

# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL LTD



## Extended Breed Standard of the **STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER**

Produced by  
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in collaboration with the  
Australian National Kennel Council Ltd

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## **THE HISTORY OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE BULL TERRIER AND IT'S APPLICATION TO THE BREED STANDARD**

I have found it more than a little useful, when seeking to understand the conformation of breeds other than my own, to gain a solid background in the history of the breed in question. Each breed was produced for a purpose, at either the hands of man or Mother Nature, and as a result each standard is set down with characteristics necessary to enable the breed to best perform that purpose.

The Stafford is a unique breed, but he is not a difficult breed to get to know. I hope that when you have a little perspective on his heritage, purpose, and ancestors, that when you come to examine the finer points of the breed standard, you will be able to relate them to the Stafford's original function as the ultimate fighting dog.

### **Heritage**

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is the "original Bull Terrier", simply a re-named version of the old fashioned 'Bull and Terrier". He was manufactured by crossing the old fashioned Bulldog; known for his strength and ferocity in the sport of Bear Baiting, with the quicker, more agile old English Terrier. The history of Bull Baiting goes back to the 1200's, but did not become very popular until the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. At this time it was discovered that the Bulldog and the Mastiff were too slow in comparison to the bull and extremely vulnerable to being tossed and gored. A more agile breed was required to liven up the sport. A dog was required that was game, showed endurance, agility and speed, tenacity, determination and indifference to pain.



## Dog Fighting

When, in the Prohibition Act 1835, the barbaric sport of bull baiting was outlawed, the sport of dog fighting came into its own. It was surely a far easier past-time to hide in back lanes and out the back of pubs, away from the eyes of the law. The sport became especially popular amongst the workingmen of the Black Country, the midlands area of England in the county of Staffordshire.



A quality pit dog must possess all the qualities of a good bull-baiter. Agility, speed, cunning, determination, soundness, tenacity, strength and imperviousness to pain. He is never too heavy as to lend himself to the slowness of the bulldog, nor too light as in the case of the terrier as to be too weak of bone to have the strength to defend himself. He needs strength and breadth of muzzle and prominent cheekbones, as well as a sound strong jaw with prominent underjaw to GRAB AND HOLD his opponent.

A relatively short, strong neck with no dewlap (actually no excess of skin whatsoever - anywhere) in order to give his opponent as little as possible to hold onto. He requires balance and soundness of body - a front that is neither a bulldog front or a terrier front, but a unique combination of the two, and strength, angulation and musculation in hindquarter that allows him to push off in the pit. A short coupling but adequate length and depth of rib-cage to allow for heart-room and sound movement, and so the list goes on. Examination of the finer points of the standard will allow us to understand these requirements in greater detail.

But it is important to remember that nearly all aspects of the standard have their origins in the pit, and if we keep in mind the Stafford's purpose we should have little trouble. However, it is most important to remember that to accurately perform his task - and hence in the modern show world, exhibit breed type - this breed **MUST** be a **BALANCE** between Bull and Terrier, and never lead to one aspect more than the other. You will see specimens in the show ring who do that just that - many are fine boned and lacking in substance reminiscent of a Manchester terrier, some are over-boned and coarse, reminding one of the Bulldog. Such specimens should be penalised accordingly as lacking in breed type.

It must also be remembered that these dogs were as much their workingmen owner's pets as their sporting dogs. These men lived hard lives in small homes, and often sacrificed their own comfort in order to give the dogs the very best in food and shelter. The dogs often had to live and get along with other dogs in the home, and as a result had to know the difference between starting a fight and finishing a fight.

In these ordinary households were also children, and this breed needed not only to get along with kids, but because of his endurance of pain and complete lack of fear he became their natural companion. The dogs often travelled to and from fights in the pram with the baby – so he certainly needed to be certain of the difference between his human and canine friends, and his opponents in the pit. This breed has brought up two generations of children in my family with total reliability, and will hopefully continue to do so. I cannot begin to express, to those who don't know the breed, how truly delightful this aspect of their nature is, and how important it is that it is never lost.

The old fashioned Bull and Terrier was required to be totally reliable, and this characteristic must still be in evidence in today's modern breed. It is NOT ACCEPTABLE for the breed to exhibit outward aggression towards his human friends, nor to another dog unless provoked or set upon. Please keep this in mind in your judging. The pit dog of the 1800's was trustworthy; let's promote the same trait in the modern generation.

### **Setting down the Standard**

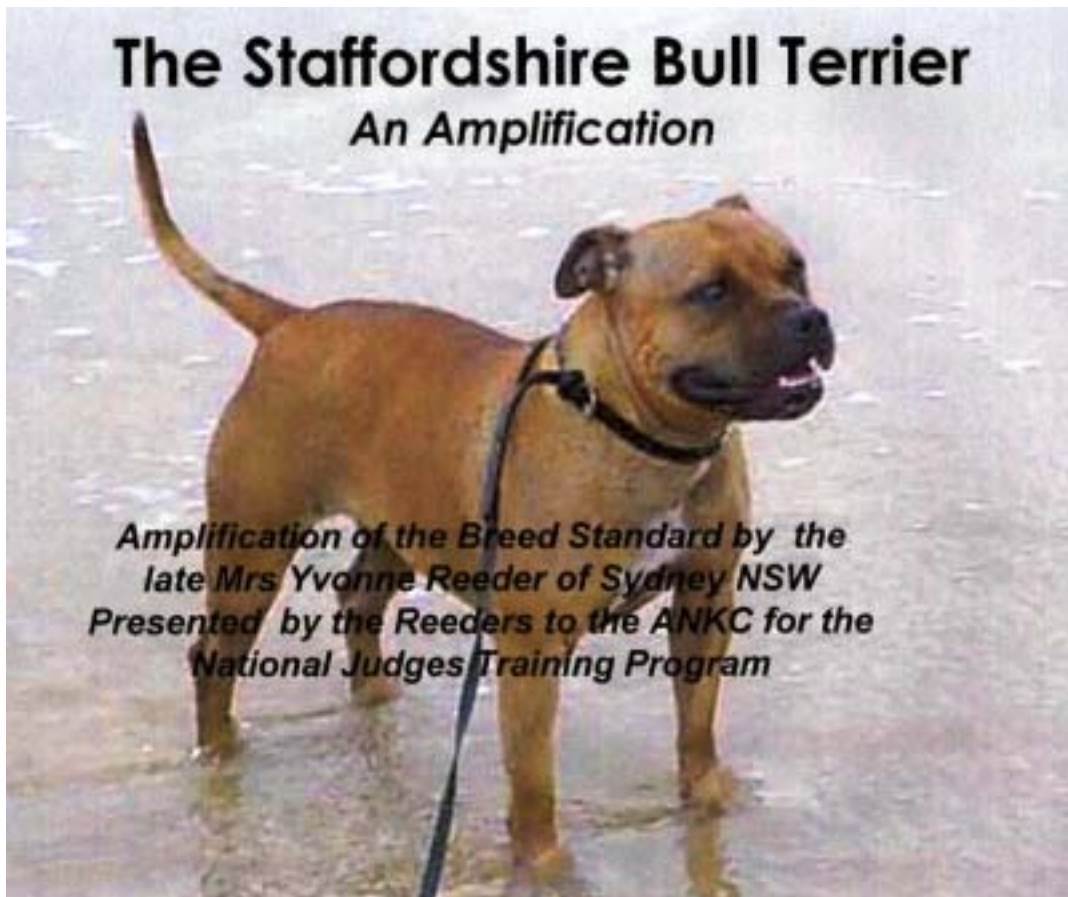
After World War I, when the police clamped down heavily on dog fighting, it became obvious to the Bull and Terrier men of the Midlands that they would have to find another avenue to pursue their interest in game fighting breed. From 1932, Joe Dunn of Cradley Heath was responsible for establishing the breed as the show dog we know it as today, and in 1935 the Kennel Club allowed the breed to be included in the Any Variety Terrier class at an exemption show in Cradley Heath. The breed was named the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, as the preferred name of 'Bull Terrier' had already been registered by James Hinks of Birmingham, pioneer of today's modern Bull Terrier. It is said that Mr Hinks bred the Bull and Terrier with the Dalmatian in order to beautify the breed, in the process sacrificing gameness. The owners of the "original Bull Terrier" named him for the county in which his working men owners resided and fought him with pride.

Breed enthusiasts of the time got together at the pub of chain maker Joe Mallen, the Old Crossguns, also in Cradley Heath. and formed the Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club. The club's first task was to set down the breed standard. Although there was much argument amongst the rank and file, it was generally considered that a good Stafford was a dog that "fought and won". Such dogs tended to possess a number of common characteristics as previously mentioned, and as a result a consensus was eventually reached by the group of experienced Bull and Terrier men who came together to write the standard. Two dogs were held up as the epitome of the breed of the day, Fearless Joe (a fawn) and Jim the Dandy (a brindle) and the standard was drawn based on the anatomy of these fine, game dogs. The breed was recognised by the Kennel Club in the same year (1935), and although the standard has been amended and

refined several times since, it still retains the essence of the original and it is (with only minor variations) most definitely still the same dog we should be breeding and looking for in the show rings today.



**JIM THE DANDY**



## **1. HEAD**

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier must possess a strong head; correctly balanced, as set down in the Standard.

## **2. BALANCE**

Balance is an essential factor in the picture of type; all components should blend together as a whole, without any exaggerations.



### **3. ACTIVITY AND AGILITY**

Smooth, long and athletic muscle should cover ample bone and substance. The Stafford must present himself as being 'active and agile'.

### **4. SOUNDNESS**

Sound structure and movement will impart this breed's athletic ability.

### **5. TEMPERAMENT**

The Stafford should be sound in mind. His temperament is to be trustworthy, dependable, friendly, tolerant and totally reliable - in particular with children.

## **! GENERAL APPEARANCE**

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



*Figure 1 Well-balanced, muscular, active and agile. Photo by: R Francis-Little*

**LOOK FOR:** Good show condition, a close short coat with a natural gleam, good straight bone, long rubbery resilient muscle, and he/she must never be fat.

## **! CHARACTERISTICS**

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

**Amplification:** This area of the standard deals mainly with temperament. This is not easy to assess when looking at a dog in the show ring. The Stafford has proven his ability in the Obedience ring, demonstrating that he is trainable. This coupled with his quiet independence and own train of thought, is one of his greatest charms. He can be a great fighting machine if set upon, exhibiting in this a single-minded purposefulness and craftsmanship not to be found in any other breed. On the other

hand he is one of the most trustworthy, affectionate and gentle creatures with humans; so much so many doubt his ability as a guard.



*Figure 2 The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is renowned for his great affection for children.  
Photo by World Class Canine*

**LOOK FOR:** A keen and intelligent expression with obvious awareness. He should stand his ground without being troublesome. Cringing Staffordshire Bull Terriers should be penalised as without his temperament he loses his magic and Stafford BREED ESSENCE.

### **! TEMPERAMENT**

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

***Amplification:*** Temperament is well covered in the Characteristics clause except to add that he should be totally reliable, a gentleman unless set upon.

### **! HEAD AND SKULL**

***Short, deep through with broad skull. Very pronounced cheek muscles, distinct stop, short foreface, nose black.***

***Amplification:*** The head of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier is unique and a major requirement in the establishment of breed type. It has a rugged beauty all of its own. It is broad, deep through, strong, short and blunt. The head must be clean of loose or pendulous skin. The broad skull is encased in prominent muscle that commences

above the eyes - bulging slightly. The prominence of the 'stop' and 'deep furrow' is enhanced by this muscle as it bulges across each side of the head and smoothly, in sweeping lines, continues behind the ears. The 'cheek bumps' (masseters) **MUST** be prominent. The foregoing relates to adults as puppy heads are often not fully developed until approximately eighteen months of age.

The muzzle is short and broad, the under jaw deep and strong. The ideal proportions are one third muzzle to two thirds skull. No sign of lippiness should be apparent; lips are to be clean and tight. The nose is black with large nostrils. From the nose, the muzzle should gently widen to the skull and ever so gradually widen to the ears. The muscular development of the cheek muscle increases the appearance of width, making the head a blunt 'wedge' shape. The head should be deep-through as should be the muzzle. There should be no appearance of snipiness but on the other hand the head should not be square. The planes of the skull and the muzzle should be parallel without any signs of being 'dish faced' or 'down faced'. The topline of the skull is flat not round. Dogs with round heads are termed 'apple headed' - this is undesirable in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier.

The size of the head is of utmost importance to complete the picture of balance. Remembering that we have a medium sized dog, that is athletic and powerful, the head should therefore be approximately (with a bit for the pot!) the same measurement around the girth of the skull as his height from the ground to the withers. Therefore, a 16 inch dog would have around a 17 1/2 inch head; it is the shape and overall balance of the head that is important, NOT the size.

Weak pinched and snipy forefaces denote a grave lack of strength in bite and are untypical. A 'bitchy' headed dog is as undesirable as a 'doggy' headed bitch.



*Figure 4 Short, deep through head with broad skull and pronounced cheek muscles.*  
Photo by Trafford



**LOOK FOR:** A muscular, clean head of good depth and breadth, wedge shaped and in balance with the whole dog. A strong deep under jaw is a prerequisite. Loose skin or pendulous lips should be penalised.

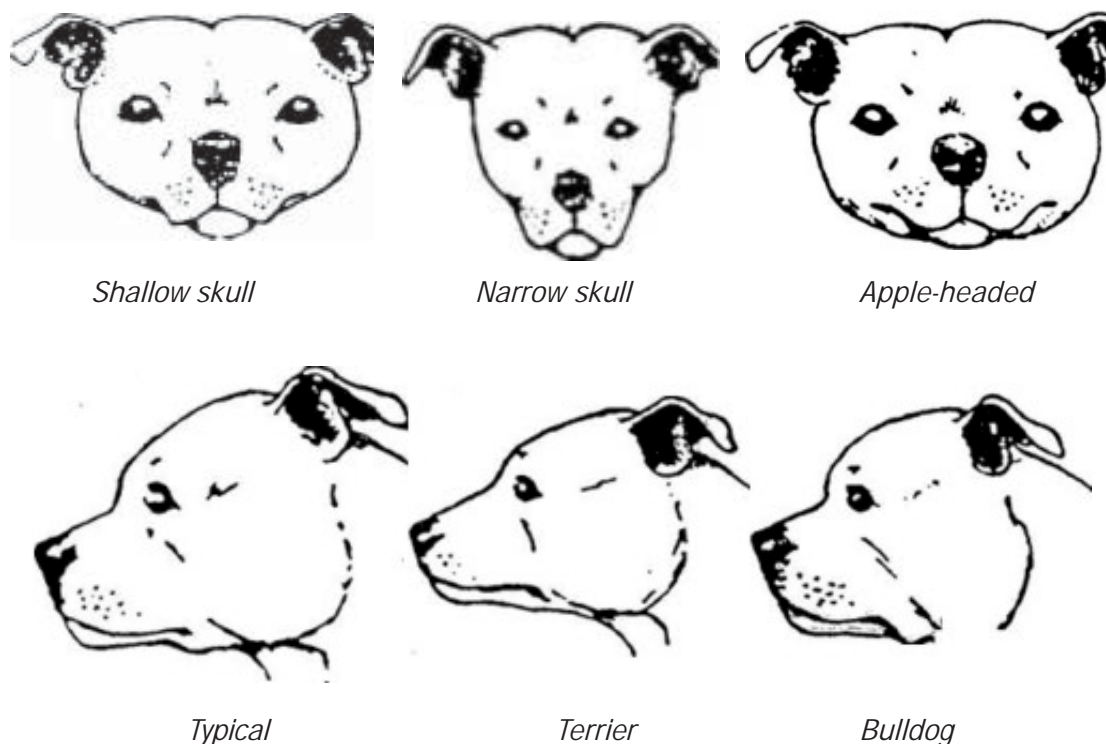


Figure 5 Illustrations of head shapes.  
Illustrations from Gordon, John, F (1975) *The Staffordshire Bull Terrier*

## ! EYES

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

**Amplification:** Without the correct eye colour, shape and placement you will not find the correct Staffordshire Bull Terrier expression. The eye should be round without being bulbous or protruding. They should be widely spaced, to look straight ahead and approximately in line with the stop. There should be no hint of the oriental. If the head shape is correct, the eye shape and set will follow. The standard calls for a dark eye but may pay some relation to the coat. Of course, the darker the better, but some brindles and reds have a hazel eye, which is quite acceptable. The yellow or lighter shaded eyes lose the true expression.

Pigment around the eye rims is to be dark on all colours **except where the hair is white** - some latitude is allowed here and the eye rims are usually pink.

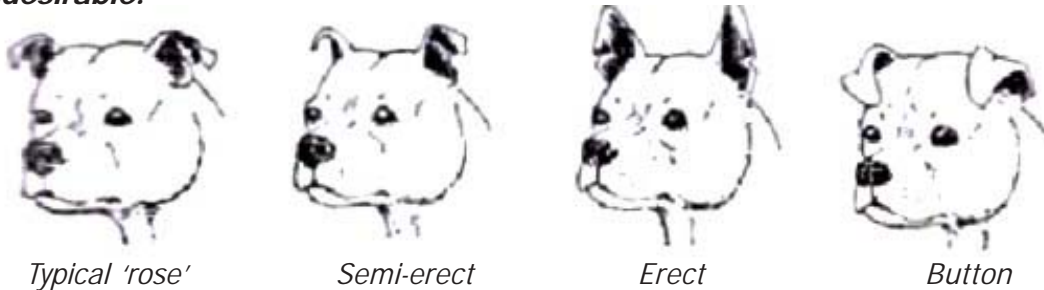
**LOOK FOR:** A keen and intelligent expression, with medium sized round eyes placed wide apart and set to look straight ahead. The dark eye is preferred but may bear some relation to the coat colour. Almond shaped, bulbous, protruding or yellow coloured eyes should be penalised.



Figure 6 Medium sized, round, dark eyes photo by R. Price

## ! EARS

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



**Amplification:** Ears play an important part in the overall appearance. Rose or half pricked are equally acceptable. The important point here is that the ears are small to medium in size and of thin texture. Large, thick ears carried untidily detract from the overall pleasurable picture of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Large ears or thick ears would also put him to a great disadvantage in the days when he performed in the pits. They should be set high on the side of the head, using the outside corner of the eye as a guideline.



*Typical rose ear held in good position*

**LOOK FOR:** Rose or half pricked ears, not large but of small to medium size, of thin texture carried high on the side of the head.

It is important that they be tidy. Full prick or full drop ears to be penalised.



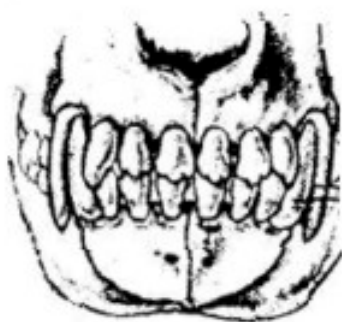
Figure 7 Small rose ears carried high on the side of the head Photo by A. Waters

## ! MOUTH

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

***Amplification:*** The Staffordshire Bull Terrier should possess a perfect regular and complete scissor bite, set square to the jaws. This scissor bite includes the canines locking into the dental arches. This is a serious problem worldwide - many Staffords have a malocclusion of the lower jaw. Because of narrow and/or receding under jaws, the canines converge into the roof of the mouth.

It affects the dogs well being, his ability to eat, and in some cases the dog is unable to close his mouth. With this in mind, this fault should be penalised accordingly



*Perfect, regular scissor bite*



*Undershot bite*



*Converging canine*

*Figure 8 Mouths. Illustrations from Spira, Dr H.R (1982) Canine Terminology, McKay, Smith, Mrs W.H (1991) The Bull Terrier Illustrated Standard*

***LOOK FOR:*** A clean scissor bite, locking canines, set square to the jaws. Deep and strong under jaw, lips clean of flesh.

## ! NECK

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

***Amplification:*** A reachy neck will lack strength, and the dog that has a neck too short will suffer from respiratory problems. The standard calling for a rather short neck does NOT in fact mean that the head is to be almost on the dog's shoulders. The neck must be powerful and strong, it must be clean from loose folds of skin. It must be long enough for the dog to swing around and confront his adversary. It must taper gradually from the head, widening into the shoulders. When a dog is standing his ground you will see the muscular, crested arch over the neck which enhances his outline.

***LOOK FOR:*** A clean, smooth, muscular and strong neck with that distinct regal arch which runs from the occiput to the entry at the shoulder.



*Figure 9 Clean, smooth, muscular and strong neck.*

*Photo by K. Reeder*

## **! 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.***

***Amplification:*** The front legs should be well boned, straight and, whilst being set rather wide apart, must be set under the dog in line with his shoulders. The straight line is broken only at the point where the feet turn out slightly at the pasterns. The turnout at pastern is for flexibility and agility.

It is essential that the dog should stand well up on his legs and the body should never appear to be slung, otherwise he cannot attain the peak of activity and agility, and his balance is affected.

Viewed from the front, the outside line of the front leg should go straight up into the shoulder. This should be covered in a flatfish muscle, not bulging or bunched. The shoulder should be smooth. Viewing from the top of the dog, the shoulders should come cleanly into the body and on no account should it appear that the shoulders are tacked onto the side of the body, as this would give the appearance of falling away behind the shoulders.

***LOOK FOR:*** a clean straight front with a slight turn out at pastern. Clean, muscled shoulders, well laid back, with no sign of looseness. Do not be impressed by bunched, loaded muscle in the shoulder. Feel for the correct thickness and roundness of bone, which should be ample rather than heavy. A stilted or "proppy" action in the forward movement will indicate upright placed shoulders, which is incorrect. Forward placed shoulders will give the appearance of an over short neck.



*Typical*



*Out at elbows*



*Bulldog front*

*Figure 10 Fronts. Illustrations from Gordon, John, F (1975) The Staffordshire Bull Terrier*

## ! BODY

***Close coupled, with level topline, wide front, deep brisket, well sprung ribs: muscular and well defined.***

***Amplification:*** The body must show great strength for it's size and great springiness in body structure. He should have a deep brisket - depth to the elbow, that lovely 'opera' front with a pro-sternum, and when you put your hands on his front you should be able to bring them round both sides smoothly without a break in contour to the back of the last rib. Note that the ribs are 'well sprung' and 'deep' NOT barreled. He should be short and well muscled and strong in coupling. There is no hard and fast measurement here but it is considered that the coupling should be approximately four fingers long but no more. He should be well ribbed back. Viewed from the side you should get an impression of a square dog, rather light in loin, with a distinct tuck-up. 'Rather light in loin' is a requirement not included in the standard of 1987. The term 'Pear Shape' is mentioned regularly of late. It is important that judges and new breeders alike realise that a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, whilst being rather light in loin, has NO relation in shape to a pear. He must have a level topline with an ever so slight muscular rise over the croup.

***LOOK FOR:*** A level topline, strong and short in coupling, ample depth of brisket, the smooth contour of that great, smooth muscle and well sprung ribs that are well ribbed back. Overloaded muscle, short heavy bones, long weak backs, lack of brisket and/or spring of rib are uncharacteristic.

### Toplines



*Good back with level topline*

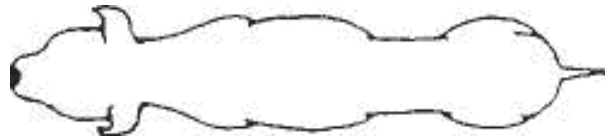


*Roach back with pronounced dip behind the shoulder*

### Overview



*Good body broad shoulders, well sprung ribs and development, with rather light in loin.*



*Undesirably thin ribs and shoulders*

## ! HINDQUARTERS

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

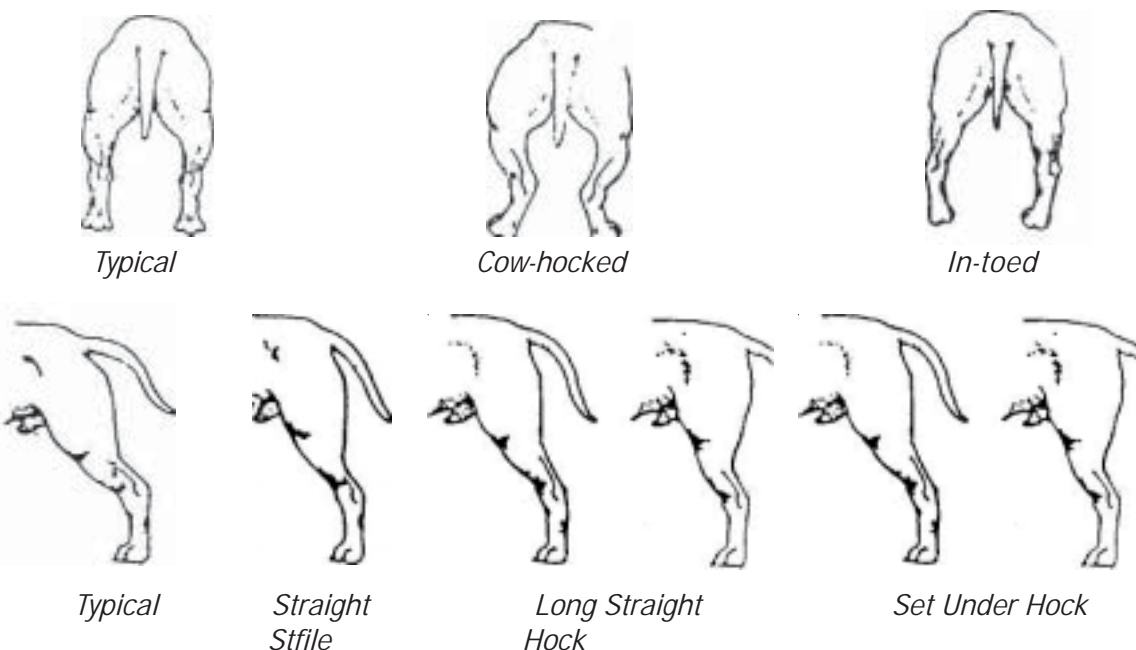
***Amplification:*** Correct balance is important in the matter of height and breadth of hindquarters. When viewed from above the hindquarters should be slightly narrower



than the forequarters. Well developed second thighs are essential, as are hocks well let down. Watch for the fault of cow hocks; when the points of the hocks turn inwards. Ensure good bend of stifle, this is very important. Any straightness in this area will limit the pushing and staying power of the dog and give a disagreeable prop-like effect on the hind limbs. This fault is often responsible for the slipping of the patella (kneecap) causing lameness because the limb is insufficiently bent and supported with muscle to hold it in place.

The slightly bowed hind leg is a legacy from our Bulldog ancestors, and whilst not perfect, is not a sign of weakness. When present to a slight extent, it does not constitute as serious a fault as cow hocks.

**LOOK FOR:** Substantial muscle development in the inner and outer confines of the hind legs. You should severely fault degenerate posteriors.



**! FEET**

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

**Amplification:** The feet are best described as half hare, half cat. They are of medium size with the front being larger than the hind. They are well padded, strong and well knuckled up - not as tight as a cat foot, with toes split up.

**LOOK FOR:** well made, sound feet with strong wrists or pasterns where wrist weakness is likely to show. Keeping in mind that we have an athletic breed in the Stafford, thin, flat or splayed feet constitute a bad fault.

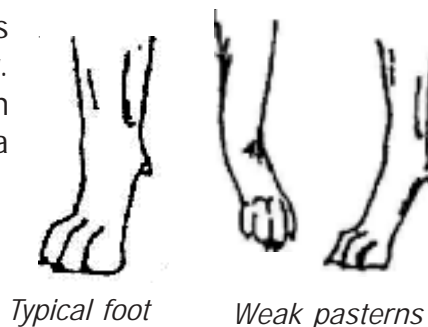


Figure 14 Feet. Illustrations from Gordon, John, F (1975) *The Staffordshire Bull Terrier*

## ! 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.**

**Amplification:** The tail is of medium length, low set and likened to an old fashioned pump handle. The length is mostly taken by holding the tail along the inside of the hind leg. It should not quite come to the beginning of the hock. It should be strong at the root and taper to a point. A correctly set 'pump handle' shaped tail sets off the overall picture of our ideal dog.

Gay, curly or tails set too high or low, or those carried between the legs, are unsightly and uncharacteristic.

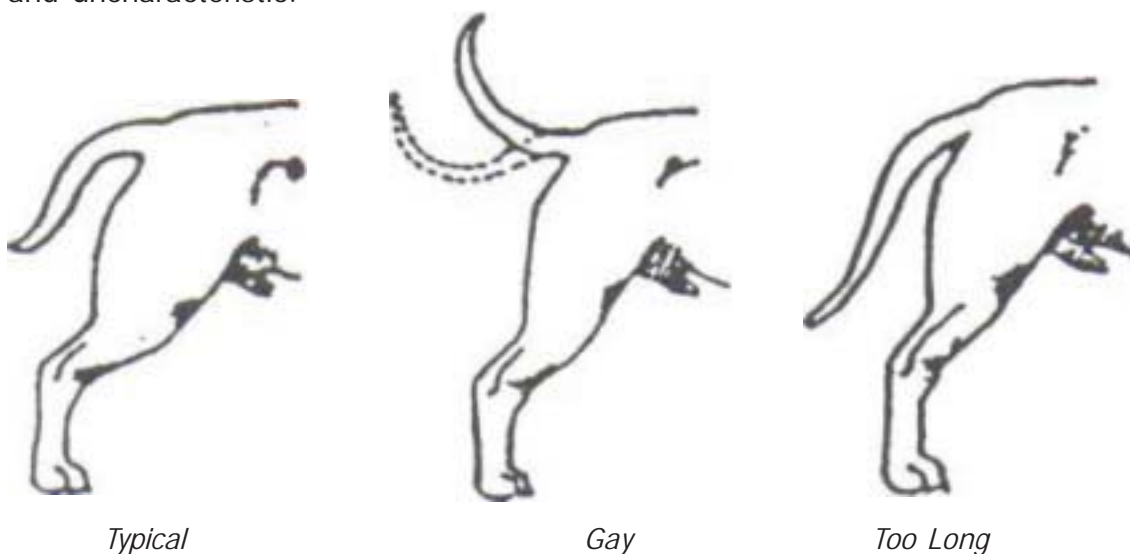


Figure 15 Tail Carriage. Illustrations from Gordon, John, F (1975) *The Staffordshire Bull Terrier*

## ! GAIT AND MOVEMENT

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

**Amplification:** Free, powerful, agile, with economy of effort, there should be a definite swagger (definition: to cover the ground with an air of self confidence and ownership). Legs should be parallel when standing, both fore and aft. The front legs, when moving, will automatically incline towards the spine or centre (kinetic balance). This inward inclination must commence from the shoulder- NEVER the elbow. The hind legs should move parallel when viewed from behind and have discernible drive. A typical, well balanced Stafford should never cross or weave either in front or rear. A dog moving in this way should be heavily penalised.

The Stafford should always be exhibited on a loose lead and moved at a medium trot. They are NOT racing greyhounds, and the 'commercial speedster' should be asked to move again at a reasonable pace.



*Figure 16 Free powerful and agile movement showing economy of effort.  
Photo by Trafford.*

## **! COAT**

***Smooth, short and close.***

***Amplification:*** The Staffordshire Bull Terrier's coat is quite distinctive, best described as a medium coarse texture and pleasant to handle. It is very close fitting, but even on hard muscled dogs it will tighten closer when the animal is on alert. When in this state it forms a leather-like armour protection to the body.

***LOOK FOR:*** Quality in the coat texture and good condition. Fault long, coarse coats and any sign of ruff.



*Figure 17 Smooth, short and close coat. Photo by G. Sparham*

## ! COLOUR

**Red, fawn, white, black or blue, or any one of these colours with white. Any shade of brindle or any shade of brindle with white. Black and tan or liver colour highly undesirable.**

**Amplification:** There is a wide variety of colours allowed in the Stafford, as explained in the standard. There should be no colour preference when judging - a good dog is a good colour unless it is black and tan or liver. The standard states that these two colours are highly undesirable. To award a prize to these colours is to encourage them. These colours are to be ostracised, as when bred with they will spread like a germ. Black and tans are the colours as distributed on the Manchester Terrier, though sometimes the tan is not as brilliant. Liver, though we do not see many of them these days, crop up from time to time but the fault is too obvious to attempt to exhibit them. They are usually a well made dog with a chocolate red coat, brown nose and pale yellow or gooseberry eyes.

**LOOK FOR:** Clean colours with sound pigmentation i.e black nose, eye rims, toenails. Check the pigmentation on blues in particular. Some blues have a grey nose and mask. In white dogs, or where white extends beyond the eye area, you will occasionally find black eyerims, but many dogs marked as such are quite pink in that area. When judging a white dog some latitude should be used though the standard states pink eye rims are a fault.



Figure 18 – Allowable colours in the Staffordshire Bull Terrier



*Figure 19 Black and Tan- an undesirable coat colour. This is a photo of "Bull and Terrier" from the 1800s housed in the Lionel Walter Rothchild Museum – Tring UK (Animal History Museum)*

## **! SIZE**

***Desirable height at withers 36-41 cms (14 to 16 ins), these heights being related to the weights. Weight: dogs: 13-17 kgs (28-38 lbs); bitches 11-15.4 kgs.***

***Amplification:*** Remembering that we have a medium sized dog, the Staffordshire Bull Terrier height /weight clause is one of the extremes, allowing 10 lbs and 2 inches. When the breed was first recognised by the English Kennel Club, the specimens at that time had a considerable size difference. In the early days it did not matter about size, all that counted was soundness and if the dog was game. The standard was therefore worded as such, so no Staffordshire Bull Terrier would be ineligible for registration. It is not very likely in these times that you would find a Stafford 14 inches and 28 lbs. or for that matter, one 16 inches and 38 lbs. Most 16 inch dogs these days weigh around 40 - 42 lbs.

***LOOK FOR:*** A well balanced dog, all components blending together smoothly, with weight in balance to height.

## **! 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.***

***Amplification:*** When judging, the standard is to be used as a guideline with all faults to be penalised in accordance with the severity. This is excepting those faults that are to debar a dog from winning a prize as quoted in the standard. The only other fault which is to be ostracised is Black and Tan and Liver colours.

## **! NOTE**

***Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.***



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The Australian National Kennel Council Ltd sincerely thank the Reeder family for permission to use the work of the late Mrs Yvonne Reeder in compiling this Breed Standard Extension.

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