



# The Staffordshire Bull Terrier

Interpretation & Illustration  
of the  
Written Breed Standard V13.7

*A comparative discussion - UK & USA*

Produced by  
The Stafford Knot, Inc.  
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## \*DISCLAIMER

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# The Breed Standard

∞ General Appearance

∞ Feet, Tail

∞ Characteristics, Temperament

∞ Gait

∞ Head

∞ Coat

∞ Eyes

∞ Colour

∞ Ears

∞ Size / Substance

∞ Mouth

∞ Temperament (part 2)

∞ Neck, Topline, Body

∞ Faults

∞ Forequarters/Hindquarters

***Dedicated to the preservation of the  
Staffordshire Bull Terrier***

# Historical Notes to Consider

'Bull-and-Terrier' mixes were bred for competitive 'blood sports' nearly 100 years prior to the name "Staffordshire Bull Terrier" being established in the official records. In fact, it was the conformation ring that began to replace the fighting pit in the 1930's that helped establish social legitimacy to the fraternity surrounding these dogs. Though many names were used to describe the early styles of Bull-and-Terriers from one region or another, it was the sport of conformation dog shows that actually created the need for consensus in giving rise to the name "Staffordshire Bull Terrier" as an officially recognized breed, thus distinguishing him from all other 'Bull-and-Terriers'.

As the fraternity's competitive focus shifted from the fighting pit to the show ring the dogs function, and thus his form, also transitioned. Still, many of the first Staffordshire Bull Terriers exhibited in conformation shows in England secretly earned their keep in the pit as well. Because of this dual-purpose, the very first version of the breed standard described the show dog in the exact physical terms of what you might look for in a 1930's fighting dog. The original standard, written to describe a "proper" fighting dog, made allowance for the dogs to be much taller than today's standard while exhibiting far less substance. The first breed standard described a dog built more like a modern, game-bred American Pit Bull Terrier calling for an 18 inch dog to carry just 38 pounds. As time went on the show fraternity wished to further distance itself from the underground world of dog fighting that persisted in the shadows. Thus in 1948/49 the standard was changed to include the single most significant alteration to the breed's makeup clearly defining the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as a show dog, not a "stripped-down" fighter. The top end of the height range was reduced by 2 inches, yet the weights remained the same – 38 pounds. This called for a more compact dog of greater substance, a beautiful specimen for the show ring, but no longer ideal for the pit. This change would mark the show Stafford's official severance of its ties to the fighting world.

# Historical Notes to Consider

When judging the Staffordshire Bull Terrier one of the first questions that comes to mind is “How do I determine which parts of the standard are more important than others?” As mentioned, the Stafford was RE-established as a show dog and companion animal in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the basic answer to this question is the same as it is with most all other breeds: Always give priority considering the original function of the breed above all else. As unsavory as it may be, those elements most important to the historic function as a fighting dog should not be forgotten. In fact, they are to be given the greatest attention.

For reference in how to prioritize which elements were considered more important than others consider the following 100 pt. judging system that was proposed in 1948/49 for that most historic update to the breed standard:

<b>General Appearance and Coat Condition</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Head</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Neck</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Body</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Legs and Feet</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Tail</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>General Movement and Balance</b>	<b><u>10</u></b>

**Total = 100**

This system is **not** used today as the Kennel Club discontinued inclusion of all 100 pt. judging systems as a part of published breed standards. However, it does give us some perspective as to how the ‘forefathers’ of the **show** Stafford prioritized the importance of the individual elements and characteristics of the breed after its departure from his original function as a fighting dog.

# A Note on Breed Standard Comparison – UK and USA:

Most kennel clubs around the world follow the official (UK) Kennel Club breed standard or they have simply adopted the Kennel Club standard verbatim, and they call it their own. The original AKC (US) breed standard was a direct adoption of the UK standard at that time, but it was later significantly changed. The current AKC version differs in the order in which the “components” are discussed and also in a few passages that are unique to the AKC version. This presentation will follow the sequence of the Kennel Club breed standard and will make mention of the differences in language and descriptions of “ideal” noting extensions, omissions, and discrepancies where then they occur within the AKC standard.

# General Appearance

“Smooth-coated, well balanced, of great strength for his size. Muscular, active and agile.”

*AKC: “The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is a smooth-coated dog.*

*It should be of great strength for its size and, although muscular, should be active and agile.”*



# General Appearance

The Stafford is an efficient athlete. Everything about him should reflect this. There are to be no exaggeration in his make-up. Excess would inhibit the breed's original function as well as its health.

He needs enough bone, enough muscle, and enough substance to support his powerful, athletic endeavors, but not an excess of any of these features. He will need strength and vigor, allied with speed and suppleness. The Stafford should have stamina in abundance. He should feel hard to the touch, never soft.

The cloddy, heavy-boned, over muscled dog may look impressive but he lacks the speed, agility and stamina of the athlete.

The racy, light-boned dog may be agile and athletic, but will lack strength and resilience.

The one in the middle will get the job done. The key is balancing capacity with efficiency. The dog is filled to the brim with everything he needs to be an effective combatant, yet exhibits nothing in excess.



# General Appearance

## Smooth coated

A first glance one may think that all Staffords all have the same basic coat. However, when you put your hands on them you may notice a wide range of coat lengths, textures & thicknesses. The correct coat should feel slightly hard to the touch, not soft nor silky. It should be tight, short and lay flat against the skin - without the use of additives.

## Well Balanced

Specific to the Staffordshire Bull Terrier the term 'Balance' does NOT simply mean that the dog's parts all fit well with one another. Having a head that fits well with the body which is in harmony with length of limbs, etc. is necessary, but this simply means the dog is Proportionate. For example a well put together Bull Mastiff may have beautiful proportions, but this doesn't make him a well balanced Stafford. Balance in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier does include notions of proportion, but there's much more to it than that. Balance is uniquely defined in this breed by that ideal blend of Bull and Terrier. But hold that thought for now. We will return to a discussion of how Balance (the correct blend of Bull and Terrier) is one of the fundamental elements of breed type later in the standard.

## Great strength for its size, Muscular, Active & Agile

The Stafford is a medium sized dog who has the strength of most dogs considerably larger than himself. His appearance should be that of an athlete or a gladiator. In build he should resemble a middle-weight boxer, not a body builder, nor marathon runner. He will be quite active – sometimes too active for many people. The Stafford should not only be powerful, but he must also be very agile. He will exhibit “economy of effort” in every move. This breed is in general quite nimble - both physically AND mentally.

# General Appearance

Staffords should be shown in fit, athletic condition. This doesn't mean completely 'stripped down' as if they are getting ready to go into the pit, but it certainly doesn't mean the dog should be carrying any excess fat. Excess weight is unhealthy and interferes with the dog's function. Always look for a well defined waistline and 'tuck.'

The Stafford is often described as being 'rather light in the loins.'

Expect to see long, lean, hard, resilient muscle; not bulky, rounded muscle that has power yet lacks stamina.

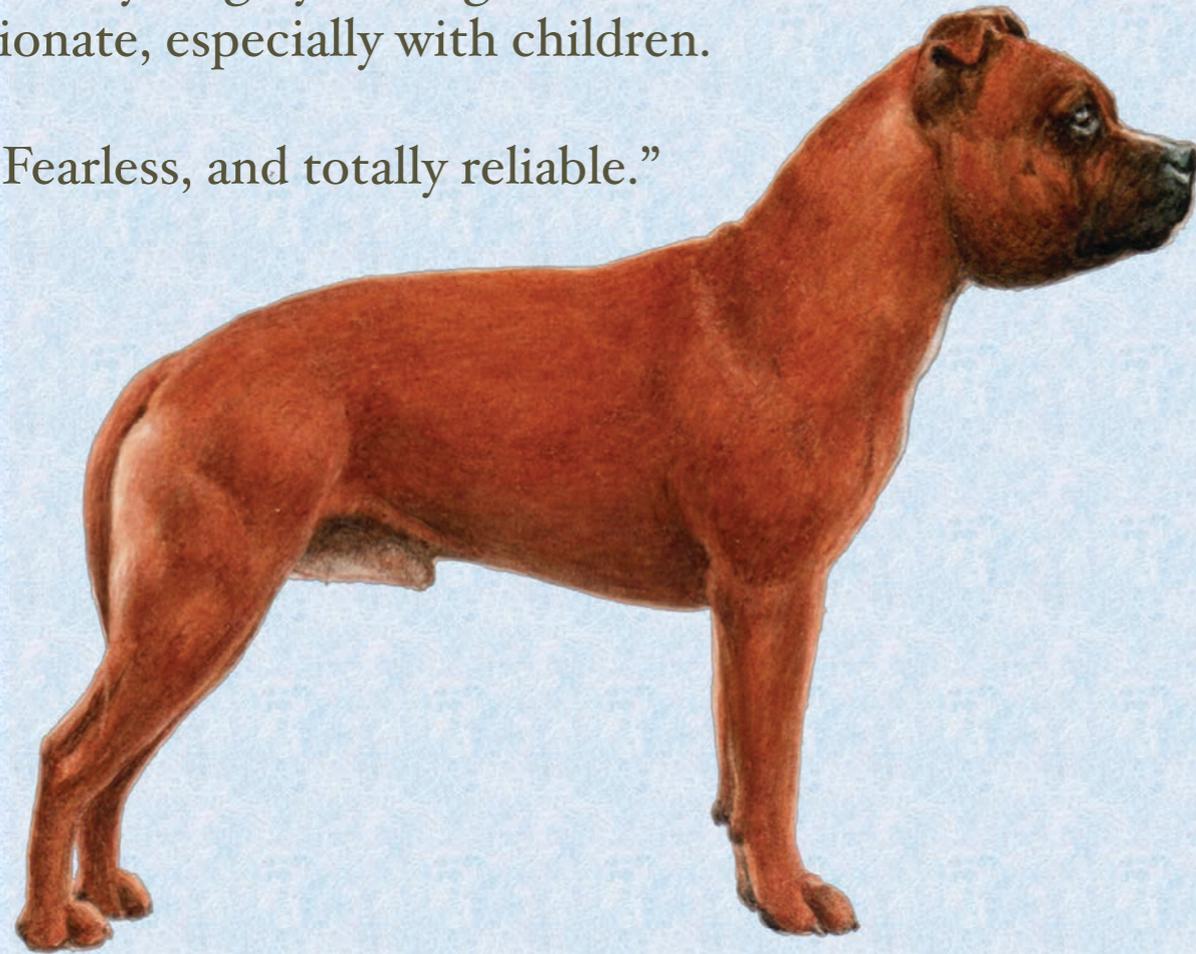
“Great strength for his size” again alludes to the notion of efficiency. You would expect a large, heavy dog to be very powerful. Do not fall for such an animal. A Stafford's strength is sometimes surprising since his outstanding physical abilities are far greater than what one may expect from such a compact package.



# Characteristics / Temperament

“Traditionally of indomitable courage and tenacity. Highly intelligent and affectionate, especially with children.

Bold, Fearless, and totally reliable.”



AKC: ““From the past history of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, the modern dog draws its character of indomitable courage, high intelligence, and tenacity. This, coupled with its affection for its friends, and children in particular, its off-duty quietness and trustworthy stability, makes it a foremost all-purpose dog.”

With a keen, intelligent expression and awareness of his surroundings the Stafford should stand his ground without being too troublesome.

Overtly shy, meek or cringing Staffords are not displaying the correct breed temperament and should be thus be penalized. A bold, confident personality is an essential characteristic of the breed.

Exceptions should be made for young ones just starting out in the ring. They will more than likely melt into a wiggling ball of exuberant licking as soon as you speak to them. As long as they are happy and not overly fearful this behavior is typical in puppies.



**The Stafford's head is one of the hallmarks of the breed, it helps define breed type.**

# Head & Skull

“Short, deep through with broad skull, very pronounced cheek muscles, distinct stop, short fore face, nose black.

*AKC Adds: “Pink (Dudley) nose to be considered a serious fault.”*

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

*AKC omits the phrase “Eye rims dark.” Instead reads “Light eyes or pink eye rims to be considered a fault, except that where the coat surrounding the eye is white the eye rim may be pink.”*

Ears – “Rose or half pricked, not large or heavy. Full drop or pricked ears highly undesirable.”

*AKC rephrases: “Full drop or full prick to be considered a serious fault.”*

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

*AKC: A bite in which the outer side of the lower incisors touches the inner side of the upper incisors. The lips should be tight and clean. The badly undershot or overshot bite is a serious fault.”*

# Head - Skull and Fore-face

The head should have an approximate skull to muzzle ratio of 2 parts skull and 1 part muzzle. This is defined when measuring the fore-face from the tip of the nose to the stop, and then measuring the skull from the stop to the occiput. So the fore-face (muzzle) is “short” in relation to the rest of the head. It is shorter in this respect than many other terriers, but not so short that it interferes with function.

The Stafford's skull should be balanced for equal width and depth and be well padded with muscle including well-developed cheek 'bumps.' These are the muscles which close the jaw and enable the Stafford to grip with power and endurance. The Stafford should not have a domed head. There should exist a distinct 'furrow' down the center formed by the temporal muscles on the top of a mature Staffords head. This helps define the Stafford's unique head shape and is thus a component of breed type – that which defines the breed as unique, different from all others. Think of breed type as a collection of Stafford trademarks. The distinct head shape is one such trademark. Puppies and young

Staffords may not get the temporal muscling until they reach 12 months or more, but it should be present as adults.

The same is true for the pronounced cheek muscles.

Until the Stafford reaches maturity (between 2-4 years) the head will continue to change and mature.



# Head - Fore-face

The Stafford's foreface is comprised of the upper muzzle (including nose) and under jaw.

Like the skull, the fore-face should also be balanced in terms of width and depth. The strength of fore-face should be congruent with the rest of the head.

A fore-face which falls off below the eyes makes for a 'foxy' head. Too much bone will create a heavy muzzle and make the dog coarse taking away from the quality of expression and head in general. While there is no definitive measure outlined in the standard you will find that many of the best examples of breed have a muzzle depth approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  that of the skull



# Head - Style

The Stafford should have a muscular, clean head of good depth & breadth, with pronounced cheek muscles and well defined stop. Although substantial and quite powerful the head should still be in proportion with the rest of the dog. It should **not** appear as if it doesn't fit with the overall structure. A female's head will generally be smaller and exhibit a more elegant, feminine expression. She should never look 'doggy.'



While the male head is a more powerful and exhibits an overall more masculine expression, loose or wrinkled skin and pendulous lips on either sex should be penalized.

# Head - Underjaw, Lip, Muzzle



In evaluating for a strong underjaw keep in mind that untidy lips / large flews can hide the underjaw giving it the illusion of weakness. A hands-on examination is often required to determine if the underjaw is weak or if it is actually untidy lips causing this perspective. In either case it is a fault.

The Stafford should have a clean lip that lies tightly against the teeth. Not only does a fleshy lip create an unattractive, foreign expression, but in considering the breed's original purpose it could be a hindrance in an 'altercation' by creating an obstacle for the dog when trying to bite as well as creating a target (something to grasp hold of) for his opponent. For this reason, there should be no looseness, excess wrinkle, nor 'spongy' appearance.



The muzzle should appear as a rounded-off block gently tapering at the nose and widening until just below the eyes while gradually deepening through to the rear of the lower jaw. Still the muzzle is a bit more square rather than overtly wedge-shaped. Get your hands on the exhibit. Feel for a rigid, smooth muzzle without excess flesh or wrinkles which indicate an inappropriate coarseness. Also feel that the muzzle does not narrow abruptly, but tapers rather gradually from the point under the eye to the nose. The female muzzle may have slightly more taper than the male, again defining her as decidedly more feminine.



## Head - Stop, Nose

The stop (the step down from the top of the skull to the top of the muzzle) is well defined. The standard does **not** describe the stop as “deep”. It is “well defined”. The stop is not to be anywhere near as deep as brachycephalic breeds such as the Boxer or Bull Mastiff, but it should be strong and apparent. A shallow stop will adversely affect the eye placement and overall strength of expression.

The stop can be deceiving without putting your hands on the dog. The angle of the stop is more obtuse than 90 degrees, yet when simply viewed from the side the eye socket often gives the illusion of an angle approaching 90 degrees. This is the eye socket, not the stop itself. Place your thumb on the stop to measure the ratio of foreface to skull (1 part to 2 parts) and evaluate the angle of the stop. It should be distinct and well defined, but not so abrupt as to be a right angle itself. Further, coat colour, patterns and room/venue lighting can create illusions when it comes to depth and angle of stop. Get your hands on the exhibit for proper evaluation.

The Stafford's nose is black. Absence of pigment (pink or Dudley) is a fault. The nostrils should be wide and open. The dog will need to breathe freely through them when the mouth is ‘engaged’ in his original purpose. Small or pinched nostrils will not suffice. Watch for this and observe the dog's breathing patterns when in the ring. He should not labor nor distress under mild circumstances.

Remember, the Stafford is an athlete so **all** his parts will have to function well.

# Eyes

Eyes are to be round with a keen expression. They are medium-sized and set in the skull to look straight ahead. Although round in shape, bulbous, protruding eyes are incorrect. On the other end of the spectrum, small, squinty, almond eyes are also to be faulted. Staffords usually have very animated eyes resulting in a lively expression. The round shape contributes to this, but again do not mistake a description of “round” for large, bulging spheres that could be a detriment in a fight.



To complete the expression, the darker the eye the better. An allowance is made for there to be some relation between eye and coat colour. This does not mean that a red dog may have red eyes, but that for instance a red dog generally should not be penalized heavily if the eyes are not quite as dark as those of a black brindle. Even so, dark is always the preferred eye.

Keep in mind that all parts of the head are interrelated. If the stop is too shallow the eye shape will often be almond and the expression will suffer.

If the stop is too exaggerated, the eyes may be overly large and prominent, again moving from the correct expression.

Remember; Eye rims should also be dark. The only exception is with the AKC (US) standard that allows for pink on the rim if the surrounding coat is white. Nowhere else is this exception made.



# Eye Colour



Acceptable example of dark eyes on Black Brindle.



Acceptable example of SLIGHTLY lighter eyes in keeping with coat colour on a lighter mahogany brindle dog.



Acceptable example of dark eyes on a white or piebald dog. Note eye size and shape are not ideal in this example.

# Ears

Check for size, shape, thickness, evenness, and set. They should be small and thin, set tightly rose or half prick, and not heavy in leather. They should not droop low nor appear large in proportion to the overall head itself. It is important that they should be tidy. The acceptance of “half-pricked” ears should not be used as a license for rewarding 3/4 or more pricked ears. The higher the ear the more it detracts from expression, and the more it becomes a target during combat. The tidy rose ear is preferred to all others.

Ears should not be set high on the head giving a flighty appearance, nor too low giving an inattentive appearance. When the ear is flattened and pulled forward the tip should extend to the corner of the eye. When the dog is at ease or in an passive state the ears may fold back close to the skull exposing more of the inside, but they should never lose their fold and drop.

Ears are a barometer to the Stafford’s emotion and alertness. Perfect rose ears round out the classic Stafford expression. Although they seem like a minor cosmetic detail they are very important in typifying the breed (breed type). An incorrect ear can ruin the entire expression and create a foreign look on an otherwise lovely-headed Stafford. As such, the standard dictates that a full drop or a full prick are highly undesirable (or “a serious fault” – AKC).



# Mouth

A clean and “perfect” scissor bite with large teeth is called for. At the same time there should be some consideration for otherwise excellent specimens with SLIGHT dentition problems. Badly undershot or overshot bites can be a serious fault, as is the wry mouth. Converging canines should also be faulted. It is important that the Stafford be able to bite with maximum power and efficiency. Anything that weakens the bite is a fault to the degree of it’s severity in hindering the animal from performing its function.

The incisors should appear level at the tips, evenly set at the base and ideally in a straight line. The occlusion of the scissor bite should be uniform.

In general all teeth must be in line to support each other. Teeth which are not set square in the jaw and in line with one another will sustain more damage under stress and more wear with daily activity. The canines are an exception to this as they angle obtusely to the jaw so that the tight scissor may be formed.

Remember that the Stafford is an active animal with very powerful jaws. Missing or broken dentition due to an accident should be considered in relation to its severity. You may still be able to assess the nature of the bite and check for developmental or structural issues. Given the breed’s exuberant nature exhibits with some minor environmental casualties may be observed from time to time, and should not be heavily faulted for this factor alone if the underlying structure of the bite is sound and you are able to assess correct placement.

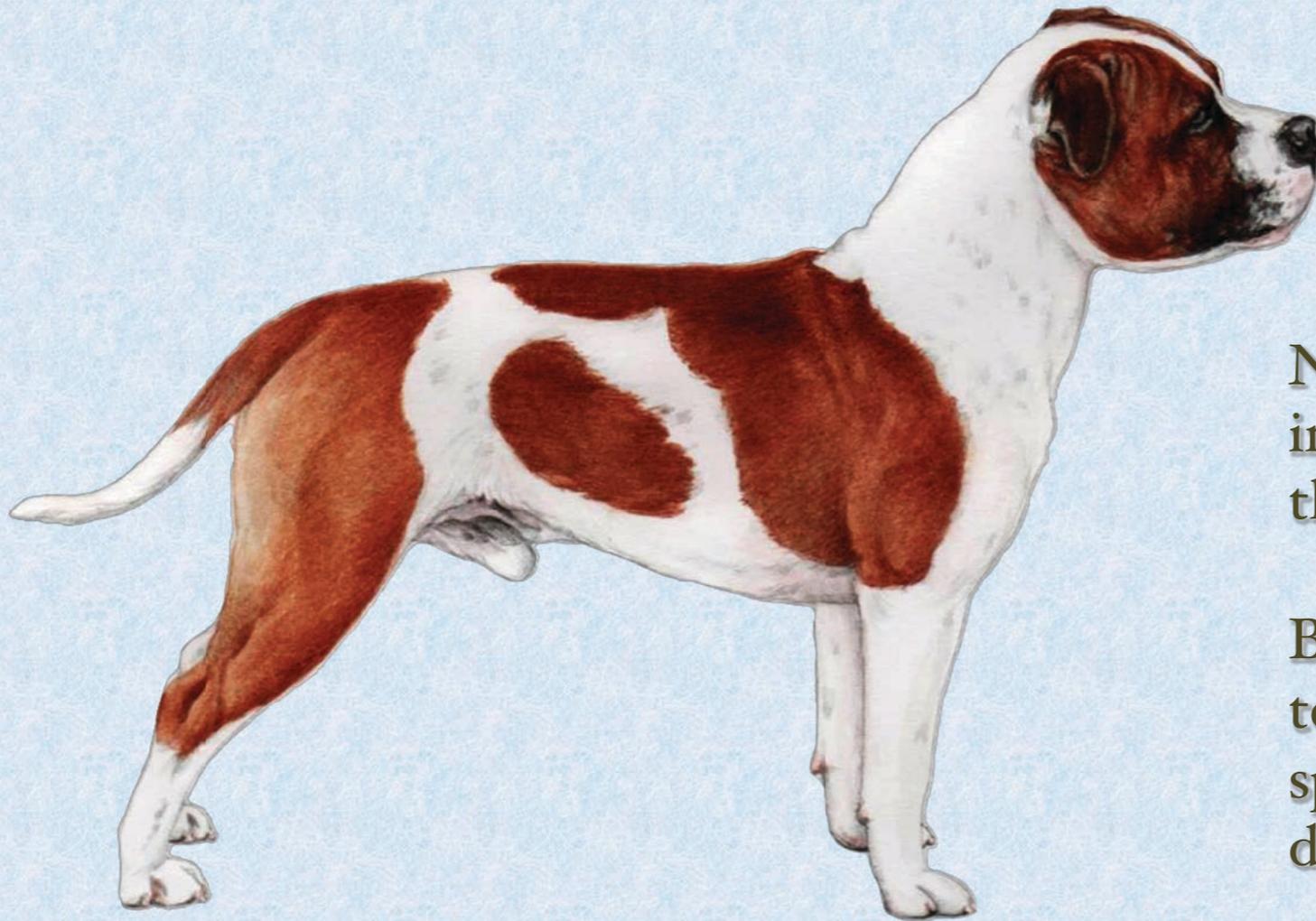
# Mouths & Bites



## Example of an ideal Stafford scissor bite

Note the large, white teeth with straight, evenly-set incisors. The outer surface of the lower incisors cleanly touch the inside surface of upper set with no gap. The occlusion lines up nicely. Canines angle outward enough to form a scissor with the lower tooth in front of upper tooth on outside of upper gum line. Also notice the dark pigment on the gums.

# Neck, Topline & Body



Neck - “Muscular, rather short, clean in outline gradually widening towards the shoulders.”

Body - “Close-coupled, with level topline, wide front, deep brisket, well sprung ribs, muscular and well defined.”

Note: The phrase “*[rather] light in the loins*” appeared in early versions of the KC breed standard and is *still included in the current, AKC standard*. By most counts this phrase (though now omitted from the KC standard) is still very important and applicable. It references the “tuck-up” that a dog in proper condition should have. It calls for the breed to never be soft or fat, but instead maintain that athletic silhouette that is unmistakable from across the room. No other breed quite has the same powerful yet athletic outline, with the deep chest, light loin and lean, hard muscle. Together these elements comprise another trademark of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier – i.e. part of breed type.

# Neck



The Stafford's neck is the foundation for what was originally the offensive end of his combat equipment. It gives direction to the head and must be strong enough to support the drive originating from the powerful hindquarters.

A short/stuffy neck lacks flexibility and speed when guiding the head. It also means the dog must shake with its whole forequarters when 'engaged' which is a very inefficient action. A long/elegant neck is weak and will buckle when driven forward.

The standard calls for a neck that is "rather short." It should be powerful, but still have enough length to maintain agility and flexibility. The back of the neck should form an arch or crest as it rises towards the head. It gradually widens into the shoulders seamlessly tying together the head and body.

One way to recognize the proper length of neck is to stack the dog and look from profile. The neck should naturally position the head so that the underjaw is level or slightly above the top of the withers.

# Body & Topline

The peak of the withers is located just between the shoulder blades. At this point there is also a noticeable pad of muscle.

Viewed in profile, there should not be a dip in vertebrae behind the withers. However, on a heavily muscled Stafford in fit condition you may see a small indentation at this point particularly when viewed from above. From the point of the withers to the croup the dog may exhibit a 'furrow' running the length of the spine that is created by the powerful muscles on either side. The effect is similar to the 'furrow' or 'cleave' on the top of the head created by the temporal muscles.



Look for a "level topline," that is strong and short coupled. There should be ample depth of brisket and a relatively smooth contour of long, enduring muscle, not bulky, heavy muscle that lacks stamina. The ribs are well sprung and carry back to the rather short and light loin. Overloaded muscle, short/heavy bones, long/weak backs, lack of brisket and/or spring of rib are all atypical and highly undesirable.

Viewed from overhead expect to see a classic, hourglass shape formed by a good spring of rib and light loin. From this angle also assess the nature of the muscling on the shoulders and hindquarters. Is it lean and enduring, or bulky and quick to expire?

# Body & Topline



Ribs are “well sprung,” never slab-sided nor barrel-chested.

Moderation is key.

The body should not be overdone, but should still show great strength and athleticism. Too much rib spring will hinder efficient movement and too much depth of brisket only adds bulk and heaviness not conducive to agile and free movement. Not enough chest or brisket weakens movement and crowds the vital organs important to an athlete.

The Stafford requires excellent balance to move freely.

*The breed is often shown on a 3/4 angle or facing in towards the judge, unlike other terriers who are shown in profile. Around the world the Stafford is also often shown in the traditional leather ‘Stafford collar’ with brass or nickel embellishments which can be buckle or martingale.*

# Body & Topline

A level topline is called for. However, the Stafford's spine is flexible and his muscles are dynamic. Do not expect an absolute "flat" back on a muscular, athletic dog in fit condition.



The croup is located after the loin at a point of the hip that follows along the sacrum.

There should not be a drop or slope at the croup. This should occur further back on the dog as the gluteus muscle round the hindquarters starting just before the tail set.



# Forequarters

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

*AKC: “Legs straight and well boned, set rather far apart, without looseness at the shoulders and showing no weakness at the pasterns, from which point the feet turn out a little. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed.”*

Note: The Stafford does NOT have the short upper arm associated with a ‘Terrier’ front.

# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm



The front legs should be straight with the feet turning out slightly at the pasterns. Legs are perpendicular to the ground, dropping straight down from the shoulder.

Shoulders are cleanly muscled, well laid back and will show no sign of looseness. Do not be impressed by exhibits with overloaded muscles in the shoulder. The Stafford is an agile athlete.

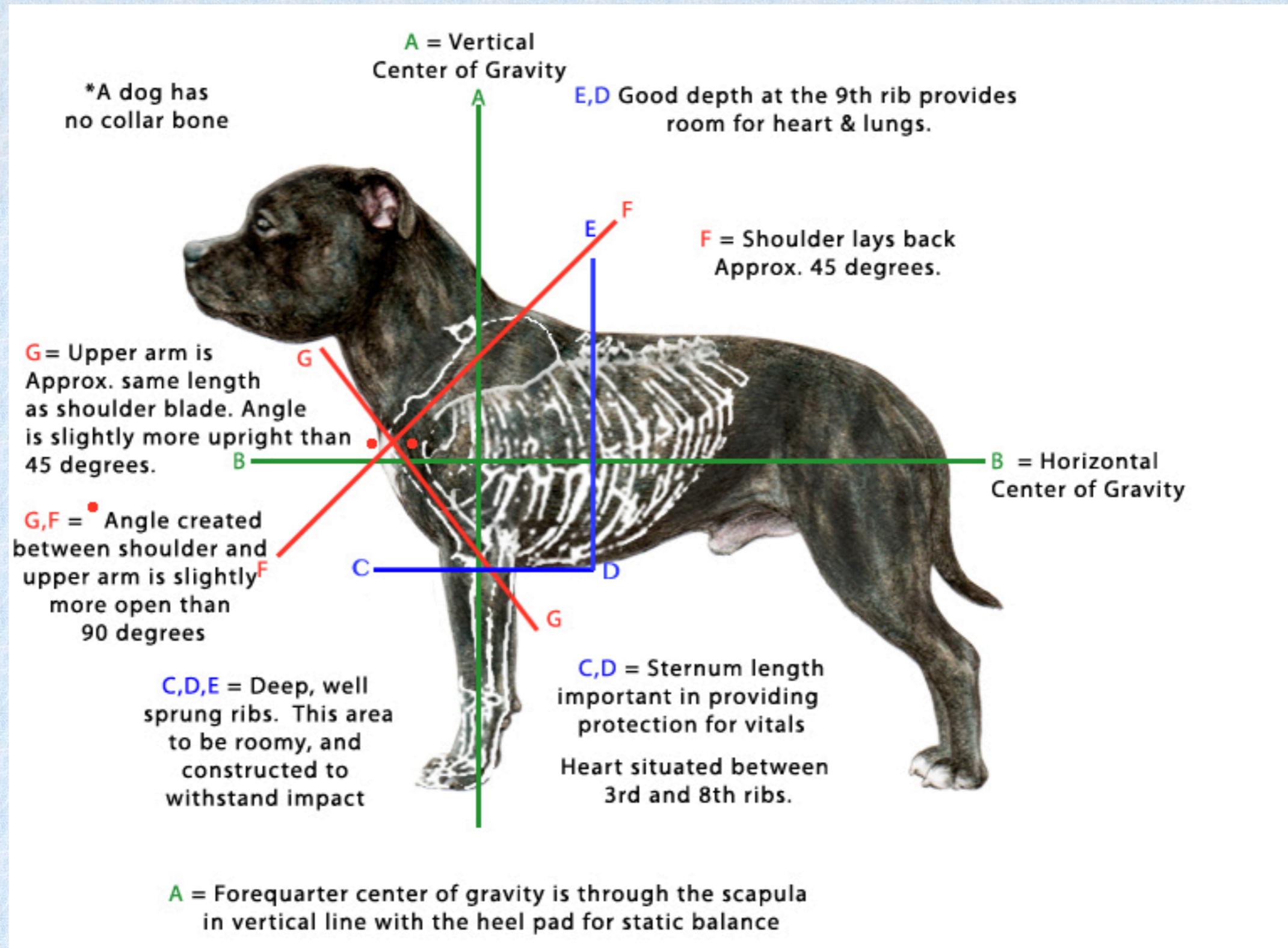
***Again, think middle-weight boxer, not body builder.***

Feel for the correct thickness and roundness of bone, which should be ample rather than heavy.

A stilted or circular action in the front legs while moving may indicate upright placed shoulders and/or short upper arm. Both are incorrect, and undesirable.

Elbows lie tightly against the body showing no looseness. The chest drops to the elbow or slightly lower, but not well below this point.

# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm



# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm



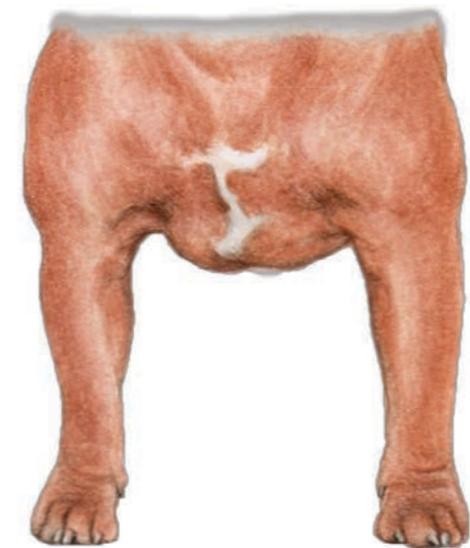
# Shoulder, Arm, Front



Clean & Correct



## Undesirable





# Hindquarters

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

# Hindquarters

Look for substantial muscle development in the inner and outer confines of the hind leg, not bulging nor overloaded muscle that compromises effortless movement.

When viewed from behind in a free stance the line from hip joint to hock joint is typically distal – i.e. the rear feet naturally fall a bit wider than the hip joints due to the construction of the well muscled thighs. The hock joint (ankle) should be low on the leg, close to the ground (“well let down”). This gives stability to the hind limb in all its actions. The hock should NOT slip forward.

The ability of the stifle and hock joints to open and close is an essential element in rear movement. These joints along with the hip socket create the mechanical “hinges” that allow the legs to position themselves for drive, changing the length of the limb to clear the ground and to push through his stride.

Legs are parallel when viewed from behind. Hocks, from joints to feet are also parallel. Look again for squareness. Look beyond the posed dog. Well-constructed Staffords should stand four square without any assistance.

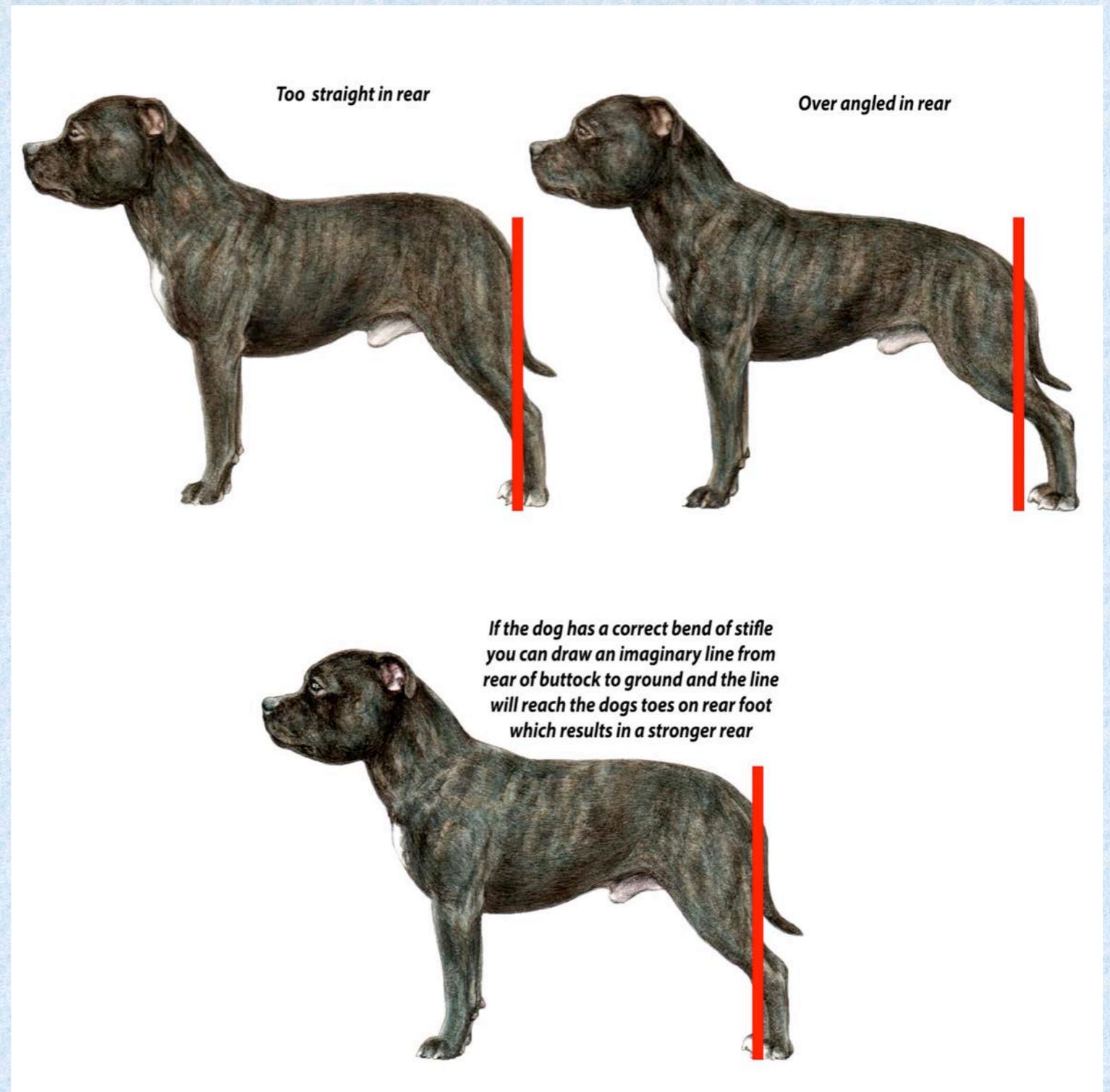


# Hindquarters

Stifles are described as “well bent.” In a comfortably freestanding dog the stifle joint should be sufficiently bent to place the hind foot just behind a vertical line from buttock to the tip of toes.

It's easy to stack a dog in this manner, so try to find him off duty. Having moved a dog in the show ring he should be allowed to come to a comfortable stop unaided. With the rear legs positioned such that the metatarsi (bones connecting the hock and the foot) are perpendicular to the ground, as illustrated here, you will see the natural bend of stifle.

A dog with too much rear angulation will often have a topline that slopes down from the withers to the croup as the extreme angle creates a “squatting” effect at the aft of the dog. This is undesirable. Conversely, a Stafford who is too straight in the rear may have a topline that rises at the rump. The angle of the stifle will to a degree control the height of the rump, and thus affect the topline.



# Feet



“Well padded, strong and of medium size. Nails black in solid coloured dogs.”

*AKC omits the explicit call for black nails in solid colored dogs, but otherwise follows this same wording.*

Feet should be tight, and toes short, but not to the point of being a ‘cat foot.’ There should be no sign of weakness.

Remember the standard says “feet turn out a little.” This is to allow for rapid change in direction (left and right) at the forequarter of the animal when engaged in battle. Still the turn out is somewhat subtle. A weak, “Chippendale” front assembly is incorrect in bend of pastern, and the extreme “Eastie / Westie” turn of feet is far too much.

Keeping in mind we have an active, athletic breed. Thin, flat or splayed feet constitute a fault as the foundation to all movement is weakened. Considering again the breed’s original function, all parts of the Stafford should be able to hold up to forces equaling several times his own weight. As long as the dog is standing, the feet will take every ounce of this force.

Look for short black nails in solid coloured dogs.

If a dog has white feet you can expect translucent (pink) nails.

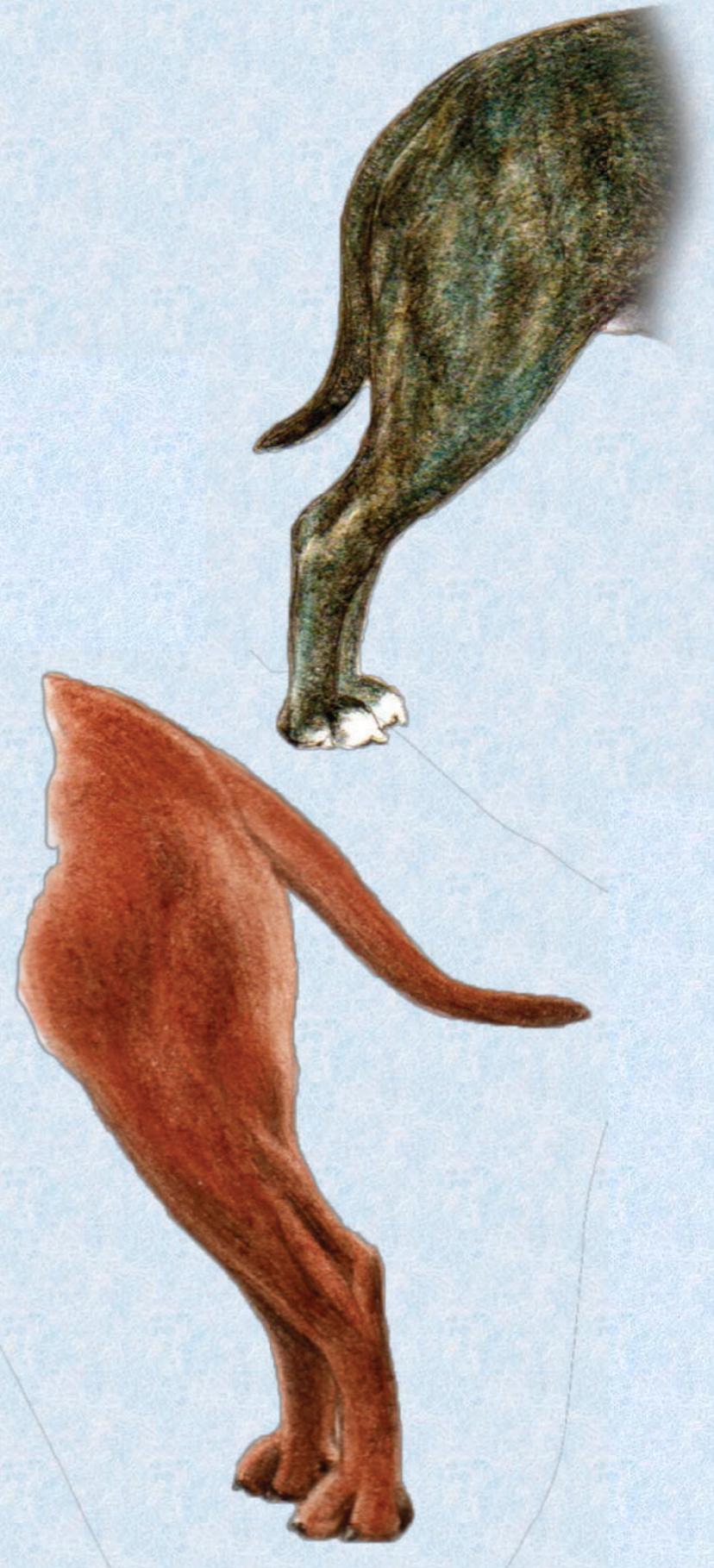
# Tail

“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.”

*AKC also adds “Undocked” and “A tail that is too long or badly curled is a fault.”*

The breed standard describes the tail in fairly detailed language. On the surface, the tails seems purely cosmetic. However, the importance of tail carriage may have been more significant for its function in a fighting dog, acting as a rudder for counterbalance.

Still, the original 100 pt. judging system only allotted 5 pts for the tail, so while the classic pump handle tail is a signature element of the breed be wary of dismissing an otherwise excellent specimen who has a less than ideal tail.



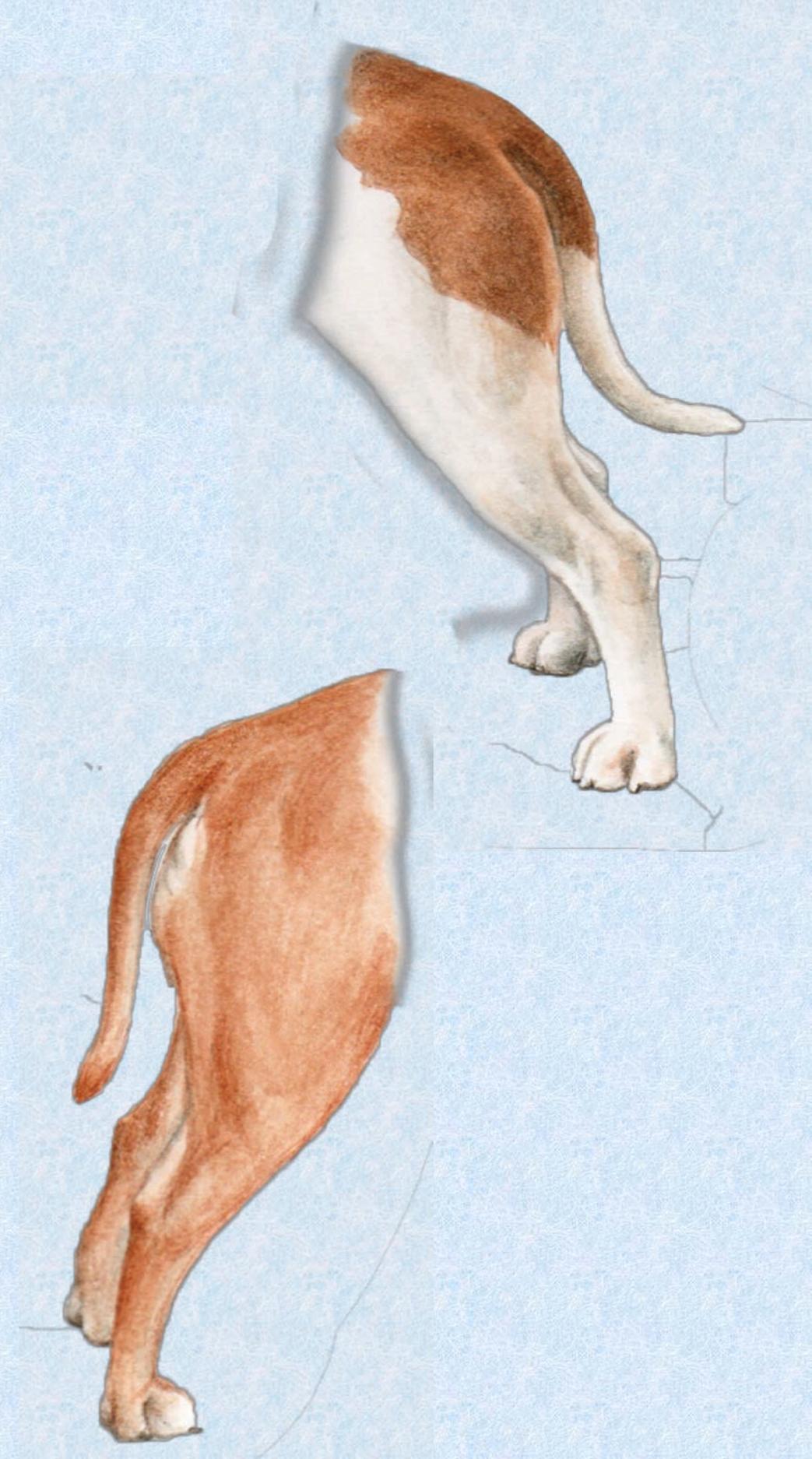
# Tail

∞ The Stafford tail is of medium length. Measure the tail by pulling down. When straightened the tip should extend even with the level of the hock joints; not pulled to the side to touch the hock, but even with the hocks when extended between the hind legs.

∞ Low set means it is set at a point below the spine, lower than the top line. There is often a ‘thumbprint’ or small divot formed just above a correctly low set tail on a muscular, fit dog.

∞ The standard describes the tail as “carried rather low” meaning not up and over the back, but keep in mind that this breed can get ‘excited’ around other dogs so do not confuse excitement or agitation for a truly gay tail.

∞ The tail should come to a point and not be bushy or thick. It should not curl much. However, it should resemble an “old fashioned pump handle,” so it does curve, and not simply fall straight.



# Gait/Movement

No mention of movement appeared in the very first breed standard. In 1948 a clause was added, and the language evolved into what we see today:

“Free, powerful and agile with economy of effort. Legs moving parallel when viewed from front or rear.  
Discernible drive from hind legs.”



# Gait



Remember the key phrase:  
“Economy of Effort.”

When the Stafford is moving away you should view its rear pads pushing off effortlessly.

There should be a decided ease on the Stafford's part to get his feet and legs under his center of gravity.

Viewed from the side the tip of the front foot reaches approximately to the end of the muzzle.

When viewed coming towards you there is no paddling, circling, stilted movement, 'bulldog roll' nor looseness. The front legs should block your view of the rear legs when moving at a proper (relatively slow) pace. This is parallel movement. Parallel does not mean in the very strictest sense that a Stafford's legs always extend exactly perpendicular to the ground when moving at any speed. At a slow gait, yes, but as nearly any dog speeds up his gait will tend to converge a bit since narrowing the track is essential for balance to keep all the body weight from shifting or rolling from side to side. If the dog were to take a turn left or right while at high speed this centralized balance is crucial. Think of a slow moving car going in a straight line vs. a fast moving motorcycle going around a curve. The wide tracking car cannot lean when it turns, but motorcycles (and dogs) naturally do, so the dog's track converges as speed increases in order to also allow for this lean much like a motorcycle.

Still the standard does call for parallel movement. Staffords in many show rings around the world are often moved at a slower pace than other dog breeds of a similar height, thus minimizing a converging gait. If the dogs in your ring are moved quickly and the gait does begin to converge the slight angle of the front legs inward should be seen a straight line from the scapula to the foot, not an angle inward starting from the elbows - which could be a result of looseness.



# Gait

As mentioned, in the show ring, Staffords should be trotted at a steady pace that may be relatively slow compared to other dogs of similar height. Always ask exhibitors to move their Staffords on a loose lead and not so fast that the feet converge on a center line. If the front feet converge at a slow gait then shoulder and/or elbow construction is suspect.

The Stafford's movement is less dramatic and overly-emphasized than some breeds with bounding strides and rear pads that are thrown towards the sky as they drive. Do not expect this from a Stafford. The Stafford wastes no energy in getting from point A to point B.

The front feet should never touch each other nor cross when moving. Any looseness in the shoulders or elbows is highly undesirable. The gait is agile on the foot, but very determined.

The Stafford is an efficient working machine, not a cloddy bulldog, nor a prancing terrier. Again, "Economy of Effort" with discernible drive from the rear is the simple goal.





# Coat

“Smooth, short and close.”

*AKC Adds: “...not to be trimmed or de-whiskered.”*

# Coat

The easiest way to determine correct coat on a Staffordshire Bull Terrier is of course to get your hands on it. Run your hand along the coat from shoulder to croup. The coat should feel tight, slightly hard and smooth. The hairs themselves should be short and lie flat. When you rub your hand in the opposite direction the hairs should feel somewhat 'spiky' and again, very close to the body.

The hairs should not be soft, wiry, silky nor long. They are short and straight. The Stafford should have equal covering of coat, not appear balding on the underside of the neck, chest or around the eyes.

There is no need for coat dressing of any kind, nor for frequent bathing that may soften the coat at first, and ultimately cause it to be dry or brittle.

In general, there is no need to take scissors to a Stafford's coat. However, many exhibitors do trim the underside of the tail for a clean appearance. The Stafford is to be shown with full whiskers.

# Pigmentation

The Stafford should exhibit deep pigmentation in every acceptable coat colour.

Depth of pigment is apparent on the nose (which should always be black). It may also be assessed in the eye rims, nails, ear leather and gums.

The area around the eyes should not appear balding, nor lacking in pigmentation. Again, the only exception made is in the AKC standard where the eye rim may be pink on a dog with white fur around the eye.

In general deep, solid pigment adds to the attractiveness of the Stafford, and is always preferred.



# 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-and-tan or liver colour highly undesirable”

AKC Disqualifies Black-and-tan or liver color.

Genetically, the Stafford does not exist with a solid black coat as even dogs with the darkest appearance of black will have red hairs somewhere on their bodies technically making them ‘Black Brindle’. The Breed Standard does indicate “Black.” *which is a reference to the appearance of solid black.*



# Colour

Since Staffords appear in so many colours, no judging preference should be made for any specific colour with the exception of Black and Tan and Liver colour; both of which are highly undesirable (AKC disqualified) whether solid or appearing with white.

When judging the Stafford do not penalize minor scars. This is an active, fearless, and often assertive breed who doesn't give a second thought to running through brambles nor taking his lumps from a local hedgehog, raccoon or other intruder in the garden.

All pigmentation in dilute-coloured dogs, such as blues, would ideally be dark, but genetically these dogs are destined to carry at least one fault as they cannot have the pure black nose nor toe nails that is called for in the standard. Still, they should carry deep, even pigment and should not appear washed out.



# Undesirable Colours

Black-&-Tan typically means marked like a Manchester Terrier or Rottweiler. It is very simple to identify. However, sometimes the 'tan pattern' itself is not clearly defined. It is not always easy to notice if a dog has this pattern. The marks over the eyes, on the face, on the chest, inside the front & rear legs and under the vent can also appear as any variation or degree of brindle on an otherwise black dog. Sometimes the 'tan pattern' is simply a couple of hard to find red hairs on a solid black dog.

Contrary to popular belief, Black-and-Tan is not simply determined by a single gene where the dog either has it, carries it or he is 'clear'. The base pattern (known as "tan point" or "tan pattern") is determined by one set of alleles, but the expression (exactly how or even if it shows up) is determined by a completely different set. So genetically, a dog may have the pattern, but may not be able to produce the tan (red) where the pattern should be. This creates a bit of a conundrum and controversy when judging "tan pointed" dogs who are not fully Black-&-Tan. In light of recent developments in coat color genetics we suggest the following rule of thumb - if the dog does not present as a black dog with tan points then he is not a "black-and-tan."



Classic Black and Tan

# Undesirable Colours

The controversy is whether or not the Breed Standard refers to only a solid Black coat with obvious Tan-point markings or whether it refers to all combinations genetically possible for the tan pattern such as a very faint brindle where the tan points would otherwise be. It is safe to assume that when the Black-&-Tan exclusion was written there was no knowledge of the somewhat complex genetic interplay of alleles that goes into making a true Black-&-Tan. The authors were simply referring to dogs marked like the Manchester Terrier.



Is the dog Black-&-Tan if the “Tan” is actually brindle?

How acceptable is this? What if the brindle is just barely visible?

What if it's just a few hard to find red hairs on a black dog? Genetically the all black dogs with a few red hairs at the points is same as the “Brindle Pointed” dogs shown above, but there's no feasible way to judge this in the conformation ring. Therefore, they should be treated the same.

# Undesirable Colours



Black and Tan Pied



Black and Tan also  
Exhibiting dilute:  
“Blue and Tan”

# Undesirable Colours

Liver Staffords are recognized by their similarity to the colour of the Sussex Spaniel or “Chocolate” Labrador Retriever. Like the coat, there will be a lack of black pigmentation on the nose and nails which will be brown in colour. Light eyes will also accompany. Interestingly enough, recent advances in coat color genetics show us that Liver is NOT a dilution of a base color such as blue being a dilution of black. Liver is a solid color simply recessive in transmission. There are conflicting accounts as to why Liver was excluded as an acceptable colour. Most likely it simply had to do with the pale pigmentation. Deep, dark pigmentation was important to the early developers of this breed, and this is carried through today. Lighter mahogany/mahogany brindle dogs sometimes will also have brown nails, but are not truly the same colour as liver. Careful study must be made before dismissing a dog for liver coat colour. A true liver will have brown nails, nose, foot pads; even gums and ear leather.



# Size

*AKC adds to the heading:*

***“Proportion, Substance”***

**Size:** Desirable height at withers  
36 - 41 cms (14 - 16 ins.),  
these heights being related to the weights.

**Weight:** dogs: 13 - 17 kgs (28 - 38 lbs); bitches 11- 15.4  
kgs (24 - 34 lbs)

*AKC adds “Non-conformity with these limits is a fault.”*

*AKC further adds “In proportion, the length of back, from withers to tail set, is equal to the distance from withers to ground.”*

It is unknown how or why this length of back phrase made it into the AKC standard. By any account such a description calls for the dog to be too “long” in back, throwing off the overall balance and contradicting the call for a “close coupled” dog. It also decreases the overall substance (proportion of weight to height) since the additional length adds weight while diluting the perception of substance (pounds per inch of height). The authors contend that this AKC phrase is an inaccurate description for the breed.



# Size, Proportion, Substance

The breed standard sets the ideal range of height for males at 14-16 in. and weight at 28-38 pounds.

Females may also be 14-16 in. but will carry from 24-34 pounds.

The key to understanding proper substance for the Staffordshire Bull Terrier is revealed in the notation: "These heights being related to weights."

Although **size** is somewhat important (staying within the limits), the correct weight for a given height is what will help you define **BALANCE**.

Essentially this is the formula for the proper blend of Bull and Terrier. A 14 inch, 38 pound dog may be within the size limits. However his substance and balance are far from ideal. The same could be said for a 16 inch dog carrying just 24 pounds.

**BALANCE** is paramount to breed type, and understanding the relative height to weight ratios is the key to recognizing proper balance.



# Size, Proportion, Substance

## *“Heights Being Related to Weights”*

We do not measure and weigh exhibits in the show ring. However, in an exercise to further our personal understanding of the height to weight ratios we can extrapolate from what the standard gives us and arrive upon the following table which represents the most ideal / correct substance throughout the range.

<b>Bitches:</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Pounds Per Inch</b>	<b>Standard Weight</b>
	<b>14 inches</b>	<b>1.71 (given)</b>	<b>24 pounds (given)</b>
	<b>14.5 inches</b>	<b>1.81</b>	<b>26.25 pounds</b>
	<b>15 inches</b>	<b>1.92</b>	<b>28.80 pounds</b>
	<b>15.5 inches</b>	<b>2.02</b>	<b>31.31 pounds</b>
	<b>16 inches</b>	<b>2.13 (given)</b>	<b>34 pounds (given)</b>

<b>Dogs:</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Pounds Per Inch</b>	<b>Standard Weight</b>
	<b>14 inches</b>	<b>2.0 (given)</b>	<b>28 pounds (given)</b>
	<b>14.5 inches</b>	<b>2.10</b>	<b>30.45 pounds</b>
	<b>15 inches</b>	<b>2.19</b>	<b>32.85 pounds</b>
	<b>15.5 inches</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>35.50 pounds</b>
	<b>16 inches</b>	<b>2.38 (given)</b>	<b>38 pounds (given)</b>

Height and Weigh are the least subjective passages in the entire standard, yet they are probably the most liberally interpreted (i.e. blatantly ignored) by unkeen eyes and novice judges. Proper substance defines ‘efficiency’ of an athlete within the confines of his particular sport. An efficient marathon runner has a very different body composition than an efficient middle weight boxer. The guidelines for substance outlined in the breed standard are of utmost importance to the Stafford given the breed’s original function. Striking that ideal balance between strength and agility is essential. It defines the Stafford apart from other ‘bully breeds’ outlining the proper blend of bull and terrier specific to this breed. This defining notion of ‘Balance’ remains an essential element of breed type. Do not hide behind the absence of scales and a wicket in the ring. Familiarize yourself with what a 15” 29# bitch and a 16” 38# dog looks like. Learn to recognize proper substance, and ideal balance when you see it.

# Size, Proportion, Substance

The standard is our guide to the ideal. Nonconformity to height or weight is a fault, not a disqualification. You will get quality dogs outside the mark, and you should always be willing to appreciate and reward quality. Make allowances, but be careful do not stray far. The breed standard always trumps opinion.

You may hear people refer to the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as having 3 distinct types; A 'Terrier type' a 'Bulldog type' and a 'Balanced type.' This is **not** correct. It is faulty logic to define *type* (that which makes a Stafford uniquely Stafford) by three different combinations of two diametrically opposing elements.

In reality, what the standard calls for is only one type; i.e. the one in the middle – the Balanced Type. This is the perfect blend between bull and terrier.

**Picture an old fashioned balance scale. The ideal is right the middle just at the point of the fulcrum between bulldog and terrier.**



# Size, Proportion, Substance

Call it what you will, but remember:

*If an exhibit is not of the 'balanced type' he is by default of the 'unbalanced type.'*

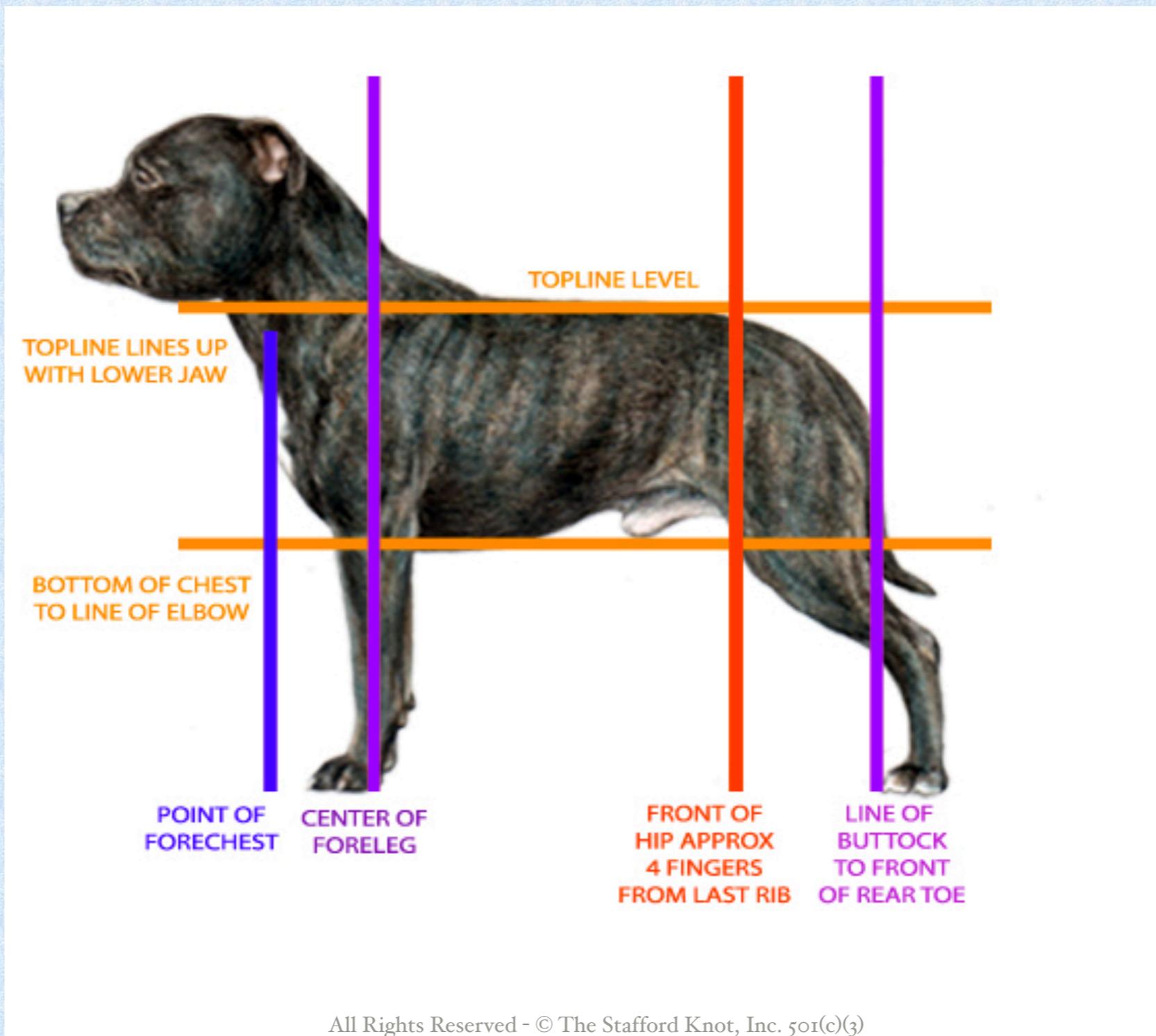


# Proportion

The head should extend just above an imaginary horizontal line across the topline.

The head and the apex of the neck extends just in front of an imaginary vertical line upward through the center of foreleg.

The dog is  $\frac{1}{2}$  his height at the elbow. This is also the point of the chest drop.



Look for a short, light loin approximately 4 fingers from the last rib to the hip with a good tuck.

Buttock is even with rear toes.

The general picture is that of a very square athlete with all parts being in proportion to one another and creating a very balanced center of gravity.

# Stafford Puppies & Youngsters

A Stafford puppy or immature animal should not yet look like the finished article. They can and will go through many awkward stages. You may catch a glimpse of what the future holds at approximately 8-10 weeks of age when they sometimes look like miniature versions of adults, but after that stage allow them to mature. Full maturation often takes 3+ years to reach, so an 8 month old who is built like an adult should be a warning sign to breeders.

Gaining their full height before their peak weight, youngsters may appear a bit rangy until the muscles, skull, etc. have had time to fully develop.



6 month old male



2 month old male

# Stafford Puppies & Youngsters

Their temperament should be confident, happy and fun loving.

Stafford puppies often have a hard time standing for a judge's examination as they are often wiggling with excitement at the prospect of a stranger petting them.

Even as youngsters, they should not be clingy nor innately fearful.



# Stafford Veterans

Staffords can easily be expected to live well into their teenage years. As such, you may often have the honor of seeing veterans in the show ring. Nothing makes the hair rise on your arm and the tears well up in your eyes faster than seeing a class of Stafford veterans cheerfully strutting their stuff at a large Specialty show. Some of them are just as happy and proud to be back in the spotlight as they were when they showed as youngsters.

Veteran Staffords should still be able to maintain a bit of their prime physique. You may perhaps see a lot of gray around the edges, but most will keep their jaunty gait and 'Stafford Smile' when brought back out for the big show. Keeping them busy both mentally and physically is the best thing an owner can do for their veteran. As such, you do not want to see excessive weight nor extremely soft muscling. Unless illness has caused a sedentary lifestyle, most Staffords will maintain an active physique as they reach 12-15 or even older. They will still want to go on daily walks and play sessions as teenagers.

Most quality Stafford breeders will tell you they have at least 1 or 2 cherished oldies lounging at home.



11 year old bitch

# More on Temperament

The temperament of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier is really the 3<sup>rd</sup> essential element to breed type, so it deserves a bit more discussion before wrapping up.

## Breed Type Review

**Head** – Very important in defining the breed. The expression, outline, proportions, ears, cheeks, and temporal furrow combine to make a distinct head unlike any other breed.

**Balance (Body Composition)** – Ideal blend of Bull and terrier throughout the size range, always powerful while being athletic and agile. Ideal height being related to ideal weight. Shown in fit condition. Hard to the touch. Rather light in loin. Efficiency is key = “middle-weight boxer”

**Temperament** – Bold, full of life. Fearless, ready for anything that comes his way. Intelligent, friendly to humans especially children. Reliable, solid, predictable.



# Temperament

***Bold, fearless and totally reliable.***

If a Stafford gets a bit noisy in the ring, fires up, or ‘talks back’ this is normal and should be tolerated as long as it is controlled. This is no different than other terriers who are ‘on their toes,’ particularly when they are asked to spar in the ring. However, a judge should **never ask handlers to spar their Staffords**. You may find that many are already on their toes, alert to everything around them, and at the ready. He is after all a terrier; and one who is ready for action!

A Stafford should never be shy nor cowering. Likewise he should not be indiscriminately aggressive and thus difficult to control.

He should show no aggression towards humans, though many do not enjoy the company of other animals.

As with other terriers he should be also be judged on spirit and attitude. It’s when the attitude becomes out of control then there is an issue. When in the show ring, a Stafford should appear confident and strut, showing off, appearing proud and happy to be there, claiming the show ring as his domain.

# Temperament

Exhibits should stand solid for exam, unflinching and not stressed by the process. Some degree of exception should be made, of course, for puppies new to the show ring. Most Stafford puppies, and some young adults will not stand still for long. They simply melt and wiggle when spoken to. This exuberance when making new human friends is totally normal behavior.

A Stafford being dragged around a ring on its belly, leaning away from human touch or, heaven forbid, snapping or snarling in fear is unacceptable. A Stafford showing overt fear or any kind of human-directed aggression may be asked to leave the ring.

Understand well the difference between aggression towards a human (NOT acceptable in Staffords), and aggression towards another animals (sometimes observed in the breed). These are **not** simply two expressions of the same temperament. They are totally separate characteristics. When observed they should be categorized and judged accordingly.

# Judging 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 and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.”**

**What a great guideline! The only thing to add would be “...and its relation to the breed’s original purpose”**

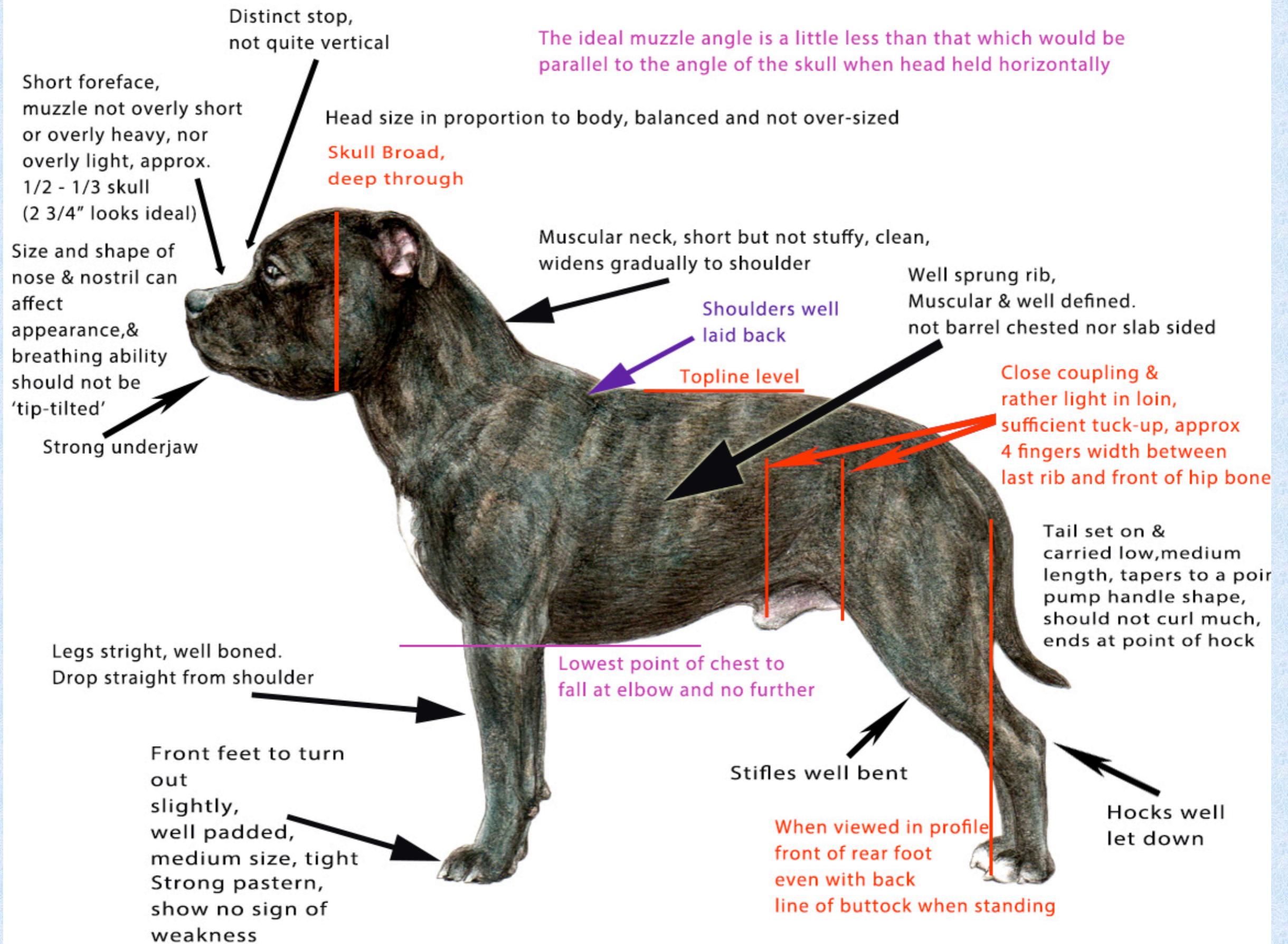
When judging you should first look at the whole dog and see his virtue, before drawing your attention to any of his faults. View all dogs from a distance assessing each one’s overall quality and presence of breed type before moving close enough to get caught up in the details and cosmetics.

The standard mentions faults in several passages – indicating not only what you should look for, but also what you don’t want to see. Almost any novice judge can identify basic faults. A judge who has a firm grasp on the breed will not simply look for the dog with the least amount of faults, but will pick the one with the greatest overall virtue even if an obvious fault or two is present. Faults that interfere with function or health and those that detract from breed type are more serious than other, more cosmetic, faults.

# Judging Faults

The standard is a guideline which contains subjective language that is often open to interpretation. However, be very careful not to hide behind the excuse of subjectivity and allow opinion (whether your own or popular) to win out over what is explicitly called for. Much of the breed standard is in fact very straight forward – ‘cut and dry.’ If the standard indicates that full prick ears are a serious fault, do not claim that this is open to interpretation. If it calls for a 16 inch dog to weigh approximately 38 pounds, do not use ‘poetic license’ and claim that a more substantial ‘bulldog type’ or the less substantial ‘terrier type’ is also correct.

There is a right way and a wrong way to use the breed standard. Always look for virtues as defined within, not as current trends or fashion may dictate. Know the standard inside and out. Do not be afraid to call a fault ‘a fault.’ If you find that your opinions are in conflict with the breed standard then don’t try and bend the standard to meet your ideals. Admit that you are in the wrong. Learn from it, and change your perspectives to match the standard. Plain and simple – Judge to the standard above all else.



The ideal muzzle angle is a little less than that which would be parallel to the angle of the skull when head held horizontally

Distinct stop, not quite vertical

Short foreface, muzzle not overly short or overly heavy, nor overly light, approx. 1/2 - 1/3 skull (2 3/4" looks ideal)

Size and shape of nose & nostril can affect appearance, & breathing ability should not be 'tip-tilted'

Strong underjaw

Head size in proportion to body, balanced and not over-sized

Skull Broad, deep through

Muscular neck, short but not stuffy, clean, widens gradually to shoulder

Shoulders well laid back

Topline level

Well sprung rib, Muscular & well defined. not barrel chested nor slab sided

Close coupling & rather light in loin, sufficient tuck-up, approx 4 fingers width between last rib and front of hip bone

Tail set on & carried low, medium length, tapers to a pair pump handle shape, should not curl much, ends at point of hock

Legs stright, well boned. Drop straight from shoulder

Front feet to turn out slightly, well padded, medium size, tight Strong pastern, show no sign of weakness

Stifles well bent

Hocks well let down

When viewed in profile front of rear foot even with back line of buttock when standing

Lowest point of chest to fall at elbow and no further



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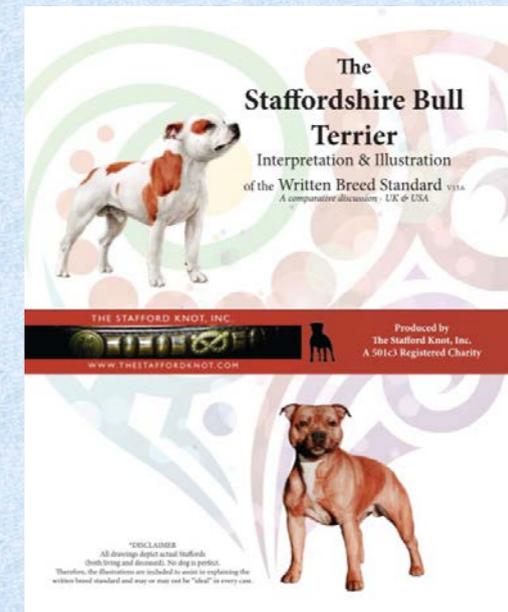


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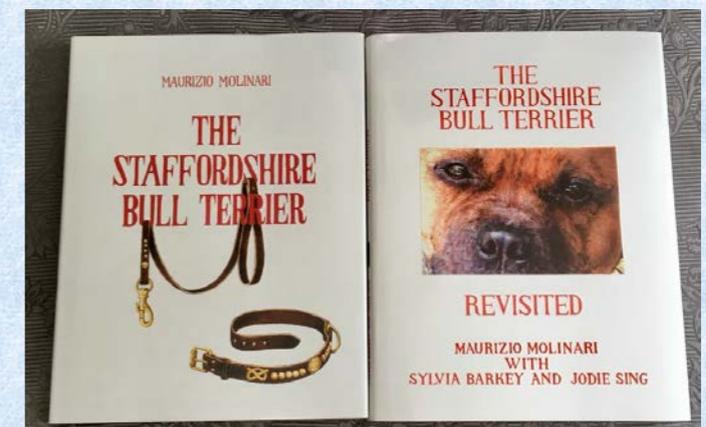


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Maurizio Molinari's books on the breed are available by contacting him directly. He is our artist in this presentation and in our own illustrated breed standard books.

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# The Staffordshire Bull Terrier

## Interpretation & Illustration of the Written Breed Standard



Very special credit and many thanks goes to Maurizio Molinari for his hard work and dedication in his contribution of the many fine paintings used within.

Please look for a copy of his book entitled  
“The Staffordshire Bull Terrier” on sale now.

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