



Within the big scheme of things, the dog world is a vast and varied one, and the Bulldog can easily be described as a breed of extremes – flat faced, plenty of mass in a relatively compact form, with a lumbering appearance. However, once the Bulldog is fully understood, and true Bulldog type is learned, it will be easy to see that the breed is actually one of balance, proportion and symmetry. Judging the Bulldog is not an easy task but understanding the standard and correct type are the first steps to doing it properly.



Back to the Beginning - “Form Follows Function”

The term “Form Follows Function” applies itself perfectly to the Bulldog. The breed was designed to be the best possible dog to take part in a bloody and barbaric sport known as Bullbaiting. In the early 1800’s, Bulldogs were set upon a bull who was tied to a tree. The idea was to have the Bulldogs grab the bull by the fleshy part of the nose and bring him to his knees. The broad and extreme undershot jaw allowed the Bulldog to latch on to the Bull and hold him indefinitely. The low-slung body with broad chest, and strong shoulders, in combination with the distinctive wheel back and narrow rear helped with the point of attack on the bull. The wrinkles and dewlap helped to keep blood from the bull out of the eyes, nose and mouth of the Bulldog and the loose skin allowed the dog to easily slip away from a bull’s horn. A tenacious and confident temperament was required to continually put themselves in harms way. Bullbaiting was finally outlawed in 1835. Had it not been for the decision to preserve the breed by a few select breeders, the Bulldog would have been lost. Dog shows began to become popular, as well as the keeping of dogs as pets and not just working animals, and as a result the loyal and friendly Bulldog we know today was developed. Always remember, that the basics of his bloody past are what makes him what he is today.



The Standard

Like the Bulldog itself, the standard is one of extremes. In some instances, it is very specific and identifies “must haves” but in other ways, the wording is open to interpretation and does not give exact measurements and weights as in many other breeds. The Bulldog has three unique features that stand out. **First and foremost, the head.** This is a head breed and the highest points in the standard are attributed there. **Secondly, the topline and wheel back.** **Thirdly, its rolling gate.** Combined, these three features help to set the Bulldog apart.

Overall, in general appearance, the perfect Bulldog outlined in the standard, **MUST** be of medium size, **MUST** have a smooth coat, **MUST** have a heavy thick set and low-swung body, **MUST** have a massive and short faced head, **MUST** have wide shoulders and sturdy limbs and his gait **MUST** be unrestrained, free and vigorous. These **MUSTS** should be kept in mind at all times. There is another **MUST** found in the standard regarding the tail being short, hung low, with decided downward carriage.



The idea of proportion and symmetry in a Bulldog is an important one. There is no denying that compared to other breeds, Bulldogs are an example of exaggeration. But care must be taken to not reward extremely overdone Bulldogs. Balance is the key for Bulldogs. No one feature should stand out over another. The standard states that “The “points” should be well distributed and bear good relation one to the other, no feature being in such prominence from either excess or lack of quality that the animal appears deformed or ill-proportioned.”.

The size for mature dogs is about 50 pounds [23kg] and the size for mature bitches is about 40 pounds [18kg]. Note that the standard uses the word “about”. Many times, judges fault Bulldogs in a class that are deemed to be too small. Often these dogs are of standard size and are just competing against dogs who are too big. Standard sized Bulldogs should not be overlooked. When judging, remember that balance is important. In many cases, the bigger dogs are the ones who have overdone features. That being said, within a single entry, do not be afraid to select both smaller and larger entrants. Choose the dogs that have the most Bulldog type.



You should always be able to tell the difference between a Bulldog bitch and a dog. There is a very clear statement in the standard on the influence of sex when judging. *“In comparison with specimens of different sex, due allowance should be made in favour of the bitches which do not bear the characteristics of the breed to the same degree of perfection and grandeur as do the dogs.”* In other words, if there are two Bulldogs of equal merit in intersex judging, the standard clearly says that preference is given to the bitch.

The Bulldog's temperament is really what saved this breed after Bullbaiting was outlawed. The dog who once was involved in a gruesome blood sport had to become a loyal house pet for him to survive. The standard says that the Bulldog's temperament "should be equable and kind, resolute and courageous [not vicious or aggressive]." The Bulldog's personality is one loved by people of all ages. Dog on dog aggression of any kind in the ring should not be tolerated and is not normal Bulldog behavior. A sense of contentment combined with courage and confidence should be exuded in the way the Bulldog carries itself in the ring. His expression should show the same.



Judging the Bulldog

Bulldogs are judged on a ramp. Whether it be an indoor or outdoor show, this is the best time to gain first impressions on balance and type before even having your hands on the animal. Do not rush this opportunity.

That Head

The Bulldog is a "head breed". Knowing the standard and applying this to your judging is critical. The only 6 point characteristic listed in the standard is for the nose. This is the most points attributed to one feature. The nose should be large, broad and black, its tip set back deeply between the eyes. The distance from bottom of stop, between the eyes, to the tip of nose should be as short as possible and not exceed the length from the tip of nose to the edge of underlip.



The nostrils should be wide, large and black, with a well-defined line between them. The ONLY disqualification for the breed has to do with the nose. The CKC standard says that a Dudley or flesh coloured nose in full or in part is a disqualification. Note, typically allowances are given to puppies under 12 months who may not have their full nose pigment. Also take note that the AKC standard regarding the nose has recently been changed and states that any nose other than black is objectionable and a brown or liver coloured nosed is a disqualification. The standard tells us that the distance from the bottom of the stop to the tip of the nose should be as short as possible. This was critical in bullbaiting times because this is what allowed the Bulldog to breathe through its nose while holding on to the bull's nose without releasing its bite. Similarly, wide and large nostrils were critical for bullbaiting and are critical today. If the dog could not breath through its nostrils, it could not do what it was bred to do.

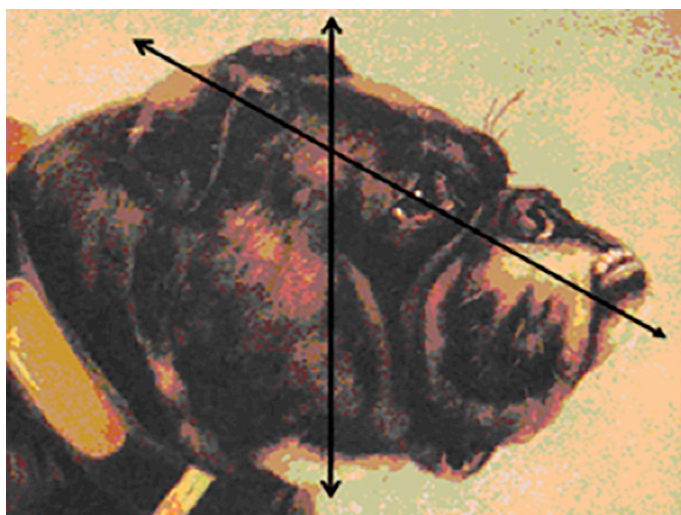
The five point characteristics of the head include the jaw, the ears, wrinkles and the skull. When you look at the jaw as a whole, including the teeth, it becomes a 7 point feature making it the most important feature in the standard [5 points for the jaw plus 2 points for the teeth = 7 points]. When judging the jaw, there are three important factors to consider – width, projection and turnup. The standard says that the jaws should be massive, very broad, square and undershot, the lower jaw projecting considerably in front of the upper jaw and turning up.

For determining proper width, when looking at the Bulldog head on, the underjaw should give the appearance of an upside down U and not an inverted V. Projection is the length of the lower jaw itself. Not enough length of skull creates the short faced look.

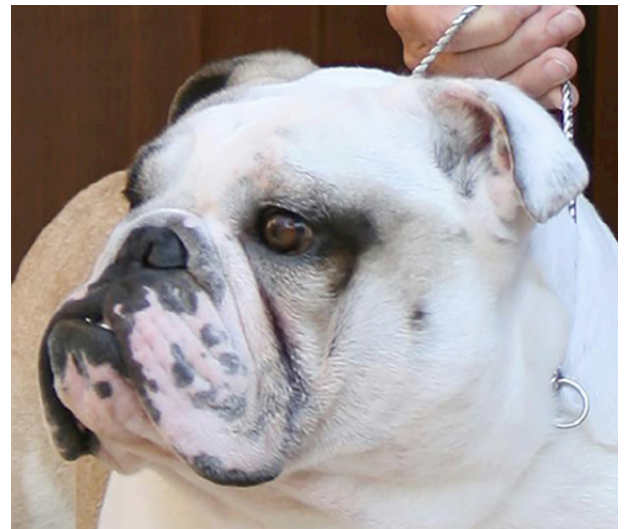
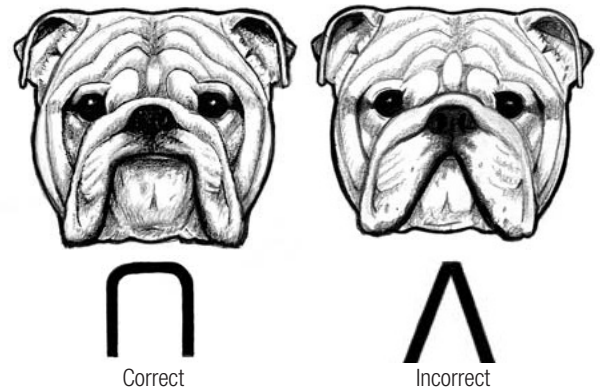
A dog with correct jaw projection will create correct head length. This can only be seen by looking at the head from the front and the side. Only when there is proper length of jaw, will there be proper up turn of jaw. Turn up is the curve of the jaw bone in a “rocking chair” shape. The curve should be maintained throughout the entire underjaw. The teeth should be large and strong, with the canine teeth or tusks wide apart and the six small teeth in front, between the canines in an even, level row. Unlike the French Bulldog which should show no teeth when the mouth is closed, a Bulldog with correct underjaw projection and turn up will often have a few of the incisor teeth showing. A fully buttoned up jaw is ideal. Canine teeth should not be seen. A wry, tilted or offset jaw should be penalized to the degree of the deviation.

The ears of a Bulldog should set high in the head, the front inner edge of each ear joining the outline of the skull at the top back corner of skull, so as to place them as wide apart, and as high, and as far from the eyes as possible. In size they should be small and thin. The shape termed “rose ear” is the most desirable. The rose ear folds inward at its back lower edge, the upper front edge curving over, outwards and backwards, showing part of the inside of the burr. (The ears should not be carried erect or prick-eared or buttoned and should never be cropped.) The top of the ears should be level with the outline of the top of the skull. Small ears are desirable but not as important as the rose shape and placement of the ears.

The standard pertaining to the skull gives the judge the only measurement to adhere to. The skull should be very large, and in circumference, in front of the ears, should measure at least the height of the dog at the shoulders. Viewed from the front, it should appear very high, from the corner of the lower jaw to the apex of the skull, and



also very broad and square. Viewed at the side, the head should appear very high, and very short from the point of the nose to occiput. The forehead should be flat (not rounded or domed), neither too prominent nor overhanging the face. The cheeks should be well rounded, protruding sideways and outward beyond the eyes. The temples or frontal bones should be very well defined, broad, square and high, causing a hollow or groove between the eyes. This indentation, or stop, should be both broad and deep and extend up the middle of the forehead, dividing the head vertically, being traceable to the top of the skull. Look at the skull 3 dimensionally. Look at it from the front and side, but also from top to bottom, side to side and from above.

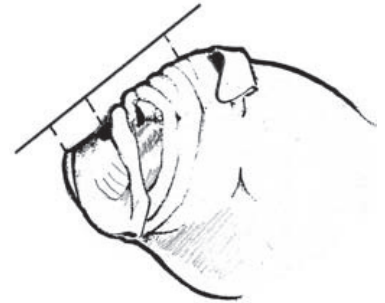




Very High from Corner of Lower Jaw to Apex



Broad and Square



Almost all of the above features of the head that have been discussed, go part and parcel with correct “layback” on a Bulldog. When discussing layback in Bulldogs, we are talking about the flat angle or imaginary straight edge created by the proper alignment of forehead, nose and jaw. Many judges lay their hand vertically on the head between the eyes to determine proper layback. If a Bulldog’s head is made correctly, you should be able to lay a straight edge on the tip of the lower jaw, over and just touching the tip of the nose, and on up the furrow of the flat skull towards the occiput. This technique will reveal faults just as easily as correct layback. If your hand rocks across the nose, then the dog is too nosey or perhaps the nose is not tilted back enough. It will also show if the furrow is not well defined or if there is too much forehead. Lack of upturn will not create proper layback. Similarly, too much upturn will create a dishfaced appearance and thus, not correct layback. One of the biggest faults being rewarded in the ring today has to do with shelf heads and incorrect laybacks. Special attention should be paid to this when understanding the head.

Judging the Head

Most Bulldogs today have properly proportioned heads. Even most female puppies meet the criteria of the only exact measurement in the standard. What is key to remember is balance and proportion combined with Bulldog type. Generally, the first thing a judge does is take the Bulldog’s head in their hands. This is your first chance to feel the mass and have a first overlook of the key features of the head. You should be able to see and feel a very broad underjaw, as well as the upturn. You should be able to see round dark eyes, set wide apart, within the outline of the cheeks and at right angles to the stop. You should see a black nose set between the eyes, with large nostrils, tilted back. You should see the stop, a furrow and layback. You should see small, thin, rosed ears.

EAR FAULTS



High Set



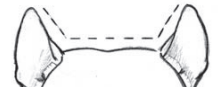
Fly Away



Button



Tulip



Prick

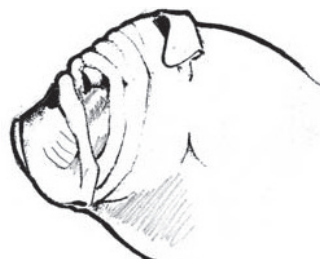
After the initial overview of the head, it is time to fully check the bite and examine the jaw, teeth and muzzle. This is the time to look for wry or misaligned jaws. The Bulldog should be undershot with upturn of jaw. You will also feel the rocker of the underjaw in your hand and the mass and width of jaw. Next is the upper muzzle and nose. This is your opportunity to assess layback and look for your only disqualification listed in the standard. The nose should be tilted back to allow for proper layback. The stop is a key feature of the head. It stands as a baseline for symmetry of the head. It should be broad, deep and well defined to the top of the head. You can use the vertical hand technique if you wish at this time. This is at your discretion. Bulldog eyes are round, dark, of moderate size and



Correct Nose – Tip Set Back



Incorrect Nose – Perpendicular



Muzzle very full and turned upwards.



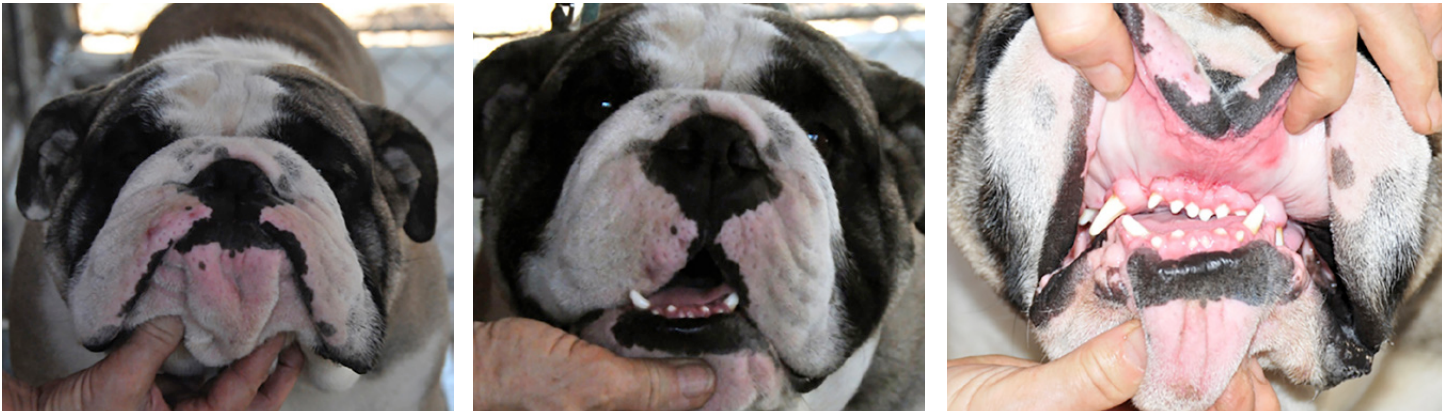
Downfaced-Nose Below Eyes, Ears Too Close – Narrow Skull



Frog faced – Jaw Too Short, or Too Narrow

should be set perpendicular to the stop. Light eyes are a fault. The lids should cover the white of the eye and the haw should not be seen. Note, as of the writing of this article, the AKC has made the standard change to include a disqualification of blue, green or parti coloured eyes. The Bulldog Club of Canada will be moving to make this standard change in the near future as well. Wrinkling should not interfere with or cover the eyes. Move up to the ears. Check for the rosed ear and ear set. Feel them for texture. The ears should be small and thin. They should not be heavy. Flying, pricked or button ears are not what you are looking for. The wrinkles on the head had a clear and definite purpose in the Bulldogs past. They are part of what makes a Bulldog a Bulldog. Wrinkles should not obscure the features of the head and should not take away from the head. The nose wrinkle should never be so big as to overhang the nose or interfere with breathing in any way.

BELOW SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPERLY CHECKING THE TEETH - NOTE THIS DOG HAS A WRY JAW



The Body

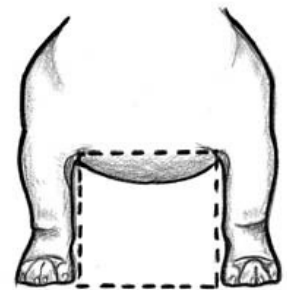
The neck of the Bulldog should be short, very thick, deep and strong, and well arched at the back. At the throat, from jaw to chest, there should be two loose, pendulous folds forming the dewlap.

The shoulders should be muscular, very heavy, widespread and slant outward, giving stability and great power. The elbows should be low and stand well out and loose from the body. The forelegs should be short, very stout, straight and muscular, set wide apart, with well developed calves, presenting a bowed outline, but the bones of the legs should not be curved or bandy, nor the feet brought too close together. The feet should be moderate in size, compact and firmly set. Toes compact, well split up, with high knuckles and with short stubby nails. The front feet may be straight or slightly out-turned.

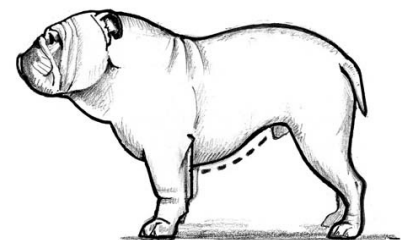
The back should be short and strong, very broad at the shoulders and comparatively narrow at the loins. There should be a slight fall in the back, close behind the shoulders (its lowest part), whence the spine should rise to the loins (the top of which should be higher than the top of the shoulders), thence curving again more suddenly to the tail forming an arch (a very distinctive feature of the breed) termed roach back or, more correctly "wheel back."

The brisket and body should be very capacious, with full sides, wellrounded ribs and very deep from the shoulders down to its lowest part, where it joins the chest. The chest should be very broad, deep, and full. It should be well let down between the shoulders and forelegs, giving the dog a broad, low, short-legged appearance. The body should be well ribbed up behind with the belly tucked up and not rotund.

The hind legs should be strong and muscular and longer than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins above the shoulders. Hocks should be slightly bent and well let down, so as to give length and strength from loins to hock. The lower leg should be short, straight and strong, with the stifles turned slightly outward and away from the body. The hocks are thereby made to approach each other, and the hind feet to turn outward. The hind feet should be pointed well outward.



Correct turn of shoulder with proper front legs will show straight perpendicular inner forelegs. A correct front will form a near square from the top of the legs, across and down



Well tucked up behind the ribs.



Brisket well let down between forelegs.

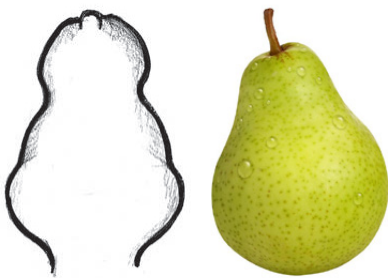
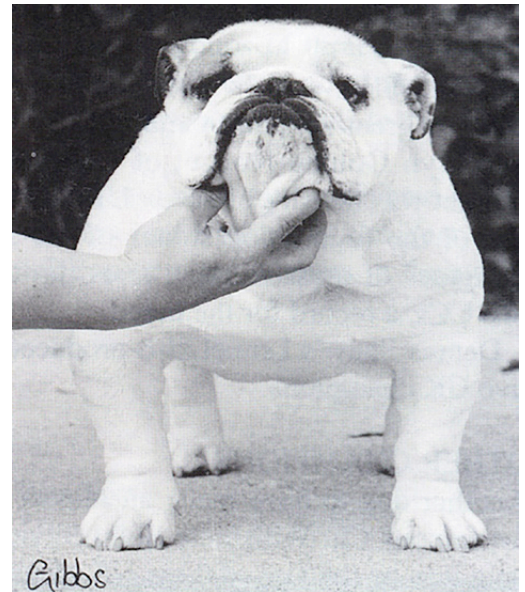
The tail may be either straight or screwed (but never curved or curly), and in any case must be short, hung low, with decided downward carriage, thick root and fine tip. If straight, the tail should be cylindrical and of uniform taper. If screwed, the bends or kinks should be well defined, and they may be abrupt and even knotty, but no portion of the member should be elevated above the base or root.

Judging the Body

Once the head examination is completed, you can then move on to the assessment of the body. While still in the front of the dog, you can then start to feel the depth and width of brisket and chest. Feel for muscling and soundness of chest, legs, pasterns and feet. From the front, the muscling of a Bulldog often creates a bowed outline. Please take time to ensure that the inside of the forelegs are straight and not bowed. The feet should be compact with high knuckles.

Moving down the body, the neck and dewlap should be evaluated.

The neck is a critical component for bringing fluidity to the topline of the Bulldog and gives balance to the profile. There should be a neck. The head should not be tacked on to the shoulders. Check for and ensure that there is loose skin around the neck and shoulders. Assess the shoulders with your hands. They should be muscular and slanting outward. Moving towards the rear is a well rounded rib and brisket.



The chest is deep and ideally the brisket should fall below the elbows. This is also a good time to assess the Bulldog's pear shape. A broad chest, outward slanting shoulders, deep brisket, lighter rear and narrow loins contribute to this appearance. Note, the term pear shape is not used in the standard but is commonly used to describe this look. The standard gives no measurements for the back, but it should be short. Balance, proportion and symmetry play a huge role in how long the back should be, as well as the need to be vigorous and unrestrained in movement.

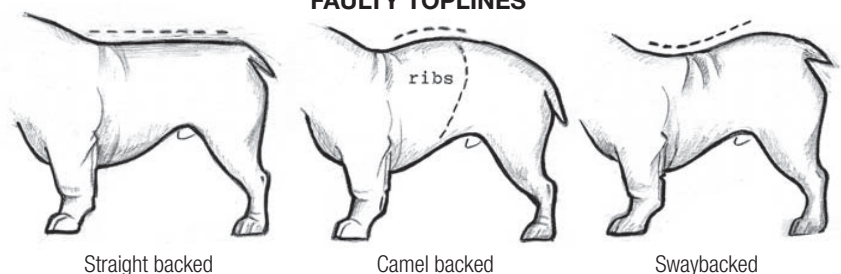
The wheel back topline is an important part of the breed. There are several elements that go in to creating the correct topline. 1. A slight fall behind the shoulders. 2. Length of back. 3. The curve of the spine peaking over the loin. 4. A more sudden curve downward toward the tail. 5. Tail set. 6. Elevation of the rear. 7. Underline.

CORRECT TOPLINES

The topline itself begins with the slight fall in the back, close behind the shoulders. The spine rises to the loins, then curves again more suddenly to the tail, forming an arch. Note that the standard says that the spine rises to the loin, forming an arch. The roach back is not just a rise over the loin formed by musculature, but an actual curve of the spine which can be seen by the eye and felt with the hand. Toplines can be judged when standing or moving. When judging the topline, if there is any question about the topline, always remember that the highest point of the roach should be over the loin. The underline should be well tucked up behind the ribs. Lack of tuck up can alter the appearance of the top line. Topline faults include camel back, straight backed, and sway backed.



FAULTY TOPLINES



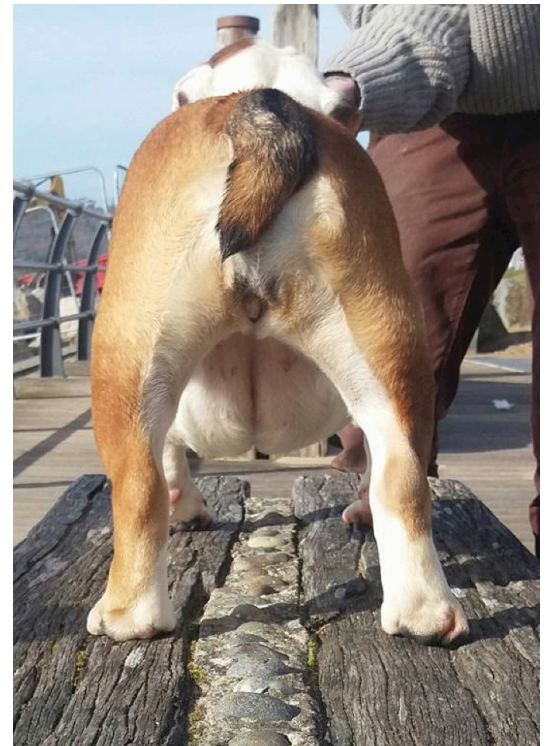
Straight backed

Camel backed

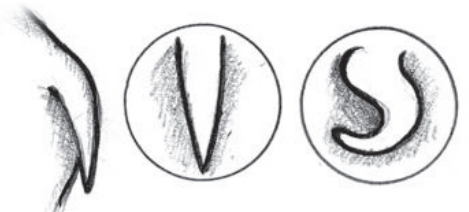
Swaybacked

The principle features of the tail to remember are that it can be either straight or screwed. Carriage and tail set are important. The tail should be low and with a decided downward carriage. The hindquarters should be well muscled with moderate angulation and well let down hocks. The stifles turn slightly outward making the hocks approach each other and the hind feet turn well outward.

The coat should be straight, short, flat, close, of fine texture, smooth and glossy (no fringe, feather or curl). The colour of coat should be uniform, pure of its kind and brilliant. **The various colours found in the breed are to be preferred in the following order: (a) red brindle; (b) all other brindles; (c) solid white; (d) solid red, fawn, or fallow; (e) piebald; (f) inferior qualities of all the foregoing.** Note: A perfect piebald is preferable to a muddy brindle or defective solid colour. Solid black is very undesirable, but not so objectionable if occurring to a moderate degree in piebald patches. The brindles, to be perfect, should have a fine, even and equal distribution of the composite colours. In brindles and solid colours a small white patch on the chest is not considered detrimental. In piebalds the colour patches should be well defined, of pure colour and symmetrically distributed. **Please take note that as of the time of the writing of this article, the AKC has changed its standard regarding colours. The acceptable colours of red, fawn, fallow and white remain unchanged.** More specificity was added to the allowed patterns and markings, which include brindle, piebald, ticking, black masks, black tipping and a limited amount of black in piebalds. The previous standard allowed a "minimal" amount of black marks. This has been changed to "limited." Black marks should never predominate. All other colors or markings are a DISQUALIFICATION. The merle pattern is a DISQUALIFICATION. The Bulldog Club of Canada will soon be submitting a request for a standard change to reflect a similar colour description in the CKC standard. The marked rise in people breeding for undesirable colours and traits has created the need for a change to the colour standard of the Bulldog.

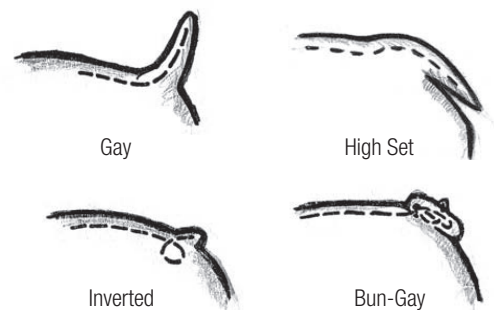


PROPER TAILS



Two types of tail are desired in the Standard, each is short, hung low, heading downward with thick root and fine tip.

FAULTY TAILS



PROPER FOOT



High Knuckles

In a correct foot, the two middle nails are very close together.



FAULTY FOOT

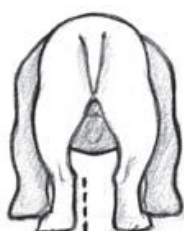


Splayed

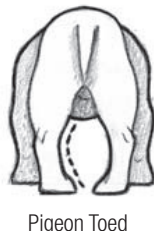


Weak Pastern

PROPER HINDQUARTERS



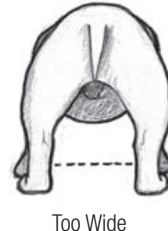
FAULTY HINDQUARTERS



Pigeon Toed



"Cow Hocked"



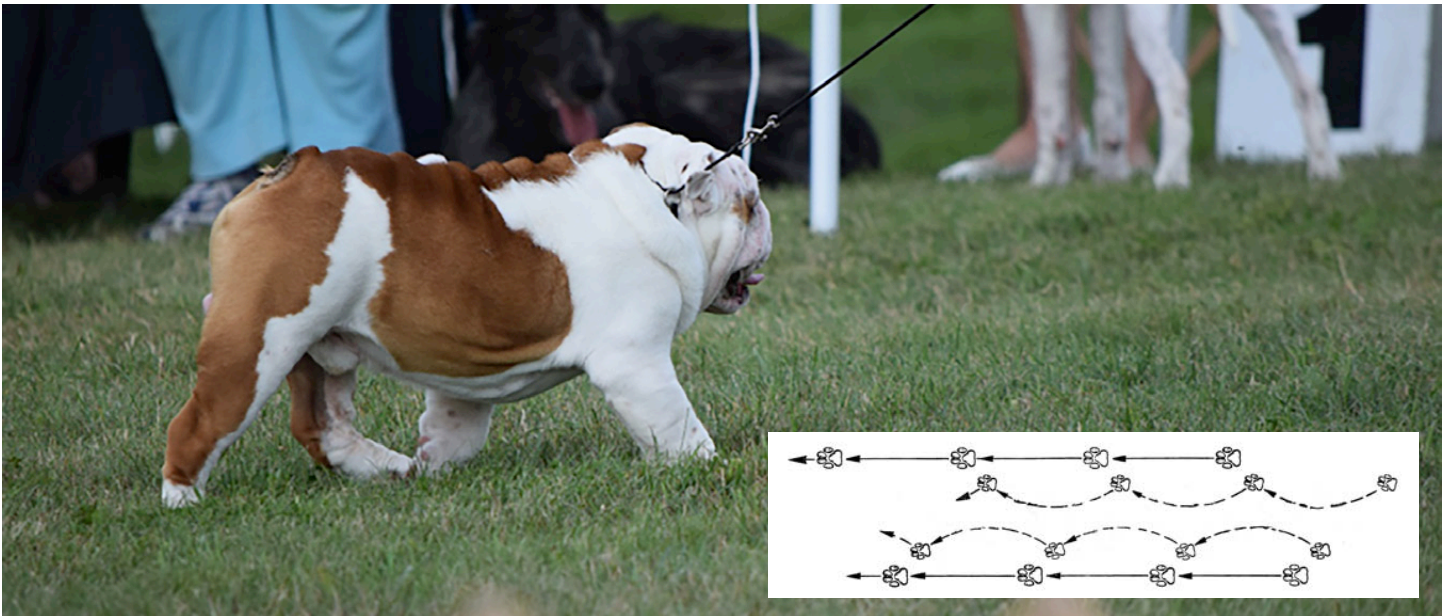
Too Wide



Straight Hock



Crooked Hock



Movement – The Bulldog Roll

The Bulldog's gait is one of the features, along with the head and topline that set it apart from most other breeds. It is an important part of the breed. The 3 points attributed to the gate in the standard should not be looked at lightly. The standard says that the style and carriage are peculiar, his gait being a loose-jointed, shuffling, sidewise motion, giving the characteristic "roll." The action must, however be unrestrained, free and vigorous. There are two things to take from this. The first is that the term "peculiar" refers to an inherent quality and does not mean odd in this context. Secondly, "loose jointed" is meant to invoke an image of gracefulness and fluidity, not unsoundness.

The Bulldog is lower and heavier in the front and higher in the rear. Combine this with the Bulldog's wheel back, and this is the reason for the Bulldog roll. Always keep in mind that the action must be unrestrained, free and vigorous. The wheel back is best seen when Bulldogs are moving. It should not flatten out while on the move. Bulldogs are also not high steppers. They tend to just skim their feet over the ground.

After assessment on the ramp, Bulldogs are most often asked to be moved in a "down to the corner and back" motion. This is obviously at the judge's discretion. While moving away, the elbows should move straight forward and not elbow out. The rear legs should not move in a parallel fashion or too close. Each hind leg should swing inward toward an imaginary centreline and then outward again to compensate for the higher rear. The hocks should approach each other, but not be cow hocked. Coming back at the judge, the front legs should move straight forward or converge slightly. You should always be able to see the rear legs through the front. There should be no padding or paddling of the front.

From the side view, Bulldogs when moving should display good reach and drive. The loose skin on the Bulldogs shoulders and back will highlight the rolling gate by moving side to side. Bulldogs with colour patterns in patches often show this the best.

At the end of the "down and back", is the best time to see a Bulldogs natural form, structure and expression. Bulldogs should not be moved around the ring at a fast pace. Judges should be encouraged to tell exhibitors to slow down and move at a reasonable pace. Again, you are looking for unrestrained, free and vigorous movement. Moving too quickly can hinder the Bulldog roll. Unsound gait should never be rewarded. That being said, judges must learn the difference between Bulldog movement or breed specific movement and lameness.



Final thoughts on ring procedure and Bulldogs in the show ring. It is highly encouraged to have Bulldogs stacked facing forwards in to the ring when there are multiple dogs in the ring at the same time, whether in regular class or Intersex competition. This is a great opportunity to look at all entrants from the front, assessing heads, front end assembly, expression. From the end of the lineup, you can start assessing and comparing toplines. The judge can then move around to the rears. Tails and tail placement, along with hind quarters and the great Bulldog pear shape can be assessed and compared from this position. Lastly, Bulldogs, like all breeds, may pant while at a dog show. It does not mean that they are not healthy as many in the media would like people to believe. There is a big difference between normal dog panting and a dog in severe distress.

Some of the more common faults being seen rewarded in the ring presently involve the three key factors that make the Bulldog – head, wheel back topline and rolling gait. Many shelf headed and short faced Bulldogs are being awarded these days. This is something that must be corrected. Also, many dogs with flat and incorrect toplines are in the ribbons. And lastly, some judges are rewarding Bulldogs with gait faults such as restricted movement, converging fronts, and lack of roll. Learning and understanding the Bulldog and true Bulldog type is a start in the right direction.



The judging of Bulldogs by breeders of more natural or conventional breeds is not an easy thing to do or understand. Fully comprehending the standard and applying it with a true understanding of Bulldog type is the first step in this difficult journey. For those judges starting out in the breed or looking for further insight or clarification, the Bulldog Club of Canada is an excellent source of information. More emphasis than ever before is being placed on breeding healthy Bulldogs with fantastic temperaments and correct conformation. The development of health testing has taken this breed to the next level. With the help of some slight standard changes in the near future to help combat “fad” and undesirable trait breeders, the future of this breed in Canada is looking bright.



THE AUTHOR

Mark Berryman has been an owner, breeder and handler of champion Bulldogs since 1991 and has bred under both the Topbrass and Bredt’s prefix during this time. He considers himself extremely fortunate to have been mentored early on by some of the top breeders in both Canada and the USA. A member in good standing of the Bulldog Club of Ontario, Bulldog Club of Canada, Bulldog Club of America, Group VI Ontario (Non Sporting Club). Currently the President and co-founder of the Bulldog Club of Ontario as well as VP of the Club VI Ontario (Non Sporting Club). Was President of the Bulldog Club of Central Canada for many years, then co-founded the Bulldog Club of Canada in 2016 and was President of the Bulldog Club of Canada as well. Currently, part of the CKC’s Brachycephalic Breeds Advocacy Committee

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