

THE MASTIFF:

An Illustrated
Standard



**The Mastiff Club
of America**

mastiff.org



The Mastiff: An Illustrated Standard

Created by the Mastiff Club of America
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AKC Mastiff Standard
Approved November 12, 1991 Effective December 31, 1991

A Guide to Reading This Document

Font Usage

Text in serif font is the precise text of the AKC Mastiff Standard.

Text in sans serif font is of design elements such as page numbers, headings, captions and labels.

Labels

IDEAL

Green labels indicate illustrations of traits which are ideal or correct according to the standard.

FAULT

Red labels indicate illustrations of traits which are faults specified in the standard.

DEVIATION

Yellow labels indicate illustrations of traits that deviate from what the standard defines as correct, but are not specified as faults.

Regarding the gender of dogs depicted, since the standard requires males and females to meet all aspects of the standard equally regardless of gender (except for the allowance that bitches may be slightly smaller proportionally) this document uses illustrations of mature males and females interchangeably in depicting ideals, deviations and faults.



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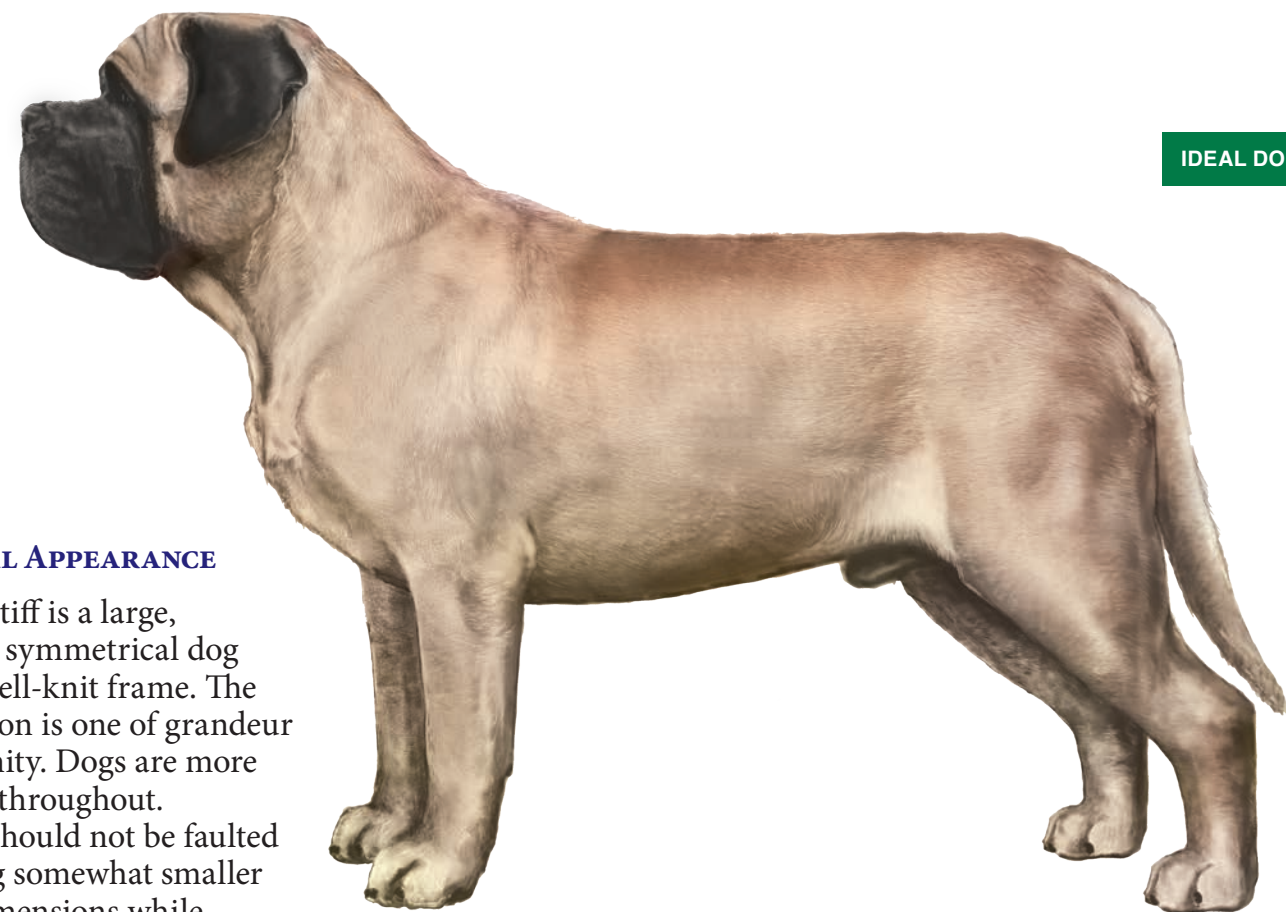
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This document includes the full text of the AKC Mastiff Standard. Nothing has been added, altered or removed. All ideal, fault and deviation illustrations have been created using only the words included in the standard as their basis.



GENERAL APPEARANCE

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE



IDEAL DOG

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Mastiff is a large, massive, symmetrical dog with a well-knit frame. The impression is one of grandeur and dignity. Dogs are more massive throughout.

Bitches should not be faulted for being somewhat smaller in all dimensions while maintaining a proportionally powerful structure.

A good evaluation considers positive qualities of type and soundness with equal weight.

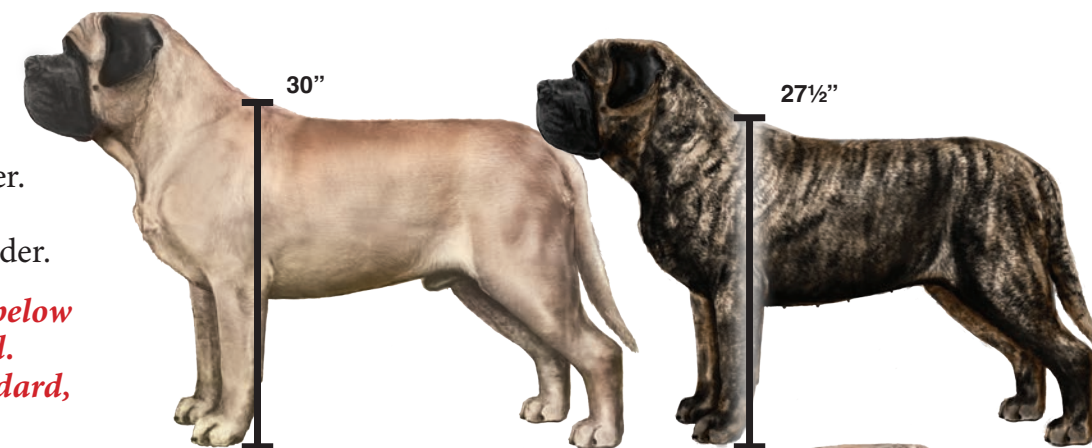


IDEAL BITCH

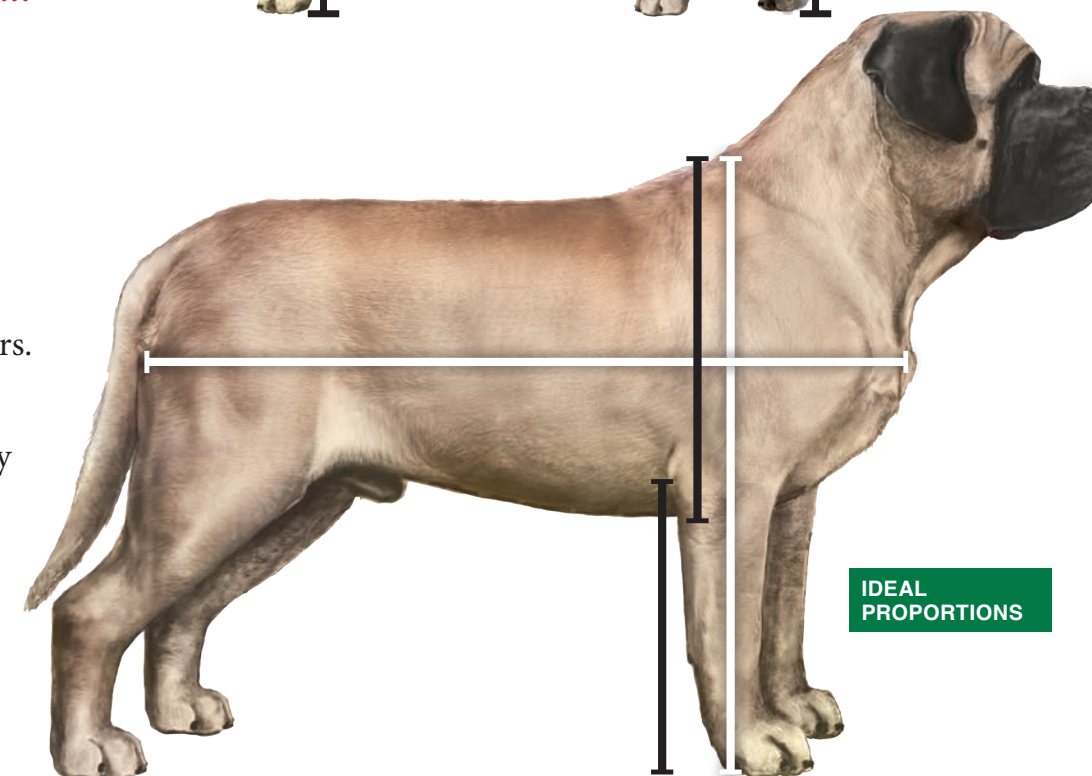
SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Size—
Dogs, minimum, 30 inches at the shoulder.
Bitches, minimum, 27½ inches at the shoulder.

Fault—Dogs or bitches below the minimum standard. The farther below standard, the greater the fault.

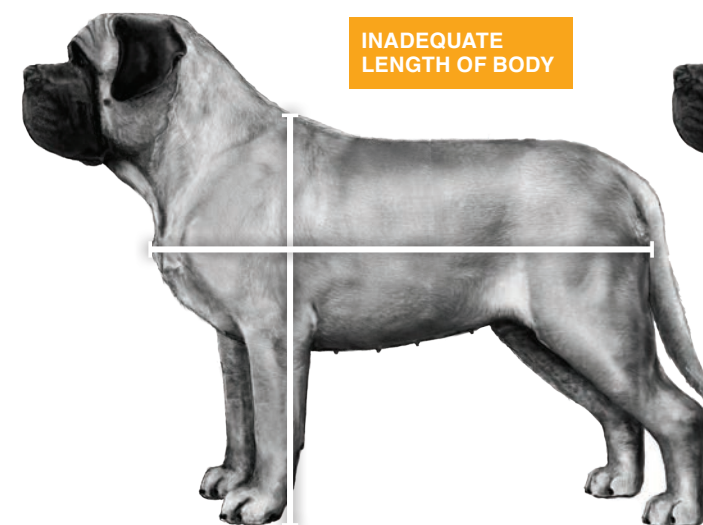


Proportion—
Rectangular, the length of the dog from forechest to rump is somewhat longer than the height at the withers. The height of the dog should come from depth of body rather than from length of leg.

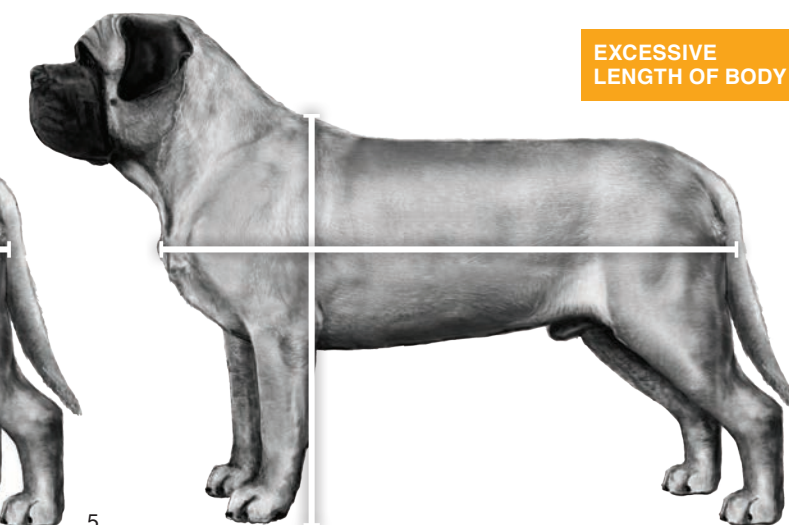


IDEAL PROPORTIONS

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



INADEQUATE LENGTH OF BODY



EXCESSIVE LENGTH OF BODY

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE (cont.)

Substance—Massive, heavy boned, with a powerful muscle structure. Great depth and breadth desirable.

Fault—Lack of substance or slab sided.



IDEAL SIDE

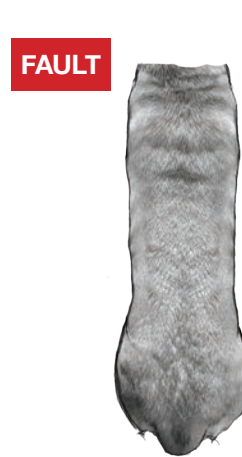


IDEAL FRONT



FAULT

LACKING SUBSTANCE



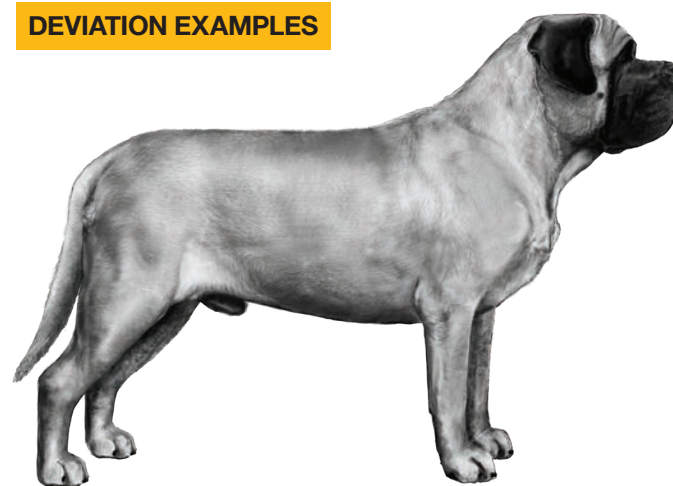
FAULT

SLAB SIDED



IDEAL BREADTH

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



LACKING BONE



LACKING DEPTH



LACKING BREADTH

HEAD

HEAD

In general outline giving a massive appearance when viewed from any angle. Breadth greatly desired.

Eyes set wide apart, medium in size, never too prominent. Expression alert but kindly. Color of eyes brown, the darker the better, and showing no haw. Light eyes or a predatory expression is undesirable.

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



EYES TOO CLOSE TOGETHER



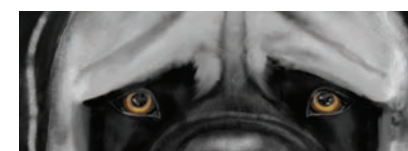
EYES TOO PROMINENT



EYES SHOWING HAW



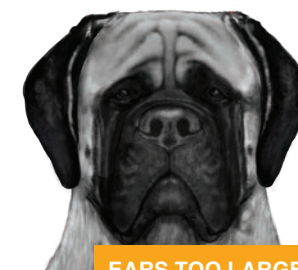
LIGHT EYES



PREDATORY EXPRESSION

Ears small in proportion to the skull, V-shaped, rounded at the tips. Leather moderately thin, set widely apart at the highest points on the sides of the skull continuing the outline across the summit. They should lie close to the cheeks when in repose. Ears dark in color, the blacker the better, conforming to the color of the muzzle.

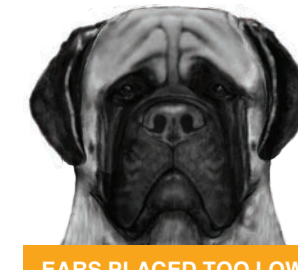
DEVIATION EXAMPLES



EARS TOO LARGE



EARS TOO SMALL



EARS PLACED TOO LOW



EARS TOO LIGHT



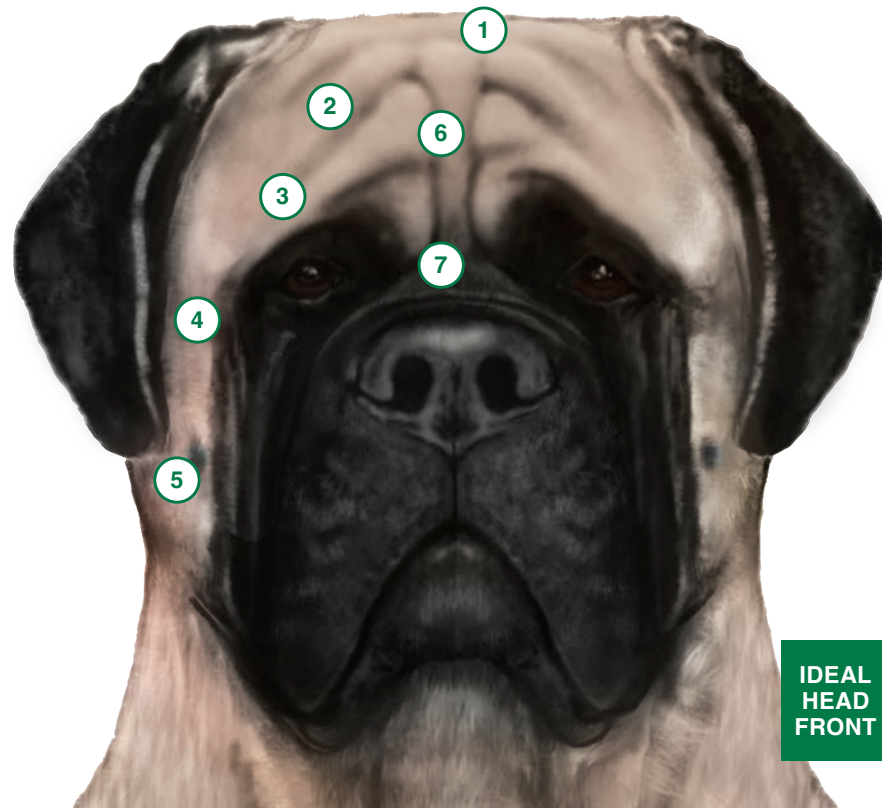
IDEAL HEAD SIDE



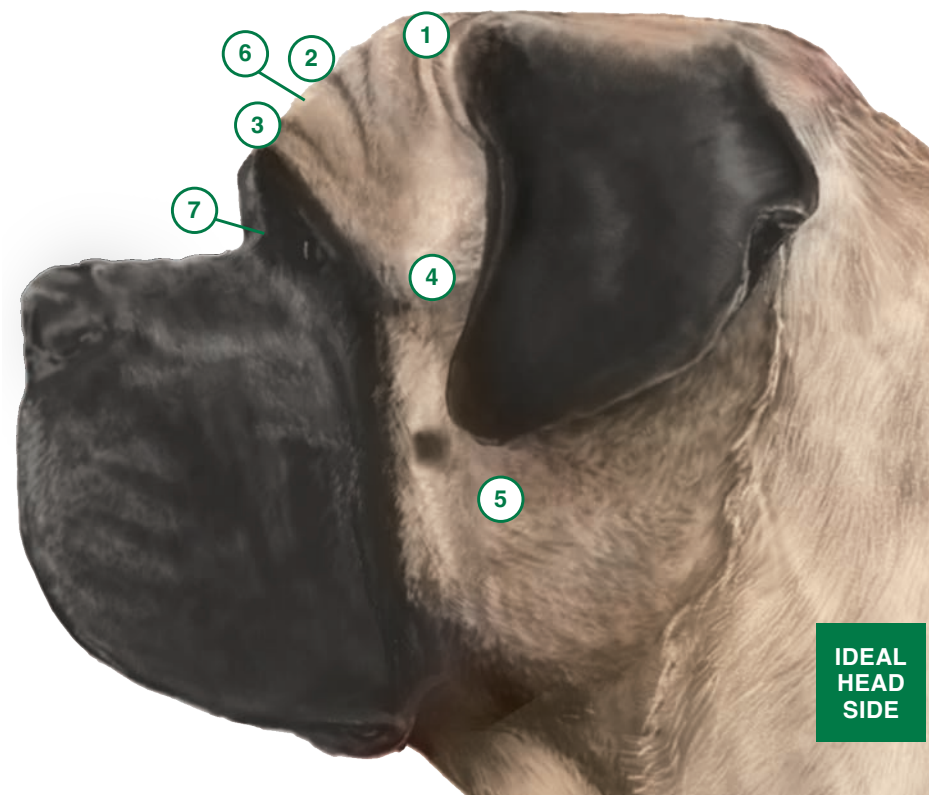
IDEAL HEAD FRONT

HEAD (cont.)

- ① **Skull** broad and somewhat flattened between the ears,
- ② forehead slightly curved, showing marked wrinkles which are particularly distinctive when at attention.
- ③ Brows (superciliary ridges) moderately raised.
- ④ Muscles of the temples well developed,
- ⑤ those of the cheeks extremely powerful.
- ⑥ Arch across the skull a flattened curve with a furrow up the center of the forehead. This extends from between the eyes to halfway up the skull.
- ⑦ The stop between the eyes well marked but not too abrupt.



IDEAL HEAD FRONT



IDEAL HEAD SIDE

HEAD (cont.)

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



① SKULL TOO NARROW



① SKULL TOO DOMED



② EXCESSIVE FOREHEAD CURVE AND EXCESSIVE WRINKLE ON FOREHEAD



② MARKED WRINKLES ABSENT FROM FOREHEAD



③ LACKING RAISED BROWS,
④ LACK OF TEMPLE DEVELOPMENT,
⑤ LACK OF CHEEK DEVELOPMENT,
⑥ ARCH ACROSS THE SKULL EXCESSIVELY CURVED



⑦ STOP TOO SHALLOW



⑦ STOP TOO ABRUPT

HEAD (cont.)



Muzzle should be half the length of the skull, thus dividing the head into three parts—one for the foreface and two for the skull. In other words, the distance from the tip of the nose to stop is equal to one-half the distance between the stop and the occiput.

IDEAL HEAD: CORRECT RATIO OF MUZZLE LENGTH TO SKULL LENGTH

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



MUZZLE TOO LONG



MUZZLE TOO SHORT

HEAD (cont.)



Circumference of the muzzle (measured midway between the eyes and nose) to that of the head (measured before the ears) is as 3 is to 5.

IDEAL HEAD: CORRECT CIRCUMFERENCE RATIO OF MUZZLE TO SKULL

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



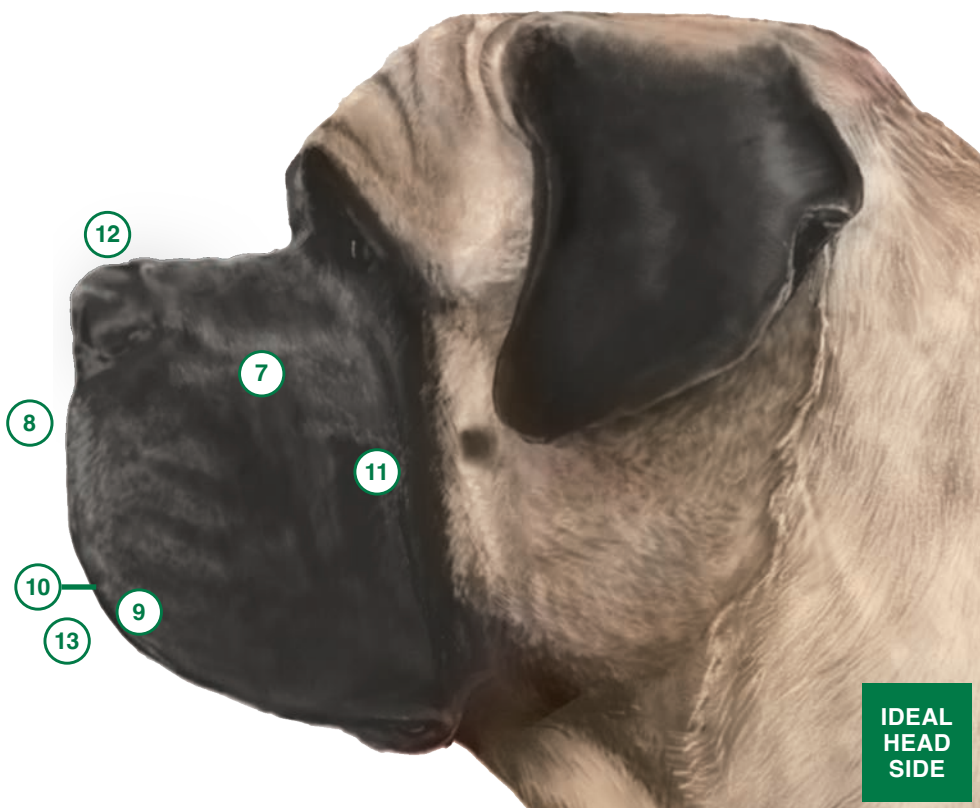
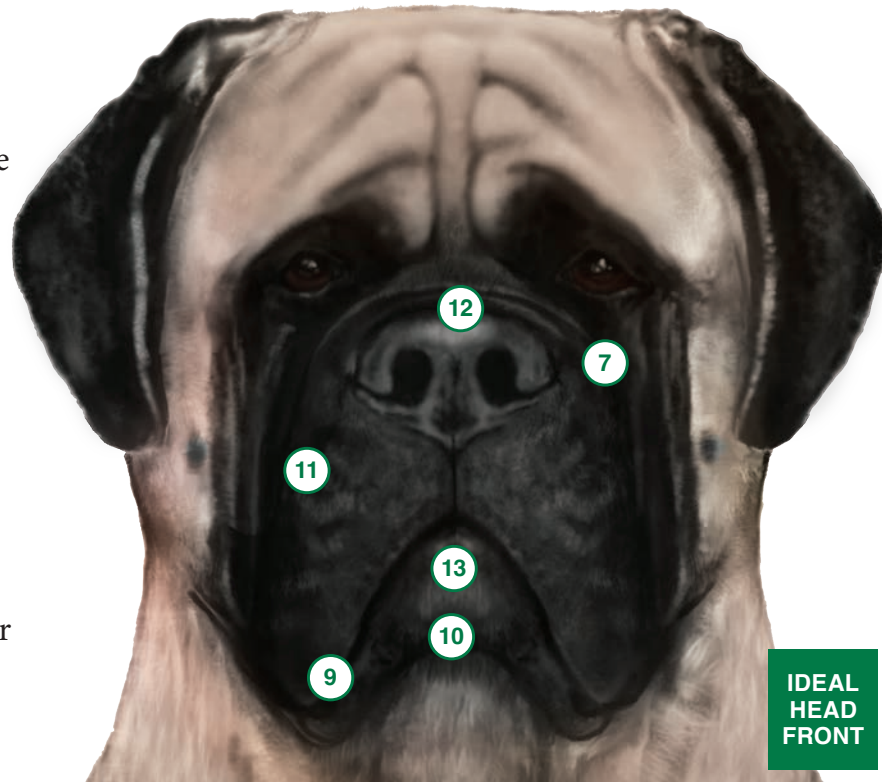
SKULL TOO NARROW



MUZZLE TOO NARROW

HEAD (cont.)

- ⑦ Muzzle short, broad under the eyes and running nearly equal in width to the end of the nose.
- ⑧ Truncated, i.e. blunt and cut off square, thus forming a right angle with the upper line of the face.
- ⑨ Of great depth from the point of the nose to the underjaw.
- ⑩ Underjaw broad to the end and slightly rounded.
- ⑪ Muzzle dark in color, the blacker the better.
- Fault snipiness of the muzzle.*
- ⑫ Nose broad and always dark in color, the blacker the better, with spread flat nostrils (not pointed or turned up) in profile.
- ⑬ Lips diverging at obtuse angles with the septum and sufficiently pendulous so as to show a modified square profile.



FAULT



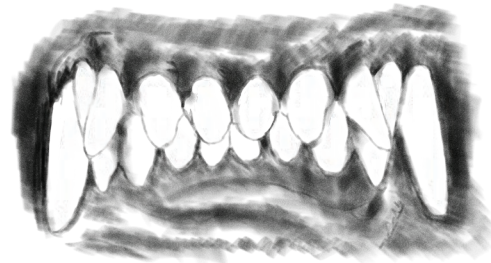
HEAD (cont.)

DEVIATION EXAMPLES

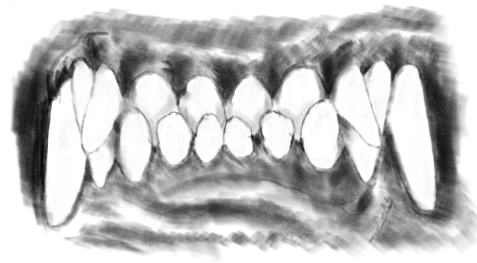


HEAD (cont.)

Canine Teeth
healthy and wide apart. Jaws powerful. Scissors bite preferred, but a moderately undershot jaw should not be faulted providing the teeth are not visible when the mouth is closed.



PREFERRED SCISSORS BITE & CANINE TEETH WIDE APART



ACCEPTABLE MODERATELY UNDERSHOT BITE

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



CANINE TEETH TOO CLOSELY SET



WRY BITE



EXCESSIVELY UNDERSHOT BITE

HEAD (cont.)

IDEAL HEAD FRONT

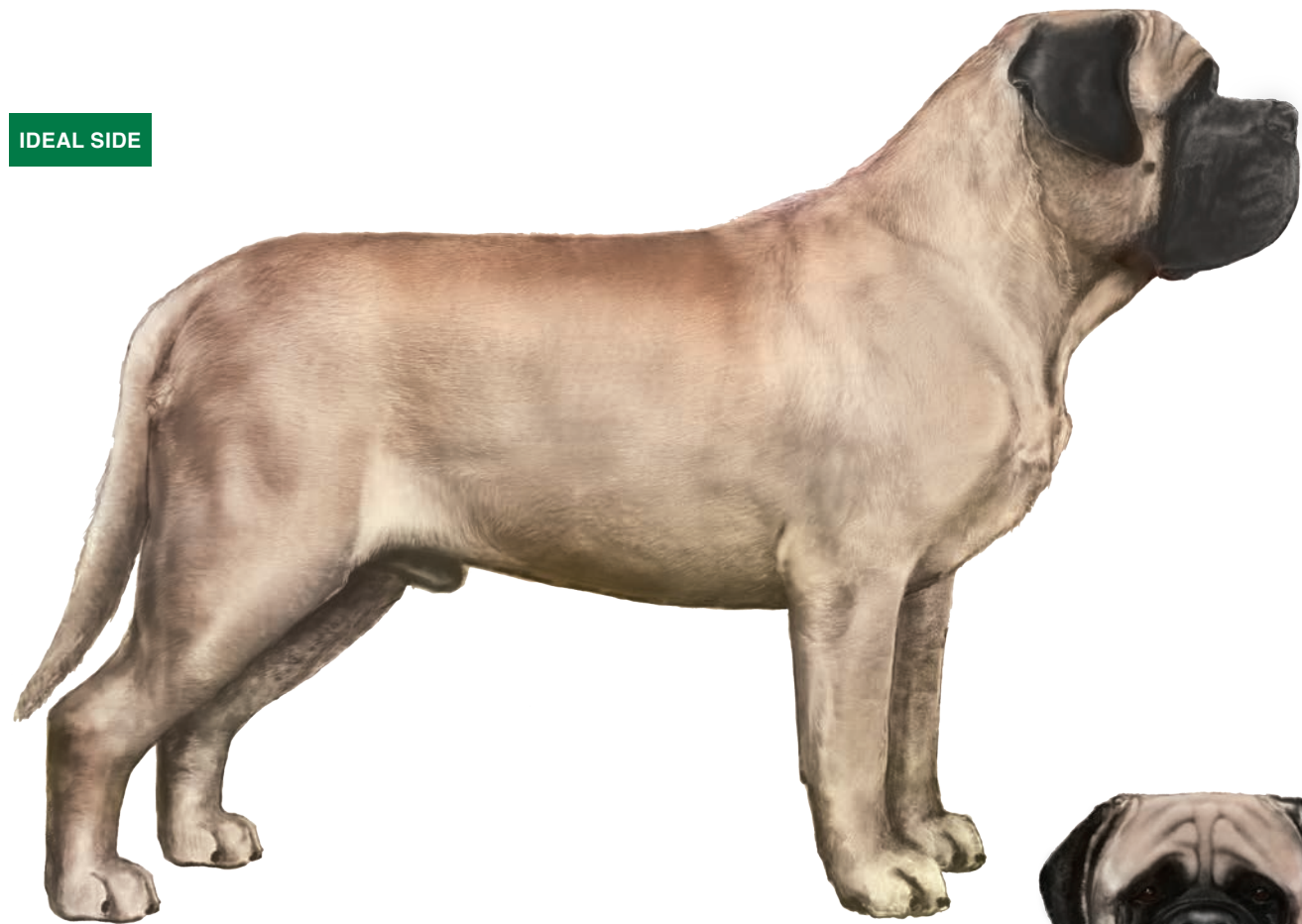


IDEAL HEAD SIDE



NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

IDEAL SIDE



NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

Neck powerful, very muscular, slightly arched, and of medium length. The neck gradually increases in circumference as it approaches the shoulder. Neck moderately “dry” (not showing an excess of loose skin).

Topline—In profile the topline should be straight, level, and firm, not swaybacked, roached, or dropping off sharply behind the high point of the rump.

Chest wide, deep, rounded, and well let down between the forelegs, extending at least to the elbow. Forechest should be deep and well defined with the breastbone extending in front of the foremost point of the shoulders. Ribs well rounded. False ribs deep and well set back.

Underline—There should be a reasonable, but not exaggerated, tuck-up.

IDEAL FRONT

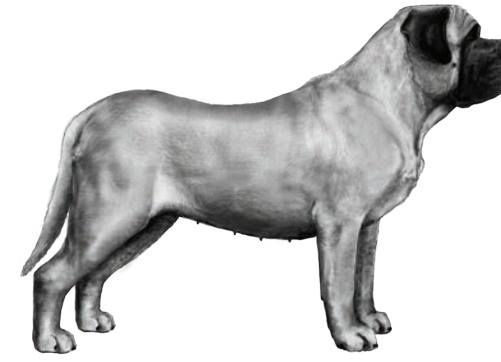


NECK, TOPLINE, BODY (cont.)

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



EXCESSIVE LOOSE SKIN ON NECK



SWAYBACKED TOPLINE



ROACHED TOPLINE



TOO ROUNDED OVER THE RUMP



LACKING DEPTH OF CHEST (SIDE)



LACKING DEPTH OF CHEST (FRONT)



NARROW CHEST



LACKING FORECHEST (SIDE)



LACKING FORECHEST (FRONT)



FALSE RIBS NOT SET BACK



TOO MUCH TUCK UP



LACKING TUCK UP

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY (cont.)

IDEAL SIDE



IDEAL REAR

Back muscular, powerful, and straight. When viewed from the rear, there should be a slight rounding over the rump. **Loins** wide and muscular. **Tail** set on moderately high and reaching to the hocks or a little below. Wide at the root, tapering to the end, hanging straight in repose, forming a slight curve, but never over the back when the dog is in motion.

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



BROAD LOINS



NARROW LOINS



LOW TAIL SET



SHORT TAIL



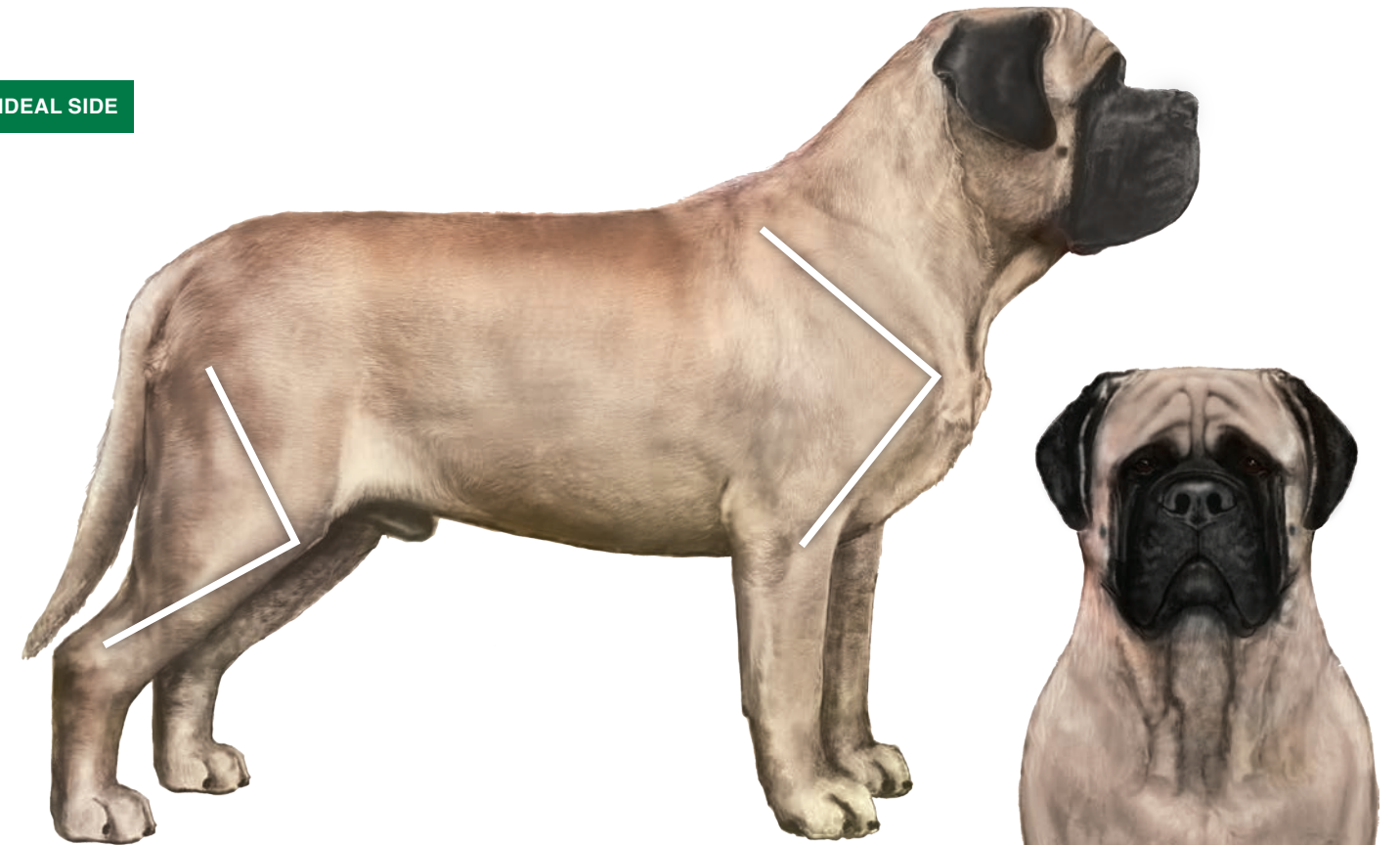
SKINNY TAIL



TAIL CARRIED TOO HIGH IN MOTION

FOREQUARTERS

IDEAL SIDE



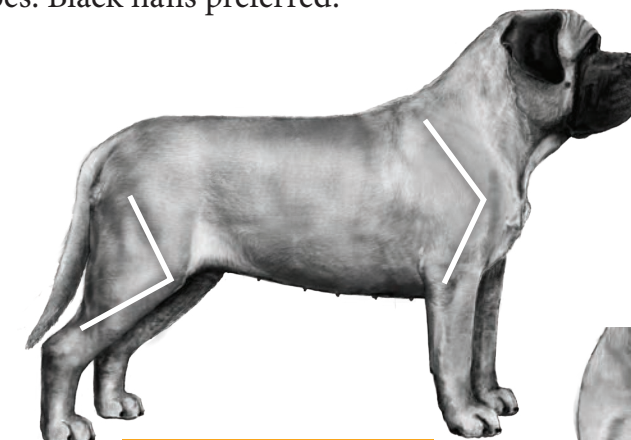
FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders moderately sloping, powerful and muscular, with no tendency to looseness. Degree of front angulation to match correct rear angulation. **Legs** straight, strong and set wide apart, heavy boned. **Elbows** parallel to body. **Pasterns** strong and bent only slightly. **Feet** large, round, and compact with well arched toes. Black nails preferred.

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



STRAIGHT SHOULDERS



ANGLES NOT MATCHING



CORRECT FEET



WEAK PASTERNS



SPLAYED FEET



HARE FEET



LEGS NOT STRAIGHT

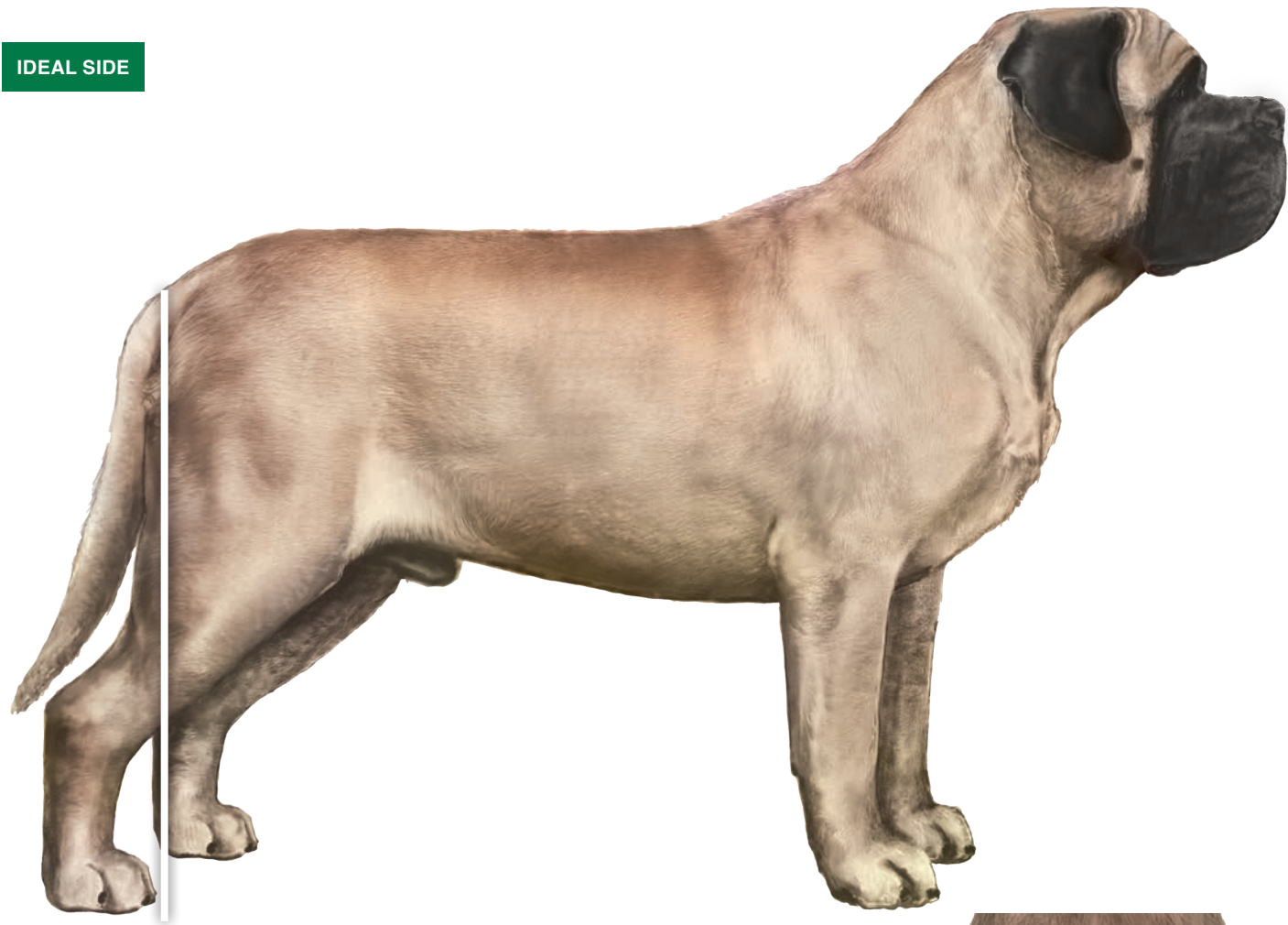


ELBOWS OUT

IDEAL FRONT

HINDQUARTERS

IDEAL SIDE



HINDQUARTERS (cont.)

FAULT

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



STRAIGHT STIFLES



OVER ANGULATED



NARROW REAR



LACKING MUSCLE/
SECOND THIGH

HINDQUARTERS

Hindquarters broad, wide and muscular. **Second thighs** well developed, leading to a strong hock joint. **Stifle joint** is moderately angulated matching the front. **Rear legs** are wide apart and parallel when viewed from the rear. When the portion of the leg below the hock is correctly “set back” and stands perpendicular to the ground, a plumb line dropped from the rearmost point of the hindquarters will pass in front of the foot. This rules out straight hocks, and since stifle angulation varies with hock angulation, it also rules out insufficiently angulated stifles. **Fault—Straight stifles.**



IDEAL REAR



NOT PARALLEL
(BOWED)



NOT PARALLEL
(COW-HOCKED)



NOT PARALLEL
(TOE OUT)

COAT

COAT

Outer coat straight, coarse, and of moderately short length. Undercoat dense, short, and close lying. Coat should not be so long as to produce “fringe” on the belly, tail, or hind legs.

Fault-Long or wavy coat.

DOUBLE COAT



SINGLE COAT



IDEAL COAT



FAULT

LONG OR WAVY COAT



COLOR

COLOR

Fawn, apricot, or brindle. Brindle should have fawn or apricot as a background color which should be completely covered with very dark stripes. Muzzle, ears, and nose must be dark in color, the blacker the better, with similar color tone around the eye orbits and extending upward between them. A small patch of white on the chest is permitted. *Faults-Excessive white on the chest or white on any other part of the body. Mask, ears, or nose lacking dark pigment.*



FAWN



APRICOT



FAWN BRINDLE



APRICOT BRINDLE

COLOR (cont.)



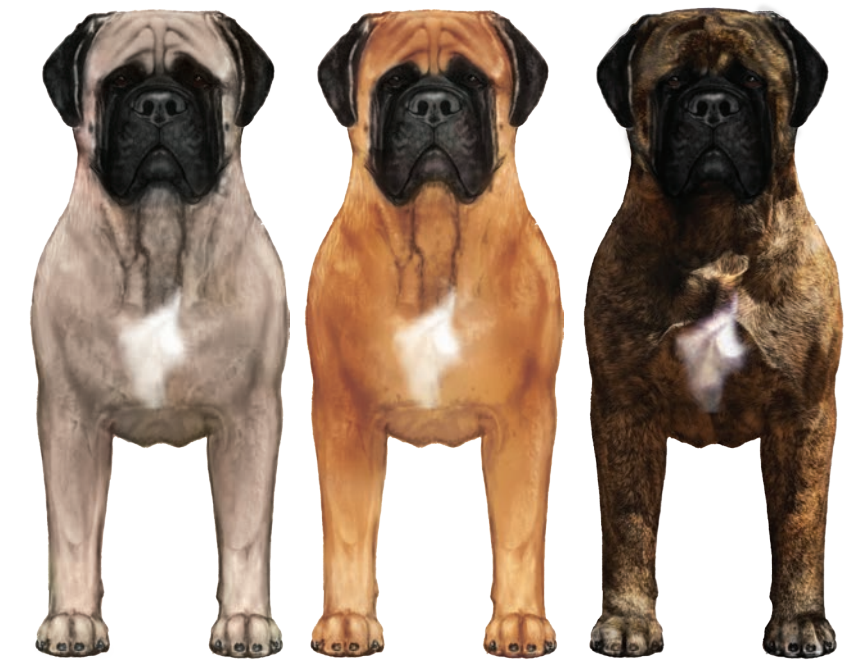
CORRECT MASK



FAULT

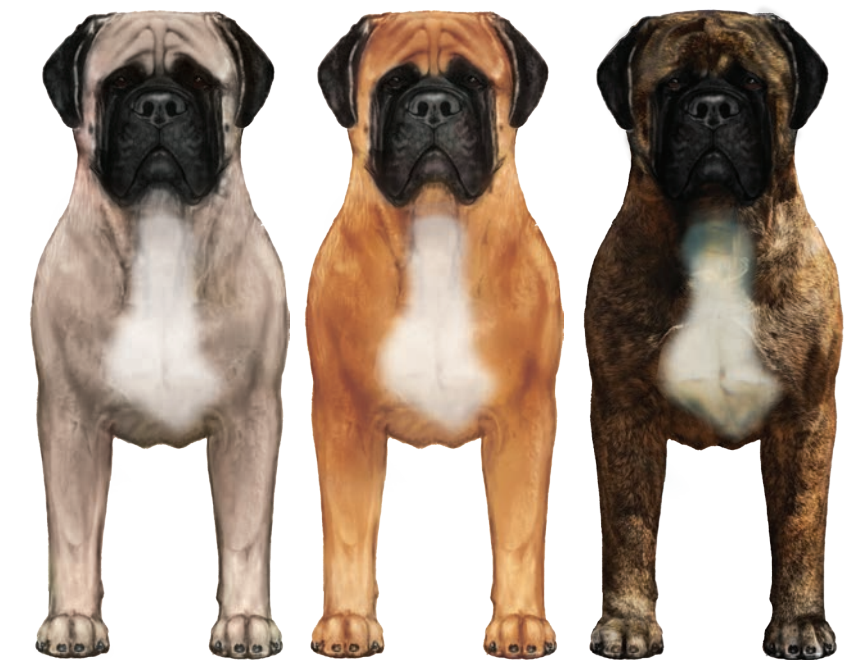


LACKING DARK PIGMENT



ACCEPTABLE WHITE

FAULT



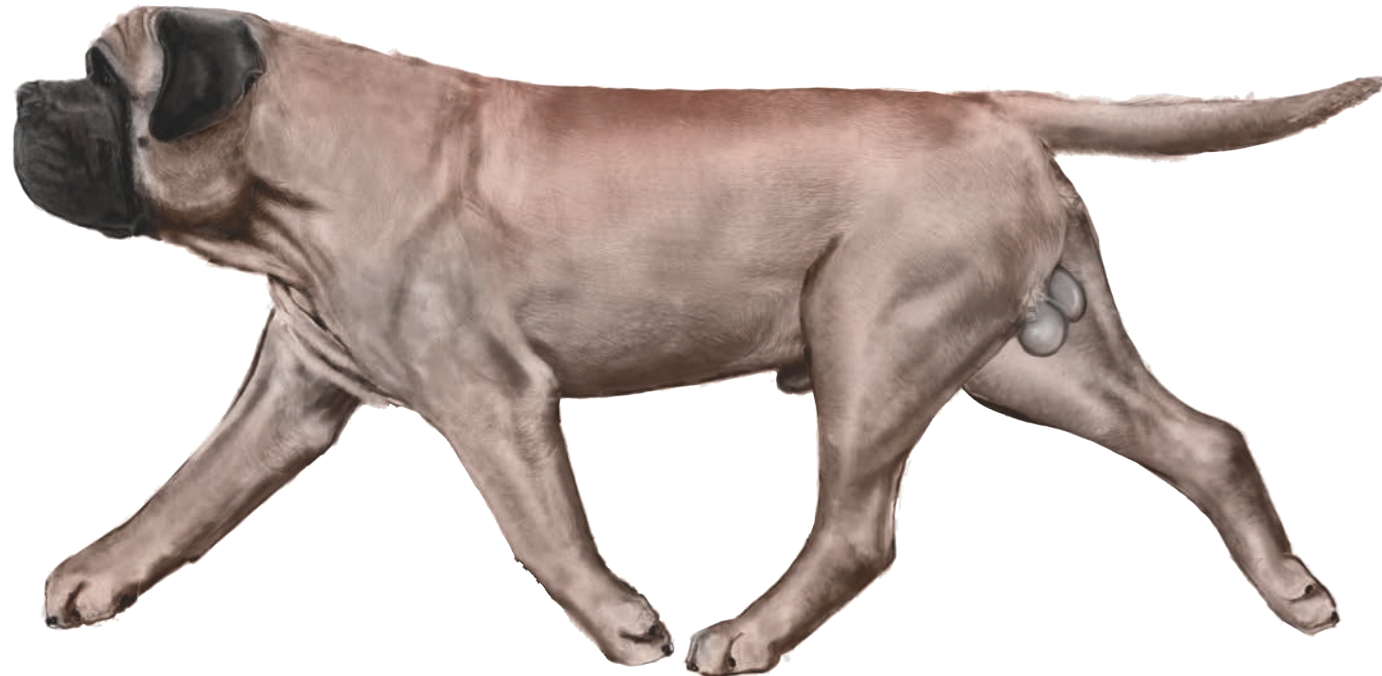
EXCESSIVE WHITE

GAIT

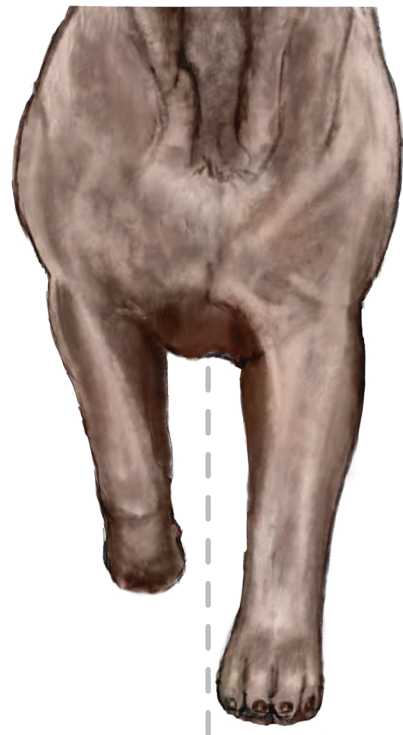
GAIT

The gait denotes power and strength. The rear legs should have drive, while the forelegs should track smoothly with good reach. In motion, the legs move straight forward; as the dog's speed increases from a walk to a trot, the feet move in toward the center line of the body to maintain balance.

IDEAL SIDE GAIT



IDEAL FRONT GAIT

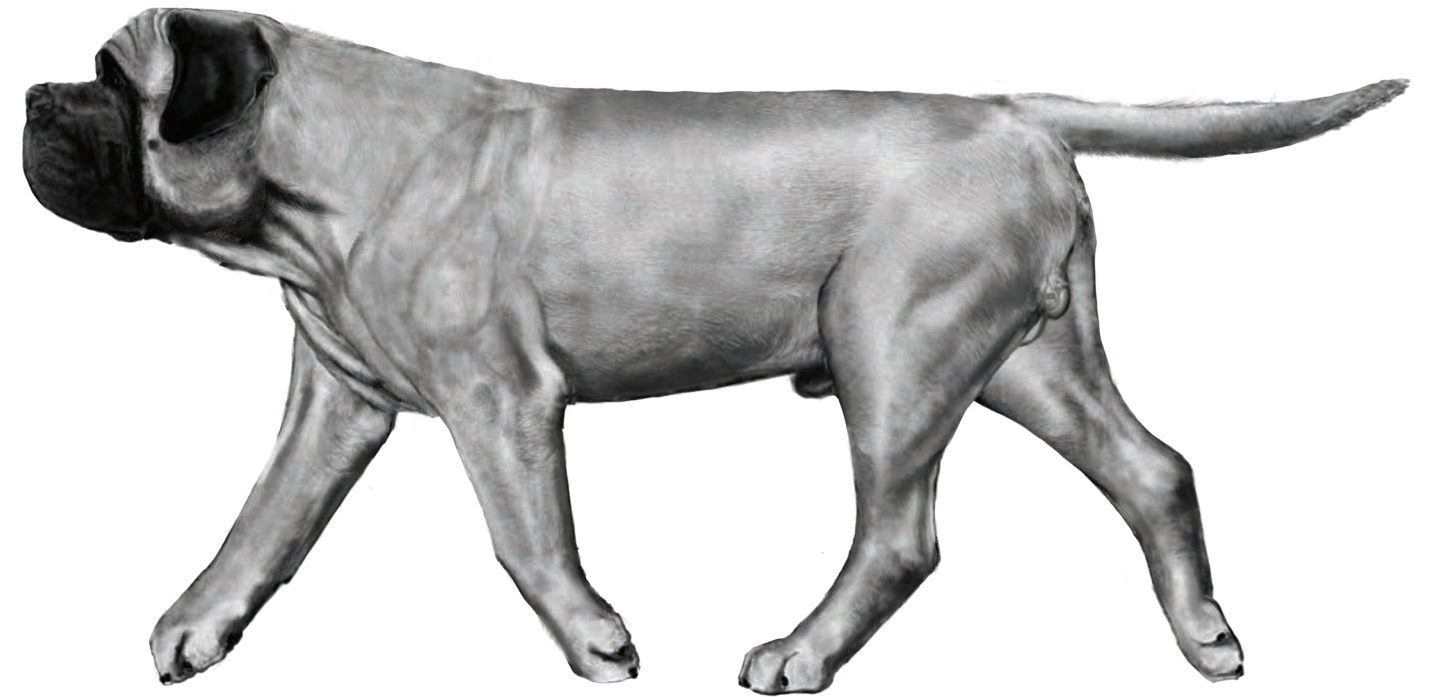


IDEAL REAR GAIT



GAIT (CONT.)

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



LACK OF REACH/DRIVE



THROWING ELBOWS & PADDLING



KICKING OUT



CLOSE MOVING

TEMPERAMENT

TEMPERAMENT

A combination of grandeur and good nature, courage and docility. Dignity, rather than gaiety, is the Mastiff's correct demeanor. Judges should not condone shyness or viciousness. Conversely, judges should also beware of putting a premium on showiness.

AKC BREED STANDARD FOR THE MASTIFF

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Mastiff is a large, massive, symmetrical dog with a well-knit frame. The impression is one of grandeur and dignity. Dogs are more massive throughout. Bitches should not be faulted for being somewhat smaller in all dimensions while maintaining a proportionally powerful structure. A good evaluation considers positive qualities of type and soundness with equal weight.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

Size—Dogs, minimum, 30 inches at the shoulder. Bitches, minimum, 27½ inches at the shoulder.

Fault—*Dogs or bitches below the minimum standard. The farther below standard, the greater the fault.*

Proportion—Rectangular, the length of the dog from forechest to rump is somewhat longer than the height at the withers. The height of the dog should come from depth of body rather than from length of leg. **Substance**—Massive, heavy boned, with a powerful muscle structure. Great depth and breadth desirable. **Fault**—*Lack of substance or slab sided.*

HEAD

In general outline giving a massive appearance when viewed from any angle. Breadth greatly desired. **Eyes** set wide apart, medium in size, never too prominent. Expression alert but kindly. Color of eyes brown, the darker the better, and showing no haw. Light eyes or a predatory expression is undesirable. **Ears** small in proportion to the skull, V-shaped, rounded at the tips. Leather moderately thin, set widely apart at the highest points on the sides of the skull continuing the outline across the summit. They should lie close to the cheeks when in repose. Ears dark in color, the blacker the better, conforming to the color of the muzzle. **Skull** broad and somewhat flattened between the ears, forehead slightly curved, showing marked wrinkles which are particularly distinctive when at attention. Brows (superciliary ridges) moderately raised. Muscles of the temples well developed, those of the cheeks extremely powerful. Arch across the skull a flattened curve with a furrow up the center of the forehead. This extends from between the eyes to halfway up the skull. The stop between the eyes well marked but not too abrupt. Muzzle should be half the length of the skull, thus dividing the head into three parts—one for the foreface and two for the skull. In other words, the distance from the tip of the nose to stop is equal to one-half the distance between the stop and the occiput. Circumference of the muzzle (measured midway between the eyes and nose) to that of the head (measured before the ears) is as 3 is to 5. **Muzzle** short, broad under the eyes and running nearly equal in width to the end of the nose. Truncated, i.e. blunt and cut off square, thus forming a right angle with the upper line of the face. Of great depth from the point of the nose to the underjaw. Underjaw broad to the end and slightly rounded. Muzzle dark in color, the blacker the better.

Fault—*snipiness of the muzzle.* **Nose** broad and always dark in color, the blacker the better, with spread flat nostrils (not pointed or turned up) in profile. **Lips** diverging at obtuse angles with the septum and sufficiently pendulous so as to show a modified square profile. **Canine Teeth** healthy and wide apart. Jaws powerful. Scissors bite preferred, but a moderately undershot jaw should not be faulted providing the teeth are not visible when the mouth is closed.

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

Neck powerful, very muscular, slightly arched, and of medium length. The neck gradually increases in circumference as it approaches the shoulder. Neck moderately “dry” (not showing an excess of loose skin). **Topline**—In profile the topline should be straight, level, and firm, not swaybacked, roached, or dropping off sharply behind the high point of the rump. **Chest** wide, deep, rounded,

AKC BREED STANDARD FOR THE MASTIFF (cont.)

and well let down between the forelegs, extending at least to the elbow. Forechest should be deep and well defined with the breastbone extending in front of the foremost point of the shoulders. Ribs well rounded. False ribs deep and well set back. **Underline**—There should be a reasonable, but not exaggerated, tuck-up. **Back** muscular, powerful, and straight. When viewed from the rear, there should be a slight rounding over the rump. **Loins** wide and muscular. **Tail** set on moderately high and reaching to the hocks or a little below. Wide at the root, tapering to the end, hanging straight in repose, forming a slight curve, but never over the back when the dog is in motion.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders moderately sloping, powerful and muscular, with no tendency to looseness. Degree of front angulation to match correct rear angulation. **Legs** straight, strong and set wide apart, heavy boned. **Elbows** parallel to body. **Pasterns** strong and bent only slightly. **Feet** large, round, and compact with well arched toes. Black nails preferred.

HINDQUARTERS

Hindquarters broad, wide and muscular. **Second thighs** well developed, leading to a strong hock joint. **Stifle joint** is moderately angulated matching the front. **Rear legs** are wide apart and parallel when viewed from the rear. When the portion of the leg below the hock is correctly “set back” and stands perpendicular to the ground, a plumb line dropped from the rearmost point of the hindquarters will pass in front of the foot. This rules out straight hocks, and since stifle angulation varies with hock angulation, it also rules out insufficiently angulated stifles. **Fault**—*Straight stifles.*

COAT

Outer coat straight, coarse, and of moderately short length. Undercoat dense, short, and close lying. Coat should not be so long as to produce “fringe” on the belly, tail, or hind legs. **Fault**—*Long or wavy coat.*

COLOR

Fawn, apricot, or brindle. Brindle should have fawn or apricot as a background color which should be completely covered with very dark stripes. Muzzle, ears, and nose must be dark in color, the blacker the better, with similar color tone around the eye orbits and extending upward between them. A small patch of white on the chest is permitted. **Faults**—*Excessive white on the chest or white on any other part of the body. Mask, ears, or nose lacking dark pigment.*

GAIT

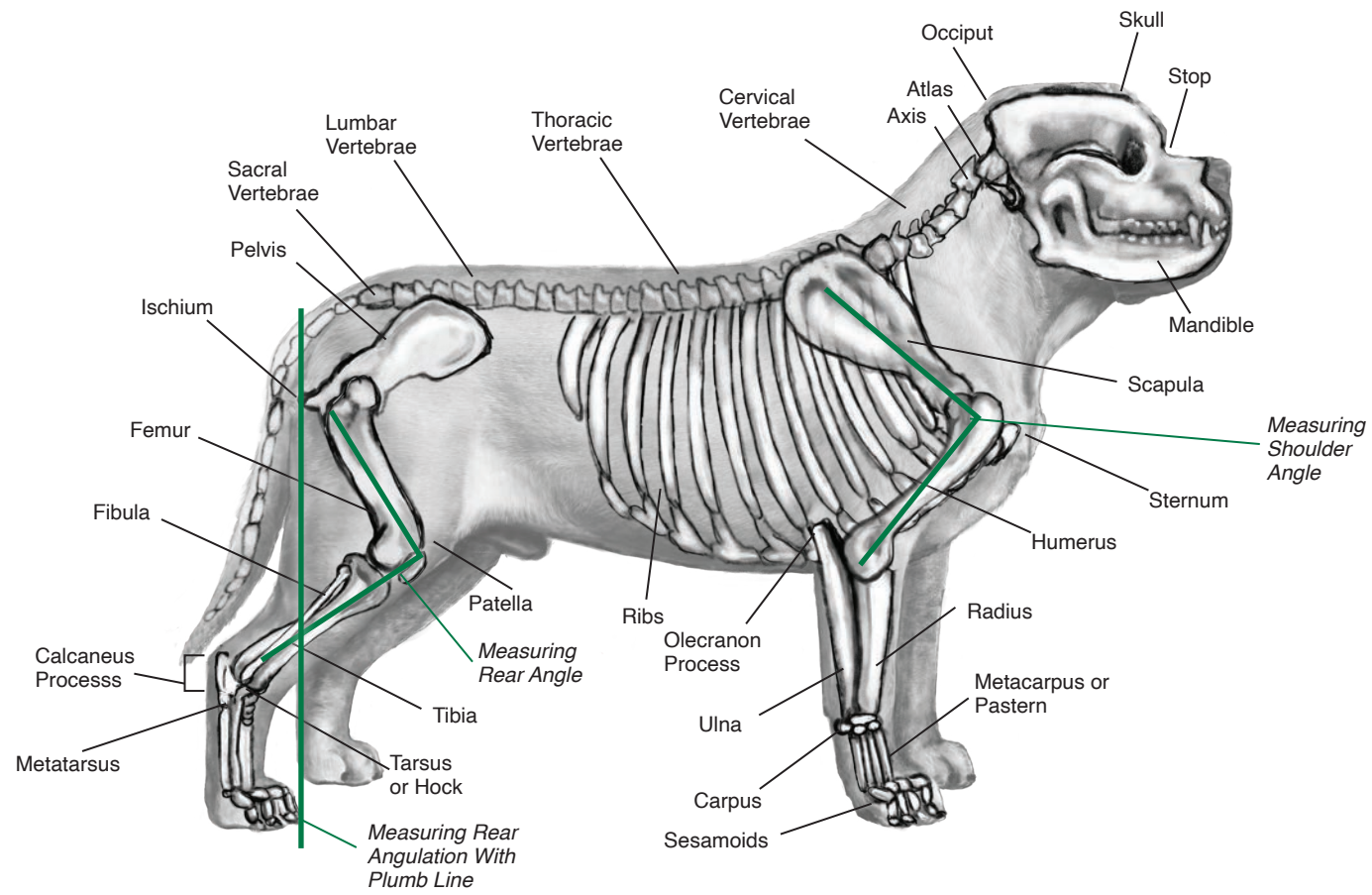
The gait denotes power and strength. The rear legs should have drive, while the forelegs should track smoothly with good reach. In motion, the legs move straight forward; as the dog’s speed increases from a walk to a trot, the feet move in toward the center line of the body to maintain balance.

TEMPERAMENT

A combination of grandeur and good nature, courage and docility. Dignity, rather than gaiety, is the Mastiff’s correct demeanor. Judges should not condone shyness or viciousness. Conversely, judges should also beware of putting a premium on showiness.

Approved November 12, 1991 Effective December 31, 1991

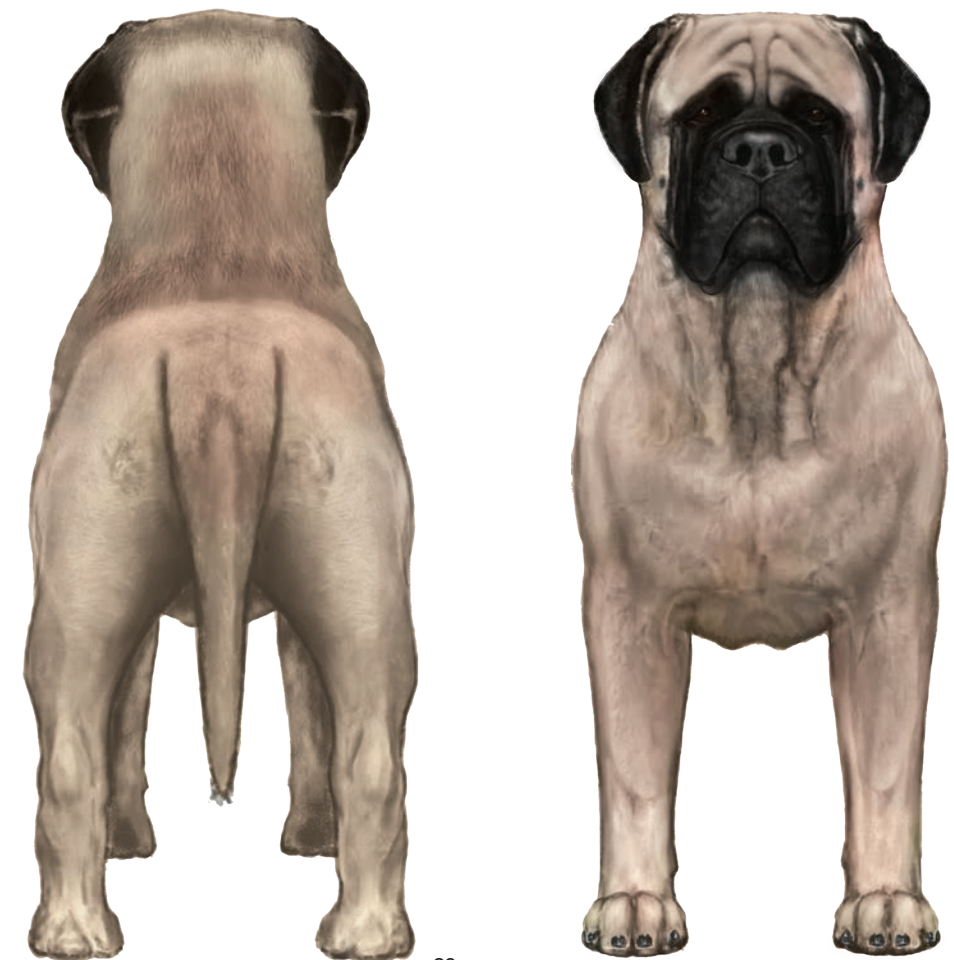
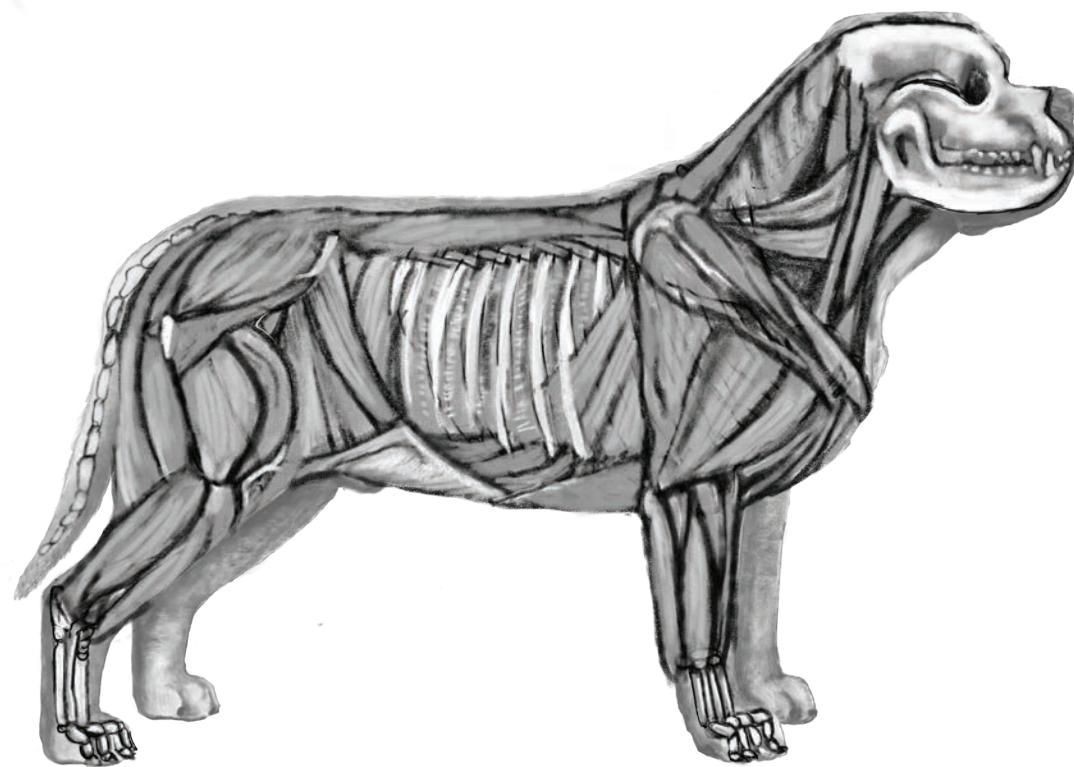
SKELETAL SYSTEM OF THE MASTIFF



IDEAL MASTIFF



MUSCLE SYSTEM OF THE MASTIFF



ANATOMY OF THE MASTIFF

