

STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER

BREED LECTURE

Prepared by **Annette Baxter BOLDHART STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIERS**

THE STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER IS “THE FOREMOST ALL PURPOSE DOG “

Acknowledgements: New Zealand Kennel Gazette, H Beilby, John F Gordon, The Staffordshire Bull Terrier in America, Deiter Fleig, The Complete Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Danny Gilmour. Thank you to all who have given permission to use photographs of their Staffords.

THE STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER

ORIGINS

The ancestors of the staffordshire bull terrier go back centuries to the mastiff breeds. The bulldog that evolved from these mastiffs were used for bull baiting and bear baiting and were very large dogs and weighed anything from 80 to 120lbs. These dogs were bred with large powerful jaws and fronts to hold their opponent. The popularity of this “sport” started to wane around the 1800’s and by 1835 was outlawed by the authorities of the time. When this so called “sport” was outlawed the emphasis was then on dog fighting wherein dog was matched against dog and usually weight for weight. Only the game survived and only those dogs who proved themselves in the pit were bred with. There were many pits around London and the mining districts of Staffordshire and this activity became a favourite pastime.

With the popularity of dog fighting and other activities such as ratting it was soon found that the qualities of tenacity and courage possessed by the old time bulldogs were not in themselves sufficient to ensure the best results when pitting dog against dog and that a lighter and more agile type was needed with rapid and quick movement a necessity. There are various theories as to the development of the Bull and Terrier or the Pit Dog however this was probably done in two ways. Firstly by selecting the most agile and lighter types of bulldogs and then by crossing these dogs with the lighter and more agile old

english terrier which was a lighter breed very active and quick in movement.

The colouration found was varied white, peds, brindle, fawn, red and even black & tan which as we know is undesirable in today’s standard of the SBT.

As a result of this crossing the weight of the fighting dog was reduced and this bull and terrier is almost certainly the forebears of the modern SBT.

Although the stafford was bred to fight other dogs it must be remembered that these dogs were owned by the hard working family man. In the main the dogs were treated with a lot of care as a good fighting dog could earn money for the family. They associated with all the family including the children.

It is from these beginnings that you can see where the **characteristics** of : Traditionally of indomitable courage and tenacity. Highly intelligent and affectionate especially with children and **temperament** of: Bold, fearless and totally reliable have stemmed from.

Although the Staffordshire Bull Terrier is now an ideal companion dog and show dog we must never forget the background and history of the breed. To judge and assess the Staffordshire correctly we must take into account the **physical and mental properties that enable the dog to perform the functions for which it evolved.**

RECOGNITION OF THE BREED.

The breed first received kennel club recognition on the 25th May 1935. Staffords were first exhibited at the Great Hertfordshire Open Show in June 1935 with 27 entries. The newly formed Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club held their first show on the 17th August of the same year with 60 entries.

Jack Barnard the first president of the club wrote the first book about the breed in 1935 and his dog Jim the Dandy was such a typical example of the breed at that time it is stated that it was this dog around which the breed standard was written.

The first challenge certificates were awarded in 1938 and the first 2 champions of the breed were titled in May 1939.

The original standard stated that a dog should be 15-18 inches and weigh 28 – 38 lbs and bitches were to be 4 lbs lighter.

The breed was awarded championship status in 1938 when CC's were awarded for the first time.
First Champions of the Breed:



Ch Gentleman Jim



Ch Lady Eve

Origins of the breed:

The Old English Bulldog was compact, broad and muscular as reflected in the well-known depiction *Crib and Rosa*. The average height was approximately 15 inches and they weighed about 45 pounds. A particular characteristic of the breed was the lower jaw that projected considerably in front of the upper jaw, which made possible a strong, vice-like grip. The nose was deeply set in the face, which allowed the dog to get enough air as it gripped the bull.



Crib & Rosa

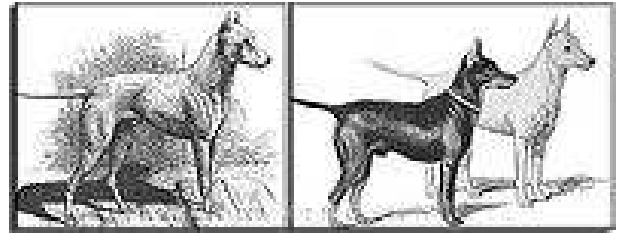
This standard was revised and the height was changed to **14-16 inches** and the weight clause unaltered thus resulting in a **cobbler type of dog**. The breed standard was also altered to include a scale of points in 1948 and it is interesting to note on what areas was the most importance placed.

General Appearance – Coat & Condition	10
Head	25
Neck	10
Body	25
Legs & Feet	15
Tail	5
General Movement & Balance	10

To assist in understanding the importance the Old Timers of the Breed – The people who established the breed standard placed on each section of the dog I have listed the points allocated in each section of the standard.



The Old English Terrier



The Black & Tan Terrier

*Jim The Dandy – The model for the original
Staffordshire Bull Terrier Breed Standard*



The **BREED STANDARD** is the criteria by which all pure breed dogs are judged. Its purpose is to describe the “perfect” Staffordshire Bull Terrier. This paragon has never existed for in all breeds there is room for improvement even in the very best specimens. Thus the aim of the breeder is to produce a dog which comes as close as possible to the criteria listed in the standard. The job of the dog show judge is to choose as winner the dog which most closely epitomizes the standard of the breed. Words most used when evaluating dogs:

TYPE: The word type probably is misused by dog fanciers more than any other word. Contrary to popular belief, each breed has only one correct type. The most “typey” dog is the one which comes closest to the characteristics set forth in the standard. Type is what sets one breed of dog apart from every other breed. All breeds have some small variation even amongst the most typey individuals. Slight differences in size, expression, substance, and refinement may be family line differences, or they may be variations within the same line - but they are not differences in type. Provided the dog adheres to the characteristics listed in the breed standard, the dog will have type even though it may look a little different from another persons ideal dog which is no less

typey. A sure way to lose type is to ignore the breed standard. Another way is to over exaggerate one area of the standard and neglect others.

SOUNDNESS: Soundness is the ability of the dog to function well. Soundness encompasses a structurally correct skeleton, correct muscle, correct temperament combined with no disabilities - temporary or permanent which would prevent the dog from using these attributes. A dog which is lame, deaf, blind, overly aggressive or highly nervous or shy is unsound. A dog with a wounded foot is temporarily unsound. As soon as he can move without limping he is sound again. Not all faults in a dog make him unsound. A dog may have an overly long thin muzzle, carry his tail too high or be too long in leg but as long as he can use those parts as nature intended he is still sound. However since those faults are uncharacteristic of the breed as described in the standard he would be said to lack breed type. A mongrel can be very sound but he has no type.

CONDITION; Condition is the responsibility of the owner. A dog is in “condition” if he carries the proper amount of weight for his size, has muscle tone, clear eyes and a glossy well cared for coat.

BALANCE: Balance means that all parts of the body should fit each other without one part overwhelming the rest. A dog with a long lanky body and a wide blocky head would appear out of proportion. The words "proportion" and "balance" are interchangeable.

STYLE: Style is defined by Webster as a "manner deemed elegant and appropriate" and "stylishness is defined as "showiness". At a dog show style often separates the superior from the good and the winners from the losers when all other points are almost equal. The "stylish" dog shows off his characteristics of his breed and makes the most of his "typeyness". Style or elegance is something you cannot give your dog he is either born with it or he was not.

THE STANDARD

Quite often today when people talk about the stafford the first thing they mention is the head. Whilst the stafford head is important and unique in appearance I believe that the first 3 clauses in the breed standard are of the utmost importance.

General Appearance: Smooth coated, well balanced, of **great strength for his size. Muscular, active and agile. (10 points)**

From this it can be clearly seen that a **stafford should never be fat**. The muscles should be hard and the animal should only be carrying sufficient condition to make it an efficient working machine. This does not mean that the stafford should have muscles like a body builder. Quite to the contrary it should be like an athlete or a boxer . He needs to have **instant action and mobility** and staying power as in the old days a fight could last for several hours. This agility should never come at the expense of substance as excellent bone is required for him to stand his ground in a fight. The bitch while showing more all over refinement should display these qualities to an equal degree.

Overall balance is of the utmost importance in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. We know from the history of the breed that we need the correct blend of bull dog and terrier and in order therefore to combine these qualities in the same individual it is

necessary not only for the different parts (legs, body etc) to be properly proportioned and developed but it is equally essential that the various parts are so built together that each part is capable of performing its own job in the best possible manner. For example, a dog may possess perfect hind legs, well boned and muscled and properly bent at stifle, yet if these are attached to a weak thin body they cannot possibly impact maximum agility and freedom of movement. Front legs may be well boned and muscled but if they are coupled with badly placed shoulders they lose a considerable proportion of usefulness and efficiency.

Characteristics: Traditionally of indomitable courage and tenacity. Highly intelligent and affectionate with children.

There was a change to the standard in 1987 and the following important clause was deleted from the standard: This coupled with his affection for his friends, and children in particular, his off duty quietness and trustworthy stability, makes him the foremost all purpose dog - what a shame this was deleted.

Generally speaking the stafford will not be indiscriminately aggressive towards other dogs however if provoked he will retaliate and usually win. It is not in the nature of a stafford to back away from a fight if challenged and nor would you want it to be. He never forgets and if he has had a run in with a particular breed he usually harbors a dislike for all members of that breed.

When judging a stafford don't expect animation or response to a squeaky toy as you would get from other breeds. However also never award **a stafford that lacks the mental characteristics necessary in the breed** . Nervousness timidity and unreliability in temperament are all signs of unsoundness and you don't want a stafford with it's tail between its legs or is timid or shy of people in any way.

Do not face Staffords up to each other. They are not like some of the other terriers, so never ask the exhibitor to "spar" at one another. If they spark up it is because they mean business and if you had a novice exhibitor who did not realise what his dog was capable of you could have a fight on your

hands. A fighting stafford does not make a lot of noise and he can go without any warning. The one who stands seemingly oblivious to everything in the ring may be the one who will go faster than the speed of light should the opportunity arise.

Temperament: Bold fearless and totally reliable.

Temperament is well covered in the characteristics clause except to emphasis that he should be totally reliable, a gentleman unless set upon.

Fearless



Totally Reliable



Head & Skull: Short, deep through with a broad skull. Very pronounced cheekmuscles, distinct stop, short foreface, nose black . **(25 points)**.

The Stafford's head should **be tight without wrinkle or looseness anywhere over both skull and foreface and must not show any sign of lippiness**. A lippy dog if fought would risk losing half his face in the first few seconds of serious encounter.

The description of the head by many of the old timers in the breed was wedge shaped both when viewed from the top and the side. Perhaps the best description is that of a chunky wedge of cheese from which

someone has cut a thick slice immediately before the eyes leaving the **skull and muzzle absolutely parallel when seen from the side**. The muzzle should never appear dish faced or down faced. The **length of the muzzle (tip of nose to stop) being ideally one third** of the length of the whole head (tip of nose to occiput) There should be a slight furrow (in adult dogs) running up the centre of the skull from the stop to the occiput. There should be very pronounced cheek muscles. Too short a foreface is highly undesirable and will bring with it associated breathing problems. The head should never appear snipey nor should it appear square – it is a wedge. Nose should be black.

The topline of the skull is flat – not round, dogs with round skulls are termed “apple headed”

The **stop** should be **deep** and is extremely important for correct eye placement and expression.

The **foreface must be well filled up under the eyes** so that strength of muzzle maintained: Where the foreface falls away and lacks this filling up the muzzle appears to be pinched and snipey denoting a grave lack of strength in the bite.

The **underjaw of the dog must be strong, broad & deep**. If the muzzle is not broad you may see crowding of teeth or canines in the wrong position. When judging, feel the muzzle and check the line of the lip as a dog that has loose pendulous lips can sometimes be mistaken for one that has strength of foreface.



The **dog should always display a stronger skull and foreface than the bitch**. Dog headed bitches and bitch headed dogs are both unacceptable.

It should be obvious from first glance of the head whether the animal is male or female. If there is any doubt about it the head is wrong and the stafford unbalanced.

The head, whether male or female, should be in complete balance with the whole dog.

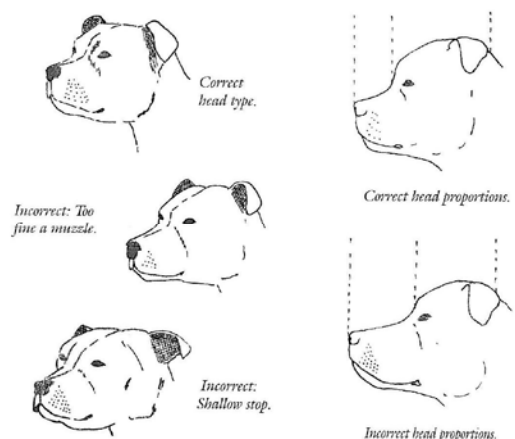
Young puppies will not show the characteristic cheek muscle or furrow but will develop it gradually. Quite often a puppy will have wrinkles on the head until it fully develops.

The slower developing Stafford often does not develop fully until 3 years of age.

The appearance of the head is determined by the following points:

- ☐ The relative length of muzzle to skull i.e. one third to two thirds
- ☐ The relative “weight” i.e. depth and breadth of muzzle and skull
- ☐ The angle at which the muzzle and skull are set to each other – parallel plains
- ☐ Distinct stop, pronounced cheek muscles
- ☐ The placement, size and shape of the eyes
- ☐ The size and carriage of the ear

Head balance and proportions



Eyes: Dark preferred but may bear some relation to coat colour. Round of medium size, and set to look straight ahead. Eye rims dark.

The expression of the face is very dependent on the setting, size and shape of the eye. The distance between the eyes never varies by more than a small amount but it is surprising how even a quarter of an inch can alter the general effect. Eyes that are close together tend to give rather a “mean” expression. Totally foreign to the breed as a Stafford should have a “**soft expression.**”

The eye socket should be rounded and facing forward. An obliquely placed or slit eye gives a foreign appearance.

The eyes must be set wide apart and this means the skull must be broad enough to permit this at the same time as allowing the eyes to look straight ahead. ***Unless there is a good stop the eyes cannot be set in the correct position.*** The eyes will be approximately in line with the stop. You should be able to run your finger along the top of the muzzle from nose to stop and your finger will come to an abrupt stop at the “stop”

Eyes must not protrude or be too large. “Poppy eyes” Remember - Round of medium size.

The eye colour can bear some relation to coat colour, thus a red dog can have a lighter eye than a dark brindle. In a tiger brindle dog the eye colour is often hazel which is permissible. Blacks, whites and peds should have eyes as dark as possible. A dark eye on all colours gives a far better expression.

The standard says eye rims black however occasionally you may see a white or pied Stafford that does not have the complete black pigment as required by the standard. It is up to you as the judge to access this accordingly. Above all we must have type balance & soundness in our dogs and the overall quality of the specimen must be judged as a whole.

Obviously if you have two excellent specimens one with and one without eye pigmentation it should be obvious which you would award according to the breed standard.



White with excellent dark eye with complete black eyerim.



Red with dark eye & excellent pigment



Light Eyes on Black Brindle – Eyes should be dark

Ears: Rose or half pricked, not large or heavy. **Full drop or pricked ears are highly undesirable.**

The ears should be set at the top outer corners of the skull. Neither on top of the skull nor along side it. A large ear is a grave handicap to any stafford whether he is working or playing and gives an opponent an immediate advantage as a hold. A similar handicap is the full prick ear or full drop ear which cannot easily be folded back out of the way. **Both the full prick or full drop give the stafford a "foreign appearance"** and are highly undesirable in the standard.

It should be emphasised that it is not essential for a stafford to bring his ears forward when being shown however much it may improve his appearance. His ingrained instinct to be on alert (especially when other dogs are around) requires the folded back position, which is ideal for listening. While he is at all suspicious of his surroundings he will keep his ears tightly folded back. You will quite often see a stafford moving around the ring with his ears pinned back especially if there is a dog close behind.

Ear leathers are becoming too thick, heavy long & large in some Staffords. A heavy large ear gives a Labrador appearance and is totally foreign. Also a prime target in a fight.



Half prick – correct in the breed standard.



Rose ear set at the top outer corners of the skull.

Mouth: Lips tight and clean. Jaws strong, teeth large with a perfect regular and complete scissor bite. i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaw.

A bone of contention in the breed has always been the undershot mouth as this will often appear due to the bulldog background of the stafford. You will quite often see a level bite particularly in a mature Stafford.

Inverted canines are also becoming common within the breed and whilst not specifically mentioned in the standard a scissor bite is a requirement. The scissor bite includes the canines locking into the dental arches. In a narrow and weak underjaw the canines may converge into the roof of the mouth and this can cause pain to the dog. You will sometimes see canines that have been cut off – watch for this as it is totally unacceptable. **The tips of all 4 canines must be visible on the outside of the gum when the jaws are closed.**

Some judges tend to discard a Stafford with a less than perfect bite, regardless of what other excellent qualities it may possess however slight irregularities in dentition such as a crooked tooth or perhaps a broken (as opposed to being cut off) incisor or canine.

A stafford who has been involved in a fight or a tussle with a wire fence may have one or two teeth broken or missing. The Stafford is essentially a working terrier the main essential is the killing grip and as long as this is still in working order the mouth should not be penalised. Even if there are missing (due to an accident) or broken teeth you can still assess if there is a correct scissor bite. Slight irregularities in dentition caused by the above should not be severely penalised.

Badly undershot or overshot mouths or inverted canines cannot grip as efficiently and should be severely penalised.

Neck: Muscular, rather short, clean in outline and gradually widening towards the shoulders. **(10 points)**

A neck that is too short can hamper the dog's movements and slow his reactions because he cannot easily see round him without turning his whole body. On the other hand a

neck which is too long will be weak it will look ungainly and rangy but will also offer a vulnerable target to an opponent.

The ideal reach of neck will give the dog free range of vision, will be strong and at the same time be too short to provide an easy target for teeth or claws. The call for a rather short neck does not mean that the head is to be almost on the dog's shoulder.

Balance between head neck and body is essential and the perfect crest of neck flows smoothly from the ears into well laid back shoulders. The neck must be free from loose folds of skin.

Quite often a neck too short will give the dog a bull dog appearance and you will generally find the dog to "stuffy" all over.

Forequarters: Legs straight and well boned, set rather wide apart, showing **no weakness at the pasterns**, from which the **feet turn out a little**. Shoulders well laid back with no looseness at elbow.

The front legs while set wide apart **must set under the dog** and in line with the shoulders. It is essential that the dog should stand well up on his legs and that the body should **never appear to be slung** between them otherwise he can never attain the peak of activity.

Overloaded shoulders are extremely **undesirable** giving a heavy bull dog appearance. When viewing the dog from above the shoulders should come cleanly into the body and on no account should it appear that the shoulders are tacked on to the side of the body. **The General Appearance clause calls for Active & Agile.**

The front should not either resemble that of a fox terrier for the chest must be broad and the front legs straight and **must show the characteristic slight turn out of feet**. This slight turn out gives the dog a far greater degree of stability and balance than he would have with a straight leg and enables him to resist being thrown off his feet so easily.

Whilst the feet turn out a little there is **absolutely no room for weakness at pasterns**. This is a common fault creeping into our breed and quite often you will see this weakness associated with incorrect

strength of bone in the front leg and also thin flat feet.

The **depth of brisket should be roughly to the elbow**. There will be a prosternum. If the brisket is too deep you will have a heavy cloddy dog that appears very short in leg. If it is too shallow the dog will be to terrier in appearance and will lack strength and balance.

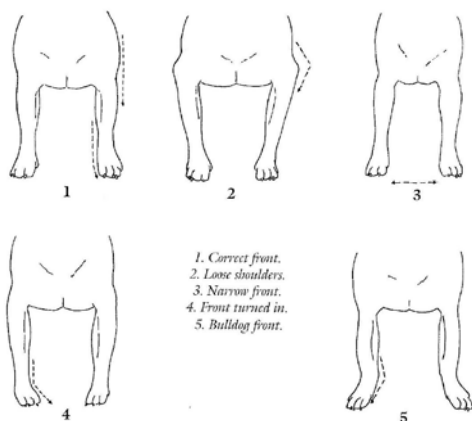
When judging the Stafford feel the brisket with your hand. You should be able to cup the rounded part of the brisket in your hand.

Below: Legs straight & well boned, correct depth of the brisket. Not overdone but showing strength. Not overloaded at shoulders. Feet turn out slightly.



Legs straight and well boned, set rather wide apart.





Examples of Forequarters

Body: Close coupled, **with level topline**, wide front, deep brisket, well sprung ribs, **muscular and well defined. (25 points)** The Stafford is **not Bulldog in front and Terrier behind**, but is a balanced blend of the two with noticeably more width at the front than any other terrier. However any resemblance to the Bulldog at the front end is thoroughly undesirable and the lightness of the terrier behind would cause an imbalance between front and rear. The Stafford must be its own blend of its two main progenitors with **absolutely no exaggerations of any kind**. However the **body is slightly wider in front than behind**.

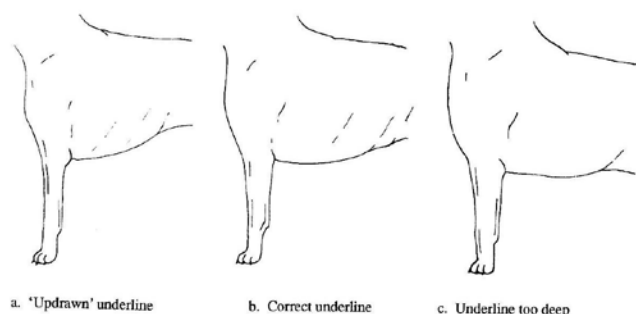
The standard previously contained the clause **being rather light in loin**. What a shame this clause has been taken from the standard! The body shape of the Stafford used to be referred to as pear shaped. To have an active and agile dog which is the basis of the Stafford Standard you need to have this "light in loin" otherwise you end up with a thick set cloddy dog all the way through.

A powerful compact dog is required with a **strong back and level topline** which does not dip behind the shoulders. A level topline is of the upmost importance as it is a key feature of the breed standard. There may be a very slight muscular rise over the loin in a mature well muscled dog. The rib cage should be long and well ribbed back – A short rib cage is undesirable. The ribs are well sprung (not barreled) and deep with prosternum.

The Stafford **should be very strong in loin** - not too short or too long. Many say approximately 4 fingers in length. What length

is 4 fingers? In the old days this would have implied the 4 fingers of an adult male - it is a guideline only. Extra shortness would reduce the dogs agility however length will produce weakness in back. A sway back or drop in the middle section a sloping croup or roach back are highly undesirable.

The underline of the dog should show a **definite tuck up behind the last rib**.



The appearance and development of the chest and body are largely controlled by two factors – **shoulder placement and rib development**. The two main bones of the shoulder the scapula and humerus lie at an angle to each other between the base of the neck and the top of the foreleg, and it is this angle that partly determines the space available for development of the ribs (well sprung ribs) and the organs i.e. heart lungs etc which lie within them. If there is incorrect angle the shoulder is said to be straight and lung space is reduced.

The **ribs extend back from the shoulder for about two thirds** of the distance between the shoulder blade and the thigh bone and at the point where they end there should be a fairly rapid reduction in body girth. Rather light in loin.

The standard rightly specifies generous chest capacity which calls for well sprung ribs accompanied by forelegs set rather wide apart. A dog with inadequate space for lung development cannot be expected to have stamina and staying power.

The measurement from withers to set on of tail should be about the same as from withers to the ground. – height of the dog.

In visualizing the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, the keynotes are **strength and agility** – Not the massive strength of the old time bruiser

bulldog but the balanced strength of the modern athlete, a strength which by the harmonious and symmetrical proportioning of the various parts and is always accompanied by that power of free and rapid motion which we call agility. Well up on his feet he should give the impression of carrying his sturdy body with ease- head well up – tail rather low, a gallant, sound and intelligent dog.

Always look over the top of the Stafford for the “light in loin “. Wider in front then hindquarters.

Active and agile is a phrase which must always spring to mind when one looks at a Stafford and that impression must always be dominant.



Withers to set on of tail should be about equal to height of dog from withers to ground. Note low set tail.

Tip when judging: Many exhibitors will stand their Stafford front on in the ring. The accepted angle for a Stafford to be exhibited has always been three quarter on. This will enable you to view the dogs outline, topline, turn of stifle etc. Perhaps the expert exhibitor turns front on for a reason?

Hindquarters: Well muscled, hocks well let down with stifles well bent. Legs parallel when viewed from behind.

Stifles should be well bent to give the necessary “spring” and “cushioning” for agility. There should however not be over angulation nor too much length.

The ***second thigh should be well muscled.*** When judging feel the ***depth of muscle*** on

the hindquarter.

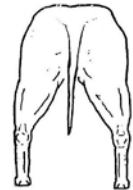
Cowhocks are an indication of weakness and are probably due to poor bone and lack of muscular development. They are highly undesirable in the Staffordshire.

Hocks should be well let down - short. When viewed from behind a parallel line should be seen from the hip through to the hock with hocks well let down - short.

All muscles should be of refined quality. Course bumpy muscles might be effective over short distances , but a lasting muscle is a long well toned one and will allow a Stafford to get maximum effect from his reserve of stamina.



Correct.



Incorrect:
Too wide.



Incorrect:
Toeing in.



Incorrect:
Cow-hocked.

Feet: Well padded, strong and of medium size. Nails black in solid coloured dogs.

(Legs & Feet combined 15 points)

The front feet **turn out a little at the pasterns.** They should be strong with well arched toes lying close together. Open feet are unsightly and inefficient. The hind feet are slightly smaller than the front feet.

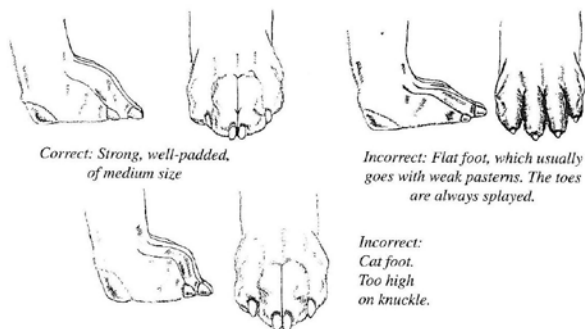
When judging check to see if they are well padded as this padding contributes substantially to the spring that is essential for this breed.

Front Dew claws are left on. There are no Dew Claws on the hind legs.

The standard says feet do turn out a little – not may. Look for this when judging as it is an important characteristic of the breed that had a purpose – **BALANCE** - in the history of the Staffordshire.

Nails: Black nails are a finishing touch to a Stafford's feet. It is quite common to see slightly lighter nails in say a red or light brindle dog. You will also see a white nail on a toe that has white markings on a foot where all other nails may be black. (the standard says black in solid coloured dogs.) However very light nails on a dark brindle / black dog look unsightly and are quite often seen in conjunction with yellow eyes.

When judging remember nail colour is only one aspect of the dog and judge accordingly.



Tail: Medium length, low set, tapering to a point and carried rather low. Should not curl much and may be likened to an old fashioned pump handle. **(5 points)**

Unlike a pump handle the Staffords tail should not be thin all the way down but should start thick at the root and taper gradually throughout its length.

The root of the Staffordshire's tail should be a strong one. It should be remembered that the tail bones are a continuation of the spinal vertebrae. This means that **any thin or inferior growth of the tail bones is likely to indicate similar weakness of bone in the spine** and skeleton generally.

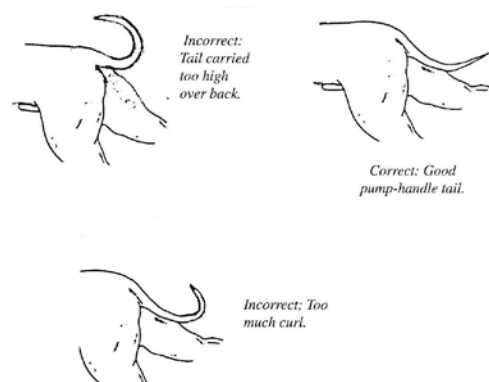
The old pit dogs found their strong pump handle tails useful as rudders in a fight. A thump down on the floor of the pit with it would help the dog to lever or edge himself into a better position in a fight.

In a full grown dog the tail should **never extend below the hock**. Check the length by holding the tail along the inside of the hind leg.

Although it should not curl up over the back, when the dog is roused and is feeling threatened the tail is almost always carried in an erect position. Particularly in the show ring in a class of males this may occur if the dogs are in close proximity to each other. This is perfectly normal reaction and should not be penalised.

Having said the above if a dog is carrying his tail high in the ring **check the set on**. The standard calls for **Low Set**. If the set of the tail is incorrect it may be the pelvis is incorrect and therefore the dog may also lack in hindquarter strength.

A correct tail set on the Stafford gives it that "finished look" and the **Pump Handle is a characteristic of the Breed**.



Gait/ Movement: Free, powerful and agile with economy of effort. Legs moving parallel when viewed from front or rear. **Discernible drive from hind legs.**

With his broad front the Staffordshire cannot be expected to move like some of the other terrier breeds. In order to be in perfect balance all the time he is moving he has to place his front feet slightly under his body with each stride. This inward inclination must commence from the shoulder and never the elbow.

The **front feet should never touch each other or cross in movement** and any looseness in shoulder is highly undesirable.

The gait must be **light and jaunty** with the feet skimming the ground without any wasted movement whatsoever.

The hind legs should **drive strongly moving as much as possible parallel** with each other. **They should never touch or cross each other in movement.** Crossing rear legs / hocks touching is **totally unacceptable in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier and is a sign of weakness and unsoundness** and is highly undesirable.

To produce perfect action, a Stafford must move his hind legs in **true parallel** to each other throughout their length. **ie from Hip to foot** showing firm flexion at the points of stifle and hock.

The Stafford on the **move should show strength, agility and drive.** There is a **jaunty appearance to the movement. – A Swagger.** The rear action often causes confusion because of the **slight** roll in a sound moving dog. The Stafford particularly in show trotting will appear extremely light and bouncy on his feet. This is caused by the great width of the front assembly with a well developed rib cage, the lighter loin and slightly less width of rear.

Also because of the lesser width at the rear, the hind legs although moving parallel will be just slightly inside the line of the front legs.

A specimen that is loose in shoulder can be supported by his handler while on the stack however as soon as the dog becomes mobile any structural faults will become apparent.

Tip when judging: A Staffordshire should be walked at a steady pace in the ring and not run like a German Shepherd. A specialist breed judge will always ask exhibitors to **walk their Stafford on a loose lead.** The loose lead will tell you many things when the Stafford is walking in a triangle.

Several years ago when Tom Horner judged in Melbourne he made some exhibitors repeat their triangles up to 3 times until he had the pace that he wanted. All UK breed specialists always make comment on the speed at which some exhibits are moved.

The Staffordshire must be in all respects an efficient working machine.

On the move



Economy of effort – discernible drive from the rear and low set pump handle tail.



Coat: Smooth, short and close. In good condition the Staffordshire coat should shine.

It is a single coat and thinner and finer than a fox terrier. It is of medium texture neither coarse or silky best described as seal like and pleasant to touch.

Because of its fine coat the Stafford feels the wind and rain and will try to avoid the elements wherever possible. If you are judging in inclement conditions expect to see even the best topline with a roach.

The coat should be very close fitting, but even on hard muscled dogs will tighten closer when the animal is threatened or alert.. It then forms a leather like armour protection for the body.

Colour: Red, fawn, white, black or blue, or any of these colours with white. Any shade of brindle or any shade of brindle with white. Black & tan and liver highly undesirable.

Strong colouring is to be encouraged. All brindles should carry eyes that blend with their darkest colouring. A black brindle should never have a yellow eye whereas a tiger brindle with a dark hazel eye is most appealing and has a more typical expression.

Reds and fawns must always have a black nose. A brown coloured nose denotes liver. Eyering must always be dark irrespective of colour. – Whites, peds, reds or fawn.

A wide variety of colours as explained in the standard are acceptable in the Stafford so when judging no acceptable colour should take preference over another.

Black & Tan (like a Manchester Terrier or Rottweiler). Sometimes this colour is not as clearly defined and harder to notice the tan markings. The peanuts over the eyes, markings on the face, on the chest, inside the front & rear legs and under the vent appear as brindle. These will usually appear on a black brindle dog. Referred to as a black & tan overlay.

Liver staffords are recognized by the lack of black pigmentation on the nose (brownish in colour) and usually very light eyes “yellow in colour”.

Both of these colours are highly undesirable and should never be shown, bred, encouraged or awarded any prize.

When judging the Stafford do not penalise “battle scars”. As a fighting dog it is certainly permissible to have scarring and is part of the history of the breed.

All feet in solid coloured dogs should carry black toe nails. When the nails have been subjected to a good deal of wear and tear the black pigmentation can look shabby and worn however if you look at the root of the nail a truly black nail will be seen.

Check for good pigmentation in diluted coloured dogs – such as blues and fawns.



Black and Tan with white – Tricolour



Liver and white. Note the brown nose.

This is a liver & white example but generally a liver can be a solid colour all over. Nose will always be brown.

Both of these colours are highly undesirable and should never be shown, bred, or encouraged.

Size: Weight: Dogs 28-38 lbs, Bitches 24-24 lbs.

Desirable height at the withers 14-16 inches these heights being related to the weights. The standard calls for a Stafford of between 14-16 inches and this is one of the few standards where the height has been brought down over the years.

It appears one of the reasons was not to breed smaller dogs but to ensure that dogs were not bred larger.

Another reason put forward was that a smaller agile dog could get under its opponents throat and tip it up.

Still another was the smaller agile dog had more endurance in a fight than the heavier bull dog type.

In more recent times it has become increasingly important to maintain correct size dogs because of the dangerous dog legislations in various countries. We need to retain the type of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier so that there can be no confusion over a dog of "pit bull" type.

The weights in the standard would have been for dogs of fighting condition and as we no longer fight these dogs and with changes to living conditions over the years our dogs tend to be a little heavier. If the stafford of today were within these scales you would probably think it underdone. Making allowance that Staffords are heavier today does not mean accepting a fat dog, he must still be active and agile.

There is much debate on size with many people saying that if we accept a heavier Stafford why not a stafford that is over height – say 18 inches. In recent years many of our winning dogs have been 17 inches plus. A stafford or for that matter any breed that is 1 or 2 inches over the standard in height plus with the extra weight attributed to this height makes a specimen completely "off type".

Not only does it make staffords that are of correct size at the lower end of the standard appear too small it makes staffords who are at the top 16inches appear small and this should never be condoned.

A good specimen within the standard should always be placed over the oversized specimens. This oversize dog may be an impressive looking show dog – but is it a good Staffordshire Bull Terrier? **Balance & type** are the key words.

There is nothing in the standard that says that a bitch should be smaller than the dog or vice versa. A 16inch well balanced bitch is as acceptable as a 15 inch well balanced dog. However the one important thing to remember is that the ***bitch must look feminine and the dog must look masculine.*** A first glance should tell you what gender is before you. You should not need to look underneath the dog.

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

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



**UK Ch Valglo Cassanova at Crossguns
UK Breed record holder with 40 CC's**

Inverted Canines in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier



Normal canine positioning in a Staffordshire Bull Terrier



Inverted canines in a Staffordshire bull terrier

At the same time that this is happening in the lower jaw, the gap between the upper canine and upper third incisor is smaller than it should be (the lower canine should fit between the two & pushes them apart as it erupts). The result is that the lower canine impacts into the hard palate on the inside of the upper canine.

Due to the problems with both the mandible (canine tilted back slightly so that the tip is positioned inside the upper canine) and the maxilla (not enough space between the upper canine and upper third incisor), orthodontic correction is extremely difficult. It can be done but requires several procedures performed separately as well as a very co-operative dog (not easy in a "mouth with legs").

In non-show dogs, orthodontics can be performed with greater success after extraction of all four third incisors in order to create some space to allow movement of the teeth. This will keep the canines intact (they are the more important teeth). An inclined plane device is usually all that is required. For those dogs where orthodontics is not an option, height reduction and pulp capping of the lower canines is the preferred treatment.

- Dr Gary Wilson

Veterinarians dealing with Staffordshire bull terrier breeders and owners are increasingly being presented with dogs claimed to have "inverted canines". In this condition, the lower canine teeth are markedly curved backward. In most cases this will result in the tip of the canine impacting into the gum at mesio-palatal margin (just on the inside near the front edge) of the upper canine.

This condition is a direct consequence of overcrowding of the teeth. In the effort to breed the modern Staffordshire bull terrier, which has a "smaller, more delicate head", there has been no attempt to also select for smaller tooth size. This then results in the overcrowding, as the large sized teeth don't fit in the available space.

The narrower mandible (bottom jaw) results in the canine erupting slightly behind the third incisor rather than beside it in an arc. This tooth has a natural curve to it but in the normal position the crown is vertical (the tooth curves from below the gum margin). As the canine erupts through the gum (the incisor is already in position), it impacts on the incisor root and tilts slightly backwards due to the curve of the tooth. The final position of the tooth will give the illusion of having a tooth that curves backward.

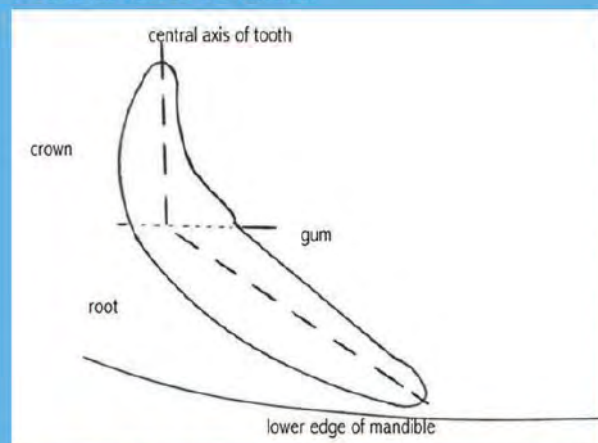


Diagram of the normal position of a lower canine tooth



Damage caused by the lower canines

Bilateral Height Reduction

- a speedy solution to a painful problem.



Firstly the offending teeth are cut with a high speed drill to a much lower height. At this new height the teeth cannot reach the roof of the mouth. However when cut like this the delicate living part of the tooth - the pulp - is exposed.



The delicate pulp must be quickly and cleanly covered to protect from the external environment. To do this we place a special filling over the pulp. To make room for the filling we must drill down into the tooth, creating a space for the filling.



Once we have room for a filling a special 3 or 4 layer filling is applied. The very bottom layer is Calcium Hydroxide, and this stimulates the tooth to grow more tooth - which eventually covers the pulp again. The other layers are there to protect the newly growing tooth while this takes place.



You can see from the picture to the left that the lower canine that used to stick into the palate of this dog no longer can. This dog is now free from pain. It will only take about 3 months for the new tooth to grow under the filling.