

Commentary To The Breed Standard By Kobus Rust.

The breed standard is a set of guidelines describing the **ideal** model of that particular breed that has been set out by a group or organisation. The breed standard is usually designed around the breed's use or purpose.

The Boerboel was, and still is in some areas, a large working farm dog, so the standard was created with this in mind. The dilemma when writing a breed standard is that you do not want to make mistakes that will be damaging to the breed in the future. For this reason, you do not want to be too exact in your description of the breed. This causes problems with enthusiasts, because now the breed standard is wide open to interpretation. This is good for diversity and the future of the breed, but is bad at appraisals, because appraisers want clear guidelines so that they can do their job correctly. Enthusiasts, especially breeders, want clear guidelines so that they can begin to produce what the breed standard outlines as “the perfect Boerboel.”

Before I deliver my comments on the breed standard, I want people to know that I am writing this to clarify terms, and also to bring significance to certain, individual points of the breed standard which may have been overlooked.

Another important point I would like to make, is that the breed standard is a description of the *perfect* Boerboel, envisaged by the people who created the breed standard. As one of the people who helped create the newer breed standard, I want breeders and enthusiasts of the breed to know that neither I, nor anyone else who was involved in writing the standard, would be so arrogant to believe that what we pictured to be the perfect Boerboel, is completely correct or encompassing. I myself believe that the perfect Boerboel can come in many different shapes and sizes.

Now that I have explained how I feel about the breed standard, I can begin my commentary to the standard.

Because we are talking about the breed standard, I will reproduce the standard, and add my comments to it where I think it is necessary.

My comments are prefaced by the  symbol. I have used the Boerboel International Breed Standard, because it is the most recent standard to have been written, and I personally helped with its creation.

OFFICIAL BREED STANDARD OF BOERBOEL INTERNATIONAL

BOERBOEL

PREAMBLE

Historically the Boerboel developed as a general farm dog for the pioneers who settled in South Africa since the seventeenth century. These dogs often were a first line of defence against predators and were valuable in tracking and holding down wounded game. Old farmers told many a tale of the strength, agility and courage of the Boerboel. The dangers and harsh conditions of Southern Africa allowed only the fittest to survive.

The protective character of the Boerboel is today still evident and is much sought after, as is the calm, stable and confident composure of the breed. It remains the guarding breed of choice amongst current day farmers and is very popular for the same reason in the urban communities.

The origin and purpose of the Boerboel should be understood in order to preserve the unique identity and qualities of the breed as a South African developed mastiff. Type, conformation, functional efficiency and mentality are equally important in the evaluation of the Boerboel as a whole. The aim with the Breed Standard is to provide clear guidelines for breeders and judges to promote a singular vision of the ideal Boerboel.



Modern day owners and breeders of the Boerboel need to understand that the work and the conditions that the Boerboel worked under are what formed the breed. That is why *type, conformation, functional efficiency* and *mentality* are all traits considered to be equally important.

Type and conformation are visual traits which can be seen at any time. Functional efficiency is tested over time and under many different physical stresses. A dog who never leaves his yard, or is just simply walking around a show ring, is not being fully tested for his function. To test efficiency, the dog needs to be out on the veldt, either covering long distances or exploding into a sprint, chasing something through scrub and jumping obstacles. How well the dog does these things, when compared to other dogs, will be the correct way to judge his functional efficiency.



This female has a very powerful hindquarter; she looks like she can really move. This is confirmed, because she is often seen continually leaping and looking over her 6ft fence. She jumps so high, that you can see her head and shoulders exposed over the fence. This is a good example of conformation being supported by functional efficiency.

The dog then, needs to be able to do this kind of work day-in and day-out for many years. In some cases, Boerboels have worked on farms for more than ten years. When a dog has gone through such rigorous work for many years, the functional efficiency and structural integrity of the dog has been tested completely.

Mentality of the Boerboel is as important as the other traits but much harder to test for. To test a Boerboel's mental strength, the dog must be put through many different stressful situations before an accurate analysis can be made. Also, it is important that someone with the correct knowledge and experience with dogs is evaluating the reactions.

Type and conformation are important to preserve the identity of the Boerboel, and they both can be evaluated by the appraiser at an appraisal. Functional efficiency is important, because it verifies that we are breeding the correct conformation (what is the point of breeding a dog who looks a certain way, but he is physically unable to do the job you are breeding him for?). However, we cannot judge this properly at an appraisal. Even though we can see if a dog

moves well, we cannot know if that dog would fatigue or break down if asked to move for long periods of time. (There are just too many variables.)

Work and time are the best judges of functional efficiency. Mentality is very important, because it doesn't matter how well a dog is conformed to the breed standard, and how efficient his body moves, if his mind freezes when he is stressed. Once again, it is hard to fully explore a good Boerboel's mental strength at the appraisal.

These four parameters are all important when we envision the TRUE Boerboel.

BREED STANDARD

1. GENERAL APPEARANCE



I would like to think of the “general appearance” of a breed, as the first impression of a dog, or what is most noticed about a breed at first glance. The general appearance may even be considered as, “What does someone that has never seen this breed, notice?”

For instance, the Dalmatian has his spots, the English Bulldog has his pushed in face and wide stance, the Great Dane has his height.

The words chosen to describe the general appearance have been carefully selected, so that the Boerboel can be easily identified amongst enthusiasts, and to leave the correct impression with first time observers. A proper Boerboel cannot be mistaken for any other breed of dog.

The Boerboel

- **Is large, with a strong-boned structure and a well-developed musculature.**



There are many breeds that are large or have well developed musculature. The main point that I would like to draw attention to is that a Boerboel **should have** a “strong-boned structure.” In more simplistic terms, Boerboels should have the thickest, sturdiest legs when compared to any other breed. One of the first things you can look for when judging, if a dog has a strong-boned structure, is the thickness of the hocks. The hocks should start thicker than the stifle bone and appear to increase in thickness as they go down and join into the hind foot. When comparing, a 70kg Boerboel male should have front legs as thick as or

thicker than the forearms of a 70kg human. Many modern dogs do not achieve this desired thickness. Although it is very aesthetically pleasing to see a dog with extremely thick bones, there is also a practical reason for it. Thick bones are attached to large joints, which handle the stresses a big powerful dog puts on his bone structure and joints during his day-to-day movement, whatever the dog is doing, with more ease than thin bones with small joints. (Greyhounds have the thinnest bones and joints and are always breaking ligaments, tendons and sometimes bones.)

- **The profile of the head and body appears blocky.**



This is the main, defining *visual* point that separates the Boerboel from any other large breed of dog. Great Danes are large but they are thin. The Boerboel body is blocky; he is wide, relative to his height, and his body is longer than it is high, like a concrete block. This blocky shaped body allows the Boerboel to be powerful, and at the same time agile. The head is also a blocky shape (there will be more about the head later). Most of the points in the breed standard can be related back to this “blocky” look.

Has an impressive demeanour created by the combination of conformation, carriage, confidence and powerful movement.



This sentence represents the “WOW Factor” of a dog. Impressiveness is one of the most overlooked aspects of a Boerboel, especially by breeders and appraisers, even though it is one of the first points to be asked for in the breed standard and one of the most important qualities when looking at a true Boerboel. A dog can have close to perfect conformation (a high appraisal score) but not look the slightest bit impressive. This is because he lacks confidence, and a few important conformation points. Breeders have been most neglectful in the past few years of breeding the proper Boerboel temperament which is paramount to having an impressive looking dog.



Maestro Trompie was a very confident large dog. He had powerful shoulders, great musculature, especially on his neck, and a good Boerboel head. He also had the calm confident temperament needed to be an impressive Boerboel. Oom Bert Krabe once commented on his neck saying that it is as big, if not bigger than any of the top Ysterberg male's necks. Considering Oom Bert was part of the Ysterberg breeding program that was a huge compliment.

Dogs who lack confidence carry their head low and try to make themselves look smaller, which is unimpressive. The best example I have personally seen of this lack of confidence affecting how a dog looks, is with a particular dog that was of another mastiff breed. This dog had everything in his confirmation to make him one of the most impressive dogs in the world. He weighed about 80kg had extremely good movement and construction, with massive thick legs plus a big impressive head. The problem was, as I approached, he shrunk down to the size of a 50kg dog, and was slinking away from me to go hide in his kennel. It was upsetting to see. I have seen the same dog look very impressive when other dogs are around, pumping himself up to look more like a lion than a dog. Once again, to make it crystal clear, a dog must have a confident attitude for him to look impressive.

There are five main conformation points that make a Boerboel look

impressive. These are in no particular order: A wide chest (less for females), thick legs (bone), a neck that shows a prominent crest (less for females), good musculature, and a good head, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.



Avalonia Waldor only scored 82% in his appraisal but was considered one of the most impressive Boerboel ever, by everyone who had the privilege of meeting him. Waldor had confidence, very thick legs, extremely wide chest, a large arch on his neck and a large correct Boerboel head to go with it. All these traits, at the very extreme end of the spectrum, combined to create one of the most impressive dogs ever.

I have seen many dogs that were extremely impressive who did not have perfect confirmation and yes they had low appraisal scores, some as low as 78%. They did have a lot of confidence, appeared fearless, and carried themselves as if they were royalty.



This pup is Ysterberg and Mouzer Sheriff. He is a great example of how confidence can make a dog look impressive irrespective of size. This pup's wide chest and confident demeanour give him a "wow" factor at only eight weeks of age, an impressive little pup!

Confidence, combined with powerful movement, and at least three of the above-mentioned conformation points, in a large dog, **will** be an impressive dog.

- **Has powerful, buoyant and unencumbered movement, notwithstanding its size.**



The movement of the Boerboel is a defining point of the breed. Movement, therefore, should be considered one of the most important aspects of the breed that should be preserved.

To a knowledgeable dog breeder, the above movement standard says so many things; it doesn't just outline movement. To have the correct movement, the dog must be physically sound and constructed quite well. A dog with bad construction or poor, aching joints, cannot move in a fluid and efficient manner.

Both the terms "powerful" and "unencumbered," relate to the dog's musculature and his skeletal assembly. A dog must be well-muscled and have a strong, sound bone structure to move powerfully. At the same time, if a dog is overly muscled, his movement will then be restricted by too much muscle, a bit like a body builder. In this case, the desired

“unencumbered movement” will not be possible.

The “buoyant” movement is one of those defining points that make Boerboels different to every other mastiff breed out there. The first time someone sees a Boerboel move, they should comment on the movement and how astounding it is to see such a large dog move so effortlessly. When you look carefully at a Boerboel moving, it should appear that it is almost floating, and the amount of effort seems much less than the actual speed achieved. It’s as if their feet are like springs, storing the energy of every step and springing it back up, propelling the dog effortlessly.

The last part, “not withstanding size,” also has a concealed meaning. The obvious interpretation is that every Boerboel should have powerful, buoyant, and unencumbered movement, regardless of size. The second message is that you can go bigger and bigger with your Boerboels, even as high as 1 metre at the withers, as long as very good movement is maintained. As soon as you lose movement, you have gone too big. The movement of the dog will be the deciding factor to the limit of size...not a measuring tape. At the same time, it is wrong to breed dogs that may be the correct height, but... have bad movement. These dogs obviously have something intolerably wrong with their structure and shouldn’t be used in breeding.

- **Is symmetrical and perfectly balanced within the desired proportions for the breed.**



I have seen dogs that have one leg turned out more than the other, and I have seen a dog with one leg thinner than the other. There was definitely something not right with either dog. When a dog does not have one side of his body the same as the other side, he is telling you that there is something wrong! If it is caused by an injury, then it is still acceptable to consider that dog for breeding. If there is no history of injury, then it is most likely genetic and that dog should be discarded from any breeding program.

The Balance of the dog is relating to whether one part is too big or too small for the rest of the body. Is the head too big or too small? Is one part of the body too long or too short? If you are looking at a dog, and you feel there is something not quite right with his conformation, but there are no obvious faults, usually the balance is out in the way he is put together. With a careful analysis of the dog’s construction, you will be able to determine that one of the body parts is too long, too short, too

big or too small; perhaps, not for the breed, but for that particular dog.

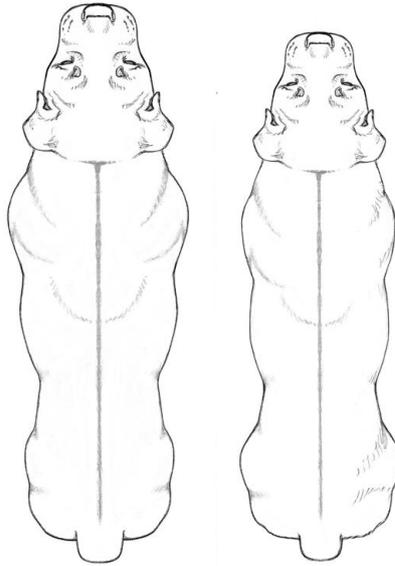
- **Has a distinct sexual dimorphism, with the bitch less prominently developed.**



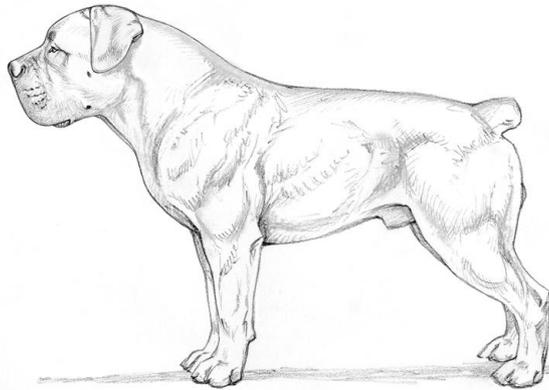
Sexual dimorphism is the difference between male and female. For the Boerboel, the male must look masculine and the female must look feminine. You can see this difference between the sexes in most mammals. When you are looking for the physical differences in the structure of males and females, there are many mammals where the differences are blatantly obvious. Males are almost always larger than females. They carry more muscle mass in their shoulders, upper back and neck, and the muscle is usually more defined and firmer looking than in the female. Females are almost always smaller. They carry more muscle mass in the rump and back legs, and have more overall body fat compared to the males from the same species.

The traits I have just described are all due to the difference in sex hormones. Males have over ten times more testosterone than females. It is this hormone that gives the androgenic (masculine) traits. When a female has too much testosterone, she will begin to exhibit male-like traits.

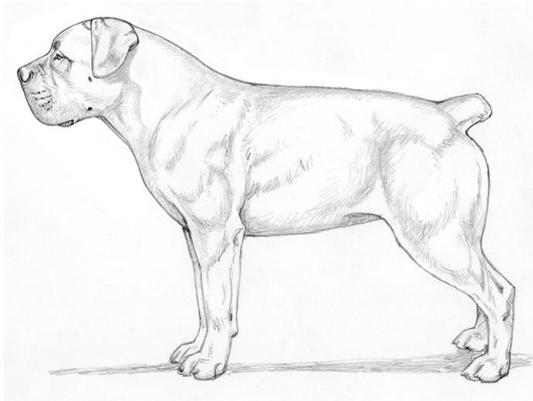
Great examples of sexual dimorphism in nature are the differences between lions and lionesses. The male is much larger, and their muscular shoulders and neck are accentuated by the mane around their neck and shoulders. Sexual dimorphism is very clear in humans as well. You can look at a masculine man from behind and know he is a man, because of the muscular shoulders, and wide back. Similarly, you can easily identify a feminine woman from behind. She will have a wider bottom than the man and also be smaller in size. Even in wolves, when you have a male next to a female, it is easy to see that the male is larger than the female and he carries more weight in the front, compared to the female. The female will look less toned around the shoulders and should carry a bit more weight in her hind quarters, compared to the male.



This is a Schematic top-view drawing of the correct male and female form. When looking at these drawings of the male, left, and female, right, it is clear that the male is larger. When you look more carefully, you can also notice the male is much larger in the shoulder and head region, when compared to the female. The female has a noticeably larger hindquarter. Looking over the top of dogs is one way to make a distinction of sexual dimorphism.



Correct Male, side view



Correct Female, side view

Schematic side view drawing of the correct male and female forms. At first glance both dogs look alike, other than the male has the penile sheath hanging down. When you look carefully, you can see that the male has a much larger head, neck, and shoulders compared to the female. His neck has a more prominent crest, and there is a lot more muscle mass in his shoulders. The female has much larger rump and thighs for her body size and, proportionally, most of her muscle mass is in her hindquarters. The female's belly and flank sit lower than the males.



This particular female looks very impressive. She has a masculine body type. The owner stipulates that she has come into season many times, and been bred many times, but never fallen pregnant. Notice that this bitch has hard looking muscles. She has defined shoulders, and is very dry looking at the rear.



When females look feminine like this, they are able to produce many offspring and look after them. Evolution Six has had many litters of pups naturally, and raised all the pups without help. Notice that this bitch has soft looking muscles; also, her back end is a lot more bulky than her shoulder area.

Why is sexual dimorphism so important? I'm not sure of the evolutionary reason, but for millions of years in mammals, nature has made the female smaller than the male, and given both sexes their distinct shapes, as we have just discussed. When you begin to breed large females who are as big as the males, and they have the male form (too much testosterone), then these females are usually infertile, or have been known to kill their own pups for no apparent reason. If they do manage to have offspring, if the daughter is even more masculine than the mother, she will most likely be infertile. If you were to breed an entire line of animals like this, you would eventually come to a dead end. All your females would be infertile, and you would end up with no more offspring to continue your breeding program. There are many examples of this happening when breeders do not keep the females looking like females and males like males. I cannot emphasize how important a distinct sexual dimorphism is to any breeding program, let alone a specific breed of animal.

2. TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

The Boerboel

- **Is intelligent, trainable and manageable.**  The type of intelligence we are looking for in a Boerboel is the ability to learn quickly and also to learn from his experiences. Boerboels should also have the intelligence to be wary of dangers that may cause harm to themselves or their owner. There is no point in spending all your time and effort in training a dog, and the first time it sees a leopard or lion, he charges out and goes and gets himself killed! The terms “trainable” and “intelligent,” often get used in describing the same trait with dogs, but they are different. Many dogs are very trainable (obedient) but cannot think for themselves; they are not intelligent. On the same note, I have seen some dogs who do extremely intelligent things but would not care for obedience training. The Boerboel must be both. When he is intelligent and trainable, he will become manageable. A large dog who is not controlled properly, can quickly become a danger to his owner or innocent bystanders.
- **Has a strong protective instinct and is loyal to members of the family.**



The original breed standard, which was written in 1983 said, “*He must be a resolutely good watchdog for all to see and loving towards the family with a special liking / preference for children.*” I would like to see the bit that says, “A special liking/ preference for children,” to be in all the breed standards for the Boerboel, as this is the original job for the Boerboel, to protect his owners, his family, and his pack. And what could be more important to his owners than their children?

I remember the last two Boerboels my father had on the farm before he died in 1976. My kids were two and three years old. I was chasing them around playfully with a lion mask over my head. Both these Boerboels were not happy with what I was doing, but they accepted it, sort of, conditionally. The next moment, my younger daughter stepped on a thorn and started crying. Both Boerboels turned on me immediately, and I had a split second to rip off the mask and calm the two dogs down before they attacked me. It was pure luck that both dogs were closer to the kids at that specific, crucial moment. I think that a small percentage of Boerboels are still like that. There is more on this subject throughout this book, because it is such an important part of the Boerboel that many people do not draw enough consideration to.

- **Is steadfast and calm, with a balanced and confident nature when approached.**



The Boerboel is a watchdog, and the first thing that a would-be-intruder will do is test the dog, to see if the dog will back down when approached. It doesn't look good when someone sees your large, powerfully-built dog from a distance, and when they come close, he slinks off in fear of the person approaching. "balanced" and "confident" also means that if something unusual happens, the dog doesn't immediately react by either wanting to run away or begin snapping in fear, either at the person approaching, or even worse, the owner holding the leash.



Oom Klaas and Ysterberg Vegter III. This dog had all the desired traits of the Boerboel temperament and much more. He was also a very prepotent producer, and appears in pedigrees of many good dogs that are at stud today.

Ysterberg Vegter III demonstrated the most confidence and calmness of any Boerboel that I have ever seen. His owner, Oom Klass Van

Waarveren walked him through a two-meter-wide corridor of 18 caged, aggressive, barking, male Boerboels. This was a very intimidating situation for any dog, but not for Vegter. He calmly stayed by his owner's side and walked past the dogs, who were launching at him, and hitting their cages ferociously, as if they were not there. When Vegter got near the middle of the corridor, he let out one stern bark, which was more like a lion's roar, and all the dogs suddenly became quiet and subdued. It was an amazing sight to see. The only explanation I, or anyone else who witnessed this spectacle could give, was that Vegter oozed such confidence and dominance, that when he barked, no dog dared to challenge him anymore.

- **Is fearless and shows courage when threatened.**  This sentence really is the essence of the Boerboel. Sure, a Boerboel has to be big and powerful, but what use is that, when in your only time of need, he decides his well-being is more important than yours? It needs to be clear that a Boerboel should be fearless when his owner is in danger, either from a charging animal, or an attacking human. Either one of these scenarios should trigger an instinct within the dog to protect to the death. This should be a strong instinct and is not rational, from the perspective of the dog and his own life. Having said that, a dog should have enough intelligence to know a bad situation, which isn't life threatening to his owner, should be avoided. Once again, this is a very important part of the breed and it is addressed many more times in this book.
- **Requires training and firm handling from an early age.**  This is the case with ALL dogs, especially larger breeds that are as strong as, or stronger than the handler. There are many dominant Boerboels who need experienced handlers. It is important to be able to distinguish between a good dog with a dominance issue and a bad dog who bites through fear.

3. HEAD

From an aesthetic point of view, the head is the most distinguishable part of any breed. To demonstrate how important head shape is to any breed, I have placed two photos of females below and blocked out their heads. Now look at the photo's and try to distinguish what breed of dog they are?



Now, turn the page and look at the photos. Did you guess right? Both bodies looked similar, but when the head is shown, it is immediately clear that they are

different breeds. I hope this has demonstrated how important the shape of the head is to any breed.

The head of the Boerboel is no different in significance. It may even be more important in distinguishing the breed, because there are many breeds with a comparable body size, shape and colour with the Mastiff-type of head. Also, when people take away focus from breeding the correct shaped head, you can quickly see other breeds taking over the shape of the head. If the dog has too much stop, it begins to look like a Bullmastiff, if the muzzle is wedge shaped, and too long, it looks more like a Hound or Labrador. A correct Boerboel head is a distinct feature of the breed and unlike that of any other breed of dog.

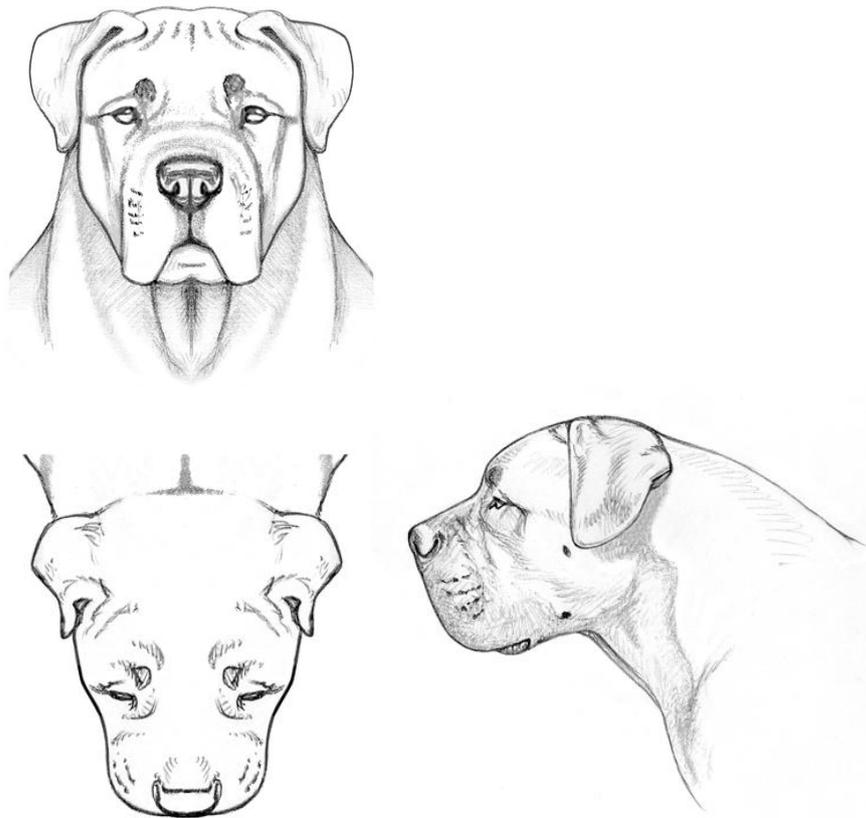
Before I go any further, it needs to be clear that the Boerboel is not a “head breed” (having a breed standard, or a judging bias, which disregards other faults, just to get the “correct” head). Nor do I want these words to turn the Boerboel into a head breed, but I am trying to describe the *perfect* Boerboel. However, at this point in time, the Boerboel head needs to be addressed immediately. For too long, appraisers and breeders have been focusing their attention on the hindquarters of the breed and forgotten about everything else; most notably, heads and temperaments.

The idea of the Boerboel head is that it should be blocky. The best way to describe this “blockiness,” is if you start with a solid concrete or stone building block, and you begin to chisel away at it. You will need to chisel away a minimal amount before you have a Boerboel head. If you start with a round stone, similar in shape to a rugby football, you could chisel out a Bullmastiff's head without removing much stone. If you were to try and chisel out a Boerboel head, from that same round stone, you would realise that there is already too much of the stone missing for it to be practical to do so.

If you can understand this “stone-block” analogy of the head, you will realise that most points in the breed standard, regarding the head, go towards creating this “blocky shape”.

If you can understand the entire concept of the correct Boerboel head, you will also realise that...

A PROPER Boerboel head is like that of NO OTHER BREED!



Schematic front, top and side view drawing of the correct Boerboel head.

- The head is impressive and a distinctive feature of the Boerboel.
- It is blocky, broad, deep, fairly short and in proportion to the body.



The term “blocky” is probably the most important term. It gives the Boerboel his distinctive look. When a head is round from the front, it is more like a Bullmastiff head, and if it is more wedge shaped than blocky, when viewed from the top or the side, it will look more like a Staffordshire Bullterrier, or Labrador head. Regarding proportion to the body, I don’t want to give exact measurements of head circumference relative to height, but as a very rough guide: A male Boerboel, with a well proportioned head, will have a similar circumference, at the largest point on the head, to the dog’s height at the withers. Also, regarding proportion of the head to the body, it is important to note that the female’s head is smaller than the male’s head, relative to their body size. So, if you were to have a small male who is the same height as a larger female, his head should be noticeably bigger than hers.

- It is muscular with well-filled cheeks.



The cheeks are not prominent like a Staffordshire Bullterrier, but they are well-filled. The Boerboel head is muscular, but not overly muscled like some other breeds.

- The roof of the cranium (skull) is square, flat and muscular.



Here we are describing the area of the head between the ears and down to the eyes. It needs to be flat, to give the blocky profile we are after. If the top of the head is round, it looks more like a Bullmastiff head. If it is overly muscled, it begins to look more like a Staffordshire Bullterrier head.

- The zygomatic arch (cheekbone) is well muscled, but not too prominent.



This “cheekbone” is where the muscles for the jaw are threaded through and are attached to the top side of the skull. The important point to make here is that it should *not* be prominent. The more rounded or prominent the zygomatic arch is, the more muscle is passing through it and attaching both on top of the head and on the jaw. This is why the Staffordshire Bullterrier and the Bullmastiff have large cheeks, and the tops of their heads are rounded due to the large amounts of muscle attachments. The Boerboel has a zygomatic arch that is more flat than rounded, which doesn't allow for a great deal of muscle. This, in turn, creates a skull that is flat on the top and relatively flat on the sides.

- The stop is definite, but not prominent, gradually sloping and well filled between the eyes.



The stop is the transition point where the forehead changes into the nose/muzzle of the dogs head. The English Bullterrier has no stop, where as the Dogue de Bordeaux has a very prominent stop. The Boerboel does have a stop, but it is smooth flowing. When viewed from the side, it starts from the plane of the top of the head, gradually joining the plane of the top of the muzzle, which is at a lower level, relative to the top of the head.

The point about being well-filled between the eyes is one of those defining points that give the Boerboel his distinctive look. Having the eyes widely spaced and in-between the eyes “well filled,” is the difference between a dog looking like a Boerboel or not. If you have the eyes spaced wide apart, and have an indent between the eyes, the indent will give the head a Bullmastiff look. The indent will also almost always continue all the way up the forehead, creating a split between the halves of the head. Once again, this is a Bullmastiff trait. If the eyes are too close together, relative to the back of the head, it creates the wedge shaped head of either a Staffordshire Bullterrier, or sometimes, if there is not a lot of muscle and the head still looks square from the front, a Labrador-looking head.

- It should not be steep, or an almost straight line between the nose and the occiput.



This point is describing the difference in height between the top line of the skull and top line of the muzzle. The occiput is the back of the head. If it were a straight line between the nose and the occiput, the head would look more like a lion head than a dog head. If the stop is too steep, it is more like an English Bulldog head. If the gap between the top line of the head and the top line of the muzzle is too big, it will take away from the depth of the muzzle. So, the correct head has a slight gap between the two planes, which is noticeable, but not prominent.

- The muzzle is broad, deep, well attached, filled below the eyes and narrows slightly towards the nose. The top line is straight and almost on a parallel plane with the cranial roof.



This is a feature of the breed that very few people understand, but which is extremely important when trying to create a dog with the correct head shape. I will begin by describing the muzzle and head from side view first, because it is a much easier concept to understand.

When looking at the head from the side, the muzzle should be longer than one third the length of the entire head, and shorter than half the length of the head. The top line of the muzzle should be almost parallel to the top line of the top of the cranium. This is where the stop comes in. If the stop (the distance separating the top line of the muzzle and the top line of the cranium) is too large, the muzzle will always appear shallow.

The muzzle needs to be “deep” when viewed from the side. This depth is obtained by having only a slight stop. However, the stop is only one factor in having a deep muzzle. The next is correct dentition and the bottom jaw sitting in the right place. If the bottom jaw is sitting too far inside the top jaw, it will create a wedge shaped head when looking from the side. If the bottom jaw is undershot, it will protrude and create a round look to the bottom of the jaw.



This schematic drawing of the correct head. By having only a slight stop, the Boerboel head allows for a deep muzzle. Even if you were to take away 10% of this dog's depth of head, his muzzle would still look relatively deep. This head and muzzle are deep and “blocky,” which is what the breed standard asks for.



This schematic drawing is of a dog with incorrect dentition. The bottom jaw sits inside the top jaw and creates a “wedge” shaped head when looking from the side. Although the top line of the head and muzzle are correct, the bottom jaw line isn't deep enough, and gives an overall “shallow” look to the head. This is called “lacking underjaw.”



This head is more like a Labrador head than a Boerboel head. It is more wedge shaped than blocky. The front of the muzzle is too shallow, which means the dog's bottom jaw is not developed enough; this is the cause of the wedge effect.



This schematic drawing shows a dog with unparallel planes of the head and muzzle. This creates too much angle between the stop and the muzzle. Whenever there is too much stop, the muzzle does not look as deep when relating back to the depth of skull. It also has incorrect dentition. This dog is undershot, and therefore his lips protrude out beyond its nose. This creates a rounded look to the bottom of the muzzle. These traits are all typical of the Bullmastiff type of head. The muzzle of this dog is as if it has been turned up from the parallel position it should be in. The length of the muzzle is shorter than the desire $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of the head length.



This female has a bulldog type head. Her head is turned up and it is clear that she is also undershot. Other bulldog type traits are her wide chest, round body and her straight rear. This bitch is also very confident, if I had to bet, I would say she probably would show some heart if she was asked to.



This head is the opposite of the Bullmastiff type. The muzzle turns down, creating an almost Bullterrier-type head. When the muzzle turns down like this, it is often accompanied by a longer muzzle, which gives the head a more hound- like appearance. It is also

harder to get a dog with a wide muzzle, if the muzzle is too long.

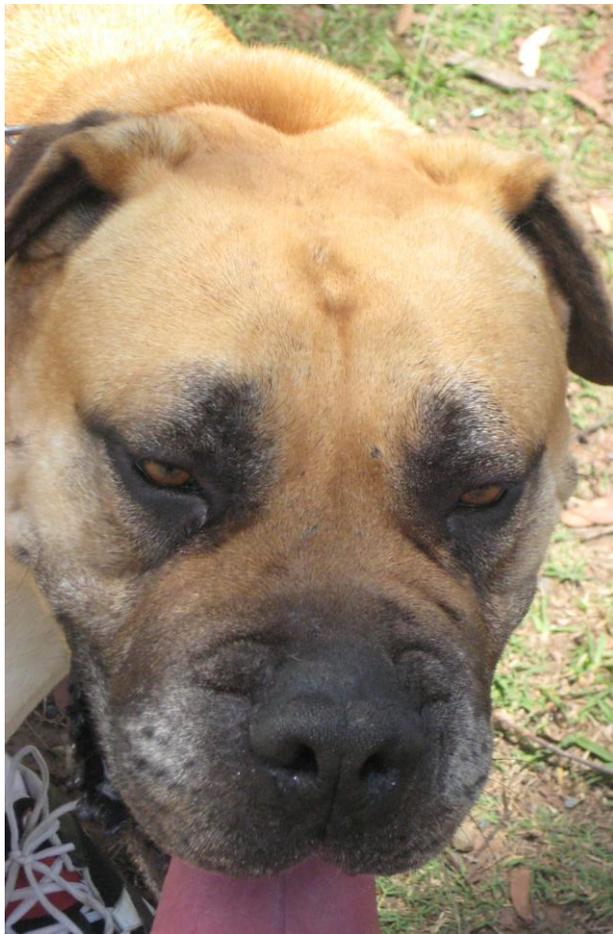


Although this dog has a perfectly straight topline, with good front and rear angulation, his head is more hound like with a longish wedged muzzle and long ears. His head has created an overall look which is more towards a Fila Brasileiro than a Boerboel.

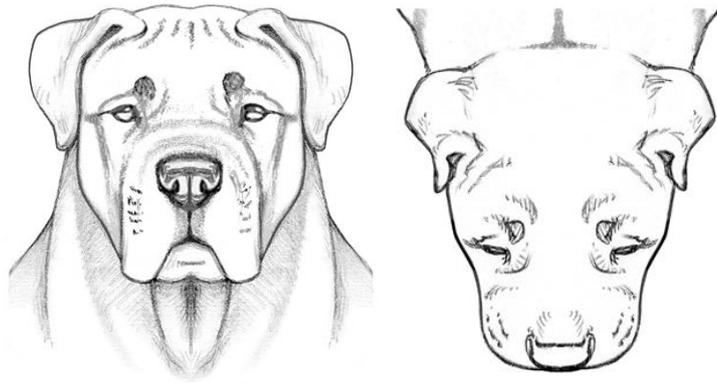
Now that we have the side view explained, let's start on the trickier front and top view of the correct Boerboel muzzle. The standard first says the muzzle is "broad." I like to call a good muzzle "THICK." A muzzle cannot have this desired "thickness" if the eyes of the dog are not spaced wide apart. When the eyes do have the correct spacing, the next thing to look for is where does the muzzle attach to the skull? The muzzle should be so wide, that it reaches out under the dogs eyes (which is where the point of "filled below the eyes" comes in to the breed standard). Also, being so wide on the top of the muzzle, where it attaches to the "well filled between the eyes" stop, it has a fair amount of area that is almost flat, but still has a slight curve to it. This flatness helps produce the blocky appearance.

The next point of the breed standard is very important to interpret correctly. Keep in mind; we are looking to create an overall "blocky" look to the head. The breed standard point of, "and narrows slightly towards the nose," could have been written as, "*narrows ever so slightly* towards the nose". This slight narrowing is hard to see on a live dog, but it is best looked at from above the head standing over the dog. When looking over the muzzle area, you want to look at the outer sides of the

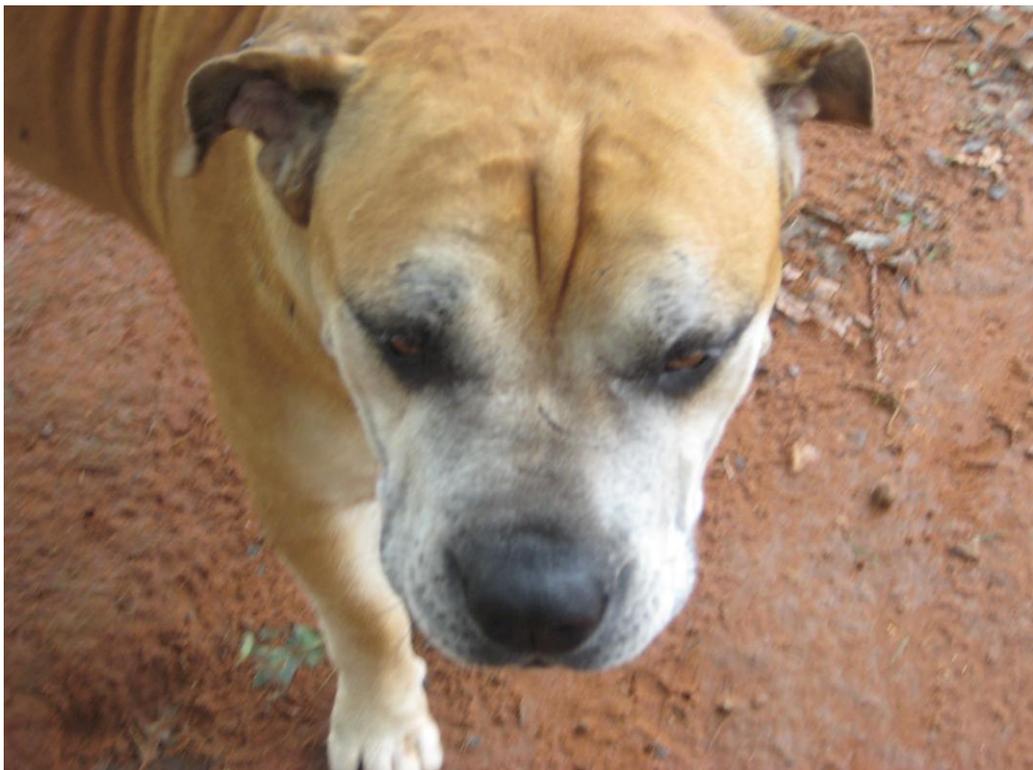
muzzle and see that they are almost parallel. Too much tapering in towards the tip of the nose gives a wedge shaped muzzle and head, not a blocky muzzle and head. So, basically, the muzzle should start thick where its width protrudes under the dog's eyes, and continue this thickness for most of the way, until it gets to the nose, where it has to come in and join the nose. Another point which also gives the muzzle its thickness is the amount of padding the dog has on the muzzle. A dog that has a "well padded," fleshy lip which extends and covers over the entire muzzle, will have a thicker appearance to the muzzle, which is the desired effect. Dogs with both a wide bone structure and good, thick-padded skin on the muzzle will have the thickest looking muzzles, the most impressive and most correct Boerboel muzzle.



This is Ataraxia Sergeant. Although he is panting, you can still see his thick muzzle. His eyes are wide apart and the sides of his muzzle still extend out to well beneath his eyes. His muzzle is also very well padded, giving it even more volume. When a dog pants, it usually changes the head shape dramatically making the muzzle look thinner. In this case, this dog's head just looks a bit rounded off on the edges, compared to when he is not panting. Sergeant has one of the best muzzles of any Boerboel I have ever seen.



I have recreated the front and top view drawings here so I can talk about the muzzle. When looking at the top view, you can see that the outer lips are almost parallel, and the front of the muzzle is quite square. This is the “blockiness” I am always trying to convey. When looking at the top view, you can also see what I meant when I was using my “stone-block” analogy. When looking at the top view, it is easy to see that if you had a stone block, with similar proportions to the head, that you would not need to chisel away much stone before you got the correct shape of the Boerboel head.

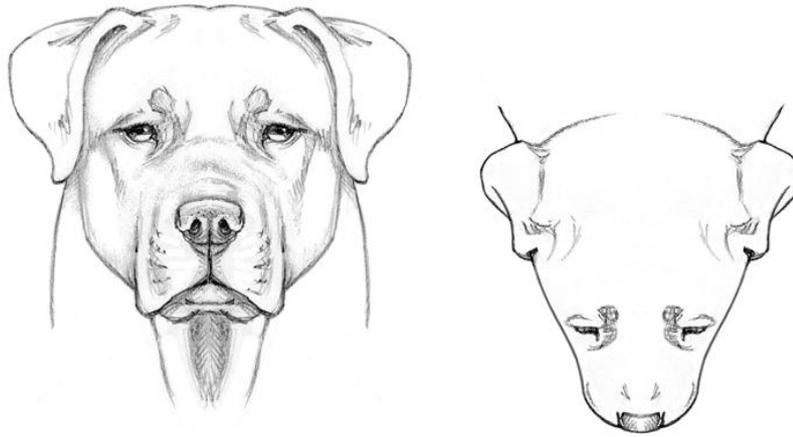


This female Boerboels head has many good points like, wide and full between the eyes. A broad, correct shape and length to her muzzle that has almost parallel sides all the way to the tip. She also has only two wrinkle lines on her forehead which gave her an intelligent look. She has the less desired Ysterberg or Rose ears which take away from her head giving a less blocky shape than if she had the correct triangle shaped ears. All in all a very nice female Boerboel head.

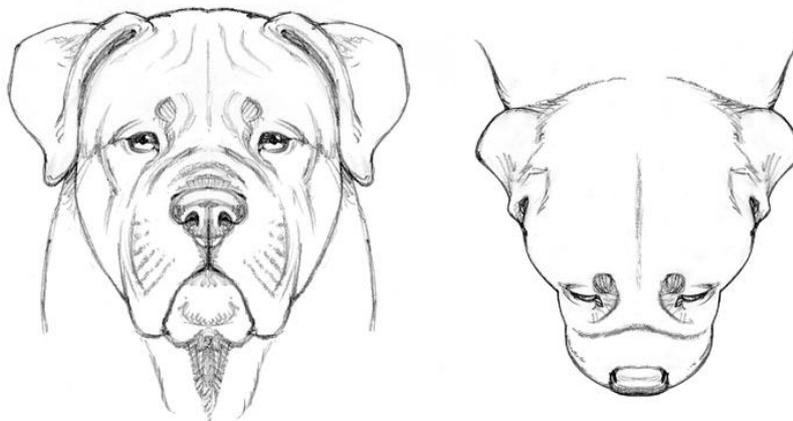
When looking at the Boerboel head from the front, you can see that the muzzle width extends out to be well under the eyes. This is a very important point for two reasons. One; because without extending out to well under the eyes, the muzzle cannot be wide! Two; this is a very unusual trait in any breed and should be conserved in the Boerboel. If the muzzle stays thick all the way to the nose, before it comes in to meet the nose, it will look blocky and powerful when viewed from the front.



This head is blocky and has most of the desired “Boerboel” traits. It is wide between the eyes and the muzzle width extends out beneath the eyes. The muzzle is thick, all the way to the end. When it gets to the end, it is also blocky. All in all, a very Boerboel-like head.



Here is the top and front view of a dog with a “snipey” or “wedge shaped” muzzle. If you look at the top view, it is clear that this dog’s eyes are too close together to be a correct Boerboel head. Once the eyes are too close together, it is virtually impossible for a dog to have a proper “thick” muzzle. This muzzle starts off too thin and tapers in towards the nose, creating a wedge shaped head. When looking from the front, this dog’s muzzle looks small and weak. It lacks depth and width, especially at the tip near the nose. Once again, there is a definite wedge shape, not the desired blocky shape we are looking for in the Boerboel.



When looking from the front, this Bullmastiff-type head is rounded. Even though the muzzle can be wide with this type of head, the muzzle will usually lack depth; in addition, this head is not of the desired, blocky shape.

When looking from the top, the Bullmastiff-type head usually has a muzzle which is too short, and the roundness of the zygomatic arch creates an effect which makes it seem as though the muzzle is separate from the skull. With a correct Boerboel head, the attachments of the muzzle should flow smoothly to the skull no matter what side you are looking from.

- The muzzle measures slightly more than a third of the total length of the head (approx. 10cm for the male and 8cm for the female of ideal height).



Muzzle length is important because if the muzzle is too short, the head will look more like a Bullmastiff. If it is too long, it will begin to look like a hound-type head. The difference in lengths of the male and female muzzles is due to the desired sexual dimorphism. If we go back, the perfect heights of the male being 68cm, and the female being 61cm, the difference in height as a percentage is approximately 10%, but the difference in the length of the muzzles is 20%. If her head were the same size, relative to her body, her muzzle length would be 9cm not 8cm. This extra 10% decrease in size tells you that the female should have approximately a 10% smaller head than the male, relative to her body size.

- The nostrils are large and widely spaced, with the septum (vertical line) of the nose perpendicular to the lower jaw.



Once again, the points that are desired go back to having a broad, blocky muzzle. Large and widely spaced nostrils will not be able to fit on a snipey muzzle. Large nostrils are very beneficial to a dog's breathing and cardiovascular performance; they allow the dog to suck in great amounts of air while having their mouth closed. (while holding an attacker, be it human or animal.)

For the septum to be perpendicular to the lower jaw, we need to go back and look at the side view of the correct head. If the lower jaw fits correctly with the upper jaw, then this perpendicular outline can be achieved. This perpendicular line generates the blocky shape to the front of the muzzle. When the dog is undershot or overshot in the bite, it changes the positioning of this line, taking away from the desired blocky shape.

When looking from the front, the septum also needs to be perpendicular to the lower jaw. Dogs with cleft lips and rei jaws should not be considered for breeding, because of this serious disqualification.

- The jaws are strong, deep and wide, and taper slightly to the front.



Here we are talking about the lower jaw and the upper jaw. If you took away all the skin and flesh you have the jaw parts left that we are

talking about. Because the muzzle needs to be so thick, and wide, and deep, it only follows that the jaw structure is the same. If the bottom jaw is not thick and strong enough, the dogs head cannot be deep. You can check the jaw structure properly by opening up your dog's mouth and looking inside it. It should look wide, with only a slight taper towards the front. If it looks too much like a wedge, it is not correct.

- **The teeth are white, strong, correctly spaced with complete dentition and a scissors bite (limited undershot discriminated against; overshot unacceptable).**



The obvious reason here for having correct dentition and a scissor bite is simply for the dogs own health. Also dogs with bad jaws cannot grip and hold their quarry. Consider that when breeding animals, faults in teeth alignment are extremely genetic. It has been proven that the top and bottom jaw grow independently of each other and are controlled by the dog's genes.

The aesthetic reasoning behind a scissor and slight undershot bite being allowed is due to these factors affecting the head shape, as has been already explained in this chapter.

A quick tip for any dog owner: to keep your dog's teeth white and strong, there is no better tooth cleaner than fresh meaty bones. There has been a lot of propaganda spread by processed dog food companies, over many years, about feeding a dog bones. But when you sit down and think about what wild dogs eat, then you realise there is no better teeth cleaner or food for your dog.

- **The upper lip is loose and fleshy. It just covers the lower lip and teeth in the front but should not hide the underline of the lower jaw on the sides.**



Having a fleshy upper lip helps with the volume and width of the muzzle. When the upper lip hangs down too far past the jaw, it begins to get too loose and flops around. It also affects the lower lip and jowls. If the upper lip hangs down too far, the dog can begin to look a lot like the other mastiff breeds, such as the Neapolitan Mastiff, and the Dogue de Bordeaux. From the side, the lips should add to the blocky shape of the head.



This dog has a nicely shaped upper lip. The front of the lip is perpendicular to the top of the muzzle, and the bottom of the lip is parallel to the top of the muzzle. It is loose and fleshy and when his mouth is closed, it just covers the lower lip. The lower lip is tight up until the jowl area. If the lower lip was loose, this dog would be drooling. This head has good depth in the cranium area and also in the area of the muzzle. The combination of parallel planes of the cranium, the muzzle, and the correct lip shape, give this dog a very blocky shaped head when viewed from the side.

- **The lower lip is moderately tight without excessive jowls.**



The lower lip shape decides whether the dog drools, or the saliva runs back into the dog's throat as nature intended. The Boerboel should have a moderately tight lower lip, which allows most of the saliva that is created in their mouth to flow back into the dog's throat and keep the dog hydrated. The looser the bottom lip is, the more a dog will drool. Drool is undesirable for two reasons. The obvious, it's messy. The less obvious reason is that the drool or saliva, which is coming out of the dog's mouth, is fluid which is meant to keep the dog cool and also meant to keep the dog hydrated. All good Dogs that work out in the elements for long periods of time do not drool. They can't afford to lose that vital fluid and become dehydrated.

- **The eyes are medium sized, round, forward facing and widely spaced, with an intelligent expression.**



I have already talked about the importance of the correct spacing of the eyes. The size and shape are also very important. If the eyes are too big, the dog will look more like an antelope. If they are too small and almond shaped, he will look like a Bullterrier cross. The Boerboel needs to have an intelligent expression. The intelligent expression is a combination of traits which flows from the eyes and is accompanied by having the ears up, attentive, and with a few wrinkles on the forehead.

As explained before, the Boerboels eyes need to be widely spaced apart to have the correct shaped head. Although the average of all Boerboels at this point in time don't have enough width between the eyes, there is a danger that the eyes are too far apart. If the eyes are too wide, they will be on the side of the dog's head and will not be forward facing. Also, dogs with their eyes too far apart cannot look intelligent. So, the limit to the width between the eyes will be the point where they are no longer forward facing and/ or the dog does not have an intelligent look on his face, due to the eyes being too far apart.

- It is well protected against the environment by firm and black-pigmented eyelids, showing no structural weaknesses.



This is common sense here. The black pigmentation on the eyelids is needed to stop skin cancers. Many white English Bullterriers die before their time, because of skin cancers on their eyelids and even on their nose, where the white/pink skin is exposed due to the short, sparse hair. Structural weaknesses are not named in the standard, but they are entropion (lower eyelid rolling in, toward the eye. This can cause abrasions on the eye) and ectropion (lower eyelid rolling out, away from the eye. This can leave the eye prone to damage and infection from foreign bodies like dust and grass seeds). Both of these problems with the eyes can sometimes be related to the desired "well padded" looking skin.

- The colour of the eye is preferably dark brown but all shades of brown (preferably darker than the pelt) are acceptable.



This part is just an aesthetic thing. Often different coloured eyes are related to multi coloured coats like merle.



This dog has way too much wrinkle and loose skin around his head (what I call too wet). This loose skin has overflowed into his eyes causing entropion.

- **The ears are set wide and high and are carried close to the head.**



If anything could be changed in the breed standard, for the benefit of the Boerboel, it's the ears. Ears that sit too closely to the head are unhealthy because they do not let enough air inside the ear cavity, which in turn causes ear infections due to dampness. In nature, there is not a single species that has down ears. Even the elephant, who has ears the size of a table, can move them and flap them, to air out the insides of their ears.

Dogs with correct ears will have a small gap between the part of the ear that is hanging down, and the side of the head. Correct ears will also have enough cartilage and manoeuvrability in the ear to keep air flowing inside the ear.

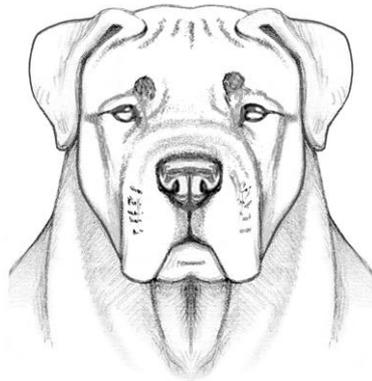
Rose ears or “Ysterberg ears,” as they are known in the Boerboel fraternity, do not create a square or blocky look to the head like the down, “V-shaped” ears, but they do let in a lot of air to the ear cavity,

and do not have even a small percentage of the problems that the standard ears have. The ears need to be set high and wide to complete the flat top line of the skull when the dog is attentive.

- They are V-shaped with a broad base tapering to a rounded point that reaches almost down to a line extending from the mouth.



When the Boerboel is attentive, his head looks very angular. This is due to the contribution of the “V-shaped” ears, attached high but wide, on the blocky skull. If a Boerboel is looking straight at you and he is attentive with his ears up, the outer line of the ears and the outer line of the bottom jaw will almost form a straight line. This straight line gives an angular effect to both sides of the head. This is only achieved when the ears are the correct length. The inside part of the ears will appear to come down in a vertical line, close to the side of the head, touching in some parts, giving the skull that desired “blocky” appearance.



This schematic drawing shows all the desired traits relating to the ears. If you look at the outer edge of both the ears and the jaw lines, you can draw an imaginary straight line that touches the outer edge of the ear, then goes down, and extends and touches the outer edge of the jaw line on each side of the dogs head. You can also draw an imaginary line across the top of the dogs head and ears. The inside edge of the ears touch the skull and are vertical giving that desired blocky look. Almost everything about the Boerboel head is blocky and angular.

- When the dog is attentive, the top of the ears and the skull, in between, should form a straight line.



I have already talked about this. The top of the ears is the top of the “V”. The back of the head is flat, and when the ears are held in the correct position, it forms a straight line. This straight line across the top

of the head completes the “blocky look that we are after for the Boerboel.

- **The facial expression should be intelligent, attentive and confident (not evasive, shy or threatening).**



The facial expression is very important because it can give an insight into dogs with extremes of temperament who are outside the desired temperament standard for the Boerboel breed.

I think a good time to judge the facial expression is at the appraisal, when there are many different things going on around the dog. The appraiser should simply click their fingers or make some kind of noise that gets the dogs attention. The correct reaction is for the ears to come up, the eyes to focus on the direction of the noise, and for a slight wrinkle to form on the forehead.

If a dog reacts by lowering his head and not making eye contact, or worse, flinching and totally trying to avoid the situation, then the dog does not have the correct temperament to be called a Boerboel.

Dogs that react aggressively in this situation, unless attacked trained, should also be considered as having the incorrect temperament. This is not a threatening situation and therefore does not require a threat response. The dog should be confident enough to sit calmly and not feel threatened or intimidated.

The Head... Summarised!

The correct head of the Boerboel is a combination of many things that are designed to make it first, functional, and second, blocky. If you can understand the concept of this “*blocky look*,” you will be able to recognise and appreciate it when you see it.

If I were to review the most important parts of the Boerboel head, I would have to say that, if the eyes are widely spaced apart, and the skull is well filled between the eyes, the rest of the head can fall into place and give an overall correct “Boerboel look”. The reason for this is, if the eyes are far apart, the zygomatic arch starts at the corner of the eye and will go *straight* back to the attachment at the back of the head. And when the zygomatic arch is straight, the head is more likely to look “blocky.” Also, coming forward from the eyes, if the eyes are widely spaced, it gives the muzzle a broad base to start from. I think this

concept of the eyes being widely spaced is critical to understanding the correct Boerboel head.

Another important point that seems to be hard for most breeders and appraisers to grasp is the Boerboel muzzle. The entire head cannot look blocky if the muzzle is thin or if it tapers off towards the nose, forming a wedge. The muzzle needs to be blocky as well. It starts with the top of the muzzle, where it joins the stop, being wide and almost flat. It is well-filled and attached under the eyes, not between the eyes. The top lips and the skin on the muzzle should be well padded to create an even wider, thicker muzzle. It only narrows slightly as it goes toward the nose. The end of the muzzle should look blocky and not wedge shaped.

When these two major points are correct, you begin to get a very nice looking Boerboel head. Other things that can be hard to achieve are the depth of skull and muzzle together.

The good news about the Boerboel head is that it is very easy for breeders to change the shape of dog heads within a few generations. I am confident, now that the head has finally been described in detail, that breeders will be able to breed more Boerboels with better and better heads.

4. THE NECK

- The neck is powerful, of medium length, strong muscled and with a pronounced crest.



I have already talked about how important the neck is to contributing to the impressiveness of the Boerboel. I think one of the main reasons the neck has been overlooked by most breeders is that only a small percentage of dogs (less than 5%) actually have a good neck, with the pronounced crest that we are after. Because there are so few dogs with the desired neck, it is hard for people to imagine, in their own mind, what a good neck should look like, and there are so few dogs to breed to with this trait.

The length of the neck is very important. When a neck is too long it looks like the head is too far in front of the dog and not entirely part of the dog. Also, it is harder to get the correct muscling and pronounced crest on a long neck. Necks that are too short can be overly muscled and look quite impressive, but the dog will lack movement in the neck. I have seen an inbred son of Lourina Mac who had such a short, muscular neck that whenever he went to see what was happening behind him, he

would need to turn his entire body around, because his neck was so restricted due to the short length and over-muscling. Usually, if a dog has a nice crest on his neck, it is because everything is attached correctly. If the neck lacks muscle and a crest, it is harder to judge if it is the correct length. Necks that are either too short or too long can effect movement.

I think the term “powerful” describes a neck that is well muscled and has a crest. Sometimes, dogs will have thick necks when you put a measuring tape around them, but they do not display the correct shape, which is the crest on top of the neck, when viewed from the side.

Many of the old Ysterberg males had great necks. I will bring attention to the photos of dogs that have good necks throughout this book so that people can be more aware of this magnificent trait.

- (In the female the muscles are less accentuated but should remain in balance with the head and body).



The female should have a less pronounced neck, with softer muscle, due to the sexual dimorphism we have already discussed. A thick neck with a prominent crest is a masculine trait. It also needs to be much larger to attach to a larger, wider front torso area, and a larger head. The male's neck also needs to hold a larger, heavier head.

- It is set medium high, flows smoothly into the sloping withers and forms a unit with the head and shoulders.



This dog below has a great neck that flows smoothly into both the sloping withers and the head. It is also set medium high because there is a definite change in direction, where the top of the withers joins the base of the neck. If it was set low, there would be a lesser angle at this junction. If it was set high, like an Arabian horse, the angle between the neck and the top of the withers would be closer to a right angle. Notice how this dog does not have a lot of muscle on his body, but still has a pronounced crest on his neck.



Mouzer and Ysterberg Ben at 9 years of age. He has lost a lot of muscle on his body due to age but still keeps that amazing neck.

- The dewlap is noticeable but disappears towards the sternum.



The dewlap on the underside of the dog's neck, which seems to be a common Mastiff trait, actually has an important function. The loose skin under the neck can help to protect a dog from snake bites and in fights, with either other animals or dogs.

Dogs that tangle with snakes will often get bitten on the chest and dewlap area, due to the Boerboels size, and the ability for disturbed snakes to rear up and strike at that height. The loose skin serves as a protection against the venom, by trapping most of the venom in the loose, fatty tissue of the dewlap and lymph nodes in the neck and not allowing the venom into the circulatory blood stream, where it can do the most damage.

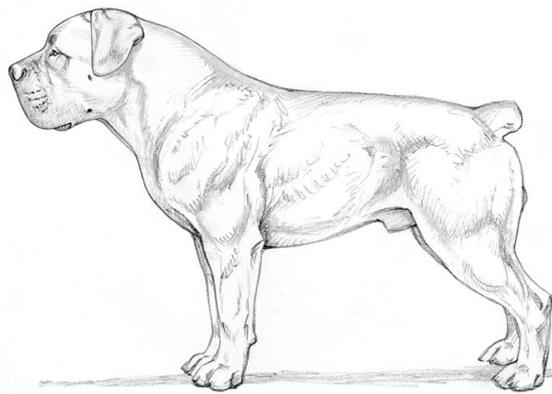
Only recently (late 2010) a breeder in Australia found a dead snake in his female Boerboels run. By the time he found the snake, it had already been dead for over a day. The Boerboel bitch had a swollen neck where

the snake had obviously bitten her. The owner rang the vet to ask for advice on what to do. The vet said that if she wasn't already dead, she should be fine, and all he should do is monitor her health. She seemed a bit off colour, but fine. The swelling on her neck and dewlap went away after about one week, and the Boerboel returned to normal health.

The dewlap is also helpful in fights. If another animal has a hold of the loose dewlap, the Boerboel is still able to manoeuvre and defend himself. The loose skin also makes it hard for an animal to get in deep and get a good grip of the throat area, which would cut off vital air and blood to the Boerboels brain.

The negative side to the dewlap is that when the dog's collar gets wet, it can trap moisture and cause infection.

5. THE BODY



- The body is approximately 15% longer than the height and is measured horizontally, from the point of the shoulder to a vertical line at the rear of the rump.



A 15% longer body, compared to the height at the withers, gives the side view of the Boerboel a blocky profile, as opposed to a square one like the Bullmastiff. When describing the body of a dog in a breed standard, most things like ratios are approximate, because there are so many variations that can be effective. So, it is acceptable if a dog is a bit longer, or a bit shorter than the desired length. The main thing is that the length is not so short that the dog is square like a Bullmastiff, or shorter in the body than the height like a Boxer, or too long in body like a Neapolitan Mastiff.

- (The length of the chest, loin and rump is approximately proportioned 2:1:1).



Here we are describing the rib cage, from the back of the shoulders, to where the loin starts (not where the ribs finish), to the end of the loin and the rump portion. This is the back of the dog, also called the topline.

- It is blocky, muscular, solid and has good depth and width.



Once again the term blocky is used. Many Boerboels have good depth, but many lack width. It is hard to get a blocky appearance without width. Solid is a suggestion of movement and construction. A dog that has a swaying back when moving and is soft and sloppy in the body is the opposite of solid.

A blocky build also creates a dog that is more explosive over short distances rather than a dog that is tall which will have a faster top speed and a lanky type of gate.

- The back is broad and straight, with pronounced muscles that form an imperceptible arch in the top line over the lumber region.



When looking from the side, the topline should be straight and almost parallel with the ground. The imperceptible arch described in the standard is like the top of the arch that is almost flat, but you know there is a curve to it. So it is with the top line of the Boerboel's back, it should have a very slight curve to it, over the lumber or loin region. This is the part of the dog's body that has only a spine as the structural skeleton. The spine is made up of many separate pieces. When all the muscle is taken away, the portion of the spine, in-between the ribs and the hips should look like a small arch that is spanning across two points. If you know anything about engineering, you know that when you are using many individual pieces (like a spine has many pieces to it) to create a bridge, the arch is the strongest shape because it interlocks the pieces together and the weight of the bridge locks everything in onto itself.

When looking from above the dog, the back is still straight and symmetrical. It is broad with distinct muscles on the loin region and at the withers. There should be a definite partition between the left side and

the right side loin muscles.

- The brisket reaches down to the point of the elbow, which is approximately half the total height at the withers.



This is a great reference point to check if a dog's front end construction is correct. So if the shoulder angulation is correct, and the depth of chest is correct, they should both line up at the same point when looking from the side. If they don't line up, then you need to ask yourself the question, "Is it because the shoulders are too straight or is it because the chest is too shallow?"

- The transitions between the chest, loin and rump are well filled and flowing.



If it is not flowing and pleasant to the eye, there is probably something wrong.

6. CHEST

- The chest is long, broad and deep, with well-sprung ribs and strong developed pectoral muscles. It is filled behind the shoulder blades.



This section is discussing the rib cage. The size of a dog's rib cage is proportional to the size of their heart or cardiovascular system. So, there is a direct relationship with the size of rib cage to how fit a dog can get. In this case, bigger is definitely better!

Well-sprung ribs mean that the sides are not flat, or slab-sided. The most efficiently shaped ribs are the ones where the cross section is a tear-drop shape. The top should appear rounded and then come down, almost to a point, at the brisket. Also, when looking at the ribs, you need to look at the thickness of each rib. Thinner ribs are more elastic and will be able to expand more, allowing more air into the lungs. Thicker ribs, and barrel shaped rib cages, have less movement. With this shape of rib cage, the dog will have to expand the belly area more with each breath when breathing heavily.

- **The point of the sternum is level with the point of the shoulder.**



This is another reference point that helps judge how correct the dogs front end attachments are. The sternum is the V shaped bone that sticks out a little in the centre of the chest. The sternum is located just under the dog's neck. If the points of the dog's shoulders are lined up with the sternum, it is a good indication that the shoulders are angled correctly and in the correct position. If the shoulders are under-angulated, the sternum will stick out further than the point of the shoulder; if the shoulders are over-angulated, the sternum will be inside the line of the two shoulder points.

Some dogs, even with correct angulation, will have the whole front assembly set too far forward on the rib cage. Although the angles may look correct, the sternum will, again, be inside the line of the two shoulder points.

- **The shoulder blades should be well-attached (not loose).**



If you have ever skinned and cut up a four legged animal like an antelope or goat, you know that the shoulder blades are only held on by tendon and muscle. There is no socket or joint to take the weight like the hips ball and socket joint. It is important for good movement and strength that they are well attached. To check this, you simply need to push down on the dog's head and watch what happens at the top of the back, where the tops of the shoulder blades are located. If the dog's shoulder blades are poorly attached, they will come together and almost touch. If they are well attached, and the dog is strong, there will be little movement in that region.

7. THE LUMBER REGION, LOIN

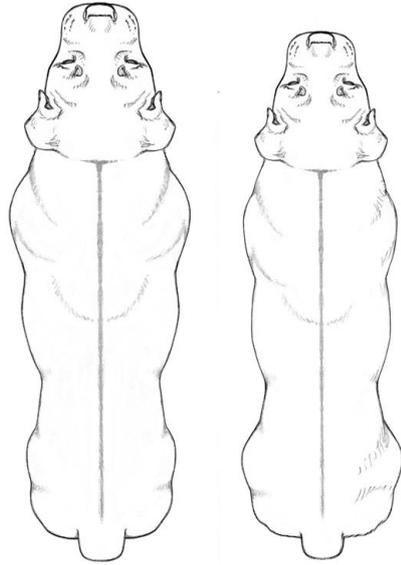
- **It is short, straight and muscular, and slightly narrower than the chest and rump.**



Dogs with short loins seem to have better movement than dogs with long loins. Also, if the loin is too long, the dog's body will become too long or the rib cage will appear too short. If the loin is too long, it is more likely to see too much movement in the dog's topline when they are in motion. The width of the loin is only slightly narrower than the chest and rump. The loin should flow nicely into both the chest and the rump. Sometimes, dogs with barrel chests will also have the end of their

ribcage stop too early, and not flow into the loin. So, if you were to try and run your hand along the side of the loin and onto the ribs of one of these dogs, your hand would come to a complete stop at the ribs.

Because the female will have a wider rump than the male, the loin will also be slightly wider than the males when looking from above.



This drawing from above shows how the loin is slightly narrower than the chest and rump. It also shows how everything flows into the next part. When looking at the loin and rump area, notice the female is wider because she needs to conceive puppies and pass them through her birth canal. The male has a larger chest than the female, because he is heavier and needs larger lungs and heart to pump oxygen and blood around to his larger body.

- The flanks are well filled, only moderately tucked up and the depth is slightly less than the length of the loin.



What we are saying here, is that Boerboels should be moderately tucked up in the belly, but not as much as a boxer or greyhound. Often, people will try and make their dog grow by over feeding him, or by keeping their dog fat, so that they can tell people he weighs “X” kg’s. If the dog’s belly is not tucked up, it is most likely too fat. Males should look more tucked up than females. The female should also have a slightly larger flank flap or skirt, which is the flap of skin that joins the belly to the back leg.

8. THE RUMP, CROUP

- The rump is broad, strong, muscular and in proportion to the rest of the dog.



The female needs to have a wider rump than the male, because she needs to be able to comfortably pass puppies through her birth canal.

- Its height should not exceed the height at the withers. The top line drops slightly towards the tail.



When looking from the side, the rump should be lower than the withers. If it is higher, it is usually due to inadequate angulation of the rear legs. If the topline is straight and the rump is at the right height, then the topline will slope slightly down towards the rump. Sometimes, dogs will have a dip behind the withers, which will create a topline that slopes up towards the rump, even if the rump is lower than the withers.

- The croup is broad and flat to provide a fulcrum (axel) towards powerful reach of the hind legs.



The width of the croup is directly proportional to the amount of muscle that can be attached to it for the back legs. So, a wide croup can hold a lot more muscle than a narrow croup. Once again, the female should be wider than the male in this area.

- The tail is thick and set fairly high. It should be well covered with hair and without kink.



Kinked tails are due to the vertebra in the tail fusing together. If you begin to breed a line of dogs with kinked tails, eventually the fusion of the vertebra moves up into the spine. This is very uncomfortable for the dog and eventually causes arthritis, which decreases the dog's quality of life, and ultimately their life span. Fused spines will also effect movement.

- Tails are traditionally docked but undocked tails are acceptable. Docking takes place at the 3rd or 4th caudal vertebrae.

- The natural tail should reach approximately to the hocks when the dog is standing.



The natural, undocked, tail flows down and is relatively straight when viewed from behind.

9. LEGS AND FEET

- Weak and malformed limbs jeopardize the physical functionality that is required of the Boerboel and should be discriminated against.

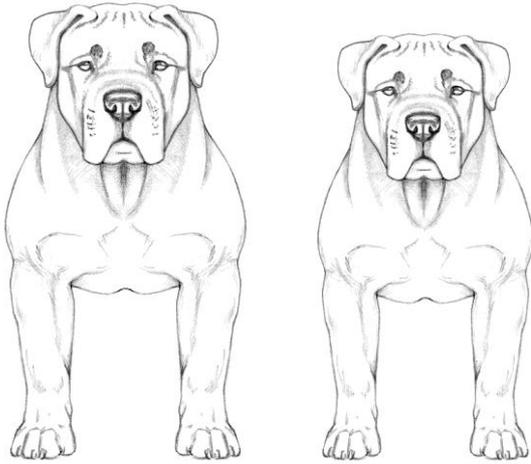


It is easy to recognise malformed limbs and feet. Legs may be bent, or one leg may be thinner than the other. Weak looking limbs are ones which look too thin for the dog's body, or the feet are widely splayed with big gaps between the toes. The feet should be tight, like cat feet.

10. THE FORELIMBS

So much emphasis has been put on the hindquarters of the Boerboel for the past 30 years, with little regard for the rest of the dog. If you were to debate which is more important, the front or the rear drive train, you could quite easily build an overwhelming argument for the forelimbs. It is a little known fact, amongst all dog enthusiasts, that the front end of a dog is where most of the initial acceleration and power comes from. It is estimated that the front accounts for approximately 70 % of the dog's power. This is verified by the dogs with excellent fronts and only average rears, out-performing dogs with excellent hindquarters and only average shoulder construction, in tasks which need quick acceleration and explosive power.

As soon as a dog begins to move, the dog's head reaches forward and 70% of the dog's entire bodyweight is on the forelimbs, with only the remaining 30% on the rear. When moving, the forelimbs need to be 2.3 times as strong as the hindquarters. When a Boerboel is standing, 60% of his weight is on the front legs and 40% on the back legs, so even when they are standing, the front end is taking 50% more weight than the rear. Taking the weight distribution and the original purpose of the Boerboel (which is to explode into action when danger is upon its owner) into consideration, it becomes clear that the front end is perhaps more important than the back end. That is only if we were to give preference to either the forelimbs or the hindquarters!



Front view, male and female Boerboel.

They both have a blocky head and body with wide chests and thick front legs. The females head chest and shoulders are smaller due to sexual dimorphism.

- **Are strong boned, with well-defined muscles and sturdy joints.**



The bone on the front legs should be thick. Twelve inches or more, around the top of the forearm, is a good size for a male, 68cm tall. Large bones are usually attached to large sturdy joints. The reason for the large bone and sturdy joints is that Boerboels are very strong explosive dogs, so strong running gear is needed to keep everything together. Having thin legs on a Boerboel is like putting a V8 into a small, 4 cylinder car. When you use the power of the V8, components in the drive train of the 4 cylinder will begin to break.

Good muscling comes when the angles of the shoulder are correct. It is through correct angulation in the shoulder, and powerful muscles, that the explosive acceleration of a Boerboel can be generated.

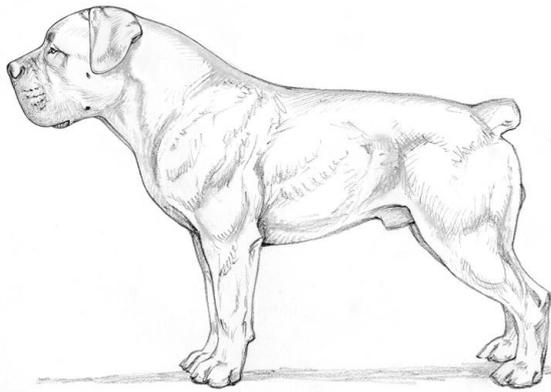
There is a point where there is too much muscle or too much bone. That point is reached when the dog's movement is compromised. I have seen dogs with too much muscle seem stiff and inflexible, but I have not yet seen a dog with so much bone that it impedes movement. Actually, at this moment in time, I personally think it is impossible to have a Boerboel with **too** much bone, and if it does exist, I would love to see that dog!

- **Should be correctly angulated from the well-sloped shoulder blade down to the metacarpus (pastern).**

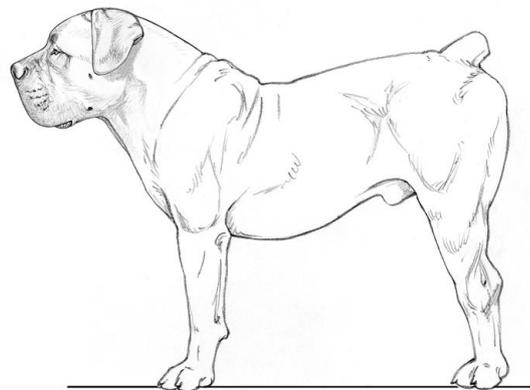


Shoulder angulation is hard for the novice dog enthusiast to

understand because it is all hidden by muscle and everything seems to blend in. The best way is to look where the top of the withers are and then draw an imaginary line down to the point of the shoulder, and then down to the front of the elbow. When you draw those two lines, you should have an obvious angle. Also, we can check if the point of the shoulder lines up with the brisket, and if the point of the elbow and the bottom of the brisket are at the same height off the ground. If the shoulder isn't sloping enough, and the front shoulder angulation is too straight, then the above mentioned points will not line up.



Correct shoulder Angulation



Incorrect front and rear angulation; notice how the top line of the dog is affected by both. It is impossible for a dog built like this to move well. Another side effect of such bad construction is bad stamina. This dog would fatigue quickly with the first signs being a wobbly, weak back end. If this were a bitch, she would have trouble delivering puppies naturally, because of the upward tilt of the pelvis.

Shoulder angulation effects musculature and more importantly, movement. Too much angulation in the front will cause the front to be weak and the dog will need to take more of its weight onto the rear. Not enough angulations in the shoulder doesn't allow a dog to stretch out when running and it is less efficient for running at high speeds, so a dog with not enough angulation in the shoulder will fatigue quicker when

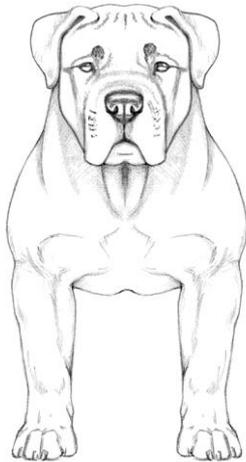
running at top speed.

- Should form a vertical line from the point of the shoulder down to the paws, with the elbows held close and parallel to the chest when viewed from the front.



Looking from the front, the dog's shoulder construction and legs should line up with the feet. Any variation from being dead straight will effect the dog's movement; the effect of misaligned legs on movement is proportional to how badly they stray from being straight.

Misaligned legs can, in many, but not all cases, put extra stresses on joints and bones. Dogs with turned-out feet and elbows quite often get sore elbows and wrists later in life, due to the uneven wearing on the joints.



Correct front view shows that shoulders, legs and feet are aligned, vertically, one on top of the other. This alignment allows joints and ligaments to work without undesirable stresses.

- Seen from the side the forearm should be vertical from the elbow to the carpus. The metacarpus is short, thick and strong and angles very slightly forward.



The main thing to look out for here is the metacarpus or the ankle. If it is too low, it could be due to dietary deficiency. This problem can be fixed by supplementing the correct vitamins, minerals, and protein ratio needed, before the dog reaches the age of 8-9months. Sometimes it is genetics which causes the dog to be low in the pasterns/ metacarpus.

Once again, this will effect movement. The lower the carpus, the more it will effect the movement of the dog.

Another genetic trait to look out for, relating to the carpus and metacarpus, is the front feet turning out. This is a common trait in the Piona line and I believe it was a trait passed down from Donkheroek Kalpoot.

- The forepaws point straight forward, are large, round, strongly boned and compact.



Ysterberg dogs were known for their straight, forward-pointing front feet. The feet need to be large and well boned to match the thick legs.

- The toes are well arched, with curved black toenails and protected by hair in between. The pads are thick, tough and black.



Most Boerboels are too flat in the feet. A condition not helped by the fact that some are kept overweight by their owners. This can effect movement. A Boerboels toes/ feet should be like a cheetahs feet. Cheetahs do not have retractable nails like the rest of the cat population, and their feet are a bit longer than the average cat. They are more like dog feet. So, like the cheetahs feet, the toes need to be tight and well arched. These tight feet help with the desired, buoyant movement.

Dogs with white pigmentation on their feet get foot sore very quickly when working and they also get foot sore on hot days when the ground heats up. I have often seen working Border Collies with one white foot, pick that foot up off the ground because it has become too tender, while the rest of the black pads keep on working throughout the day. Black pads are about five times tougher than white pads!

11.THE HINDLIMBS

The hindquarters of the Boerboel has had a lot of emphasis put on it since 1995. This was when the breed had a large amount of dogs with straight rears. These days, there are many dogs with good rears and emphasis needs to be put back on the entire dog and not just one segment. Because of the distinct sexual dimorphism needed in the breed, a good rear is more important in the female

than the male. Both should have correct angulation, but males should have less muscle and width in the rear when being compared to the female.

- **Are strong boned, sturdy and muscular.**



There is that term “strong boned” again. Most of the bones in the rear are covered by muscle, except part of the stifle bone, and the metatarsus or what most people call the hock. The metatarsus should be noticeably thicker than, sometimes double, the visible part of the stifle bone.

- **The joints should be sound, strong and correctly angulated to support the powerful propulsion from the hindquarters during movement.**



Sound joints are the most important point here. When a dog goes lame in the rear, there are three main points where things most often go wrong: The hips, the patellas, and the cruciate ligament.

The cruciate ligament can get ruptured when the dog does not have the correct angulations; often too much angulation will cause this problem. Sometimes, a dog will tear his cruciate ligament when walking or running on slippery surfaces. Usually, but not always, it tears due to some underlying problem

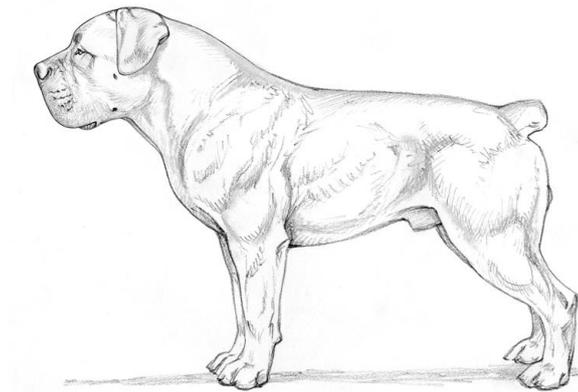


This dogs photo was taken specifically because it had all the wrong angles in its hind legs and front legs. Even his front foot is turned out

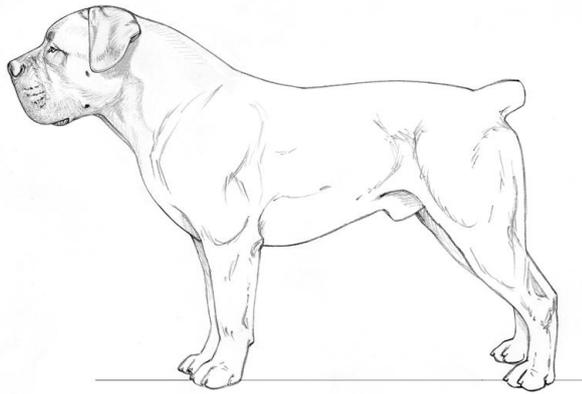
facing the camera. Obviously he cannot have a good topline or movement, with such poor angulation in his legs. This dog is more susceptible to joint and ligament problems due to his poor construction.

The patella is like the dog's knee joint. Sometimes, patella's will move, causing trouble with a dog's movement. This is called subluxating patella's; it is often a genetic problem in some breeds. I have not seen it too often in Boerboels.

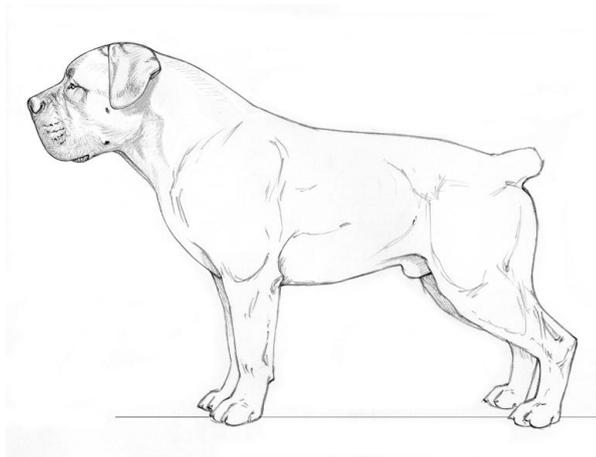
Hips are always a controversial subject amongst large-breed enthusiasts. The hips are a major load-bearing joint and need to be sound. If a dog can move effortlessly, without limping, for his entire life and live to be over ten, then his entire structure, including the hips, are sound. Bad hips can be due to the genes passed down from the parents. Bad hips can also be due to environmental issues such as, incorrect food, and injuries attained during growth. Hip injuries, or excessive wear and tear on the hip joint, can also be owed to bad angulation in the rear legs.



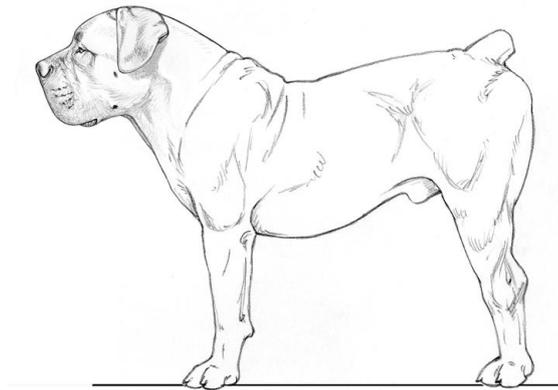
This drawing depicts the correct rear angulation and musculature for a male. When the rear is correct, and the front is correct, it allows the topline of the dog to be straight, and slightly sloping to the rear. When looking at the following drawings, take note of the effect that incorrect angulation has on a dog's topline.



This dog is slightly under-angulated when compared to the breed standard. Because he lacks a bit of angulation, this in turn, affects his topline by raising it. Dogs with this amount of angulation can live a long, healthy life, and still move well. If you were to breed a line of dogs, you should aim for most of the dogs in your line to have angulation in-between the ideal and this depiction. Dogs with even a fraction more angulation than ideal should not be bred and you should try to avoid breeding dogs with less angulation than the above drawing.



This dog is over-angulated and his top line slopes too much towards the rear of the dog (what some breeders call a “ski-slope” topline). When I look at this dog, he looks weak in the rear as if he has hip or spinal problems. Dogs with over-angulation cannot move well and are more prone to physical ailments like bad hips and torn cruciate ligaments. Slightly under-angulated is much healthier than slightly over-angulated.



This dog has a very straight rear and straight shoulders as well. Both have affected his top line massively. This dog cannot move well and is more likely to have problems with joints the older he gets, because the weight is on the incorrect parts of the joints. Straight shoulders and stifles cannot hold as much muscle to them as correctly angulated ones can. Because there is no angulation in the rear, the dog's back foot will sit further under the dog to support his weight.

- The upper thighs are broad, deep and muscular as seen from the side and the rear.



I think musculature on the thighs has been exaggerated with some males. The muscle on the rear needs to be balanced with the muscle on the front. The front should always be wider than the rear. For females it is better to have the rear wider and carry more weight than the front. The muscle on the female should be noticeably softer than males.

- The lower thighs have well defined muscles and show substance down to the hocks.
- The metatarsus is broad, relatively short and perfectly upright. The front is in a vertical line with the rear of the rump.



A Boerboel must have thick bones; this applies to the hocks as well. I think I have already mentioned this, but it is so important that I will mention it again. The hock should be thicker than the stifle bone and comparable in thickness to the front legs. The hock should be perpendicular to the ground. The toes should be in a plum line from the point of the buttocks (the area that protrudes beyond the tail) to the ground. If the toes are behind this plum line, the dog is probably over

angulated in the rear or “sickle hocked.” If his toes are in front of this plumb line, the dog is lacking in bend of stifle. Both of these faults are a weak hock assembly and will affect the dog’s movement and athleticism. It would be advisable to breed away from dogs with faulty hock conformation.

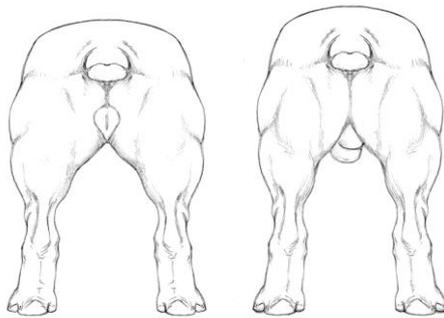
- From the rear the profile of the hindquarters should form an inverted U, with the stifles pointing straight forward and the hocks straight backwards.



What the standard is asking here is that the stifle and hocks should be on the same plane and that plane should point straight to the front. So both legs are almost parallel when viewed from the top or behind. This is the same as most endurance-type dogs like Husky’s, Sheepdogs, Kelpies, and Border Collies. When the legs track straight, it is the most efficient construction for a dog, allowing him to move freely and effortlessly, for long periods of time.

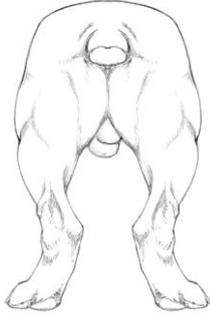
What needs to be said here, is that the power dogs, those who need to explode off the mark, like Greyhounds, are actually slightly cow hocked, but with the hock and stifle bones of each individual leg still on the same plane. The only difference is that the planes will converge somewhere behind the dogs hocks. A slight cow hock not only produces more power, but it also looks more powerful when looking from behind, because it shows more of the dog’s thigh muscle. Although the standard asks for stifles pointing straight forward, a slight cow hock should not be discriminated against, as it is a good adaptation if you want more explosive dogs.

A dog with a powerful, correct front, and a slight cow hock at the rear, will accelerate faster than a dog with a perfect rear, and a correct front given all other things are equal.



The female is wider when viewed from behind, even if she is smaller. With the stifles pointing straight forwards and the hocks pointing back. What is important here is that the stifle and the hock are on the same plane. So, if you were to cut off each leg and lay it on the

ground, keeping the same angles as when the dog is standing, the leg should sit flat on the ground. Often, I have seen dogs that look like they have good angulation from the side, but when you look from the rear or from above, the hock is on a different plane to the stifle bone.



This is an extreme cow hock. Although not desirable, cow hocks are much better than the opposite, which are the hocks facing out. If a dog is cow hocked, the next thing to check is if the stifle and hocks are on the same plane. If they are, the dog should still be able to move well. Many breeds of actual, functional, working, performance dogs have varying degrees of cow hocks and perform at the top of their sport.



Bandy legs or Barrel hocks are the variation in the stifle that is the weakest and the least desired. When watching such a dog move from behind, you see how weak they look, their hocks wobbling with every step. Dogs with barrel hocks are prone to bad movement and torn cruciate ligaments. They should be avoided in breeding programs.

- The hind paws point straightforward, are slightly smaller than the forepaws but have the same quality.



If everything else is correct in the hindquarters, leading up to the paws, then barring injury, or arthritis, the paws will have to point straight forward.

12.MOVEMENT

- The movement is strong, purposeful, buoyant and fluent, with comfortable reach in front and rear.



When describing the movement of the Boerboel, the above sentence is the crux of the breed's movement. A dog can move in a way that is exactly conforming to the following points below, but if he does not have that powerful, buoyant, almost floating, effortless movement of a Boerboel, then he should be rigorously scrutinized.

The rest of these points below, about movement, describe the finer points to perfect movement and although important, are not as important as this first point.



This picture shows a solid topline, and good reach and drive from both the front and rear quarters. Good reach and drive from the front end of this dog show the importance of having good shoulder construction. Also, if you find his centre of gravity, you will discover that it is just behind his shoulders and therefore most of his weight is on his front legs. This is just another reason why dogs need the desired, powerful shoulder construction.

- The legs and body should move in line front to rear. The feet moves closer to a centre line as speed increases, forming a V shape in the observers mind.



A dog with correct construction will do this as he increases speed. A dog like a Bullterrier, who is stiff in the shoulder area, will increase speed, and his front legs will stay relatively parallel. This creates stilted

movement, not the fluent movement we are after for the Boerboel.

- Whilst converging towards the center line of travel, the legs should never cross.



Dogs that lack width in the chest are more susceptible to the legs crossing when moving, than dogs with a chest that is the correct width.

- At all gaits the top line is firm and strong, without swaying, or dipping in the middle, and without excess body roll.



Looking at a dog's topline is a good indication of his over-all construction, when standing still, and more so when the dog begins to move. When trotting, the topline needs to stay stiff, with the moving parts only being in the shoulders and legs. When running or sprinting, the topline should be bending at the loin area, but still maintain a strong, firm look to it. Dogs who have sway in their spine when walking, or their topline flexes like a wobble board when trotting, do not have correct Boerboel movement and may have other underlying problems.

- Weak, unsound or plodding movement should not be tolerated.



This is the exact opposite to how a Boerboel should move. Without mincing words, dogs with really bad movement should be culled from breeding programs. So when it says, "Should not be tolerated," this simply means the dog should be disqualified when being appraised. Dogs who move poorly will have many structural faults which will be the cause of their poor movement. Poor movement is the gauge for any extremes. If a dog is large and has poor movement, it should be disqualified. If a dog is overly muscular and the muscle effects the movement, then the dog should be disqualified.

13.THE SKIN

- The skin is thick and loose but fits smoothly.



Thick skin is important to protect the Boerboel against whatever may want to attack it. The thickness of the skin is relative to the hair count per inch of coat. The higher the hair count, the thicker the skin. The skin is loose fitting, so you can easily grab a handful around the top of the neck, but it is not like a Shar Pei, where the skin is wrinkly and hangs all over the body.

- A small dewlap is permissible and moderate wrinkles over the forehead when the dog shows interest.



Too much wrinkle can cause problems like entropion and ectropion, and no wrinkle lessens the characteristic, intelligent look of the Boerboel.

14.PIGMENTATION

- The Boerboel is well pigmented, especially on the lips, palate, the skin and hair around the eyes, nose bulb, paw pads, toenails, the anus and the skin and hair around the genitals.



Black pigmentation is important to protect the Boerboel against skin cancer in the harsh African sun. The only Boerboels who don't have this black pigmentation are either the pied dogs, who may have the white coat run into their skin. These dogs are more likely to die of skin cancer. Also red or liver nosed Boerboels occasionally pop up. It is this lack of pigmentation that leaves the dog much more susceptible to skin cancer, and that is why it is not allowed in the breed. It is also very genetic, so if these dogs are allowed to breed, the fault will begin to increase in the population very rapidly, like with what has happened with the Dogue De Bordeaux.



This pup has poor pigmentation. His nose lips and eye lids are pink and not black. He lacks the black eumelanin pigmentation that protects all his exposed skin from the sun. This pup has a lot more chance of getting skin cancer and dying at a young age, more so, than a dog with the correct black pigmentation. Also if you breed a grown dog with this pigmentation fault with another dog with the same fault ALL the offspring will have pink nose and accessories.

- Only dogs with black eumelanin pigmentation are acceptable.



This part is very clear, if a dog has parts of its exposed skin that should be black and it isn't, the dog should be disqualified at its appraisal.

15.THE COAT AND COLOUR

The colours chosen below have been carefully researched and are all colours that will allow the breed to stay healthy by protecting the dog's skin from the harsh African climate. The large variation in colours has been allowed, because the Boerboel is first and foremost a working dog and what is important is that he can do his job, his colour is secondary. Like the old timers say, a good dog can't have a bad colour.

- The coat is short, dense, smooth and shiny.



Dogs with a coat that is short, smooth and shiny will look much more impressive and muscular than a dog with a dull coat, or a dog with a fractionally longer coat. The density of the coat is important to protect the dog from the elements, and whatever animal they may tangle with. Although it is possible to get short coats that are very dense. At the moment, the dogs with the most protective coats are the ones with hairs that are fractionally longer than ideal.

- The recognized colours / colour patterns are (with or without a mask):



The further the mask goes back over the muzzle and head the better. The black pigmentation not only gives a distinctive look but also ensures that the black pigmentation on the nose, lips and around the eyelids is strong and resistant to the harsh UV rays of the sun.



The black mask can go back as far as the ears like with this great looking puppy. This pup is dark brown with a lot of black hairs around his face and on his feet. The black also extends to all his exposed skin

like the nose, around the eyes, lips, feet and anus. This pup has as good and more importantly as healthy a colour as someone can hope for.

- All shades of Red, Brown and Yellow (fawn).



These are the more preferred colours that the majority of Boerboels come in. I have not reproduced any of the colours here because they all feature throughout the book.

- Black.
- Brindle : Brindle is a colour pattern with irregular vertical lines of only black hair on Red, Brown or Yellow base.



There are not many brindle Boerboels, although it is a colour that always has great pigmentation. The majority of brindle Boerboels are the dark brindle like the female above. There are lighter shades of brindle which are also acceptable.

- Piebald :Piebald is permissible to breed with, but should be discriminated against in the show ring.



If a dog is piebald like this dog and has many endearing qualities that you want in your dogs, especially if you cant find the same traits in dogs with correct colours, then it is better to use a piebald dog that is of excellent quality than a lesser dog even if it has the desired colour.



I think this terminology of being “discriminated against in the show ring” needs to be cleared up. If there are two identical dogs in the show ring, but one is piebald and the other is red or brown, then the piebald dog should be placed below the red or brown dog.

To put these less desirable colours into perspective: A poor temperament or bad movement are far more undesirable than having white markings. A breeder must work within the hierarchy framework when considering what to breed and what not to. Generally, consider the lesser faults as breedable (which are usually cosmetic—colour, coat type, ear set, etc.), and try to breed to a dog who does not have the same faults. Select the puppies in you litter who do not carry the cosmetic, and in not too many generations, you will have cleaned up that line of cosmetic faults. This is certainly not as easy to do with temperament, health or structure faults.

The reasons the Piebald and Irish markings are less desirable are due to the fact that these dogs are more likely to produce dogs that lack the black eumelanin pigmentation than the tan, brown, or red dogs. Both of these colours, which have a lot of white, are also very genetic. When you breed with these dogs, or dogs with Piebald or Irish in their

immediate background, pups with this colouration pop up quite often.

- **Irish Markings** :Irish Markings are permissible to breed with, but should be discriminated against in the show ring. (Same as above.)



Irish markings contain three colours, tan, white and black. As long as the nose, eyes, lips and anus have black pigmentation the Irish or Piebald marked dog should not have any problems with getting skin cancer. The only trait that comes along with the piebald and Irish marked dogs that is a physical negative is that often their pads on their feet are white. White feet are often more tender than black pads and take longer to toughen up through work. Dogs with white pads are more likely to go lame when doing long days walking or running.

- All these colours and colour patterns should be accompanied by good pigmentation.
- No other colours or colour patterns and tan markings are acceptable.

16.SIZE

- Is determined by the ideal height at the withers and desirable ratios between the height and the

measurements of the various parts of the external anatomy.

- The ideal height for a dog is 68cm (lower than 60 cm is unacceptable).



There is no maximum height limit in this breed standard. As explained before, the height limit is reached when the dog does not have the desired Boerboel movement.

There is a restriction on minimum height and the reason behind this is extremely significant. When you begin to breed large breed dogs that are smaller than desired, the resulting offspring usually quickly decrease in size. Then, trying to get size back by breeding these undersized dogs is usually very hard. When breeding Boerboels, you should try to breed to males over 66cm at the withers to avoid this possible problem.

- The ideal height of a bitch is 61cm (lower than 55 cm is unacceptable).



Once again, there is a minimum height restriction for the same reason as mentioned above. Females are noticeably smaller because we want a clear difference between the sexes. Also, like the males, the maximum height is reached when movement is sacrificed. As far as breeding goes, females should look like females and, as a rough guideline, be smaller than the male they are being bred to.

17.GENITALS

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



The condition where the testicles do not descend is called Cryptorchidism. The main problems with testicles that do not descend are that they usually become cancerous, and it is extremely genetic, with this trait popping up many generations down the track. Dogs who don't have two, normal looking testicles should be disqualified.

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 direct proportion to its degree.



The more a fault affects the wellbeing and health of that particular dogs “future offspring” and “the future of the breed,” the more serious a fault it is.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

For too long, appraisers and breeders have been way too soft on dogs with serious faults...The Boerboel population is big enough and healthy enough to cull out the less desirable traits. The reason for these points being disqualifying faults have already been explained above...

- 1. A dog that is too small (Smaller than the minimum heights stipulated in the Breed Standard).
- 2. A dog that is too big and out of balance.
- 3. An overly aggressive dog.
- 4. A too small and untypical head.



The size of the head is not as important as the shape. If the head looks like a totally different breed and the dog has no other appealing qualities, then it should be considered for disqualification.

- 5. A lack of pigmentation.
- 6. Excessively undershot bite.
- 7. Excessively overshot bite.
- 8. Blue eyes.
- 9. Pricked ears.



Pricked ears change the shape of the head totally, and could also be an indication of a dog with questionable genes in his back ground.

- 10. Any dog clearly showing any physical or behavioural abnormalities.

This elaboration of the breed standard is to assist breeders, evaluators, and fanciers in knowing what to look for in the ideal Boerboel. You will rarely, if ever, find the perfect dog in any breed. However, there is a higher standard which must be adhered to when selecting breeding dogs. In a Boerboel breeding program, you should work to select and breed for the highest quality dogs. Don't breed the pet that you have in your backyard to another pet quality dog that your friend has and expect to improve the breed. The best you can expect, in that particular scenario, is to produce more, substandard pets. Purchase the highest quality bitch you can afford, breed to the best dog, who is best suited to your female, that you can find (whether he is the most winning dog or not is irrelevant), and study the resulting pups to select the best prospects. You will produce a lot of sub "par" quality dogs in this process. Don't be discouraged; just keep selecting the best puppies. Eventually, you will get to the point where the lesser dogs you produce are better than most other breeders' top prospects.

As breeders and evaluators, we must be strong and decisive in what we approve as breeding stock. Politics, friendships, and emotions should play no part in selecting and approving dogs. The dogs must be of good enough quality, on their own merit, or they simply should not be used in a breeding program.