of course this is not a reliable criteria for statistics and must not be treated as such, but it does give a random idea of the present and past problems.

There are also those breeders who claim not to have any problems in their breeding lines. I cannot under any circumstances accept this rationale and feel that they are doing more damage to the Bullmastiff as a whole than their reputations are worth. Furthermore, who, with any sense, believes them?

I have compiled a list of what I perceive to be problem areas in the Southern African Bullmastiff. This was done from my own experience, by talking to people over the years, or from what I have seen when judging or appraising a dog on request of the owner. In respect of two of the problem areas I have incorporated the expertise of three other people. Dr Quixi Sonntag is the honorary veterinarian for The Bullmastiff Club and a behaviour practitioner. She has had the experience of working with aggressive Bullmastiffs and Boerboele. She has compiled a section on temperament in the Bullmastiff. Mr Robin Coen, the son of one of our longest standing members - now deceased, and his wife Nadia, a former secretary, add some interesting notes on size in the Bullmastiff.

I do not think it is a crime to have problem areas in one's line, but they should be recognised and acted on if necessary. I have made reference to the conditions as hereditary only when / where there is proof to substantiate the fact.

The following health conditions are some of the most prevalent problems. They are in no specific order.

Gastric dilation volvulus syndrome (Gastric torsion)

This condition is considered a veterinary emergency. It is caused when the stomach rotates on its axis because of either an unnatural accumulation of gases, secretions and / or food. The blood vessels conveying the necessary oxygen and nutrients to the tissues are strangled and with this comes the shock and respiratory distress that will kill the dog if not attended to. The dilation or volvulus can be complete or partial.

Causes and predisposing causes

1. Unknown.
2. Possibly hereditary, possibly familial (running in certain lines).
3. Bad eating habits including overeating.
4. Bad eating habits coupled with excessive exercise.
5. Stress.
6. Possible stomach pathology (delayed emptying of stomach contents for some reason).
7. Deep chested large dogs like the Bullmastiff.

Clinical signs

1. Distended abdomen. This may be just slightly or excessively distended.
2. Signs of shock: Rapid laboured breathing / respiratory distress / panting.
3. Rapid pulse.

4. Salivation.
5. Vomiting or trying to vomit.
6. Restlessness.
7. Some dogs try to roll over from stomach to back to relieve the pain.

Treatment

1. The treatment of the shock is paramount if the dog is to be saved and getting veterinary assistance is critical. From there the veterinary surgeon will proceed with the treatment protocol which includes setting up an intravenous infusion, administering selective drugs, inserting a stomach tube if possible to relieve the pressure, and when stabilised, possible surgery.
2. If surgery is performed, there are appropriate postoperative measures, such as pain relief, a nil per mouth regime for a short period, and a corrective eating regime.

Preventative measures

1. Education of the Bullmastiff owner. Recognise the signs and act quickly.
2. Reduce the risks by:
 - : Feeding smaller quantities of food more frequently.
 - : Pre-moistening pellets.
 - : Avoiding exercise before and after feeding.
 - : Avoiding large quantities of water after eating pellets.

Eye disorders

Eye disorders in the Bullmastiff can be divided into two categories: Those acquired and those inherited. Acquired disease is usually due to an accident or infection, and whereas it is not always preventable, it can at least be treated with a fair degree of success. Inherited eye disease, which can be either present at birth or develop gradually, is however not always treatable. Fortunately it is avoidable.

According to Dr Anthony Goodhead of the Johannesburg Animal Eye Hospital there are forty known hereditary eye conditions affecting about 120 different breeds of dogs.

The conditions that affect the Bullmastiff specifically are:

1. Entropion
2. Glaucoma
3. Retinal dysplasia-folds
4. Distichiasis

Entropion

This is a “conformational defect resulting in an ‘in-rolling’ of one or both eyelids which may cause ocular irritation. It is likely that entropion is influenced by several genes (polygenic) defining the skin and other structures that make up the eyelids, the amount and weight of the skin covering the head and face, the orbital contents and the conformation of the skull. In this breed the palpebral fissures may become vertical and / or shaped like a ‘pagoda’. Entropion in the Bullmastiff is severe and may require multiple surgical corrections”.¹

¹ American College of Ophthalmologists. *Bullmastiff I*.

Clinical signs

1. As described above – a particular eye shape. (Refer to the correct shape of the eye in my evaluation of the Breed Standard.)
2. The condition can be uni or bilateral.
3. The eyes may water continuously.
4. The dog may paw at his eyes due to the pain.
5. The dog may blink excessively, especially in bright sunlight, which he will tend to avoid.
6. Eventually the cornea will be so damaged that the dog may lose its sight.
7. The condition may be seen within the first few months of life.

Treatment

1. Prescribed eye ointments to alleviate the pain and / or infection.
2. Surgery to correct the defect.
3. The dog should be removed from any breeding programme.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a condition that occurs when the fluid pressure in the eye increases above the normal limits. The affected eye will appear prominent and / or enlarged.

Clinical signs

1. Initially the eye may be only slightly inflamed with a discharge.
2. As the pressure increases, a bulging effect will become noticeable.
3. Signs of pain.
4. Partially closed eyelids.
5. Dilated pupil with no light reflex.
6. Eventually the cornea becomes opaque.
7. Eyesight fails due to the pressure on the optic nerve.

Treatment

1. The fluid pressure in the eye must be reduced as quickly as possible, by either drugs or surgery.
2. If blindness has occurred, the eye has to be removed or an intraocular prosthesis has to be fitted.
3. Whether the treatment is successful or not, the dog should be removed from any breeding programme.

Retinal dysplasia-folds

This eye disorder is characterised by multiple folding of the retina, which can progress to non-attachment of the retina to the underlying structures. There can be total blindness in one extreme to no apparent defect in the other extreme. According to the American College of Veterinary Ophthalmologists, breeders are given the choice of whether to breed or not to breed with the dog.

Distichiasis

This eye condition is characterised by a double row of eyelashes causing corneal irritation and ulceration. Treatment is by electrolysis and involves permanent removal of the hair roots. Removal of the dog from any breeding programme is recommended



Ch Chizelhurst Chascah APT having his eye clearance test done by Dr Anthony Goodhead of the Johannesburg Animal Eye Hospital

Hip dysplasia

Hip dysplasia is a known hereditary condition where the head of the femur does not fit tightly or correctly into the acetabulum (hip joint) of the pelvis. Normally the femur head is kept snugly in the acetabulum with a ligament and capsules. In dysplastic dogs the acetabulum is shallow and the femur head is flattened which results in a laxity of the joint. The body tries to stabilise this laxity by developing new bone around the joint capsule, femur neck and acetabulum. This in turn causes osteoarthritis, pain and stiffness.

Causes

1. It is known to be a hereditary condition and polygenic, i.e. there are multiple genes involved in the hereditability.

There are a few environmental factors that can aggravate the genetic factor. These include:

- Overfeeding or incorrect feeding of a growing pup in its formative months
- Excessive exercise as a puppy
- Trauma to the hips.

Clinical signs

These may appear as early as three to four months in really severe cases. Some adults, especially ones that are muscular and well looked after, may never develop clinical signs of the disease. The following are some of the irregularities that may be observed in dogs suffering from Hip dysplasia:

- The dog may limp and / or favour a particular leg.
- There may be reduced tolerance to exercise.
- A “bunny hopping” gait may be observed.

- The back can be seen to sway when the dog walks.
- A generalised stiffness can be detected when the dog gets up.
- There is a tendency to place more traction on the front legs in order to relieve the rear legs, which causes well-developed forequarters as opposed to poorly developed hindquarters.
- A clicking sound can sometimes be heard from the hip area.

Diagnosis

The diagnosis of hip dysplasia is made on a physical examination and confirmed by radiographs. A veterinarian can do these either under sedation or anesthetic depending on the dog's temperament and the facilities available. The grading system in South Africa ranges from 0 to 4 where 1 is considered minimal and 4 severely dysplastic. A hip dysplasia report or certificate can be obtained with the specific grading on it from The University of Pretoria, Faculty of Veterinary Science. This is not an opinion but rather a measurement.

Treatment

This will depend on the severity of the condition and the age of the dog. Young dogs often respond well to a strict maintenance diet to correct a weight imbalance and to restricted exercise. Occasionally it may be necessary to administer pain relief in the form of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Various forms of surgery are another, but expensive, option. If the dysplasia is beyond help, euthanasia is usually the kindest procedure.

Prevention is, of course, the solution but this is easier said than done. All breeding animals should be x-rayed and graded prior to breeding and those with any dysplasia excluded from breeding programmes. Breeders should, however, bear "the complete picture" in mind before eliminating otherwise excellent animals. A Bullmastiff with excellent hips is not necessarily a Bullmastiff of the correct phenotype, and would then be undesirable.

Most reputable breeders in South Africa do x-ray their breeding stock. They also advise testing of the progeny before breeding.

Size

The Breed Standard gives us the correct sizes for the Bullmastiff but somewhere in the search to correct other problems this vital feature has been overlooked. The South African Bullmastiff is definitely getting smaller!

Recently when I mentioned this fact, as a possible problem, to another Working Group Judge, she was rather taken aback and expressed the opinion that she was not aware of the size being a problem in the Bullmastiff! Have we then become so accustomed to seeing small Bullmastiffs that it has become the norm?

Interestingly enough some years ago I exhibited my 26½ inch male, with a confirmed measurement, to a certain British Judge and was informed that he was too big!!

In the last seven years thirteen Bullmastiffs were imported into the country. Eleven of them were imported specifically for breeding and / or showing purposes. Eight of them, all adults, comprising of two males and a bitch from the United States of America, one bitch from the United Kingdom, two bitches from Spain, one bitch from Australia and one bitch from Zimbabwe are listed below. A further two males, one from the UK and one from the USA and a bitch from the UK are not included here. I have seen six of the first eight dogs, and on clinical examination, found them all to be small. This leads me to wonder whether other countries are also experiencing the same problem with size. They may or may not be aware of it.

I requested the owners of these eight dogs to measure them for this Breed Profile. This was done in the correct manner. They were stacked and absolutely symmetrical, standing on a flat surface with the measurement taken from the withers down to the ground in a straight line, and with the correct KUSA officially recognised measuring stick when available. The following statistics emerged:

UK bitch	: 23 inches
Australian bitch	: 22 inches
USA bitch	: 22 ½ (not seen)
USA dog - one	: 21 ¼
USA dog – two	: 24 ¾
Spanish bitch – one	: 23 inches
Spanish bitch – two	: 22 ¾
Zimbabwe bitch	: 25 inches (not seen)

Robin and Nadia Coen have been very active in monitoring and measuring the dogs in South Africa. In two impromptu “trials” conducted in two different provinces, they discovered the following:

Western Cape Province

Of the ten adult Bullmastiffs measured, only five were found to be in the Breed Standard. Two were above the Standard, one of which was a bitch of 27 inches and one a dog of 27 ½ inches. The remaining three were all bitches and all undersized at 23, 22 and 21 ½!

Gauteng Province

In this Province another ten Bullmastiffs were measured.

Dog 1	26 ½ inches (adult)
Dog 2	26 ½ inches (adult)
Dog 3	26 inches (adult)
Dog 4	26 inches (adult)
Dog 5	25 inches (adult)
Dog 6	25 inches (10 months old)
Bitch 1	23 inches (adult)
Bitch 2	23 ¾ inches (11 months old)
Bitch 3	23 inches (11 months old)
Bitch 4	23 inches (10 months old)

Whereas the male Bullmastiffs seem to be holding their own, although some of them are at the lower end of the scale, the bitches’ sizes are of concern. None of the above Bullmastiffs are the imported ones mentioned previously.

I encourage all breeders to take cognisance of this problem and to act NOW to correct it. If we leave it any longer it will be even harder to manage.

Cruciate ligament rupture

The cruciate ligaments, of which there are two, the cranial and the caudial, are situated at the stifle (knee) joint of each leg. They are part of the structures maintaining joint stability, and in the Bullmastiff, play an important role in his fast mobilisation from a lying or sitting position to full

flight after his quarry. As the dog launches from a sedentary position to a run, tremendous tension is applied to these ligaments and they should be able to withstand this tension without rupturing. In the olden days the dog also had to be able to change direction in mid-flight (after the poacher's Lurcher) using his hindquarters to do so, again applying incredible tension to these ligaments. Therefore, there has to be not only strong ligaments, but also a stifle of correct bilateral angulations.

As mentioned previously in my Breed Evaluation, there is no mention of the stifles in the KUSA Breed Standard and therefore we see a variety of shapes in the Breed Show Ring. These can range from a very straight stifle (possibly an angulation of 130 degrees or more) to an over-angulated stifle of 90 degrees or less, neither of these extremes being in the best interest of the dog. Moderate angulation of approximately 100-110 degrees in both knees is needed. Not all ligament ruptures, however, can be associated with the shape of the stifle.

There is what is known in veterinary terms as a "premature ageing" process, which can be related to the cruciate ligaments and is known to occur in the Labrador and the Rottweiler.² Although there is no proof that it happens in the Bullmastiff, it could be a reason why so many of our dogs suffer from this affliction. There is also the possibility that it may be hereditary although there is no proof to substantiate this theory either.

Whatever the reason, when the cruciate ligaments tear or rupture completely, either singularly or together, lameness occurs either suddenly or gradually. Depending on the severity of the situation, the dog will either limp slightly or hold the affected limb semi-flexed off the ground.

Treatment

This may vary from rest and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication to physiotherapy, to complex surgery. There are various different forms of surgical techniques and a skilled veterinary surgeon can achieve amazing results.

Cancer

Cancer is the collective name used commonly to describe a malignant growth of tissue anywhere within the body. Dogs, like humans, can and do develop cancer in any of its multiple forms. It is a disease with devastating effects and fortunate is the dog breeder or owner who has never had to experience the overwhelming helplessness when dealing with a stricken pet.

In the United Kingdom, cancer was classified as a major problem in the Bullmastiff and research is in progress. Here at home a few of the really conscientious breeders are genuinely concerned, but on the whole not much is (or can be?) done about the matter.

It is also important to remember that dogs are now living longer due to the excellent care and nutrition they receive. Veterinarians are therefore attending to many older dogs with cancer. This leads me to ask the following question – would the dog have been a cancer statistic forty odd years ago or not?

The most commonly diagnosed cancers in South Africa Bullmastiffs are Osteosarcoma and Lymphosarcoma. Various other forms of cancer, namely Leukaemia, prostate, mammary, spleen and kidney cancer and cancer of the jaw have also been responsible for the deaths of some dogs.

Only one owner, to my knowledge, took the option of chemotherapy in trying to help her dog. Radiotherapy, cryosurgery and surgical removal of tumours, the other options, have not been taken to my knowledge. I do not think that this is due to the high cost and inconvenience, but rather to the fact that many of the cancers are only discovered in the final phases, and the owners of the stricken dogs are so emotionally traumatised by the news and of seeing their beloved pets deteriorate, that they then opt for euthanasia. As we all know Bullmastiffs have a very high pain threshold and often

² Turner, Trevor (Ed). *Veterinary Notes for Dog Owners*, p 333.

the owners fail to pick up indications of pain and discomfort before it is too late. The reduced appetite and weight loss can also only manifest itself in the advanced stages.

Ideas for the prevention of cancer

1. Sterilise all bitches not required for breeding before their first oestrus or just after. According to Dr Larry N. Owen “Mammary tumours in Guide Dogs in Britain are unknown due to early spaying”.³
2. Selective breeding programmes. This could possibly be beneficial with Lymphosarcoma, the incidence of which is known to be high in the Bullmastiff. However, this concept is very difficult to control or manage because of the unknown factors.

General lameness

General lameness of the hind leg is one of the few problems reported to, and carried on the data bank of the Bullmastiff Club of Southern Africa. As specific details are not available, virtually anything could be the cause. Listed below are some potential causes of lameness in any limb:

1. Nutritional deficiencies.
2. Over or under supplementation with minerals and vitamins, especially calcium, phosphorus, vitamin C and vitamin D. Any supplementation should only be done under the direction and supervision of a veterinarian.
3. Bone or joint disease, for example cysts and tumours.
4. A genetic predisposition. This is seen in puppies that grow rapidly, of which the Bullmastiff is one.
5. Infection in any of the bones, ligaments, muscles or tendons.
6. Trauma to any bone or soft tissue, for example fractures, sprains, dislocations, lacerations or nail bed injuries.
7. Hip and / or elbow dysplasia.
8. A foreign body, such as a thorn in the foot.
If the reason is obvious and can be treated locally one should do so. Otherwise veterinary attention is necessary.

Skin allergies and skin conditions

One of the most common problems reported to the Bullmastiff Club was one of skin ailments and / or conditions. There is no specific breakdown contained within the data bank and since this is such an extensive and complicated field of medicine, I intend mentioning only briefly the more commonly known ailments. These may or may not be the ones troubling breeders.

The allergies

According to Dr Lowell Ackerman in his book *A Guide to Skin and Haircoat Problems in Dogs*, an allergy is an “abnormal response to things in the environment”. Any of these substances can be ingested, such as food given to the dog. It may also be substances inhaled, such as pollens and chemical pollutants in the environment; or bites from insects and substances in contact with the skin. These situations can all have an effect on the dog, especially if its immune system is compromised.

The more common allergies are:

³ Turner, op.cit., p. 473

- The inhalant allergies, which manifest themselves between the ages of six months and three years with the dog, causing scratching, licking and chewing.
- An allergy or hypersensitivity to the bite of a flea.
- An adversity or reaction to certain foods, or an allergy where the dog will vomit, may have diarrhoea, hives or excessive itchiness all over, or will simply refuse to eat the food.
- A reaction to substances with which the dog has come into contact, such as grass, some plants, disinfectants, certain surfaces, such as cement or vinyl, shampoo or perhaps drugs or medicine given to the dog.
- There are also the bacterial and fungal infections, of which the best known is the “hot spots” or pyotraumatic dermatitis and the ringworm or dermatophytosis. Acne, as most Bullmastiff owners know, is also a common problem.

The skin and parasites

In South Africa the three biggest problems affecting our dogs are fleas, flies and ticks. All three of these parasites can be controlled by preparations and / or medications that are easily available.

The ear mite or *Otodectes cynotis* and demodectic and sarcoptic mange are three more common problems. They require veterinary attention.

Skin tumours

Dr Ackerman also claims that skin tumours are the “most common form of cancer seen in dogs”. As there are various different types of skin tumours, and not all of them malignant, a veterinarian should be consulted.

This is apparently not a common problem with the South African Bullmastiff.

Bad bites

The Breed Standard calls for a level bite. Slightly undershot is allowed but not preferred. Due to the appalling neglect from some breeders, and judges who disregard this all-important feature, we now have a situation where a level bite with correct head proportions is fast becoming a rarity. Level bites and long, usually rather snipy muzzles, are commonplace.

Vaginal hyperplasia

Incidence

Vaginal hyperplasia is known to be a common problem in the brachycephalic or modified brachycephalic breeds such as the Boxer, Bullmastiff, Boerboel and Bulldog. The condition is related to the bitches’ hormonal cycle and is usually only seen during pro-oestrus. Depending on the severity of the condition, there is anything from mild protrusion of vaginal tissue through the vaginal opening, to an entire rather unsightly prolapse of all the vaginal tissue. This is visible externally.

Hereditary component

There is no scientific proof that the condition is hereditary, but it is thought to be familial.

Breeding

The first KUSA registered brindle Bullmastiff bitch imported into the country from the United Kingdom in 1958, Bullstaff Amaryllis of Bagdannes, suffered from a grade three vaginal hyperplasia. According to her owner, Christo Swanepoel, she was operated on successfully by Dr Alan Fair of Bethlehem and was able to have a natural mating thereafter.

The breeders and veterinarians that I have spoken to about the condition are divided in their opinions as to whether an affected bitch should be bred from or not. If, however, the bitch is mated either by natural means or artificial insemination and conceives, she should receive special anti-natal care with a caesarian section an option for the delivery.

The Bullmastiff Head

The Bullmastiff Breed Standard is very clear as to the shape and size required for a good head. (Refer to my Breed Standard evaluation). The head should be “large and square viewed from every angle” with the circumference equal to, or almost equal to the height of the dog at the withers. What is actually being seen on some of the dogs in the breed show ring (which is supposedly the cream of the crop) is anything but this. There are small heads, long narrow heads with snipy muzzles, sloping stops, muzzles out of the required ratios, too much or too little wrinkle and sometimes flews that are way too pendulous. Bad breeding techniques and bad judging are causing a huge problem for the dog.

I mentioned in my Breed Evaluation that the head determines the breed type and if breeders do not take cognisance of this problem before it is too late then many more Bullmastiffs will end up with heads like the Rhodesian Ridgeback or worse.



These three Bullmastiffs have heads that adhere to the requirements of the Breed Standard, both from front and side view. The size is in proportion to the height of the dog and the muzzles are deep and broad and in proportion to the head/ skull. The stop is pronounced, there is a correct amount of wrinkle and the flews of two of the dogs are correct. The dog on the right has flews that are very slightly pendulous. All three have got good crown lines and correct positioning of their ears and eyes.

The bitch is required to have exactly the same proportions but obviously in relation to her size. Femininity is important, but the differences should be immediately visible.

Temperament in the Bullmastiff

Dr Quixi Sonntag

Introduction

Canine temperament refers to a dog's character or “personality”, or more specifically the way in which it behaves. Behavioural scientists distinguish between behaviour that is acceptable or

unacceptable to people, and behaviour that is appropriate or inappropriate for a dog, in a given text. Context refers to the environmental and other influences that may affect a dog's behaviour at any given time.

The role of genetics in behaviour

Temperament refers to a dog's behavioural characteristics, as opposed to its physical characteristics. Behavioural traits, just like physical traits, are determined by the manner in which environmental factors affect the genetic blueprint of a dog. The dog possesses certain genes which determine how it will behave in certain circumstances. These responses are modulated by various environmental factors, such as learning through experience, training methods, socialisation, level of environmental stimulation, punishment and even physical factors, such as pain.

Breeds and temperament

All dogs, regardless of breed, share some common behavioural characteristics, such as their perception of social structure. Different breeds, however, were bred for different purposes, and this is how different behavioural traits came into play. The Bullmastiff, as the gamekeeper's night dog, originally had to be physically strong, alert and be able, on command, to launch a quiet and unexpected attack on an intruder. The dog was to limit its attack to pinning down the poacher and keeping him down without injury, until the gamekeeper ordered the dog to release his victim.

The changing roles of dogs

During the last century, with the changing lifestyle of the modern world, the original purposes of dogs changed largely from utility to companionship and recreation. The family dog now plays a variety of roles – from playmate and trusted companion, to a stimulant of physical activity, source of entertainment and protector. The Bullmastiff became popular because its physical and behavioural traits allowed it to fulfill many of these functions. It was especially its ability to guard and protect that attracted many people to the breed. In South Africa in particular, with current high crime rates, there is a demand for dogs that can act as effective deterrents of criminal activities.

Expectations of dog owners

The demand for dogs with protection abilities has led to several breeders selecting breeding stock based mainly on this behavioural trait. This bias towards aggressiveness has unfortunately led to an increase in cases of inappropriate and unacceptable aggression towards people.

Breeders and potential owners of Bullmastiffs should have realistic expectations of their dogs. It is unrealistic to expect a dog to show intense aggression to some people yet still be affectionate to family and friends. Dogs are unable to discriminate between welcome and unwelcome visitors and any incident where a dog does protect one's life or possessions should be seen as a bonus and not be an outright expectation.

A particularly unrealistic expectation is that a dog will fiercely protect its owner's property in the owner's absence. Dogs have a natural territorial instinct that may act as a deterrent when it comes to preventing unwanted visitors from entering one's property. However, a dog cannot be expected to replace security measures, such as specialised fencing, security guards and an armed response.

Aggressive behaviour encouraged in one context often leads to aggressive behaviour in other contexts. A dog that is expected to bite strangers may well start biting family members. The

physical and emotional trauma of a dog bite can have serious and tragic results, especially where children are concerned.

Training for aggression

Neurochemically and neuroanatomically, aggression, fear and anxiety are very closely related. Thus a dog that shows aggression easily is often a very anxious or fearful dog that may overreact in certain situations. Training a dog to be aggressive has the potential of creating other problems. Protection training for the family dog is therefore not advocated.

Man work or training for protection is best left to professionals working with specially selected dogs, such as police and army dogs. The serious dog sport enthusiast does man work purely for competitive reasons and should choose a reputable training school utilising play-based methods to teach controlled, inhibited biting at the appropriate age. Protection work in dog sport focuses on an artificial situation where the dog responds to commands from the handler and is expected to exhibit self-control during the attack and the bite. Unfortunately many dog training schools use incorrect training methods that encourage uncontrolled nervous aggression of dogs. There is also little, if any, selection of dog or handler, and this often results in handlers being unable to control their dogs and a variety of resultant behaviour problems in the dogs.

Behavioural problems of the Bullmastiff in South Africa

Behaviour problems related to aggression seem to be the most common in most breeds. In the Bullmastiff in South Africa, the aggression is often directed towards people, which is not a surprising fact considering the history of the breed and the current public demand for aggressive dogs.

The following is a short review of the more common behavioural disorders that may be encountered in Bullmastiffs:

Aggression towards people – dominance aggression

Dominance aggression may be manifested in many different ways. The symptoms include the following: Growling, snapping or biting when the dog is physically punished or verbally reprimanded, ordered to get off the furniture, suddenly approached, disturbed while sleeping, stepped over, handled on the head or the muzzle, patted on the head or stared at (direct eye contact). The aggression is usually directed at a family member or someone the dog is familiar with. In addition these dogs will often lean or push against people, put their paws on people's shoulders or back, straddle or mount people, mouth the hand, stare, be very demanding of attention, be very possessive about food or other resources and block doorways.

These symptoms may be exhibited by young dogs (under 12 months old) but are most commonly encountered in dogs reaching social maturity, which is usually between 18 and 36 months of age.

The underlying problem in these cases has to do with the dog's perception of its social status within the household and its need to control resources in its environment. All dogs have a need to fit in to a social hierarchy. They see humans in their lives as part of their pack and need affirmation that the people are effective pack leaders. Problems can occur when the owners are unable to maintain a leadership position within the pack. These dogs are usually quite anxious about their position in the social hierarchy and the anxiety lowers their threshold for aggression (i.e. they are more likely to show aggression).

Dealing with a dog with dominance aggression requires establishing an effective social structure in which the dog feels comfortable and therefore less anxious. The dominance of the owners is reinforced in a non-confrontational manner, by the correct use of body language and positive reinforcement training. This relaxes the dog and modifies its behaviour. Exact techniques of behaviour modification are best addressed in a consultation with a professional canine behavior practitioner. Head collars (“halti” collars) are excellent tools in the management of the dominantly aggressive dog.

The use of physical punishment or any physical demonstration of power by the owners of such dogs (e.g. hitting the dog, alpha rolls, the use of pain-eliciting collars, jerking on the collar) usually makes the problem worse. Unfortunately this is the advice often given to owners of problem dogs by well-meaning breeders or dog trainers who do not have a background in behavioural medicine.

If addressed early and incidents of aggressive behaviour are not frequent or severe, the prognosis for these cases is good. However, aggressive behaviour forms part of the behaviour repertoire of any dog, and although it can be effectively controlled in most cases, it cannot be guaranteed that the dog will never bite someone.

Aggression towards people – fear aggression

This form of aggression is usually directed towards people who are not familiar to the dog, or towards specific groups of people, e.g. men, people wearing hats, children, etc. The dog will often bark, snap, tremble and bite from behind or when cornered. They will usually try to back up when approached in order to avoid confrontation. Fear aggression is usually the result of inadequate and /or inappropriate socialisation of the young puppy during the 3 to 16 week period when it is very sensitive to stimuli from the environment, but it can also be induced by abuse and inappropriate punishment.

Therapy consists of instituting a relaxation programme using positive reinforcement training techniques. This is followed by systematic desensitisation and counter-conditioning, a process whereby the dog is gradually exposed to the fear-evoking stimulus while being rewarded with foods for appropriate (non-fearful) behaviour. In some cases, anti-anxiety medication for a few months would be recommended.

Territorial and protective aggression

Territorial aggression can be directed towards humans or other dogs. Dogs usually become territorial about a location such as the property they live on, their sleeping area, kennel, car (when traveling) or the front door of the home. A dog that is territorially aggressive will not be aggressive when removed from that territory. Confinement in small areas or chaining the dog usually increases inappropriate territorial aggression.

Protective aggression occurs when the dog perceives that the owner is being threatened when in fact there is no real threat. Examples of such situations would include the owner being hugged or touched by someone.

Inappropriate territorial and protective aggression is treated by initially avoiding situations that would induce aggression and then following a programme of relaxation training, systematic desensitisation and counter-conditioning.

Interdog aggression

Interdog aggression is common between dogs of the same gender, although it can occur between opposite sexes too. Aggression between dogs in the same household is the manifestation of

hierarchical conflicts and commonly occurs when the younger dog reaches social maturity (18 to 36 months) or when two dogs of the same age reach social maturity (sometimes sooner). For this reason, and others, it is not advisable to acquire two puppies at the same time, especially not from the same litter and of the same gender. This sets the scene for hierarchical instability as soon as both dogs are of equal size, strength and status and therefore the probability of later conflict is great.

In these cases it is important that the owners recognise and properly establish the natural hierarchy of the dogs amongst each other, with themselves being effective pack leaders. This may involve drastically reducing the attention given to an older weaker dog in favour of the younger stronger dog. Sterilisation of bitches and castration of male dogs significantly reduces the incidence of interdog aggression.

Another form of interdog aggression is redirected aggression when the stimulus for aggression (a dog passing in the street, a jogger, a cyclist) is out of reach and the aggression is then redirected to a dog (or person) within immediate reach.

Interdog aggression between dogs familiar to each other can occur as a result of territorial or fear aggression. The latter is often the result of inadequate socialisation with other dogs of the same age during the socialisation period, compounded by too early weaning (before 7-8 weeks of age).

Destructive behaviour

Destructive behaviour can be a result of boredom and frustration due to an under-stimulating environment, or it can be a symptom of separation-related anxiety. It is often a combination of these factors.

Environmental enrichment and regular positive human–dog interaction will reduce boredom and frustration. Dogs, and especially puppies, need to chew, thus it is essential that they have sufficient chew toys of good quality available at all times.

Toys should, however, not be freely available, but should rather be rotated on a daily or unpredictable basis, so that they retain their value. Play is an essential aspect of a dog's life and games are necessary but should always be initiated and terminated by the owners and not the dog. The owners should always win tug-of-war games. This also helps to establish the owners as effective pack leaders.

Regular outings are very stimulating and will certainly prevent boredom. Walks are not just good physical stimulants but also stimulate the olfactory (smell) sense. Puppy walks are very important as it exposes the puppy to different environments during its sensitive socialisation period.

Destructive behaviour in a dog suffering from separation anxiety typically occurs only when the owner is not at home. Other signs associated with this condition can include howling or barking and soiling indoors when the dog is known to be house trained. A professional canine behaviour practitioner best deals with these cases. Therapy will include a relaxation programme, environmental and behavioural modification techniques and possibly temporary drug therapy.

Fears and phobias

The most common fears in dogs involve the fear of loud noises and thunderstorms, strangers and unfamiliar environments. Fearful dogs may respond to these stimuli with escape behaviour (running away or hiding) or aggression, especially where escape is not possible or unsuccessful. Physical signs include shaking or trembling, hyperventilation, excessive salivation, urination and defecation.

Fears usually develop gradually and can be part of normal behaviour. A phobia is a sudden abnormal response that results in extremely fearful behaviour.

Dog owners often unwittingly reinforce fearful behaviour by reassuring dogs when they appear fearful instead of showing by their own example, that it is not necessary to be fearful. Fears

are best addressed early on before they develop into real phobias, and very often gradual and frequent positive exposure to the fear-evoking stimulus is all that is needed to desensitise the dog. In more severe cases, drug therapy and other forms of treatment may be necessary.

Prevention of behaviour problems

Careful selection of breeding stock, screening of potential owners and appropriate early socialisation and training of the puppy at 3 to 16 weeks of age play an important role in the prevention of behavior problems. It is essential that positive reinforcement training methods, rather than correction or punishment-based methods, be used.

Temperament tests have been devised to assess the behaviour of dogs. These can be done from 7 weeks of age. Although temperament tests are not useful in predicting future behaviour of dogs, such tests performed from time to time can identify problems before they develop into serious disorders.

A good understanding of the social and biological needs of the dog, combined with some basic background knowledge of canine behaviour will further ensure that behavioural problems in the Bullmastiff are limited to the bare minimum. Education of breeders and owners about these issues remains a priority in preventing behaviour problems. It will also assist breeders in being more effective in selecting clients. Not all people who want a Bullmastiff are capable of owning one in a responsible manner.

Breeders should follow up the behavioural development of the pups they sell. The Information gleaned from the follow-up of the progeny of breeding stock (at least up to three years of age) can be used to determine whether certain breed lines are more prone to specific behaviour problems than others. This combined approach of data collection and education of owners, addresses both the genetic and environmental aspects of behaviour.

It is up to breeders and owners to create an excellent reputation of the Bullmastiff temperament by accepting their responsibility in the prevention of further behaviour problems.



SOME NOTABLE SOUTHERN AFRICAN BULLMASTIFFS

Date	Name	Sex	Colour	Owner	Notation
1925	Farcroft Vigil (Imp UK)	Bitch	Clear	Heard	First known Bullmastiff imported into SA (Not KUSA registered)
1925	Farcroft Joe (Imp UK)	Dog	Brindle	Heard	Second known Bullmastiff & first brindle imported into SA (Not KUSA registered)
1928	John Bull of Damara (Imp UK)	Dog	Clear	Heard	First known Bullmastiff to be registered with KUSA.
1928	Brittania of Damara (Imp UK)	Bitch	Clear	Heard	Early import KUSA registered
1928	Trustful Peggy (Imp UK)	Bitch	Clear	Heard	Early import KUSA registered
1935	Ch (UK) Springwell Major (Imp UK)	Dog	Clear	De Beers	Breeding & guarding stock for the diamond mines



Ch (UK) Springwell Major

1937	Ch Castlehill Sally	Bitch	Clear	Holmes	First KUSA registered champion bitch
1944	Ch Bullar of Dunmar	Dog	Clear		First KUSA registered champion dog

1958	Bulstaff Amaryllis of Bagdannes (Imp UK)	Bitch	Brindle	Behrman / Swanepoel	First KUSA registered brindle
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Photo : Christo Swanepoel

1960	Bagdannes Quixote of Zextas	Dog	Brindle	Swanepoel	First SA born brindle to be registered with KUSA, first brindle to enter the Breed Show Ring and first brindle to be awarded a CC
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Photo : Shona Taylor

1966	Ch Nagar of Islairg	Dog	Brindle	Keith	First KUSA registered brindle to achieve championship status
1976	Royalguard Kingpin of Hipwell (Imp USA)	Dog	Brindle	Montagu, Hamill, Epstein & Honeyborne	First two Bullmastiffs imported from the USA
1976	Royalguard Sugar Baby of Hipwell (Imp USA)	Bitch	Clear	As above	“



Photo : John Montagu

1977	Ch Pitman's King Cole (Imp UK)	Dog	Brindle	Whiffler	Second KUSA registered brindle to achieve championship status
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Photo : Karen Whiffler

1982	Ch Jokukids Goola o'Gruff	Dog	Brindle	Whiffler	The only brindle Bullmastiff to have won a BIS at an All Breeds Ch.Show
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Photo : Karen Whiffler

1992	Ch Jokukids Orphan Annie	Bitch	Clear	Whiffler	First recipient of the Pitman Trophy – excellence in the Breed Show Ring & in Obedience
1992	Ch KimKen Shea of Starvalley	Dog	Clear	Ceronio	The second clear coloured Bullmastiff to have won a BIS at an All Breeds Ch Show. Holder of 99 BOB certificates. National Bullmastiff 1990/91/92/94



Photo : Wilma Ceronio

1997	Ch Sondu Casca	Dog	Brindle	Spooner	First National Stud Dog 1997/8 & first brindle to win a BISS
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Photo : Don Spooner

1998	Gamekeeper Dangerous Don	Dog	Brindle	Ellis	A deaf dog that was rescued and then trained in Obedience using hand commands. He subsequently went on to gain the highest score ever in a KUSA Obedience Show
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Photo : Colleen Ellis

1999	Ch Chizelhurst Chascah APT	Dog	Brindle	Robertson	The only Bullmastiff to have won BISS four times in his show career. One of only three KUSA registered Bullmastiffs to have passed APT testing. Second National Stud Dog 1999/2001
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Photo : Dawn van Staden

2001	Ch Lelloi Juke of Scottswold APT	Dog	Clear	Scott	One of only three KUSA registered Bullmastiffs to have passed aptitude testing
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Photo : Robertson

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BRINDLE

All the available literature on the Bullmastiff informs breeders about the importance of using the brindle Bullmastiff in long-term breeding programmes. Some breeders are adamant that there can be no purity and clarity of colour without a brindle somewhere in the line, as it is the brindle that is the key to the cosmetic colouring in the dog.

And indeed the early breeders were quick to realise (working on a practical trial and error basis?) that when they did incorporate a brindle into their long-term breeding programmes, the dirty smudging seen regularly in matings between the clear colours, which apparently do not carry the brindle gene disappeared from their stock, and the mask on the muzzle was clearer.

What they perhaps did not know was the genetics involved in the inheritance of the mask and the brindle coat in the Bullmastiff.

There are actually two kinds of brindle Bullmastiffs. There is what is called a true or pure brindle with the genetic code of $e^{br}e^{br}$, and what is called a brindle with a masking gene, which carries the genetic code of $E^m e^{br}$.

It is not always possible visibly to tell the difference between the two as the brindle colouring of the dog sometimes obscures the masked portions of the muzzle, but the difference can be seen clearly in the red and fawn coloured dogs that also normally carry this masking gene. Occasionally there are dogs that do not carry this masking gene, or the mask is a poor one. This can be seen especially in the clear colours, but sometimes also in the brindle. As the Breed Standard calls for specifications in respect of the mask, dogs that are deficient in this quality will not be readily displayed in the Breed Show Ring and knowledgeable breeders will probably not breed with such stock unless they have other positive qualities, which explains why we see so few of them.

Pictured below are two brindles, one with poor masking (only the area around the nose is masked) and the other with a good mask.



Apart from expensive blood tests, a way to positively determine the one brindle from the other is to mate that particular brindle to a red or fawn dog and the colours of the offspring will provide the answer. If the dog is a true brindle, all the puppies will be brindle regardless of the colour of the other dog.

According to Don and Sue Spooner (Sondu Bullmastiffs) one of their Champion brindle males Ch Sondu Tristan only produced brindle puppies regardless of the colour of the bitch mated to him. This would then make him a true brindle.



Ch Sondu Tristan, pictured here as a young dog.

To understand more fully the concept of the involved genetics, let us look at what Clarence C. Little says in his book, *The Inheritance of Coat Color in Dogs*. This should help the reader understand the possibilities available in relation to the Bullmastiff colour coding.

“ Mating two pure brindles having no masking gene ($e^{br}e^{br}$) would produce only pups that are pure brindle ($e^{br}e^{br}$).

Mating a pure brindle ($e^{br}e^{br}$) to a brindle with a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$) would produce all brindles, 50 percent pure brindles and 50 percent with masking genes.

Mating a pure brindle ($e^{br}e^{br}$) to a red or a fawn ($E^m E^m$) would result in all brindle pups, but all would carry a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$).

Mating two brindles both with a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$) would result in 25 percent pure brindle ($e^{br}e^{br}$), 50 percent brindle with a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$), and 25 percent red or fawn ($E^m E^m$).

Mating a brindle with a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$) to a red or a fawn ($E^m E^m$) would result in 50 percent brindle with a masking gene ($E^m e^{br}$) and 50 percent red or fawn ($E^m E^m$), but none of the brindles would be pure brindle.

Mating two fawns / reds would result in a litter of all fawn / red puppies and no brindles”.¹

How then do we explain the phenomenon of Wellmeadow Inkunzi of Anubis - a brindle dog out of two fawn coloured parents?

The breeder of Inkunzi, Bobby Bain, is adamant that there was no other male, specifically a brindle Bullmastiff male present on her property during Angie’s oestrus and mating and there is no reason to suspect otherwise. So was this conception and birth a genetic mutation? Or is there more to this than thought?



Wellmeadow Inkunzi - 3/2/1984 – 19/11/1989
(Ch Jokukids Greg x Leblon Angie)

¹ Little, Clarence. *The Inheritance of Coat Color in Dogs*.

Is this litter then a landmark in the history of the Southern African Brindle Bullmastiff or not? Furthermore there are two other known Kennel Union of Southern Africa registered litters where the parents were of a clear colour and the puppies or some of the puppies have been registered as brindle.

However both cases are not quite as clear-cut as the previous one as there was a resident brindle male in both cases. I definitely do not want to cast doubt on or attack the integrity of the breeders but this fact cannot be ignored. Mistakes can and do happen without us knowing.



This brindle-to-brindle mating produced six puppies of which only two were brindle. The male is known to be a brindle carrying a strong masking gene, the bitch the same but with a weak-masking gene.

The Breed Standard does not specify whether the brindle stripes should be in a chevron pattern or not, it only states that the colour should be clear and pure. It also does not say whether the background colour should be more or less than the brindle pigment or even if the pigment must be dark or light. It does, however, state that there should be a dark mask on the muzzle toning to the eyes, and that the ears should be darker than the body, and that the nails should be dark. Other pigmentation such as the flews and eye rims should also be dark, for aesthetic and practical working purposes. This is unfortunately not mentioned in the KUSA Breed Standard.

In fact the only specification mentioned in respect of the brindle coat is that it be pure and clear. There is, however, much more to the colour of the brindle coat than meets the eye, as there are actually many different variations of brindle colouring to be found.

There are primarily the red and the fawn brindles and of these two, the background colour can either be so heavily patterned with pigment (brindle markings) that it gives the appearance of an almost black Bullmastiff, or it can be so lightly pigmented that the background colour is the dominant one.

There can also be a 50/50 balance of the two. Yet another variation is a coat of which the background colour may be mixed, for example areas where the red shows through the brindling and areas where the colour fawn shows through, with neither colour being dominant. It is also unusual to have matching patterns on both sides and sometimes the entire brindle pigment is uneven throughout.

In specialist judging of the Bullmastiff for the Best Brindle Coat, I feel the Judge should take the original purpose of the dog into consideration and that the darker the brindling, the better. After all the dog had to avoid detection in the undergrowth, and just as white is an undesirable feature on the dog, a fawn coloured dog with only a slight amount of light brindling would be easier to detect than an almost black dog. However, as in everything, moderation is the key and perhaps a

compromise of 20 percent background colour to 80 percent dark brindling could be a guideline for the interpretation of the words “pure and clear”. A brindle squiggle here or there can definitely not be interpreted as pure and clear and is therefore, in my opinion, not desirable.

We must bear in mind that the original Gamekeeper’s Night Dog was depicted as brindle. It is therefore assumed that the brindle was the original colour of choice. These dogs could blend well with the vegetation whereas the black muzzle and ears further aided the dog to remain undetected even when its head was lifted up to sense, smell or sight the poacher. In Richard Ansdell’s painting of “The Poacher” dated 1865 this can be seen very clearly.²

The original brindle colouring stems from the incorporation of the brindle Mastiff and the brindle Bulldog in the mid 19th Century when the breed typing was being done.



² *The Poacher*, painted by Richard Ansdell. in Hancock, D. *The Bullmastiff: A Breeder’s Guide*, Vol 1, p. iv.

THE BREED SHOW RING AND JUDGING THE BULLMASTIFF

The Breed Show Ring is an intensely competitive area with both pitfalls and pleasures for the exhibitors and the judges. It is also an area where everyone must observe the written rules. These rules are contained in the show manuals of the participating clubs and the KUSA Constitution. They are inviolable. There are also many unwritten “codes of conduct”, both positive and negative, that should be observed. Obviously all these are in the interest of both dogs and human participants.

For the non-professional handler here are some tips on handling that will help avoid some of the pitfalls of the Show Ring:

- 1 Have a clean well-groomed dog to present to the judge. With the Bullmastiff maintenance is minimal and a daily face wipe and groom of ten minutes can maintain the coat in show condition. Dogs that are attended to in these ways do not need to be shampooed. Short manicured nails are a must, as are clean ears and teeth. This can be done weekly. No colourants or substances that alter the coat texture may be applied to the coat prior to going into the ring.
- 2 Be ready and waiting in the marshalling ring or at the entrance to the ring when due to enter, with your dog close to you and your competition number displayed prominently. Failure to respond to three calls for your attendance can result in being marked absent.
- 3 Have the correct collar and lead on the dog. I recommend a sturdy choke chain of the correct length to just go over the dogs head, and a very short lead with the handle just long enough for the hand to fit through. This will give you complete control over your dog. A well-trained dog will respond to commands from your index finger, which will be right next to his cheek.
- 4 Do not, under any circumstances, manhandle your dog in the ring. If he misbehaves or displeases you, remove him from the ring and attend to the problem in private.
- 5 Do not fidget or fuss with your dog once it is stacked. He should be looking perfect as the judge approaches.
- 6 Appropriate dress is essential. Long flowing skirts, high heels and bangles have no place in the show ring.¹
- 7 Synchronise your movements to those of your dog when gaiting round the ring. Your knee and the dog’s head should move in sequence. Bullmastiffs should be gaited at a slow trot with a short but loose lead. They should never be strung up like some of the other breeds.
- 8 Be prepared to perform any of the ring movements required by the judge. The most common ones requested are the “away and back”, the “circle” around the ring and the “triangle”. Occasionally a judge may ask all the dogs to walk round the ring.
- 9 Always maintain a reasonable distance from the dog in front of you, whether gaiting or stacking and never run into the dog in front when the gaiting ends.
- 10 Do not be intimidated by the competition. If you want to be the winner, and have a Category A dog (discussed below) be positive and have a strategy. The owners and handlers of all the top-winning dogs have a campaign strategy.
- 11 Always congratulate the winner and if possible stay to support him / her in the next class. That is good sportsmanship.
- 12 If the judge is a friend, do not compromise him / her by any patronising behavior. A simple greeting will suffice.²
- 13 Keep the welfare of your dog in mind. Standing in the sun for long periods or restricting access to empty bowel or bladder is cruel.

¹ *KUSA Guide for Dog Show Judges*. Sept 1991. 2nd edition, p. 5.

² *KUSA Guide ...*, op. cit., p. 6

- 14 Do not ever walk in or cross over the designated ring area before the show commences.
- 15 Always remove any waste products that your dog may leave on the grounds.
- 16 The Bullmastiff is one of the breeds with specific height requirements. At any time, while in the ring, the judge can take a measurement of your dog. This is done with a measuring stick at the withers and the dog should be able to tolerate this manoeuvre, just as he should be able to tolerate being examined by a complete stranger.

Uneven ground: Another common problem is the ground where the dogs are displayed. It is not always flat and even. There can be slopes, small bumps, holes and the grass can be uncut. A skilled handler will use the terrain to his / her advantage. For example do not stack your dog with his front legs in a dip and his rear end on an upward slope or bump. He will look awful.

Aggressive dogs: Any dog showing aggression towards the judge and / or other exhibitors and their dogs is a danger and can be ordered by the judge to leave the ring. Any responsible owner will not allow such behaviour.

Confined space: If the ring and surrounding area is small, rather remove yourself to a position further back than sit so close to someone else that relaxation is impossible. Remember your dog might be the most obedient dog there, but the one next to you, a hooligan. Dogs out of their home comfort zones and stressed by the entire sensory overload and stimulation may well fight in such a situation. Rather avoid the possibility of it happening by acting accordingly.

Baiting: If used judiciously, baiting can really bring out the best in a dog. Allowing the dog a treat just prior to it having its mouth examined is not a good idea. Some handlers use moon bags if their clothing does not have pockets. If standing in front of your dog with the lead relaxed and bait in your hand, be careful that you do not hold the bait too high otherwise you will alter the whole topline of your dog, and not necessarily for the better.

Double handling versus a change in handlers: Any handler within the ring may make a request to the judge in respect of a second handler taking over the dog if, for example, excessive running is a problem. It is up to the judge to approve or disapprove the request. This is totally different to a dog being double handled from outside the ring by a second party who tries to attract the dog's attention in various ways. Within the KUSA Rules and Regulations this is not allowed and any dog that is so distracted may be requested by the judge to leave the ring.

One of the greatest pleasures obtained from campaigning and exhibiting one's dog, is to chart the dog's process through its show career. This begins with the first show right through to the last show, and usually spans three to four years. If your dog is a big winner complete his show career while he is in his prime and at the top. There is something very sad and pathetic about dogs that are campaigned well past their "sell by" dates.

The camaraderie and the atmosphere where friends get together at a show can be wonderful. Many exhibitors travel great distances and without the support of friends would find the show circuit a lonely place.

There is great pleasure in watching a good handler demonstrate his or her skills. Many of the professionals have come up through the ranks over the years and much can be learnt from them. With practice we can all be that good!

Of course pleasant weather is an advantage for everyone and bad weather can alter the atmosphere immediately.

Category A, B & C dogs

The category A dogs are the quality dogs, the dogs that should be winning. They should all be rivals for the accolades. One will win today, the next one the next day



The category B dogs are the mediocre dogs. They will usually win if there are no category A dogs present, but should not win if there is category A dog's present. However, sometimes they do win and then the credentials of the Judge and the contents of the Breed Standard come under the spotlight.



The category C dogs are the dogs that should not even be in the Breed Show Ring, but for whatever reason, are. They should not be considered for any accolades. If any are presented then again the credentials of the Judge and the Breed Standard contents will be under the spotlight.



Ring Procedure

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1. Have the dogs enter the ring, and to break the ice and relax both dogs and handlers, let them proceed once round the ring. This is an ideal opportunity for the Judge to generally appraise what is being presented to her eg : phenotype, physical fitness, movement and muscle tone, general condition and spirit, response to environmental stimulation, colour, tail position and size.
 2. Line up for individual attention.

3. Start with a frontal and non- confrontational approach and a greeting to the handler – and dog if you so wish. This is the time to check the position of the front legs and feet and the width of the chest.
If there is any indication from the handler that the dog may not be approachable then act accordingly. Remember : should the dog show any overt aggression towards the Judge &/or other exhibitors then it should be excused from the ring. The Bullmastiff's heritage should be kept in mind when there is dog-to-dog intolerance.
4. From this front position continue with the assessment of the heads' size and shape, muzzle, stop, flews, eyes, ears, crown line, cheeks, nose and wrinkle, and then the bite. If desired by the Judge, the handler can be requested to show the bite. The Judge should avoid prolonged eye contact with the dog. Fawning over and excessive touching of the dog is unnecessary as all but the bite can be assessed visibly.
5. The Judge may now move to the side of the dog while the handler moves to the front of the dog.
6. Check the depth and width of brisket (chest) again if necessary, neck, front shoulder angulation and position of front legs and slope of pastern. Lift up the front paw and check the feet, nails and pads.
7. Check the coat quality while assessing the back / backline, ribs, underline, flank and loin.
8. The second thigh of the hindquarters must always be felt as well as the testicles. The rear view of the hind legs will show the Judge whether there is a problem with cow hocks or bowlegs. At the same time the tail length can be determined correct or not.
9. The only movement required is an “away and back” and a “circle” to the end of the line. (Refer to my gait evaluation)

Judging the Bullmastiff puppy

The Bullmastiff puppy starts to change shape rather rapidly just as s/he qualifies age wise to go into the show ring.



A four-month-old quality puppy not yet out of proportion

During the rapid growth period, which is generally between four and twelve months, the puppy, can change shape many times. The hindquarters tend to grow faster than the front quarters, which can leave the puppy looking somewhat unbalanced.



A five-month-old quality puppy with an acceptable back / backline



An eight-month-old quality puppy showing the distinctly uneven growth rates.



A ten month old quality puppy showing an almost level back / backline

Acceptable head and ears in the Bullmastiff puppy.

The ears are usually huge and are out of proportion to the head which in turn is small and out of proportion to the body. This of course changes as the puppy grows. The three photographs of the same dog featured below illustrate the head growth and subsequent change of head shape.



Four months



Twelve months



Twenty-four months

The Gait

The feet can be all over the place when gaiting but this is not necessarily indicative of a gaiting impediment. The judge should not be fooled by the best-trained and handled puppy and really needs to draw on knowledge and experience combined with “that gut feeling” during this time.

Two extra criteria to keep in mind are the general condition of the puppy and whether it is re-acting positively to its surroundings or not. A skittish and withdrawn puppy or one that shows any sort of aggression is unacceptable.



THE END

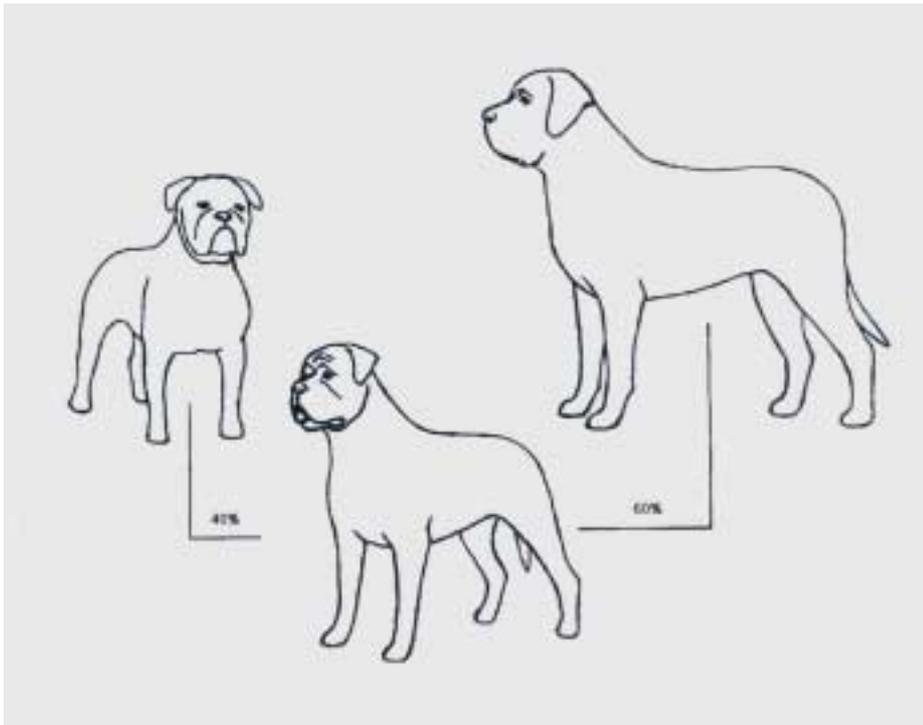
THE BULLMASTIFF ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND (A brief summary)

The Bullmastiff's development began in the early 19th Century for and by wealthy estate owners in England who were desperate to protect their large game herds from poachers. What they needed specifically for this purpose was a guard dog that could take enormous physical abuse and at the same time be reliable, powerful and agile. The dog also needed to have a suitable colour to enable it to blend in with the surrounding vegetation.

Various combinations of breeds were experimented with including the Great Dane, the European and English Mastiffs and the Saint Bernard's and Bloodhounds of that time. Some authorities claim that the Dogue de Bordeaux and the Dalmatian were also used. As many of these so called "breeding programmes" were not registered it is absolutely impossible to account for the total gene pool of the present day Bullmastiff.

However the recognised and accepted origin of the Bullmastiff is a cross between the Old English Mastiff and Bulldog of that time. This took place in the mid 19th Century.

The making of the Bullmastiff



1

¹ Walkey, Bill. The Bullmastiff Fancier's Manual.p 17.