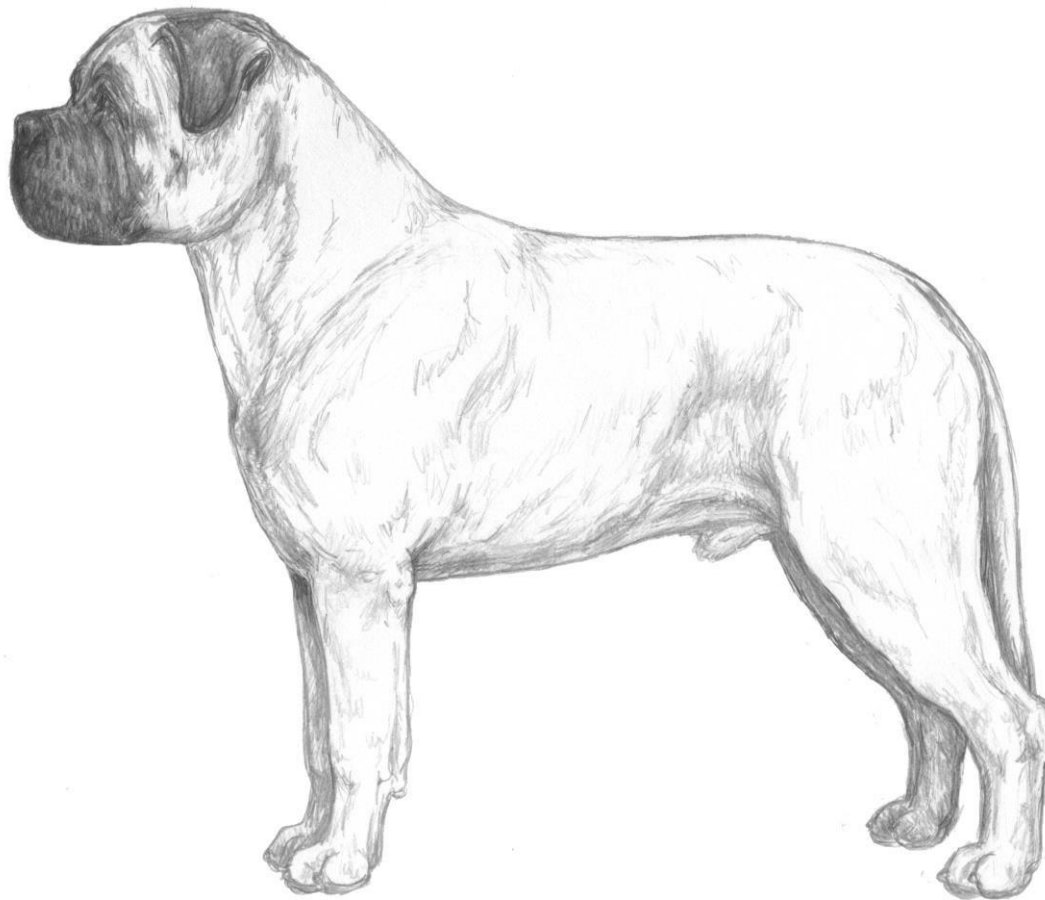


# **The Illustrated Standard of the Bullmastiff**



# Bullmastiff Illustrated Standard

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Illustrations:  
Jeanne Flora, Illustrator

*Reformatted Illustrated Standard October 2015*

*Please note: Language from the AKC Standard appears in bold italics within boxes and commentary appears in bullet points.*

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# The Bullmastiff 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 inches at the withers, and 110 to 130 pounds in weight. Bitches 24-26 inches at the withers, and 100 to 120 pounds in 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, 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. Pasterns 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.

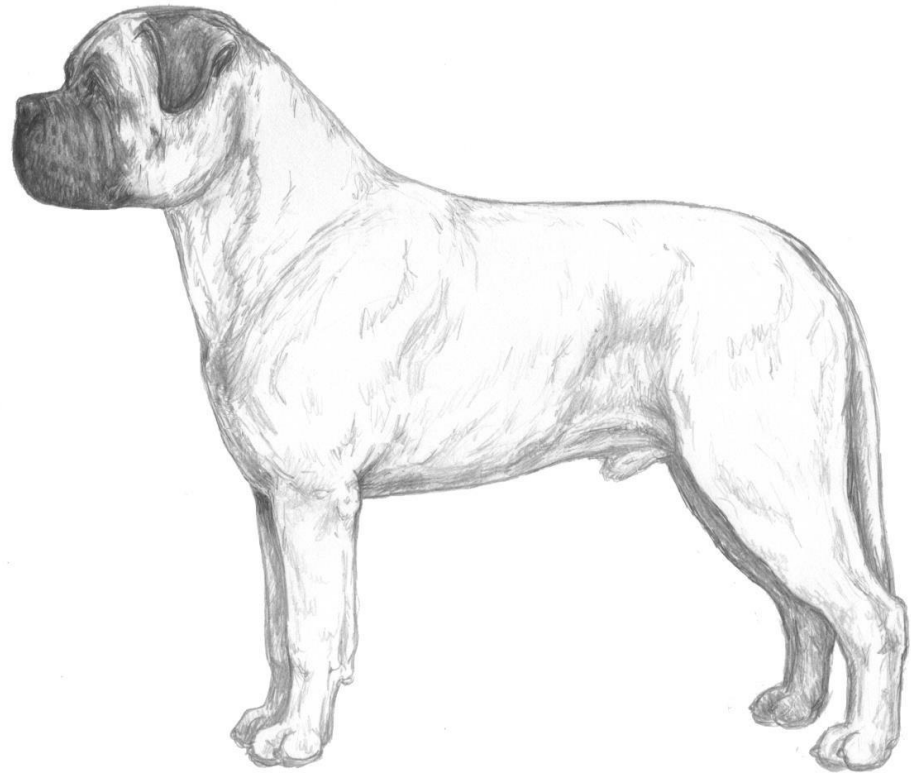
Color: Red, fawn or brindle. Except for a very small white spot on the chest, white marking is considered a fault.

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.

*The Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club has approved the revised standard for Bullmastiffs.  
Approved February 8, 1992 / Effective March 31, 1992*

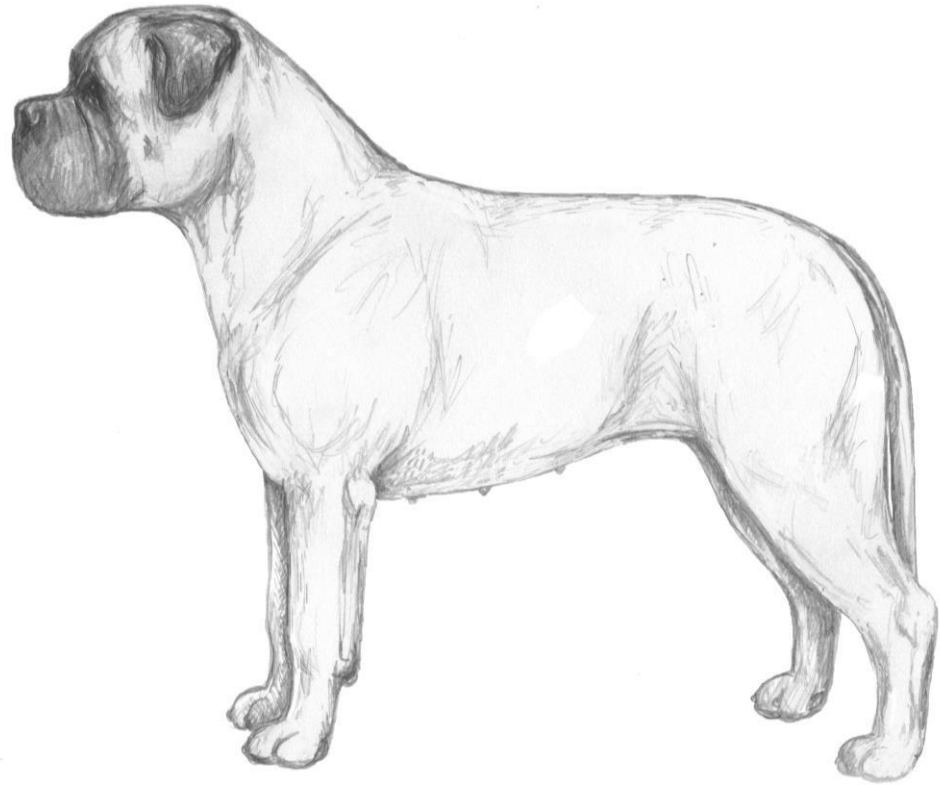
# Ideal Male



***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.***

- Since form follows function and the Bullmastiff was developed to be a gamekeeper's guard and working companion, a balanced, strong, alert animal with endurance is a must in this breed.
- First impression should convey the image of a dog that by virtue of its size, substance and fit condition would be able to catch and hold a struggling assailant/quarry. Although the dog is seldom used as a gamekeeper's dog today, the purpose for which the Bullmastiff was developed should always be considered in the evaluation of the dog.
- There should never be a question of masculinity in the appearance of the male.

# Ideal Female



***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.***

- Females should not vary in type from the males.
- They should simply be a slightly smaller, feminine version of the same dog.

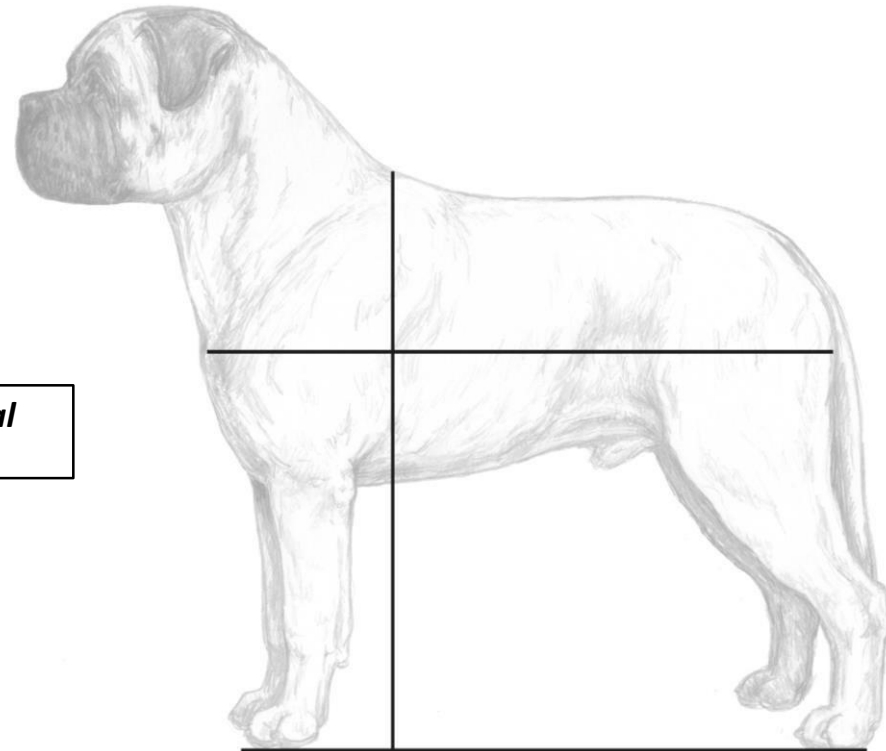
# Size, Proportion and Substance

***Size – dogs 25-27 inches at the withers, and 110 to 130 pounds in weight.  
Bitches 24-26 inches at the withers, and 100 to 120 pounds in weight.***

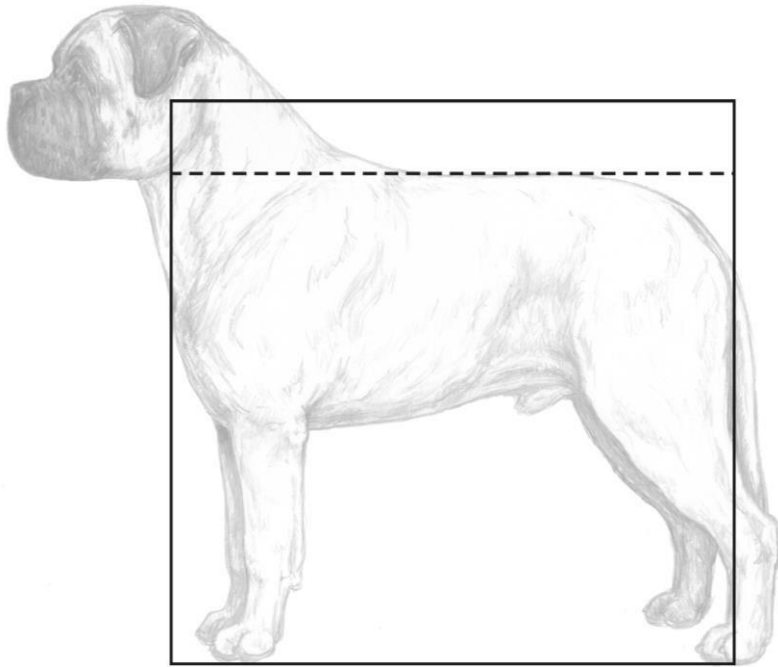
- Ratio of height to weight is important. There is not a disqualification for height or weight. There are definite parameters and the extent to which an animal deviates from the high or low should be penalized to the degree it deviates.
- The standard for both dogs and bitches allows variances of 20 pounds in weight and 2 inches in height for each. Logically the least weight figure applies to the shortest dog. The dog carrying the top weight and the shortest height would appear cumbersome. The dog carrying the lowest weight and standing at the tallest height would appear weedy.

***Substance: Other things being equal, the more substantial dog within these limits is favored.***

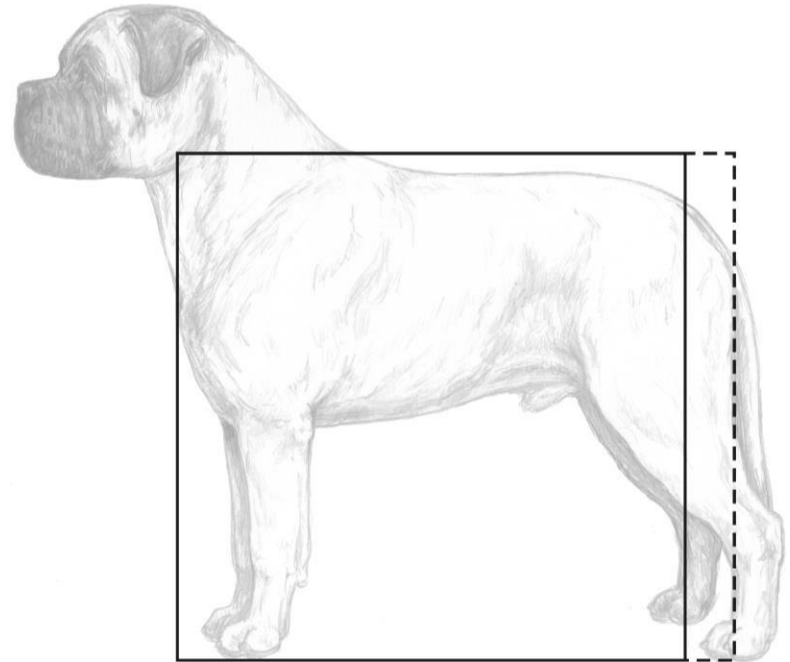
- The standard specifically mentions “all things being equal, the more substantial dog within these limits is favored.” This does not mean the heaviest dog, unless the weight consists of solid muscle and proper bone combined with a balance of height and weight.
- Heavy, out of condition dogs that obtain their weight from fat are not substantial and are worthless as working dogs. The basic framework is bone and muscle and it is these two factors that establish the substance of the dog. Therefore, proper condition and balance of height to weight are very important.



***Proportion: Slightly longer than tall***



*Slightly shorter in height than length.*

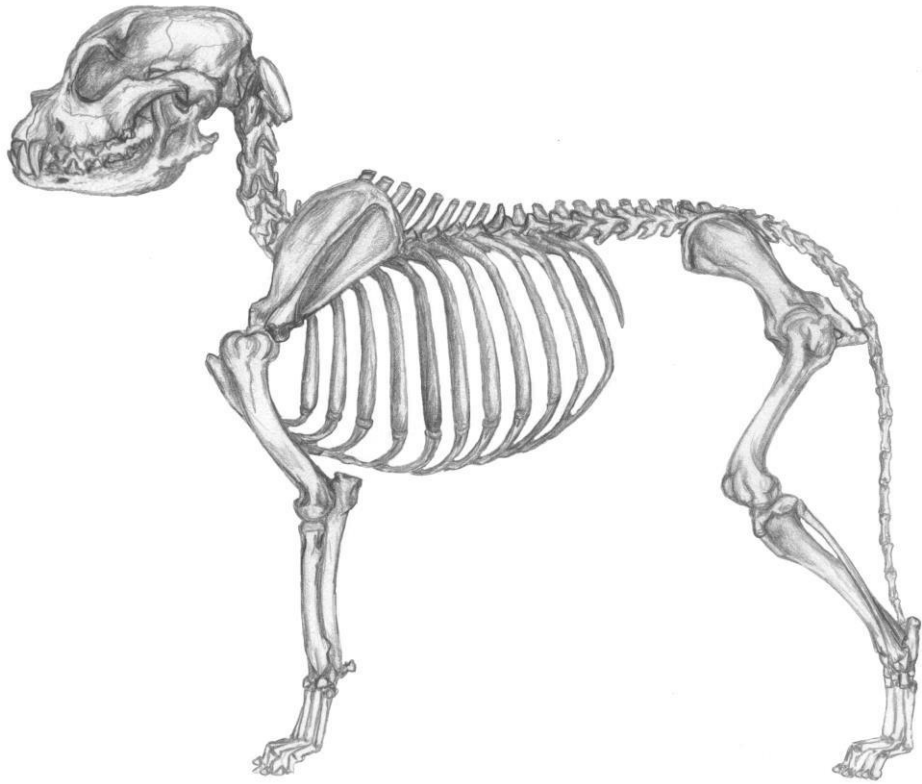


*Slightly longer in length than height.*

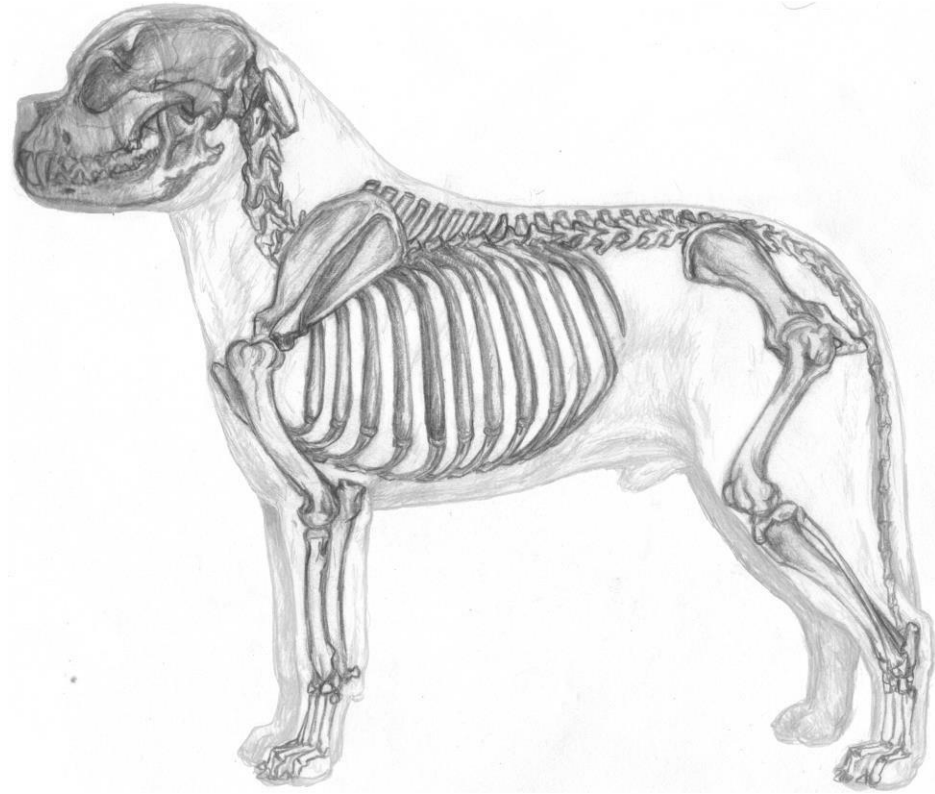
***Proportion: The length from tip of breastbone to rear of thigh exceeds the height from withers to the ground only slightly, resulting in a NEARLY SQUARE APPEARANCE.***

- Although the standard states measurement is from “the tip of the breastbone to the rear of the thigh,” one should be sure to measure from bony point to bony point (breastbone to the point of the hip at the back of the thigh) for accurate and consistent measurement.
- A dog bred for both substance and agility needs to have a low center of gravity. The body being just very slightly longer than tall results in a NEARLY SQUARE APPEARANCE, creating a compactness that suits the dog’s original purpose.





***Skeleton***



***Skeleton overlaying dog***

# 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.***

***Ideal dog head***



***Ideal bitch head***



- The head of the Bullmastiff is the hallmark of the breed. Good head type is essential, not only for correct appearance, but when the headpiece is properly constructed it is entirely functional.
- In fact, the greatest amount of detail in our standard is devoted to the head and its proper construction.

***Expression – Keen, alert and intelligent. Eyes – Dark and of medium size.***

***Too close eye placement***



***Correct eye placement***

***Too wide eye placement***



- “Expression – keen, alert, intelligent.” The expression should clearly convey these attributes. The eyes are one of the primary indicators of the dog’s intellect. The standard does not address the issue of shape.
- The dark and medium sized eyes are set moderately wide apart because they would be at risk from branches and brush when the dog worked.
- Eyes too close set restricted peripheral vision as well as spoiled the expression. A deep set eye within the orbital arch/rim would be less likely to suffer injury.
- **Undesirable:** light eyes, yellow eyes, protruding eyes, eyes set too closely, cross eyes, strabismus.

***Ears – V-shaped and carried close to the cheeks, set on wide and high, giving a square appearance to the skull; darker in color than the body and medium in size.***

***Correct ear placement***



***Too low set an ear***



***Too large an ear***



***Flying ears***



***Incorrect ear carriage***



***Rose ears***



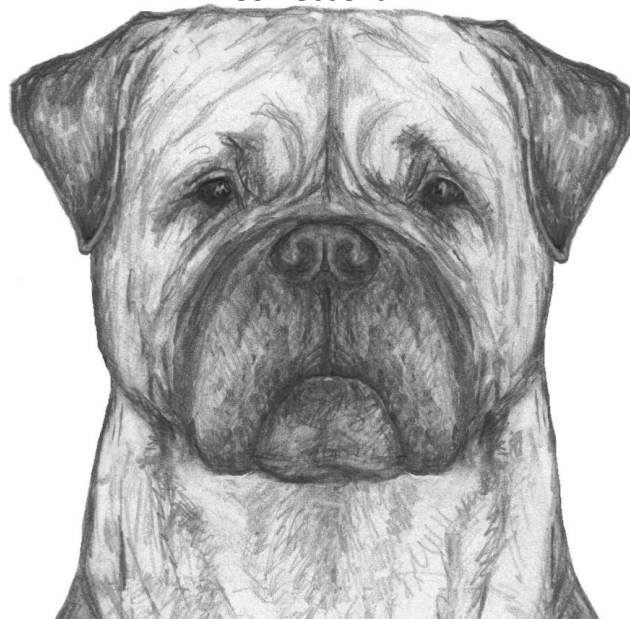
- Ears are carried close to the cheek and when the dog is alert are most correct with the tip reaching level to or just below the bottom of the eye.
- Heavy, houndy ears, rose ears, too small, low set or high set ears spoil the square appearance of the skull and are to be considered as undesirable.

***Skull– Large, with a fair amount of wrinkle when alert, broad, with cheeks well developed. Forehead flat.***

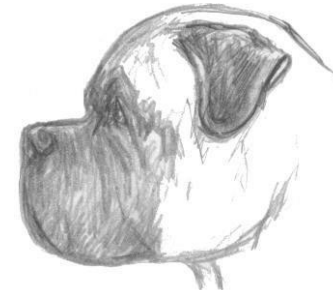
***Too much wrinkle***



***Correct skull***



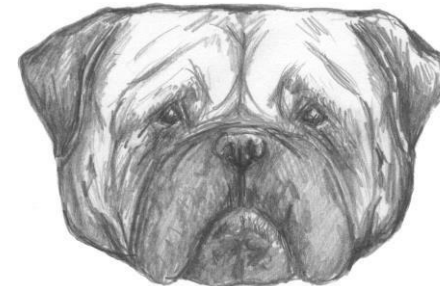
***Rounded foreskull***



***Narrow skull***



***Skull too broad***



- The strength and holding power of the jaw is dependent on the breadth and musculature of the skull and cheek. A well-developed cheek is necessary to enhance the square appearance of the skull.
- The occipital bone is set about level with the top of the ears. A Bullmastiff with backskull is incorrect. A flat forehead enhances the square appearance of the skull. A domed skull almost always goes along with low set ears.
- The standard calls for a fair amount of wrinkle when alert. This wrinkle along with body posture is the dog's indication of its interest in something in its immediate area. Dogs may carry some furrowing on the forehead when in repose.
- **Undesirable:** Narrow head, domed skull, too wide skull, backskull, lack of cheek development, excessive wrinkle or folds of skin on skull.

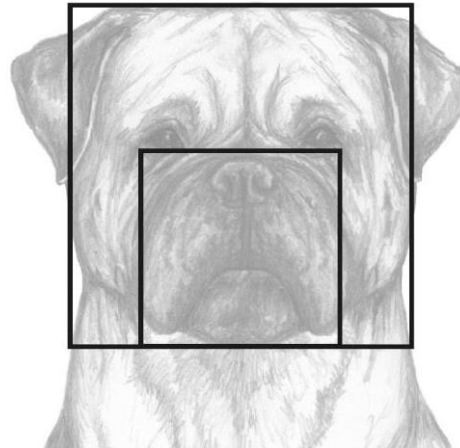
Stop – Moderate

**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.**

**Snipey muzzle  
Narrow underjaw**



**Correctly proportioned muzzle  
Cube on cube overlay**



**Too much repandus\***



*\*Repandus (chin) is amount of upward curvature of the underjaw.*

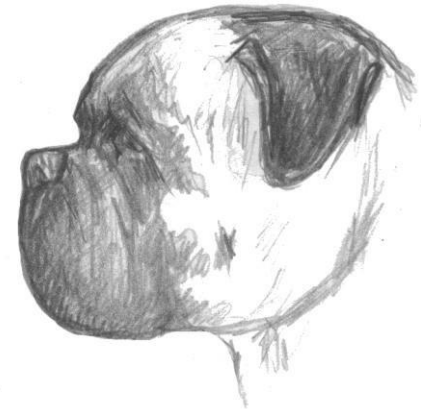
- The muzzle needs to be broad and deep to compliment the strength of the skull and cheek. In viewing the head of the Bullmastiff, the muzzle is to be 1/3 the length of the entire head. As the skull is large square and strong, so must the muzzle be a smaller strong square which attaches to the skull with essentially equal breadth along its entire length.
- The strength of the muzzle should come from skeletal structure and not depend on padding alone. Lack of foreface with nostrils set on top of the muzzle is extremely undesirable because it is not only a reversion to the Bulldog, but an impediment to proper respiration. Breadth of muzzle is an important factor in the holding power of the jaw. Lack of fill under the eyes weakens the strength and breadth of the muzzle, producing a wedge shaped muzzle.
- A lack of dark muzzle detracts from the overall image of the dog. Masking patterns can vary.
- **Very undesirable:** Snipey, too long, too short, down-faced, shallow or wedge shaped muzzles.



***Muzzle too long***



***Correct muzzle length***



***Muzzle too short***



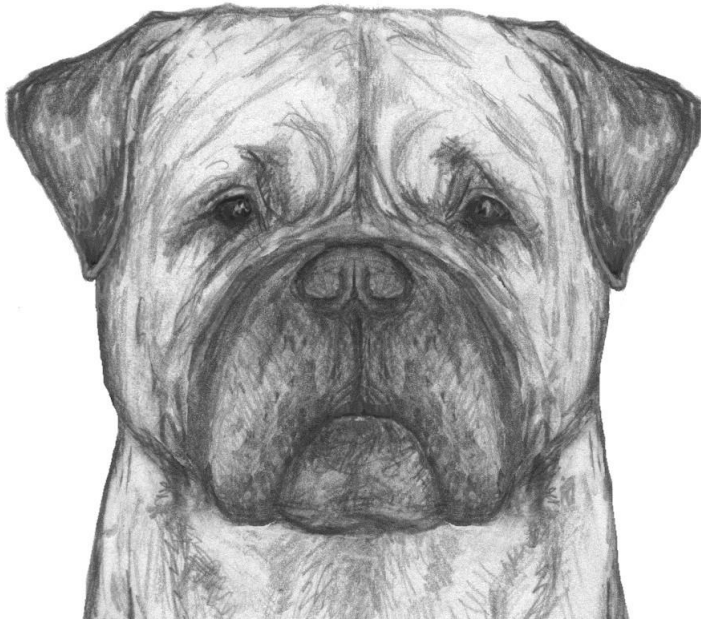
***Lacking underjaw***



***Down-faceted***



***Reversion to Bulldog***



***Stenotic nares – pinched nostrils***

**Nose – Black with nostrils  
large and broad**

- Large, open nostrils are very important. A dog bred to hold a struggling intruder needs all the air it can take in. Stenotic (pinched) nostrils are a major impediment to normal respiration.



***Excessive flews***

**Flews – Not too pendulous**

- Pendulous flews/lips not only detract from the square appearance of the muzzle but are a danger to a dog that works by holding its adversary. The flews should be long enough and padded enough to contribute to the square appearance of the muzzle.



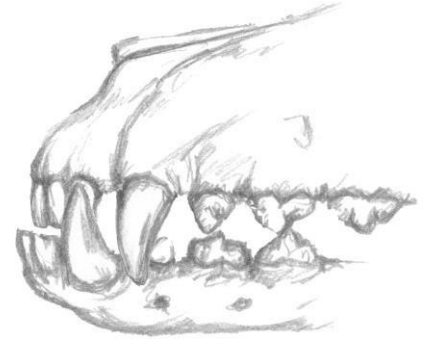
**Bite: Preferably level or slightly undershot. Canine teeth large and set wide apart.**



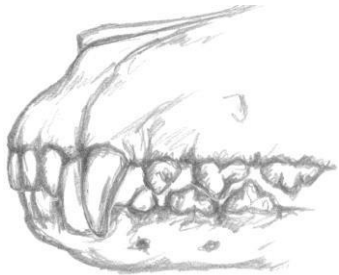
**Level**



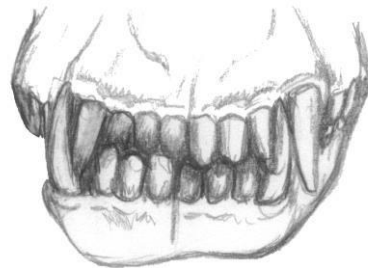
**Reverse scissors**



**Slightly undershot**



**Scissors (over)**



**Wry mouth**



**Severely undershot**



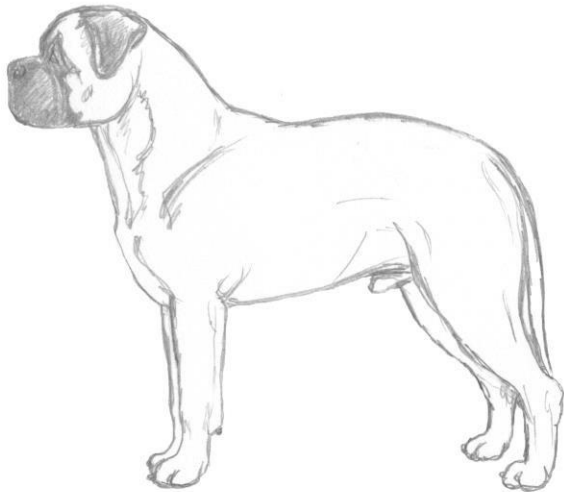
**Overshot (parrot mouth)**

- As there is no punctuation between the descriptions in the sentence describing bite, there is no reason to penalize a dog that has a reverse scissors or slightly undershot bite. Because of its Bulldog background, the Bullmastiff with a reasonable amount of space between the upper and lower canines should be allowed. However, the amount of space should never be extreme.
- Severely undershot dogs should be penalized to the degree of the fault. Wry mouths are unacceptable as they are in any breed. This is a deformity.
- Large, wide-set canines are desirable and give the dog a greater holding ability. Emphasis should be placed on the desirability of a broad underjaw.

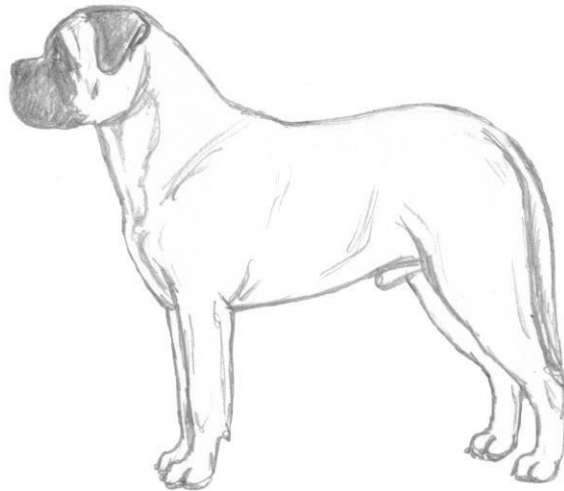
# Neck, Topline and Body

**Neck** – Slightly arched, of moderate length, very muscular and almost equal in circumference to the skull.

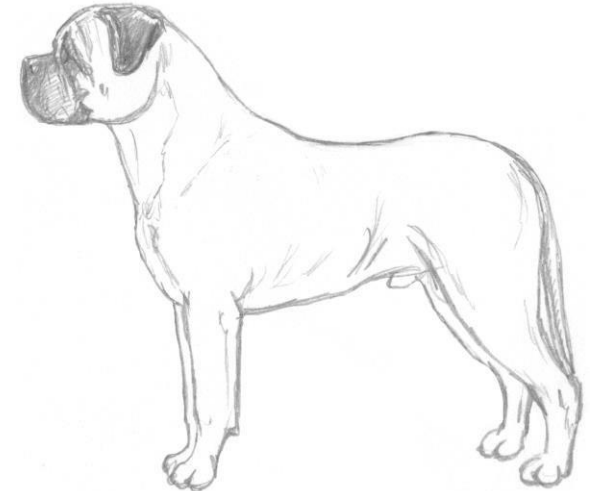
**Topline** – Straight and level between withers and loin.



***Roach back***



***High in rear***

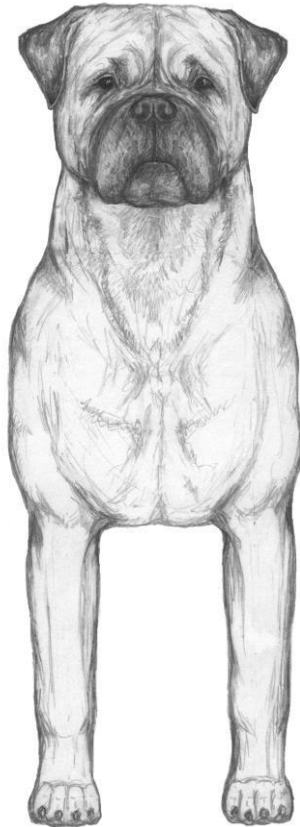


***Sway back***

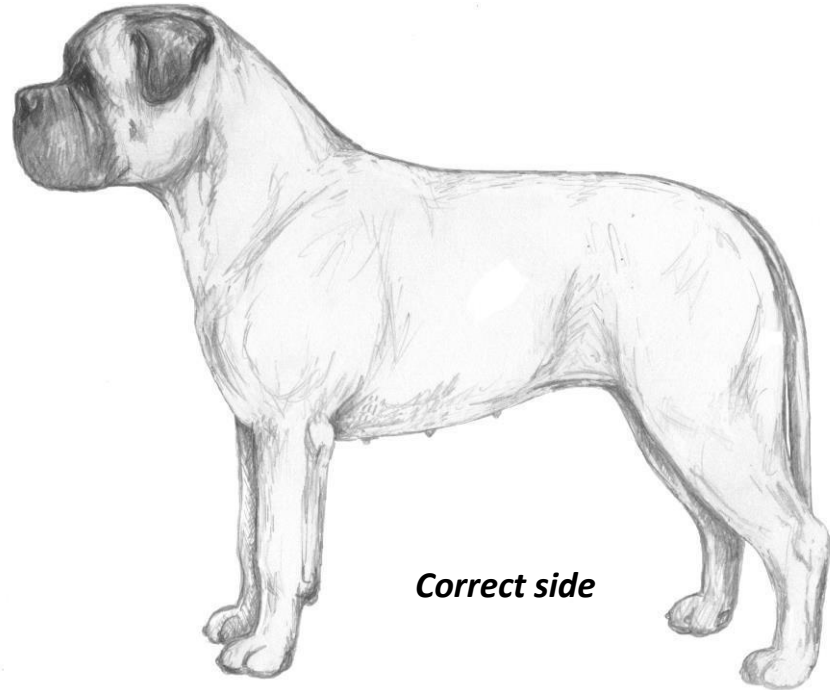
- The strong muscling and circumference of the neck are important to the support of the large and powerful skull.
- Too short a neck, which results from too straight a shoulder, is restrictive. Too long a neck reduces the strength of the neck and the proper balance of the dog.
- In a dog of this substance, a strong spinal connection is important. Weakness in the topline interferes with the dog's ability to coordinate front and rear movement.

**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.**



***Correct front***



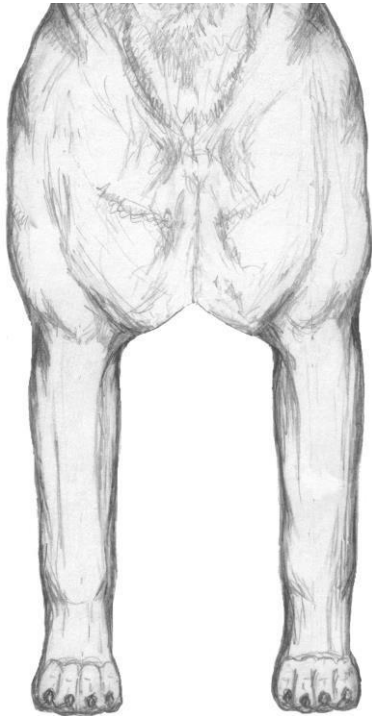
***Correct side***

- Compactness of body with a deep, well-sprung chest, set well down between the dog's forelegs gives the Bullmastiff an excellent center of gravity and good lung capacity needed to perform its historic work – downing and holding.
- **Undesirable:** herring gut, too long in body, shallow chest, lack of ribsprings.
- A short, level back is necessary to create compactness and balance.
- **Undesirable:** roached or sway back, high in rear.

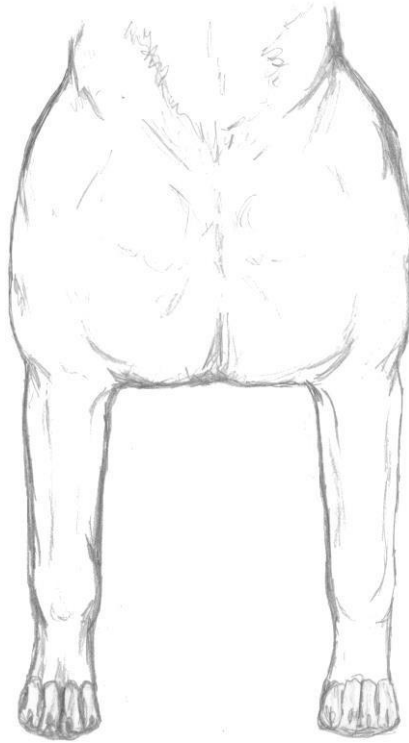
**Body – Compact. Chest wide and deep, with ribs well sprung and well set down between the forelegs.**

**Back – Short, giving the impression of a well-balanced dog.**

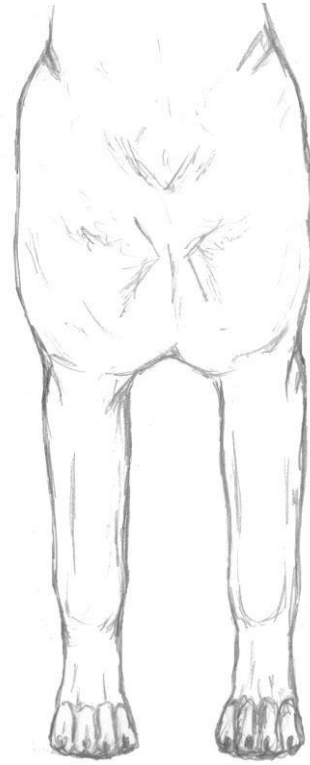
***Cathedral chest***



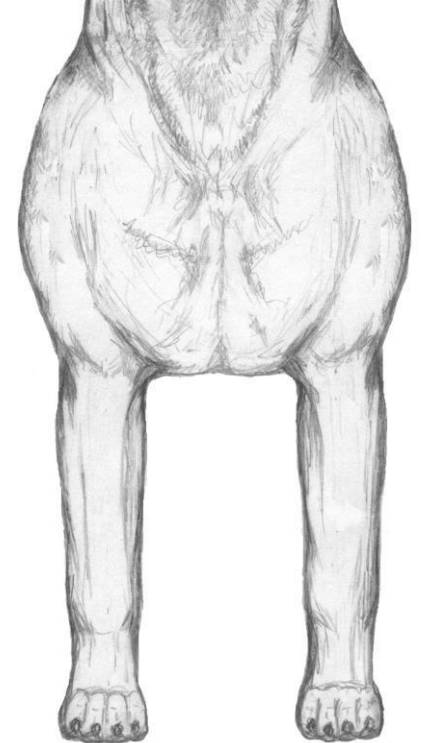
***(shallow brisket)***



***Chest too wide***



***Chest too narrow***



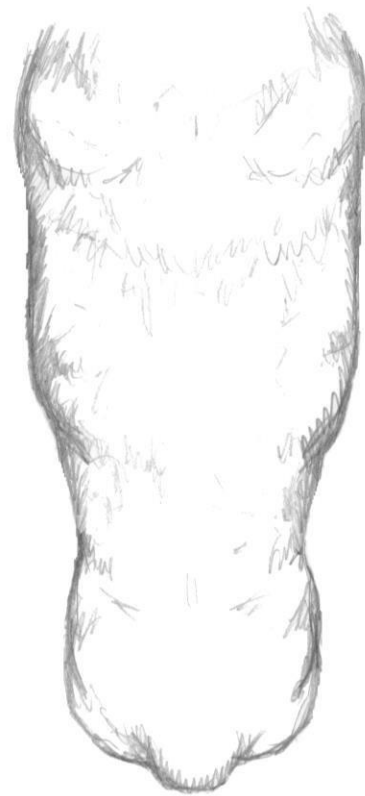
***Loaded shoulders***

**Body – Compact. Chest wide and deep, with ribs well sprung and well set down between the forelegs.**

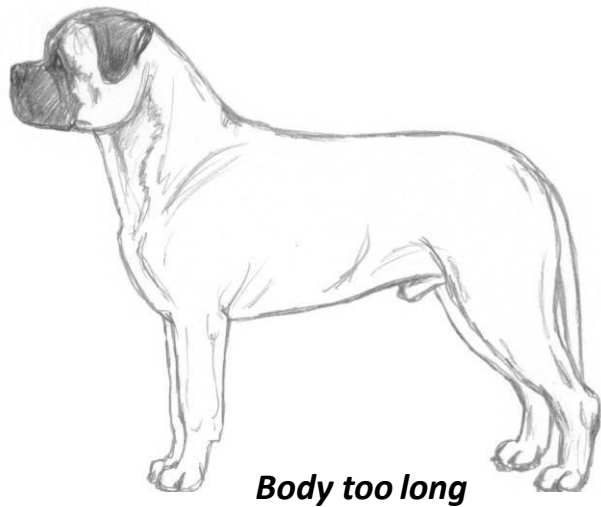
**Back – Short, giving the impression of a well-balanced dog.**



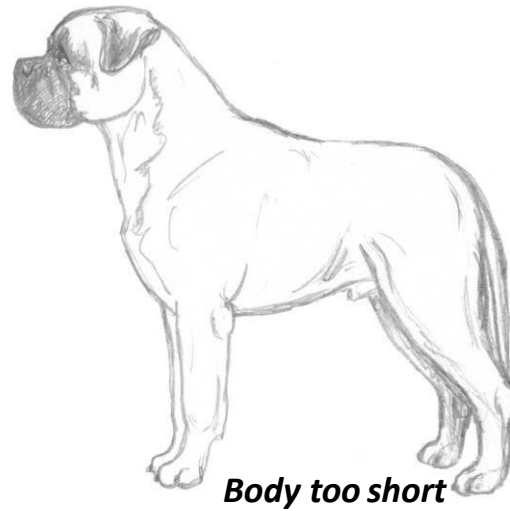
**Top view**  
**Proper width front to rear**



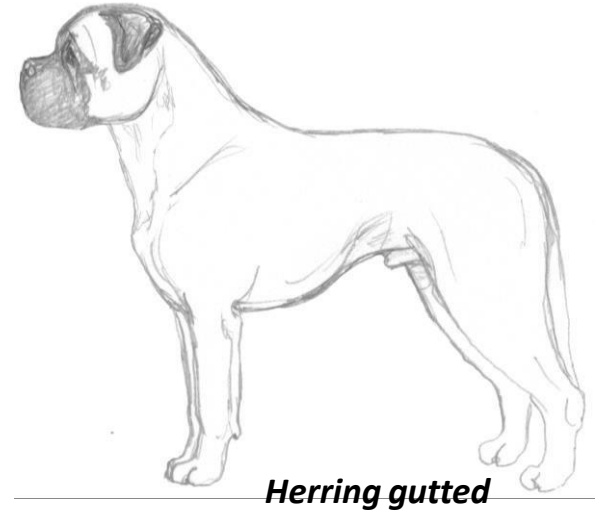
**Top view**  
**Narrow rear**



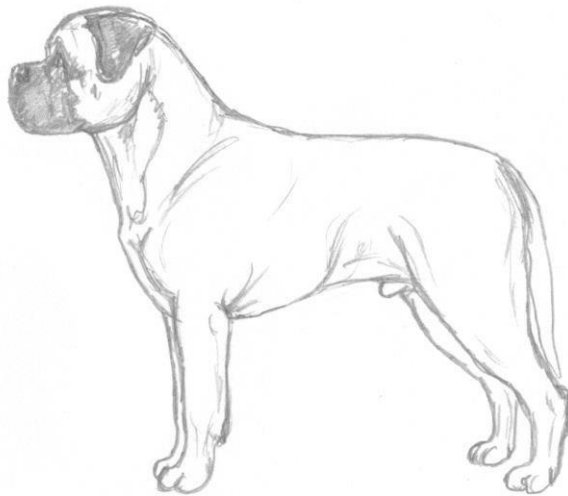
***Body too long***



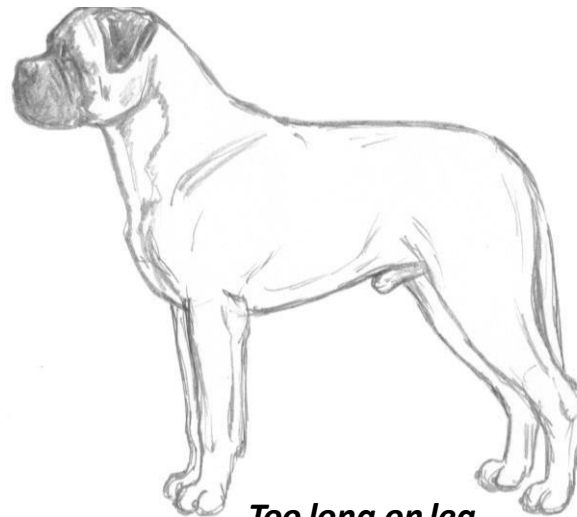
***Body too short***



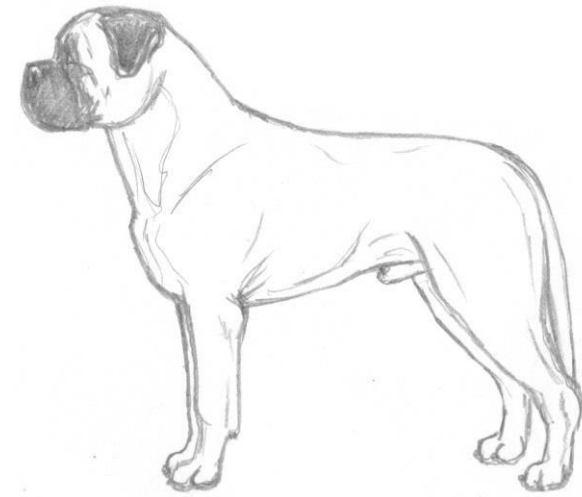
***Herring gutted***



***Rib cage too short***



***Too long on leg***

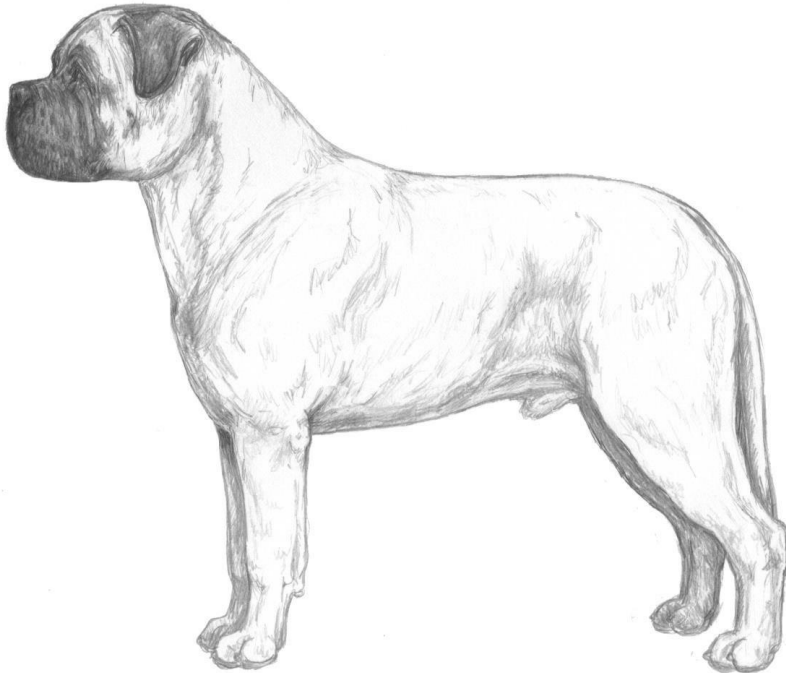


***Too short on leg***

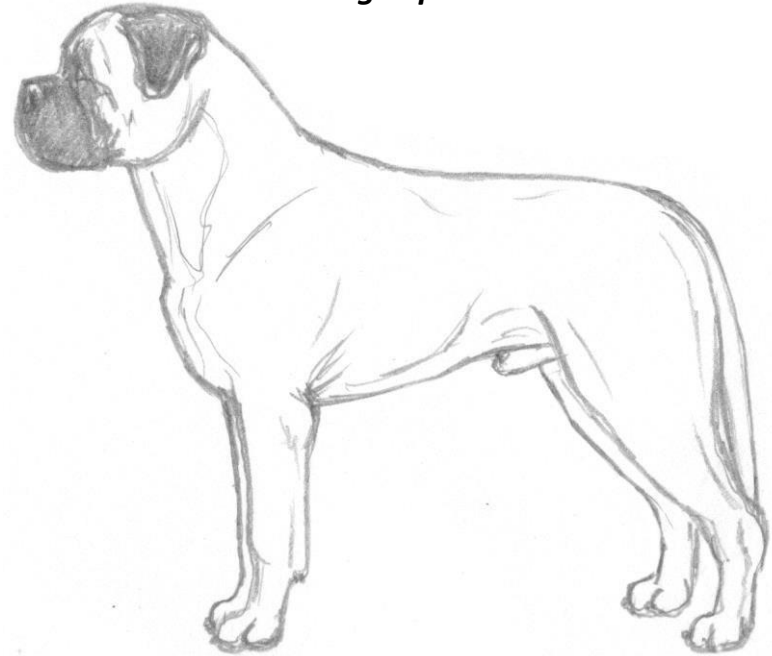
**Loin – Wide, muscular and slightly arched, with fair depth offlank.**

**Tail – Set on high, strong at the root and tapering to the hocks. It may be carried straight or curved, but never carried hound fashion.**

***Correct depth***



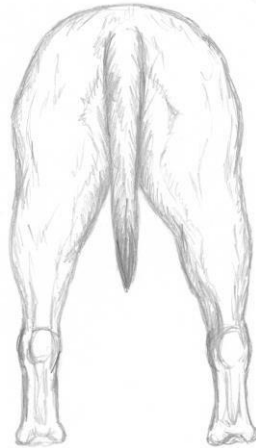
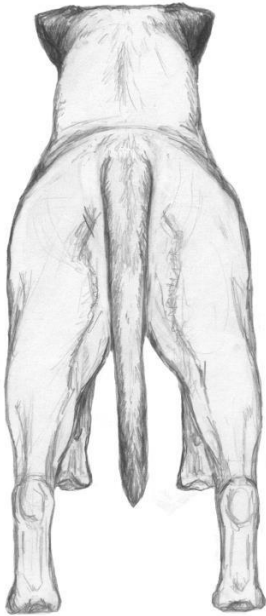
***Lacking depth***



- The loin is described as slightly arched. Obviously this means front to back. The purpose of this arched loin, caused by a slight tip of the pelvis, is to allow an only moderately angulated dog to reach under itself to attain drive in its rear assembly.
- The wide, muscular loin and fairly deep flank contribute to the overall strength of this rear and balance with the dog's strong deep front assembly.

***Tail – Set on high, strong at the root and tapering to the hocks. It may be carried straight or curved, but never carried hound fashion.***

***Correct tail***



***Short tail***



***Non-tapering tail***



***Rat tail***



***Crank tail***

- As the tail is an extension of the spine, a sturdy, high-set tail root indicates the strength of the spinal column itself, something very important in supporting the rest of the skeleton of a substantial animal. A low-set tail indicates a great than desired tip of the pelvis.
- A tail carried hound fashion is carried curved over the back. A tail carried above the level of the topline or with a curve is not improper unless the tail curves back over the body. A dog with a high-set tail when alert, should not be expected to carry its tail down. Tail position is an indication of the dog's attitude.
- **Undesirable:** too short tail, rat tail, hound tail or crank tail.



**Tail – Set on high, strong at the root and tapering to the hocks. It may be carried straight or curved, but never carried hound fashion.**

***Correct tail set***



***Tail carried hound fashion over the back***



***Low tail set***



- As the tail is an extension of the spine, a sturdy, high-set tail root indicates the strength of the spinal column itself, something very important in supporting the rest of the skeleton of a substantial animal. A low-set tail indicates a great than desired tip of the pelvis.
- A tail carried hound fashion is carried curved **over** the back. A tail carried above the level of the topline or with a curve is not improper unless the tail curves back over the body. A dog with a high-set tail when alert, should not be expected to carry its tail down. Tail position is an indication of the dog's attitude.
- **Undesirable:** too short tail, rat tail, hound tail or crank tail.

# Forequarters

***Forequarters*** –Shoulders muscular but not loaded, and slightly sloping.

***Forelegs straight, well boned and set well apart, elbows turned neither in nor out.***

***Pasterns straight, feet of medium size, with round toes well arched. Pads thick and tough, nails black.***



***Down in pastern***



***Correct shoulder layback***



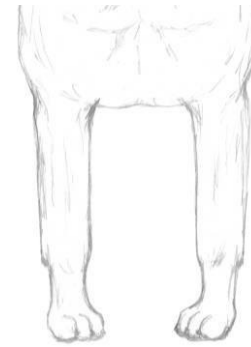
***Flat footed***



***Straight shoulder***



***Splay footed***



***Turning in***



***Knuckling over***

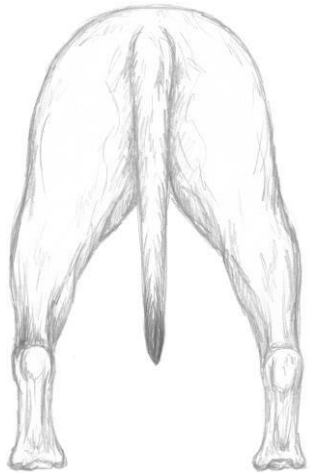


***Turning out***

- Shoulders are only slightly sloping in accordance with the moderate angulation of the dog's rear. **Undesirable:** loaded shoulders, narrow chests, lack of brisket.
- The forelegs being well-boned, set well apart, with properly aligned elbows and strong pasterns are a necessity in supporting the dog's substantial frame. **Undesirable:** weak pasterns, elbows turned in or out.
- As the dog was intended to work on rough ground, tough, well-padded feet are an important part of the dog's basic makeup.

# Hindquarters

***Hindquarters – Broad and muscular, with well-developed second thigh denoting power, but not cumbersome.***

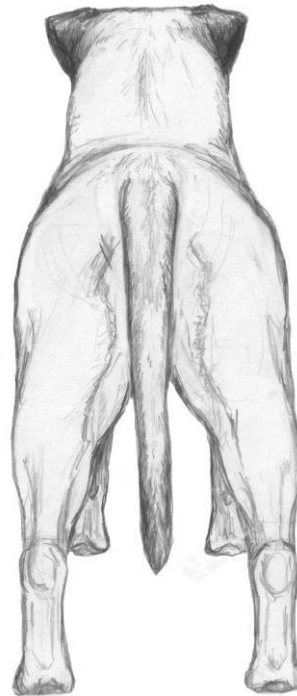


***Too wide***

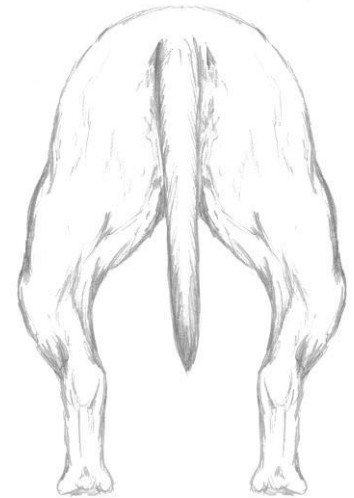


***Cow hocks***

***Correct rear***



***Too narrow***

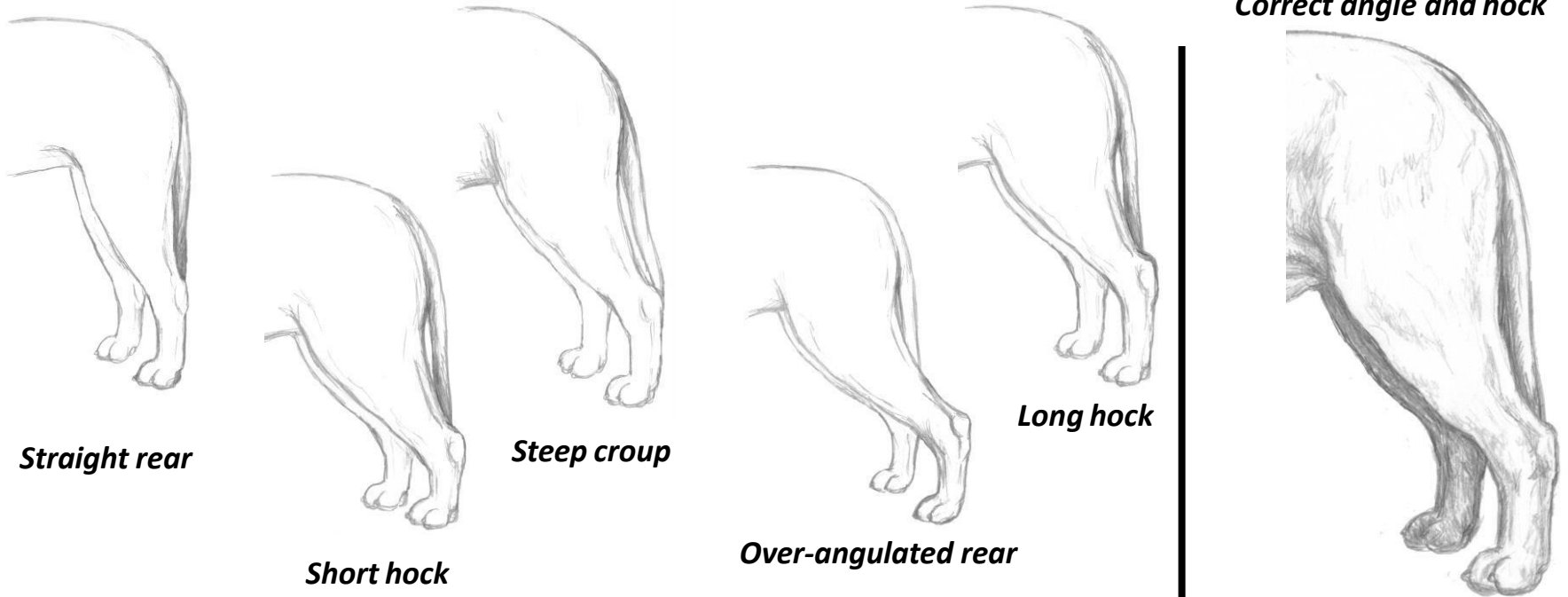


***Bowed femur***

- The hindquarters supply the drive in the dog's stride. Their strong musculature and support enable the dog to make quick turns and utilize quick bursts of speed which are necessary for its intended work. A strong thigh is emphasized in the standard because it is an integral part of the mechanism that produces powerful rear movement.
- **Undesirable:** straight stifle and/or hock, lack of well-developed second thigh, bowed femurs, narrow rear.

# Hindquarters

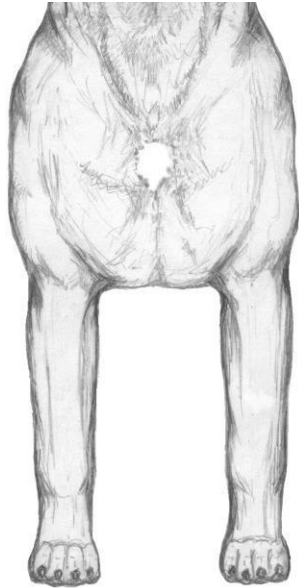
*Moderate angulation at hocks. Cowhocks and splay feet are serious faults.*



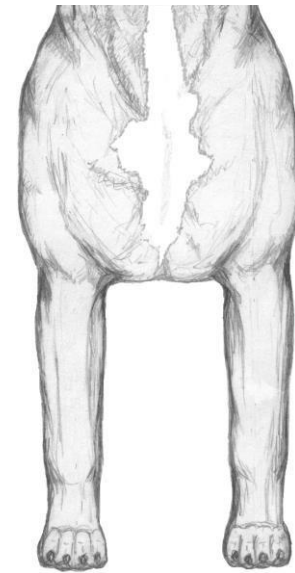
- The hocks are only moderately angulated because hock set far back would not properly support the weight of the dog's substantial body. Cowhocks cause movement that generally breaks the proper tracking of the rear legs. Splay feet are weak feet and severe detriment to a working dog.
- *Consider as serious faults: splay feet and cowhocks.*

# Coat

***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.***



***Acceptable white marking***



***Excessive white marking***

- The necessity for a short, dense coat was dictated by the climate and condition in which the dog worked. While there is an undercoat for weather protection the top coat should lay flat and be a tight, short coat. Soft, fluffy, wooly and/or long coats are improper as they would give little protection against precipitation.
- The Bullmastiff originally worked as a night dog. Dark color was beneficial. Brindle was the original desired color as it was the best camouflage. There is no present day color preference. Excessive white marking is discouraged.

# Gait

***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.***



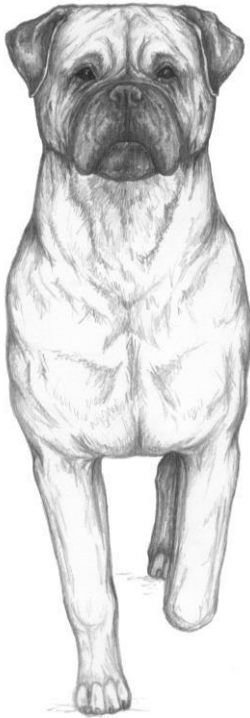
***Correct extension and movement***



***Restricted movement (lack of reach and drive)***

- The standard description is quite clear. While Bullmastiffs did not work long distances at the trot, that gait is still the best indicator of a dog’s soundness of movement. Efficiency of movement is important in dogs that work long hours over rough terrain.

**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 of the joints.**



***Correct movement from front***



***Correct movement from rear***

***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.***



***Moving wide***



***Paddling***



***Crossing in front***



***Moving out at elbow***



**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.



***Cowhocks***



***Crossing in rear***

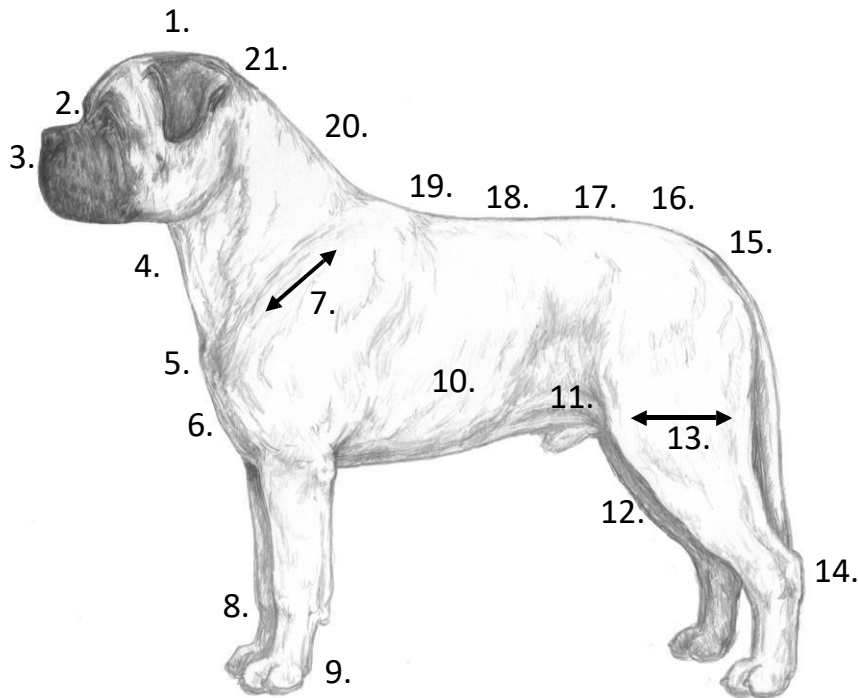


***Moving wide***

# Temperament

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

- There should be no allowance made for unprovoked aggression by this breed. There is no place for an unreliable or dangerous dog. This behavior is not acceptable at any time. Timid behavior should be penalized, giving some leeway for very young puppies new to a show ring. The Bullmastiff should have an interested, open, alert and accepting attitude necessary to the reliability required of the breed.

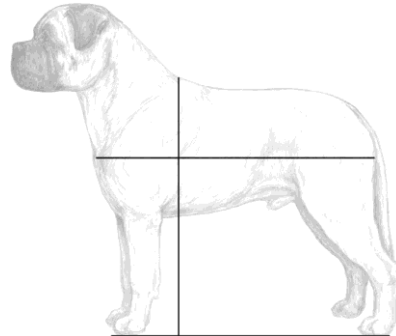


- |                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Skull (flat)                     | 12. Stifle                           |
| 2. Stop (moderate)                  | 13. Hindquarters (broad, muscular)   |
| 3. Muzzle (blunt)                   | 14. Hock (moderately angulated)      |
| 4. Neck (well muscled)              | 15. Tail (high set with strong root) |
| 5. Sternum                          | 16. Croup                            |
| 6. Brisket                          | 17. Loin (slightly arched)           |
| 7. Shoulder (slightly sloping)      | 18. Back (short)                     |
| 8. Pasterns (straight)              | 19. Withers                          |
| 9. Feet (medium, round arched toes) | 20. Neck (slightly arched)           |
| 10. Ribs (well sprung)              | 21. Ears                             |
| 11. Flank (deep)                    |                                      |

# Bullmastiff at a Glance Card



***Ideal Dog Head***



## **Essential Breed Characteristics:**

- **Nearly square**
- Body compact
- Back Level
- **Slight** arch over the loin
- Powerful / substantial
- **Moderate** matching angles
- Reach and drive indicate maximum use of dog's **moderate angulation**
- Ribs well sprung
- **Head as pictured: Cube on cube**
- Fearless and confident



## **Heavily weight these deviations:**

- ***Serious Faults: Cow hocks / splayed feet***
- Long back / long loin: **Long is Wrong!**
- Rectangular in appearance
- Reversion to the Bulldog
- Short legs: Long and low
- Over-angulated rear / straight stifles
- Straight / stuffy shoulders
- Snipey / long muzzle
- Grossly undershot / overshot / wrybite
- Overly aggressive / seriously timid
- ***Showmanship should not override breed correctness***

# ***Notes***