

'A radical approach to the Breed Standard'.

GENERAL

APPEARANCE

Smooth coated, well balanced, of great strength for his size.

Muscular, active and agile.

The Stafford is an athlete. Everything about him should mark him as such. There should be no exaggeration in his make-up. He needs enough bone/substance and muscle; including the strength of limb etc. He will need strength and vigour, allied to speed and suppleness along with endurance and stamina. The cloddy, heavy boned, over muscled dog may look impressive but will lack the speed, agility and stamina. The lighter boned, 'racy dog' will lack strength and power. The type between the two is more likely to carry all the characteristics required.

CHARACTERISTICS

Traditionally of indomitable courage and tenacity. Highly intelligent and

affectionate, especially with children.

Allow me to say, I disagree with 'totally reliable' in whatever context it is intended. This being in view of recent problems relating to dog attacks. I also abhor the words NANNY DOG. No young children should be left alone with any dog. I believe this description could lead and has resulted to sad incidents and feel the latter point should be deleted from the standard.

TEMPERAMENT

Bold, fearless and totally reliable.

He/she will play for hours. Even though their past might suggest an aggressive and vicious spirit, this is not the case. They love to socialize. Perhaps this is due to confidence born from the past.

HEAD AND SKULL

Short, deep through with broad skull. Very pronounced cheek

muscles, distinct stop, short foreface, nose black.

You will hear the muzzle description of 'one third muzzle and two thirds head'. I think that is too short to conform to the K.C. health directions. I prefer it to be 2/5 muzzle 3/5 skull. There should also be strong muscle definition around the zygotic arch and towards the temporal areas; at the 'fontanelle' there should be a distinct furrowing. The stop if not distinct will create a foreign expression by causing the shape of the eye to appear oriental, or possibly, even causing a bulbous shaped eye. The stop, which is the step down from the top of the skull to the top of the muzzle is quite marked. The Stafford's skull should be balanced for equal width and depth. The fore face, muzzle and jaw, should also be equally balanced for width and depth and continue the strength of his head as a whole.

EYES

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

Eye rims dark.

Dark eyes have nothing to do with coat colour really. This is controlled by a separate gene, which affects also pigmentation. This feature will, however, help to complete the overall expression. I feel darker the eye is better in any colour of dog, the light coloured eye in the dark coated dog can be a little off putting. Dark eye rims along with dark eyes should be desired, although this, of course, is a cosmetic feature and has no effect on sight function and should be judged as such.

Eyes must be correctly placed within a correct skull, as this can affect the setting and shape of the eyes and overall expression. If the stop is correct the eye size and shape should be as well. Should the stop be shallow, then the eye shape will be almond

shaped and the expression will suffer. When the stop is exaggerated, the eyes will appear to be overly large, bulbous and prominent and will move away from the correct expression.

EARS

Rose or half pricked, not large or heavy. Full, drop or pricked ears highly undesirable.

The Stafford's ears should be quite small and thin. Pulled forward the tip should not extend beyond the corner of the eye. They are preferably, rose shaped and fold back close to the back of the skull. Oversized, or thin, flighty ears alter the expression

MOUTH

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

There should be 42 teeth in number; 4 canines 12 incisors 16 pre-molars

and 10 molars of which should be large and clean. Pups have 26 deciduous teeth of which are replaced later by the permanent 42.

I find it amusing why some judges seem to preface their critiques by complaining about bad mouths. Other items are more essential. I find that things have improved immensely regarding faulty mouths compared to what the situation was in the past. Unfortunately, this improvement has come at the expense of strength in the lower jaw, which has decreased, and possibly is the cause of converging canines.

Heavy, loose lips hold little value other and present a possible point of injury for the dog himself. Thick lips make for coarseness in the fore face. Jaws, as mentioned under the 'head clause', should be strong. Look for filling below the eyes along with width in the muzzle. A weak receding ...



under jaw can accompany an overshot mouth and again a further reason for the aforementioned converging canines.

Look for balance in strength between top and bottom jaws. Teeth should meet in a scissor bite. The scissor bite is important for all carnivores. The close scissor bite is their means of operation. The canines are the striking/gripping/catching tools; they puncture and hold. The molars are the crushing tools; they break up and grind the food for swallowing. For all teeth to exert maximum pressure they must be set square to the jaws and in line to support each other. Look for big, strong, well-placed teeth in your Stafford.

NECK

Muscular, rather short, clean in outline gradually widening towards shoulders.

How short the neck can be is dependent on the steepness of the shoulder placement. In my opinion, as far as our breed is concerned there should be an approximate

measurement of 45 degrees or thereabouts to the horizontal between the scapula and the humerus. The steeper the angle the shorter the neck.

To compare dogs to humans who balance their heads above their shoulders by the support of the clavicle - dogs carry their heads in front of their shoulders. Their construction requires a strong neck, stronger in relation to the weight of the headpiece.

A too long/elegant neck is weak. So look for a rather moderately short length. The power for any head action comes from the dog's neck.

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 the elbow.

The front legs/forequarters carry the whole front, this being the heaviest part of the body which should be well positioned and continuing

from the shoulder to the feet and providing the optimum of support outside the body and not too close below the area of the early rib formation. The front structure of the dog is tied to the shoulder blades by the big muscle groups pertaining to the neck, shoulders and chest. It isn't propped, it is slung in a cradle style fashion.

Well laid-back shoulder blades allow for a longer attachment and make it easier for these muscles to carry the weight and provide a smooth meeting of the neck and upper back, known as the cervical and thoracic vertebrae.

Upright shoulders make for a stuffy neck and a dip behind the withers.

Length of the shoulder blade and upper-arm allows for a longer, more athletic muscle as opposed to the short bunched heavier muscle type of which short limbs tend to carry. Further, steep shoulders can, in the Stafford, cause the dog to be monkey footed. This expression means the absence of lay back in the pasterns....



The heavy muscled dog may look awesome, but it will be less athletic. The pasterns, being the main joint above the front feet - which is equivalent to the human wrist - needs to have a little give. Along with the other joints of the front limb it will cushion the impact when the foot hits the ground. So, while this joint should be strong and able, it should not break the line of the leg.

Stafford's feet should turn out slightly from pastern to sole. There are those who say that this was to give the dog a broader and more stable base of support in the pit by making it more difficult for his opponent to unbalance him.

BODY

Close-coupled, with level top line, wide front, deep brisket, well-sprung ribs; muscular and well defined.

The couplings (for the majority of people) is taken to mean the loin or the part of the back from the last rib to the hip joint. Close coupled, therefore, means short in the loin. A short loin is a strong loin but lacks the flexibility of

a longer loin. This flexibility is vital to a dog. It permits turning with speed and power and it transfers the pushing/ wrestling drive from the big muscles of the hips and thighs to the business end and thereabouts.

The level top line is so much a feature of posed dogs but can often be lost when on the move. The top line is the back from behind the withers to the top of the croup. Many consider 'level' to mean like a tabletop. But the spine of a dog, the structure which determines the line of his back, is not level to this degree. It may be level for the length of the thoracic spine, (the rib cage), but it will rise slightly over the lumbar spine, which is the loins, this being the only bone, hard tissue, in that part of the body. A slight rise, as in a humpback bridge would seem to make sense here and strengthen this part of the assembly. So while we don't want camels, we do need to be as suspicious of the absolutely level top line.

Wide front. The Stafford needed this wide front to give him stability in the pit. The brisket should be no deeper than the point of the elbow. The dog does not need any more depth. It will take away from his ability to perform.

Well sprung ribs. I was always led to believe that spring of rib referred to the way in which the rib connected to the spine and its capacity for air expansion. The front ribs, flatter than those behind, give room for the elbows to be tucked under the shoulders with room to move freely below the dog. The rear ribs have more curve. There is a temptation to admire Staffords with massively barreled rib cages and great depth of brisket in the belief that this provides more room for heart and lungs, increasing stamina and endurance. It isn't the size of these organs but their efficiency which is important. Bulky bodies are only more weight for the dog to carry. Being well ribbed provides room and protection for the vital organs. So, we are looking for dogs whose rib cage is carried back before the tuck-up begins. Also we find these days 'heron/kipper' gutted dogs emerging in our breed where there is a steep incline from the sixth rib into the loins. ...



The fore chest should be evident and fill the space between, and in front of, his shoulder joints but not overly so. In other words, we don't wish to see pigeon chested Staffords.

HINDQUARTERS

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

Well muscled. This is where the propulsive power comes from. Staffords should have strong, powerful thighs. It would seem the second thigh muscle seems to have almost vanished from the breed.

Hocks well let down. The hock joint, should, in the Stafford, be close to the ground. This, quite simply, gives stability to his hind limb in all its actions.

In a comfortably freestanding dog the stifle joint should be sufficiently bent to place the hind foot just behind a vertical line from hip to tip of toes. It is easy to pose a dog thus, however, having moved a dog in the show ring he should be allowed to come to a comfortable stop unaided, and still

present a good bend of stifle. The ability of the stifle, and indeed hock, joints to open and close is an essential element to movement. When viewed from behind hocks, from joints to feet should be parallel.

Legs must be well muscled to allow for a powerful driving action (along with a good turn of stifle and let down hocks). They should not be exaggerated so much that the hock, although well let down, affects whether a dog moves to its best potential. In any case, moving to its best potential is, on many occasions is in the hands of the handler. You could have a reasonable mover but moving too fast or slow can affect the action causing the legs to traverse to a centre line, thus, cancelling out the standard direction asking for the legs to be parallel when viewed from behind. There should be evidence of drive and reach with the head held at least the height of the top line. Close action can be caused by straight stifles, and forward paddling caused by steep shoulder placement. There can be other

reasons for bad movement, such as, poor conditioning and lack of exercise and some days a poor canine mind set

FEET

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

Nails should be black in all colours. Red is the only solid colour in our breed - I would go along with this except in the case of a white dog. White is not a colour, it is an absence of pigmentation in the coat which extends down to the nails.

Well padded, thick spongy pads are a requisite for comfortable hard wearing feet. Splayed feet with thin pads have short duration period and break down easily. There should be a natural clenching in the joints of the dog's toes which makes for compact feet.

TAIL

Of 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.



All tails taper to a point but not always carried rather low. 'Well, the sight of a curly tail seems fairly common at the present time'. Unfortunately there is, it seems now, to be quite an acceptance of this. Curly high set tails, seen so often today, can be an indication of a fault in construction/ movement, possibly a shallow pelvis and stilted rear action. The tail should reach the hock. When on move, the Stafford should be at ease by carrying his tail along with the level of the top line. Alerted it is then lifted in response to excitement or threat.

For the younger generation, who have never seen a pump handle I find this term rather archaic, therefore I also feel this description should be omitted from the Standard.

GAIT AND MOVEMENT
Free, powerful and agile with economy of effort.
Legs parallel when viewed from front or rear. Discernible drive from hind legs.

The first clause is easy. The action should allow for free flow across the ground. An efficient and

balanced movement requires that the feet converge to a minimum. Any lateral displacement keeps the centre of gravity of the dog above and within the base of support or as close as possible to this. This of course becomes impossible if we allow them to be moved at a fast pace with the handler running like an Olympic athlete. Judges should require dogs to move at a medium trot. A further demonstration of my words – During lifting and pushing weights a lifter always places the hands separately in line with the shoulders to allow for more purchase, further, anyone pushing something quite large and heavy will always separate the hands and therefore the Stafford should do likewise to allow for maximum forward discernible drive from the rear legs. Viewed from the rear, the only measure of drive we have is in the pads of the feet. Moving away and really pushing/driving off his rear feet causes the dog to show its pads. From the side view we look for the dog to leave his foot well behind him when he drives and to close the space underneath when he reaches forward. Doing this he will cover the ground with ease and economy. These are the indications of sound movement. These are what we should look for. A

well balanced dog is more likely to be the better mover

COAT

Smooth, short and close

Coat texture should be soft and feel crispy when stroked against the growth.

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.

The dominant colour in the breed is brindle. The colour Black does not exist and should be removed along with the colour Blue from the standard. Black if it existed as suggested in the Standard, would result in the complete absence of Reds simply because Black is dominant over all of which I imagine would be to the delight of the Blue back street breeders. The gene colour for Black extends to all breeds....



SIZE

Desirable height at withers 35.5 - 40.5cms (14-16ins), these heights being related to weights.

Weight: Dogs: 12.7 - 17kgs (28-38lbs);

Bitches: 11-15.4kgs (24-34lbs).

My comments to this clause are related below under faults.

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 on the welfare of the dog and the dog's ability to

perform its traditional work.

This should be straightforward stuff but causes much controversy. We need to remember that the standard is a guide, so none of these heights or weights are cut-off points. We will get quality dogs outside these marks and we should be always willing to appreciate and reward virtues.

We have a breed which could quiet easily split into two types, a terrier type and a bulldog type. We need to always be looking towards the blend of the bull and terrier type.

We need to be able to look at the whole dog and

see his virtues. We should view all dogs from a distance, assess them against the standard and judge them as examples of their breed. We must beware of moving close to get caught up in the perishing 'details and cosmetics'. Further, there is a need to be appreciative in our judging and refrain from the mean and small minded attitudes by remembering the standard is a guideline wide open to interpretation. Keeping in mind, the quality of present Staffords is the stepping-stone to the future of the breed.

**Norman Berry
RENDORN.**



CH RENDORN DRUMMER BOY

RENDORN BEAT THE RETREAT

CH RENDORN APPOLYON

CH RENDORN RIGHT MARKER

RENDORN THE MIGHTY QUINN

CH RENDORN DEVILS TIMPANI

CH RENDORN NO RETREAT

CH RENDORN DELTA DAWN

CH RENDORN DEADLY NIGHT SHADE