

THE MASTIFF:

An Illustrated Standard



**The Mastiff Club
of America**

mastiff.org

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The Mastiff: An Illustrated Standard

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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

STANDARD Green labels indicate illustrations of traits which are 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 the standard, deviations and faults.



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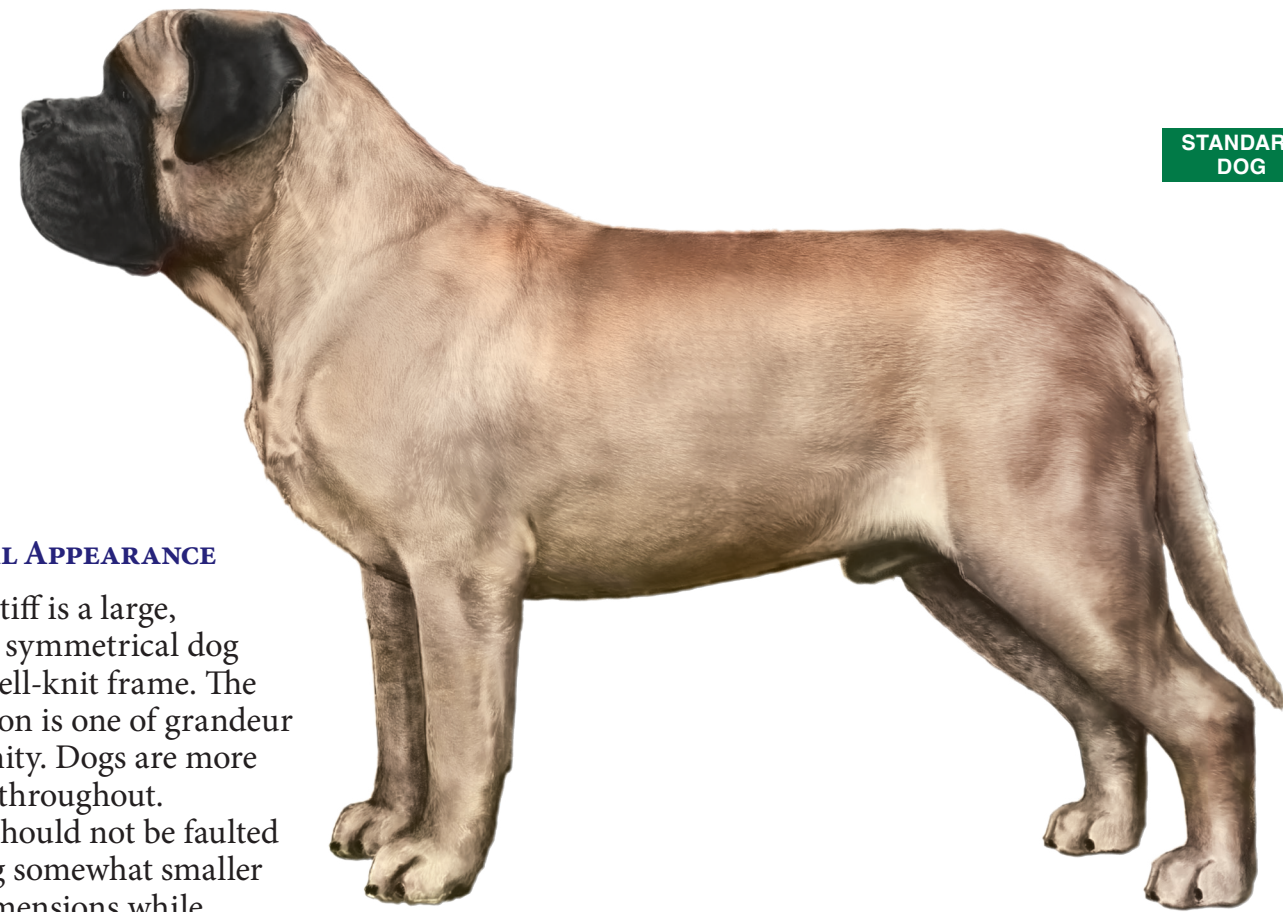
This document includes the full text of the AKC Mastiff Standard. Nothing has been added, altered or removed. All standard, fault and deviation illustrations have been created using only the words included in the standard as their basis.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

GENERAL APPEARANCE

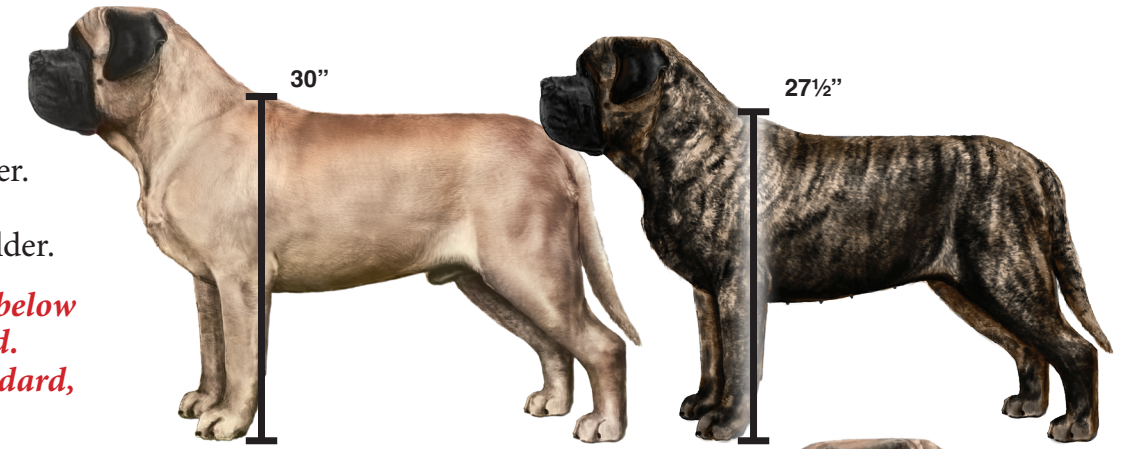
The Mastiff is a large, massive, symmetrical dog with a well-knit frame. The impression is one of grandeur and dignity. Dogs are more massive throughout. Bitches should not be faulted for being somewhat smaller in all dimensions while maintaining a proportionally powerful structure. A good evaluation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



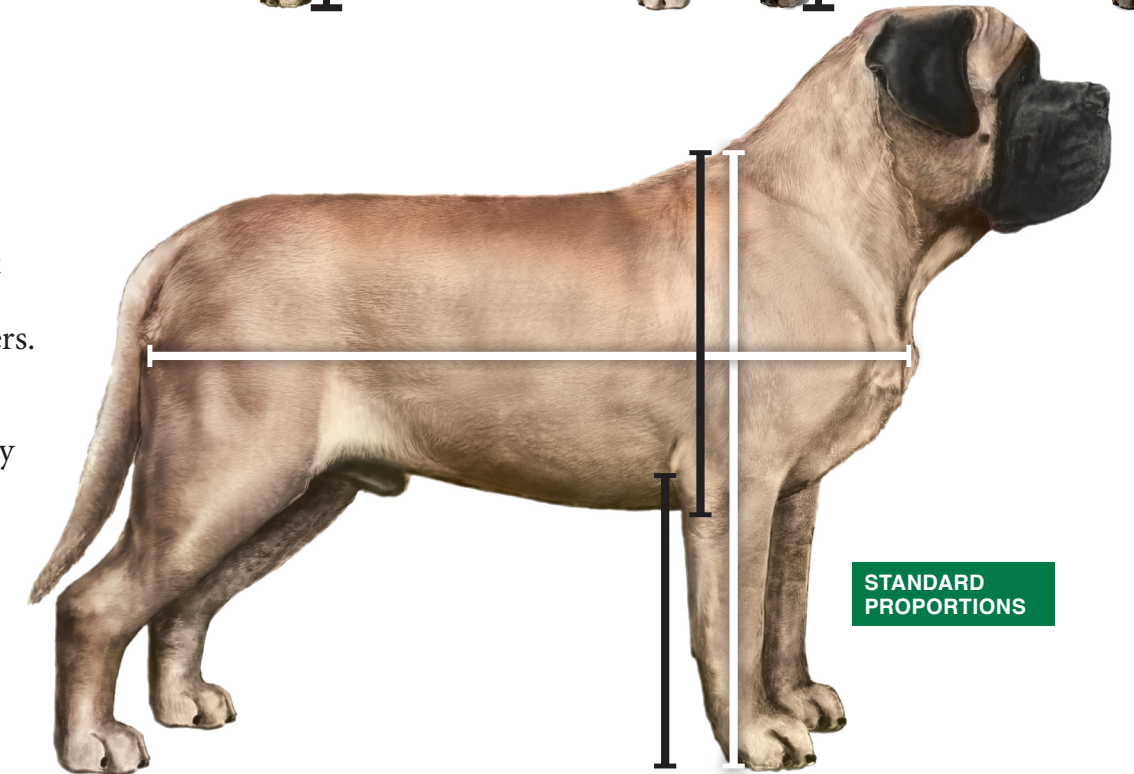
SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

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

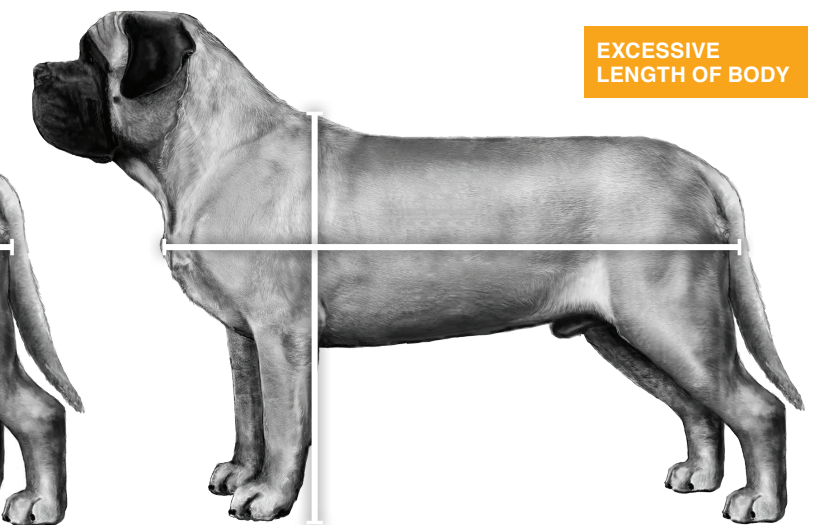
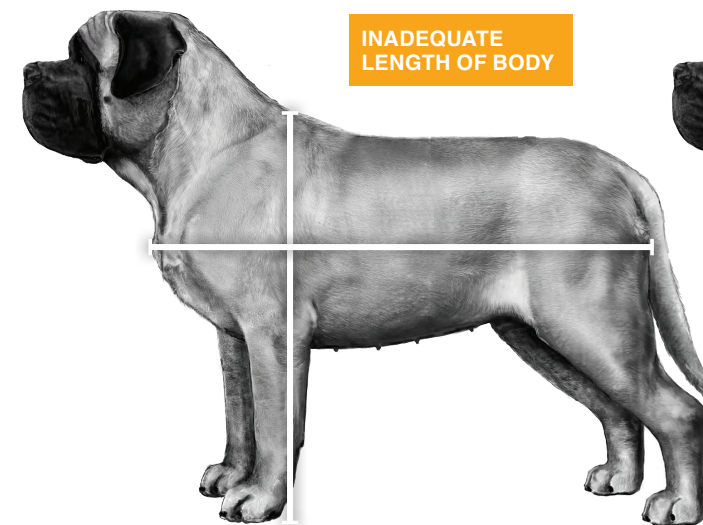
Fault—Dogs or bitches below the minimum standard. The farther below standard, the greater the fault.



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.



DEVIATION EXAMPLES



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.



STANDARD SIDE

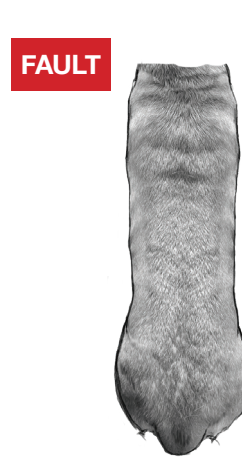


STANDARD FRONT



FAULT

LACKING SUBSTANCE



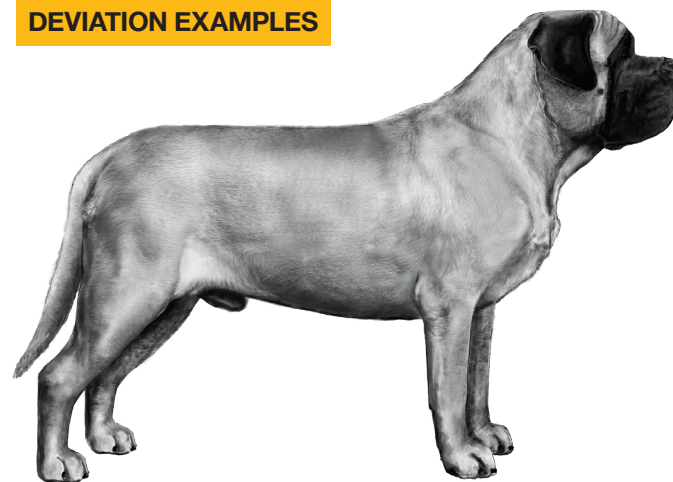
FAULT

SLAB SIDED



STANDARD BREADTH

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



LACKING BONE



LACKING DEPTH



LACKING BREADTH

HEAD

HEAD

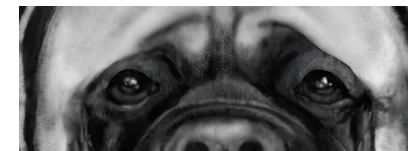
In general outline giving a massive appearance when viewed from any angle. Breadth greatly desired.

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.

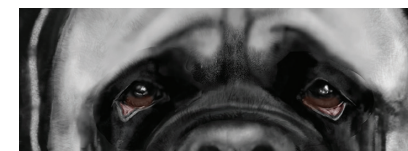
DEVIATION EXAMPLES



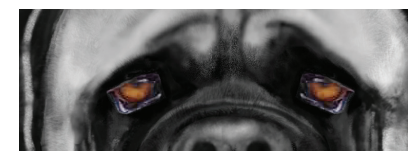
EYES TOO CLOSE TOGETHER



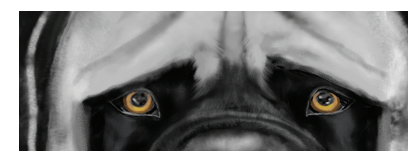
EYES TOO PROMINENT



EYES SHOWING HAW



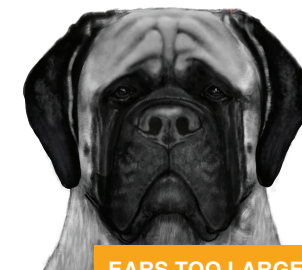
LIGHT EYES



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.

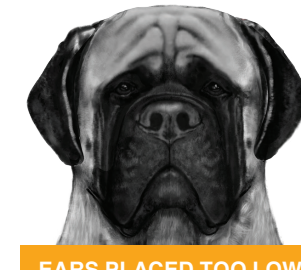
DEVIATION EXAMPLES



EARS TOO LARGE



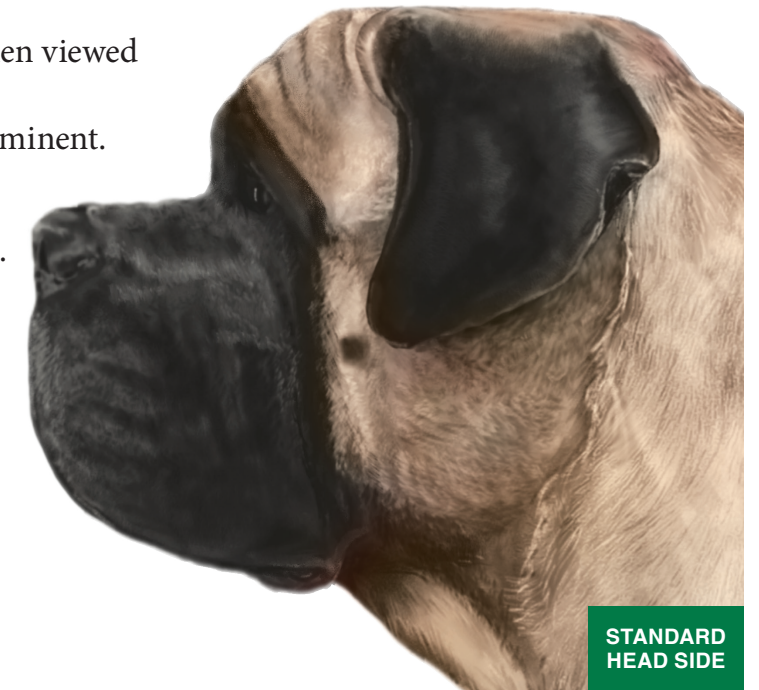
EARS TOO SMALL



EARS PLACED TOO LOW



EARS TOO LIGHT



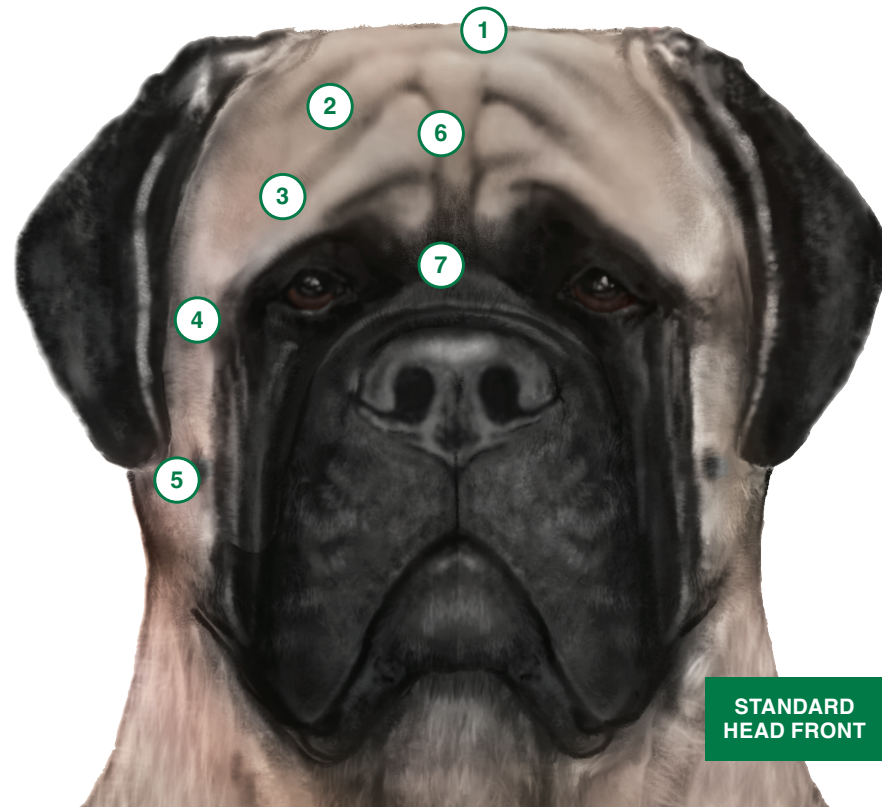
STANDARD HEAD SIDE



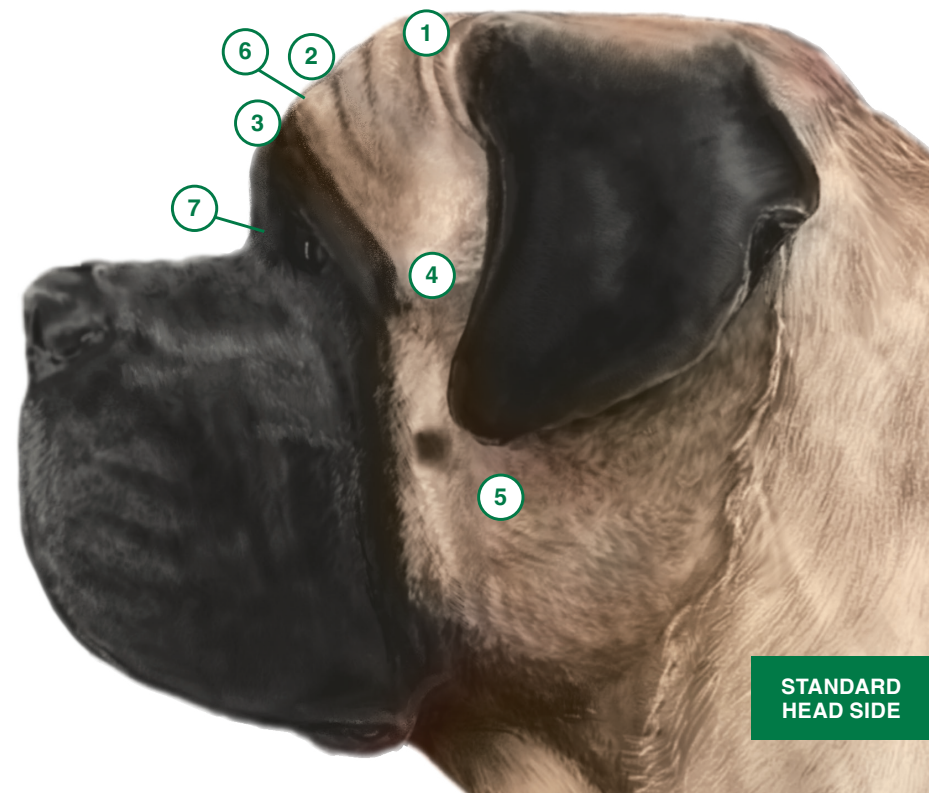
STANDARD HEAD FRONT

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.



STANDARD HEAD FRONT



STANDARD 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, LACK OF TEMPLE DEVELOPMENT, LACK OF CHEEK DEVELOPMENT, ARCH ACROSS THE SKULL EXCESSIVELY CURVED

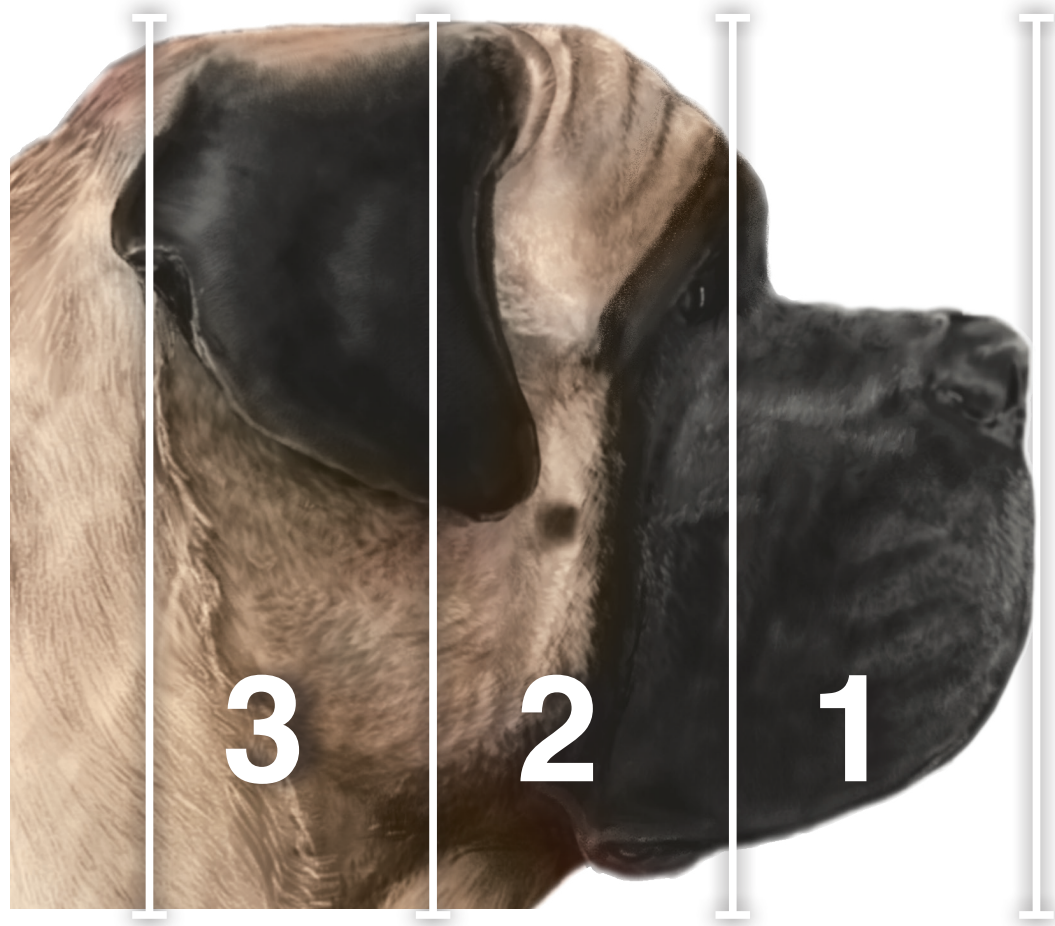


⑦ STOP TOO SHALLOW



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.

STANDARD 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.



STANDARD HEAD: CORRECT CIRCUMFERENCE RATIO OF MUZZLE TO SKULL

DEVIATION EXAMPLES



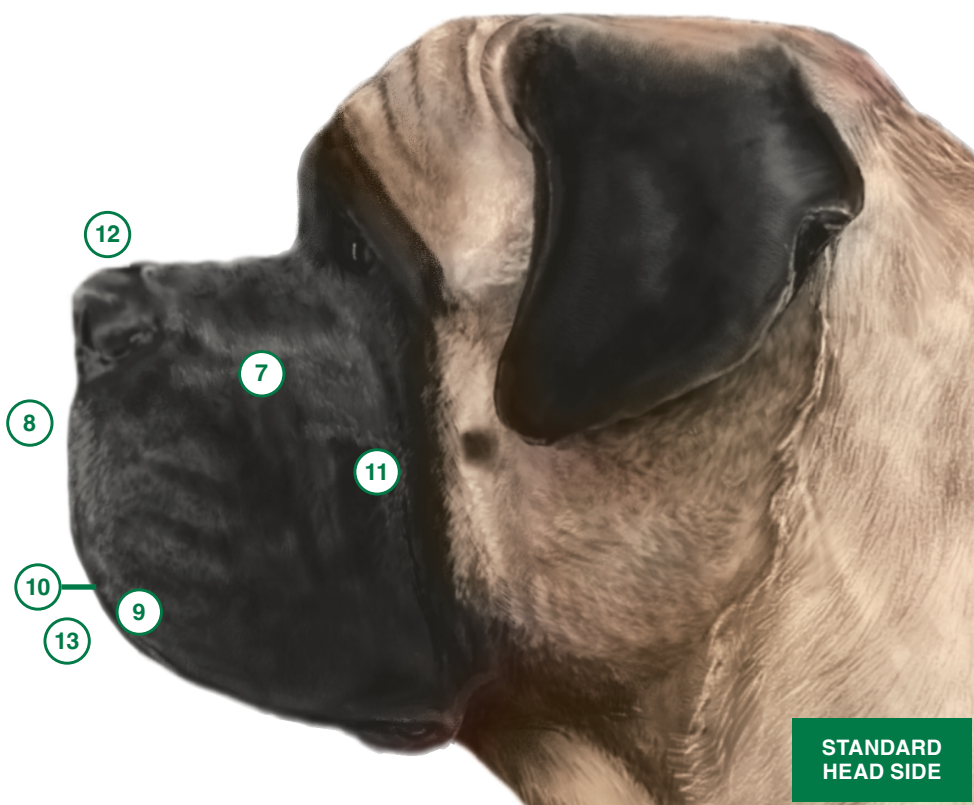
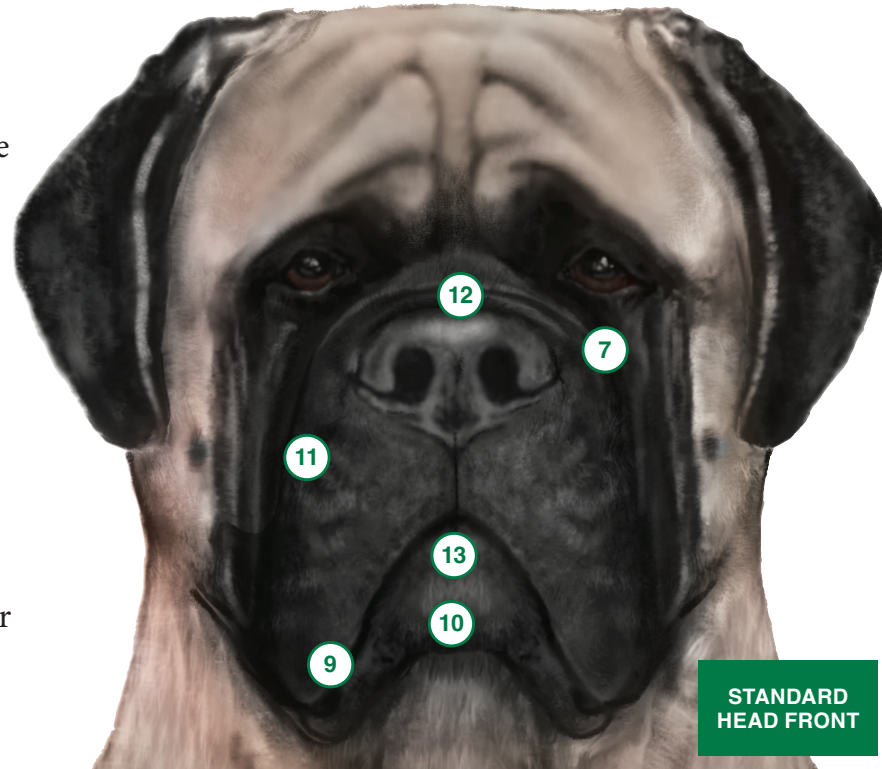
SKULL TOO NARROW



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.

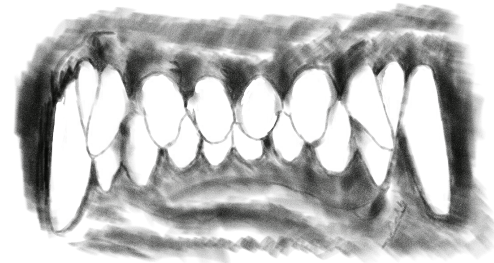


HEAD (cont.)

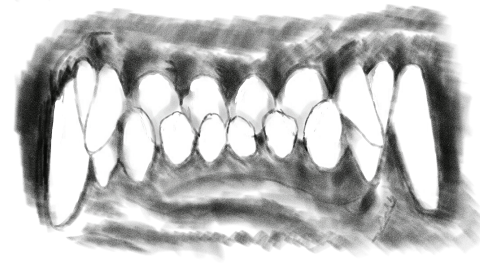


HEAD (cont.)

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.)

STANDARD HEAD FRONT

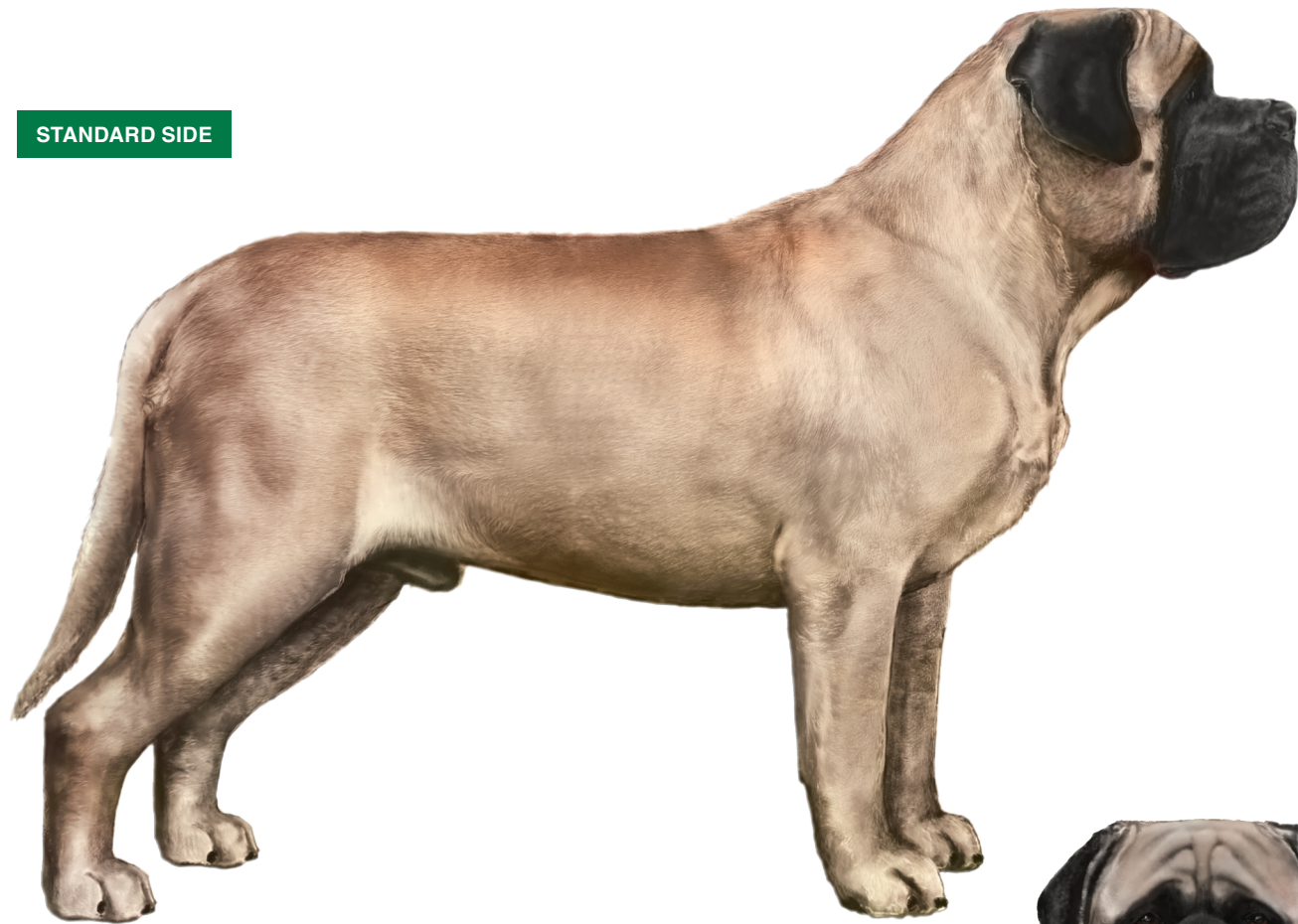


STANDARD HEAD SIDE



NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

STANDARD 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.

STANDARD FRONT

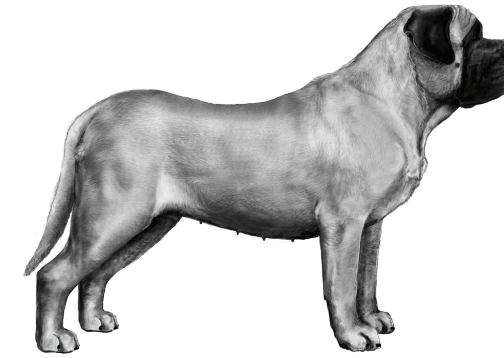


NECK, TOPLINE, BODY (cont.)

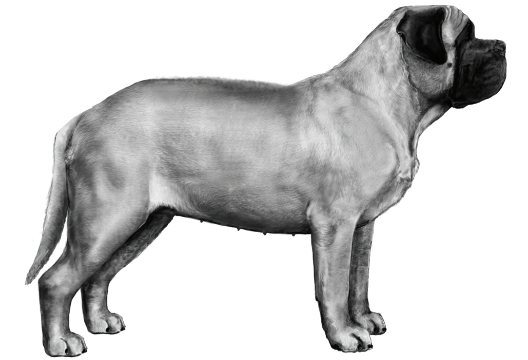
DEVIATION EXAMPLES



EXCESSIVE LOOSE SKIN ON NECK



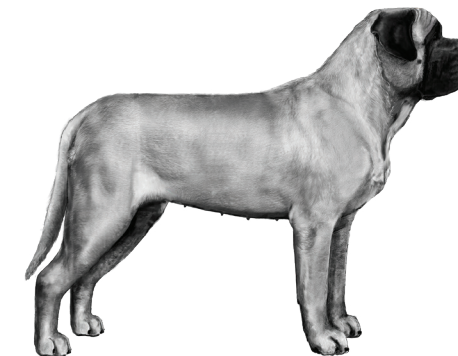
SWAYBACKED TOPLINE



ROACHED TOPLINE



TOO ROUNDED OVER THE RUMP



LACKING DEPTH OF CHEST (SIDE)



LACKING DEPTH OF CHEST (FRONT)



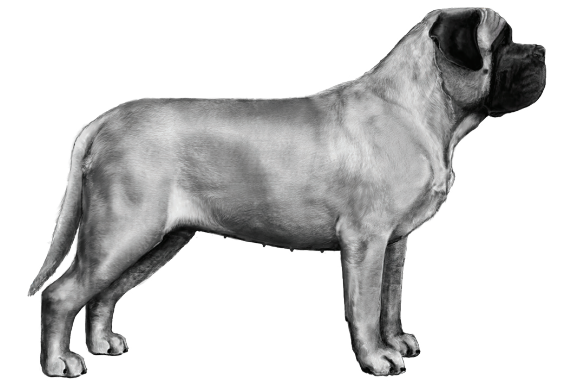
NARROW CHEST



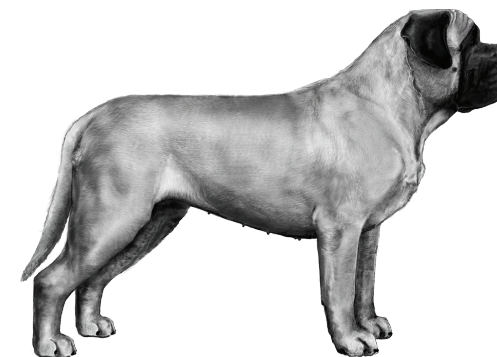
LACKING FORECHEST (SIDE)



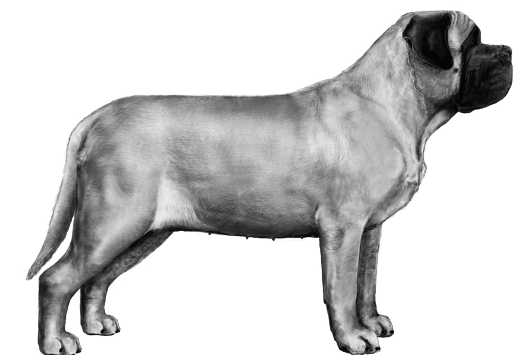
LACKING FORECHEST (FRONT)



FALSE RIBS NOT SET BACK



TOO MUCH TUCK UP



LACKING TUCK UP

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY (cont.)

STANDARD SIDE



STANDARD 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



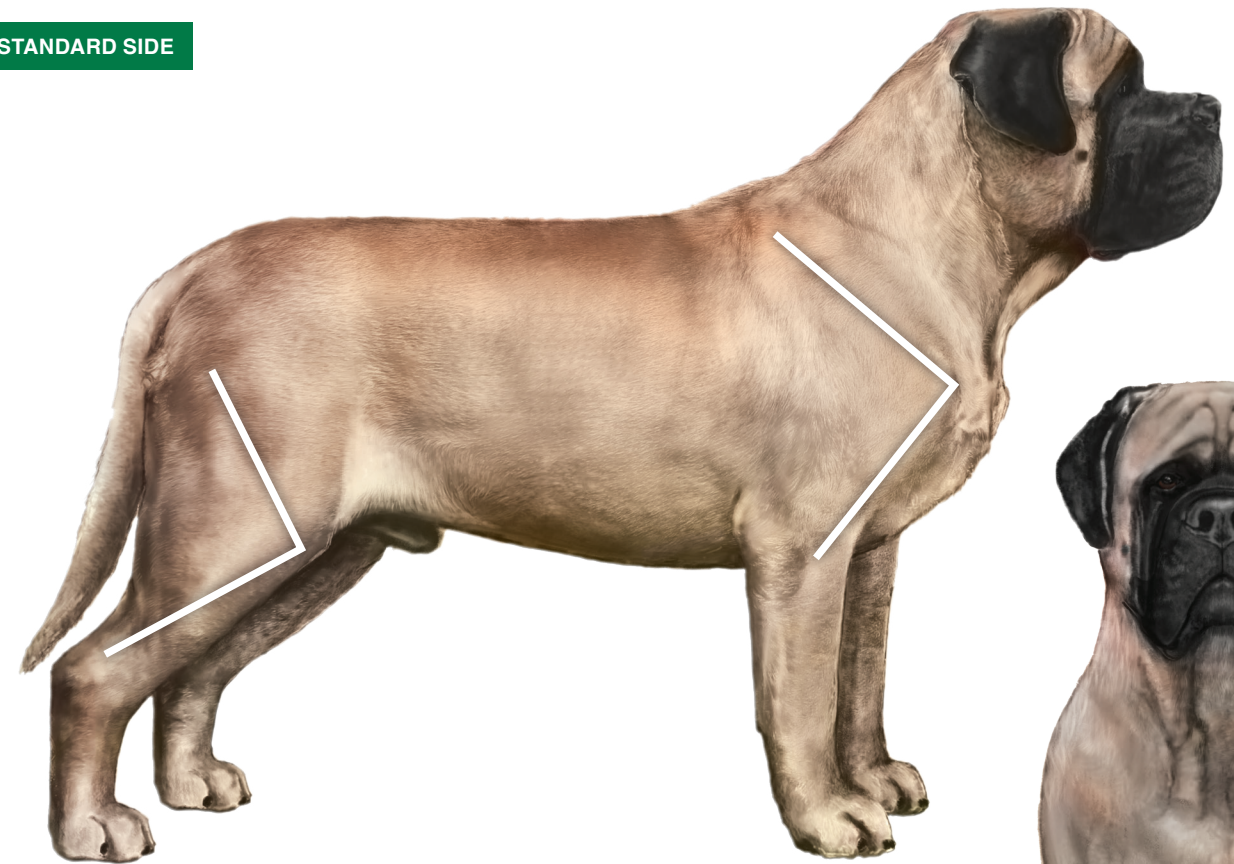
SKINNY TAIL



TAIL CARRIED TOO HIGH IN MOTION

FOREQUARTERS

STANDARD SIDE



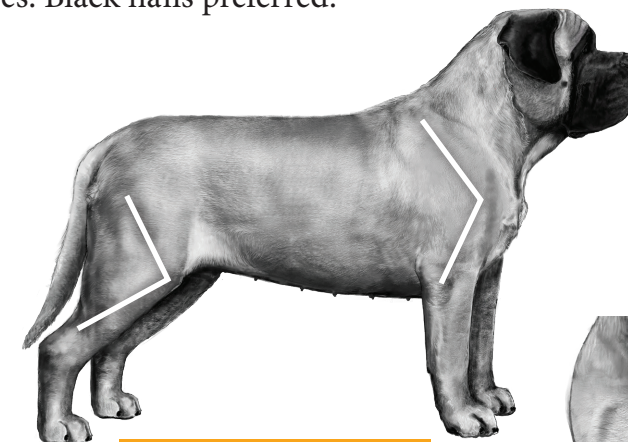
FOREQUARTERS

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



STANDARD FEET



WEAK PASTERNS



SPLAYED FEET



HARE FEET



LEGS NOT STRAIGHT



ELBOWS OUT



STANDARD FRONT

HINDQUARTERS

STANDARD 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.



STANDARD REAR



NOT PARALLEL
(BOWED)



NOT PARALLEL
(COW-HOKED)



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



STANDARD COAT



LONG OR WAVY COAT



FAULT

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.)



STANDARD MASK



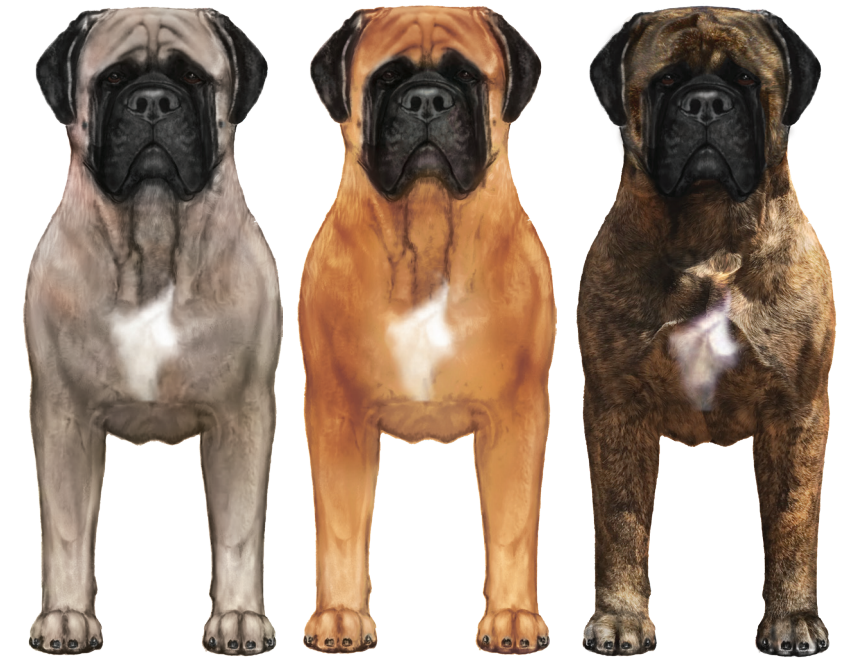
FAULT



LACKING DARK PIGMENT



FAULT



ACCEPTABLE WHITE



EXCESSIVE WHITE

GAIT

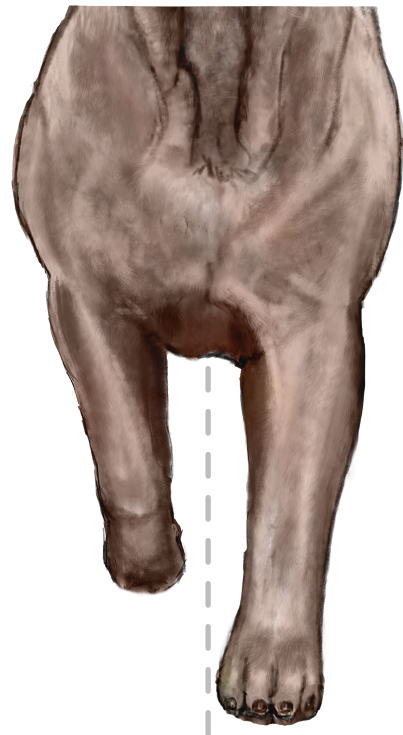
GAIT

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.

STANDARD SIDE GAIT



STANDARD FRONT GAIT

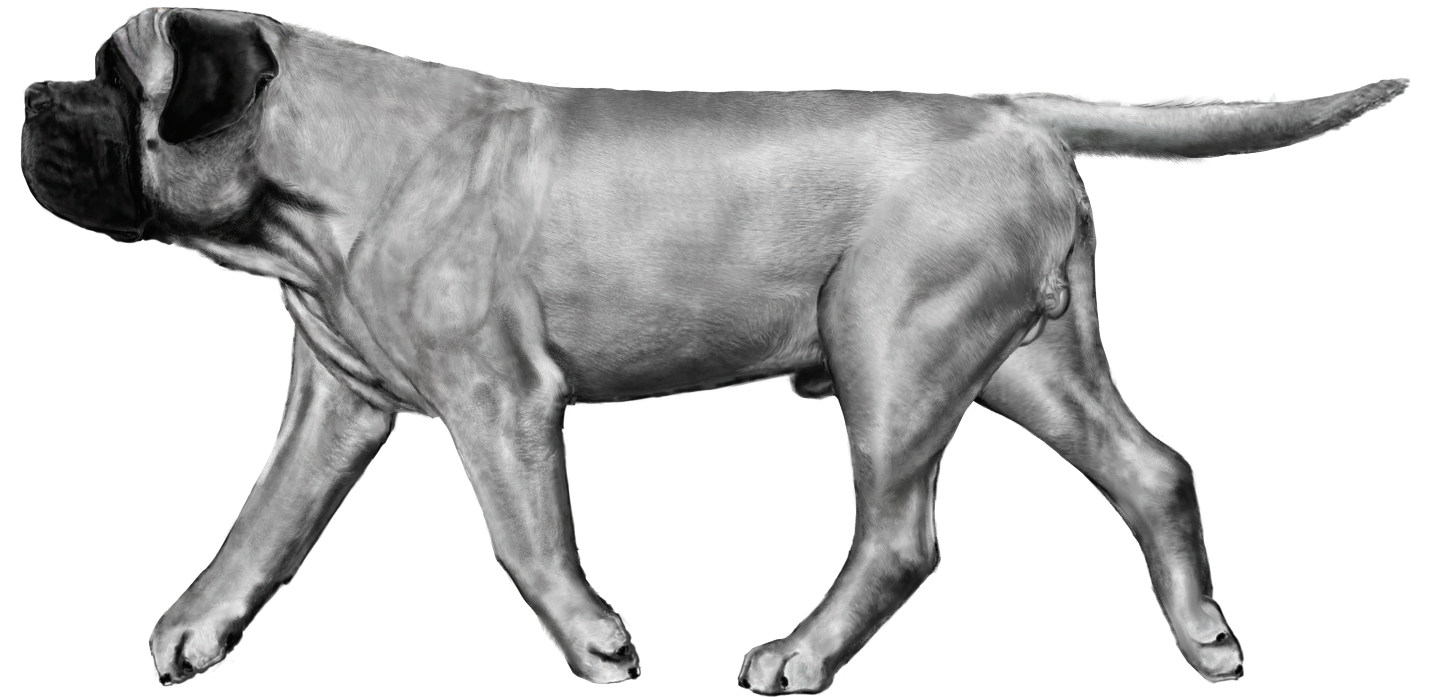


STANDARD REAR GAIT



GAIT (CONT.)

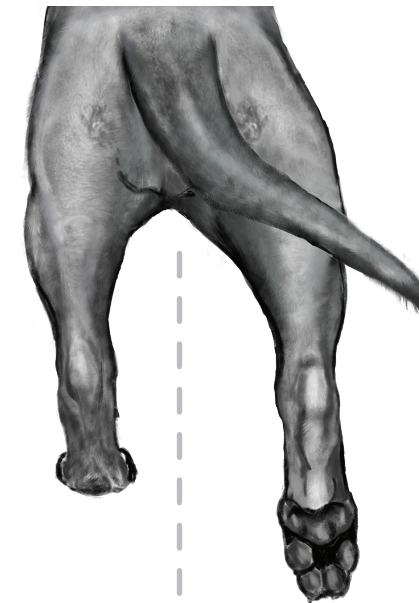
DEVIATION EXAMPLES



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

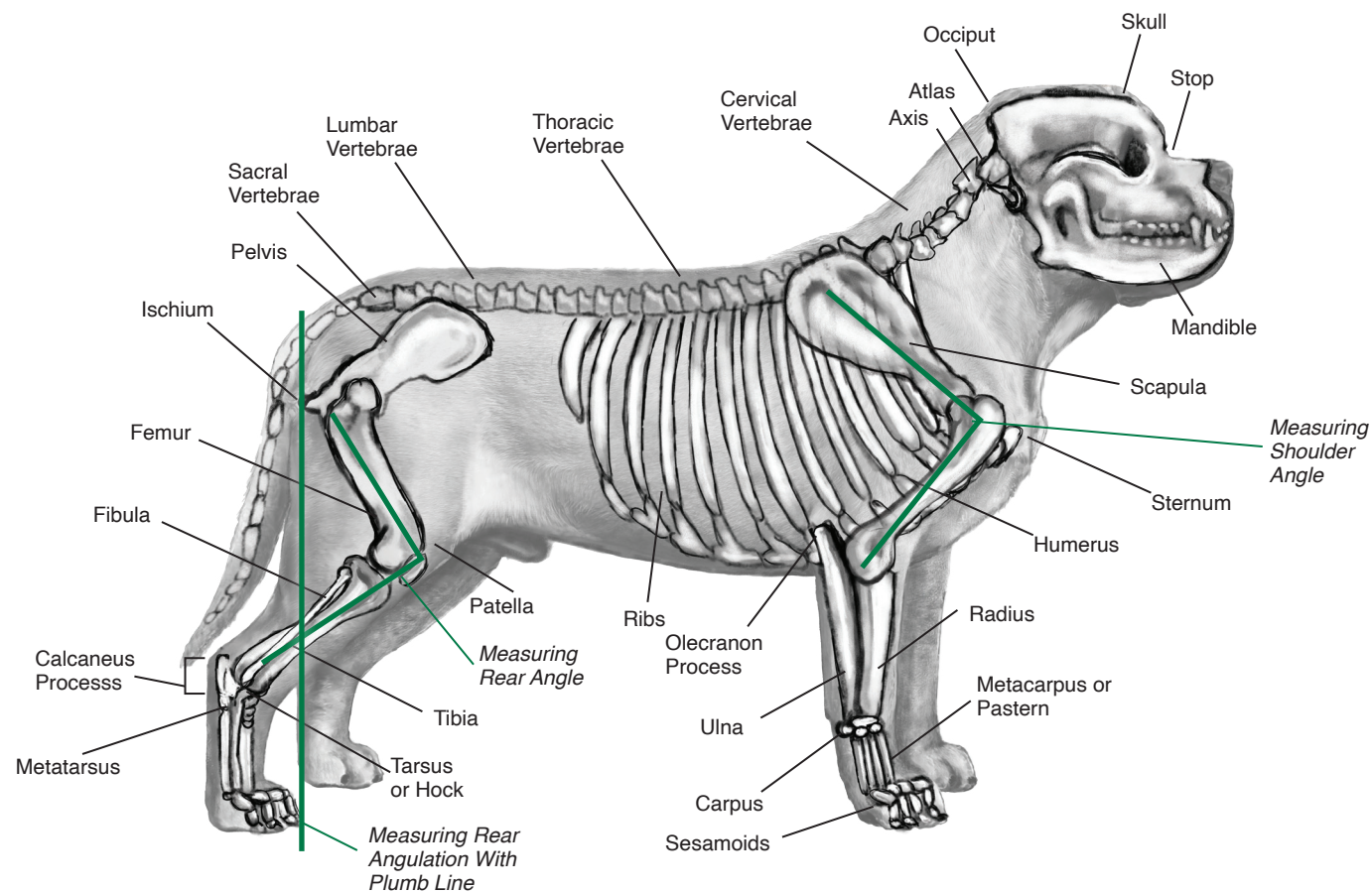
The gait denotes power and strength. The rear legs should have drive, while the forelegs should track smoothly with good reach. In motion, the legs move straight forward; as the dog’s speed increases from a walk to a trot, the feet move in toward the center line of the body to maintain balance.

TEMPERAMENT

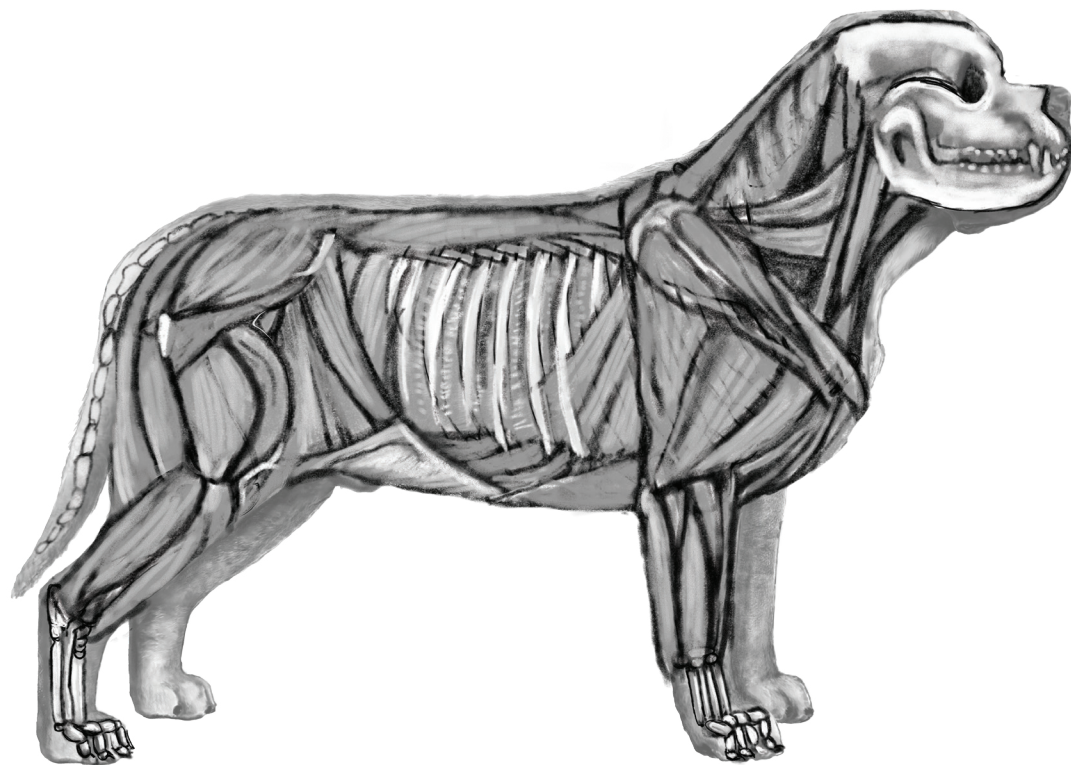
A combination of grandeur and good nature, courage and docility. Dignity, rather than gaiety, is the Mastiff’s correct demeanor. Judges should not condone shyness or viciousness. Conversely, judges should also beware of putting a premium on showiness.

Approved November 12, 1991 Effective December 31, 1991

SKELETAL SYSTEM OF THE MASTIFF



MUSCLE SYSTEM OF THE MASTIFF



ABOUT THE CREATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Mastiff Club of America Illustrated Standard Committee is:

Committee Chair: Donna Bahlman

Artist: Lora Myroup

Board Liaison: Mark Tichenor

Graphic Designer: Jessica Bahlman

Committee Members: Pam Gilley, Chris Jones, Carrie Klaiber, Chris Murphy, Melissa Prete, Carla Sanchez, Katherine Stivason, Kimberly Wampler, Cat Zavoras

INTRODUCTION:

We created our committee's Facebook group on February 26, 2020 and worked steadily from then until June 2022 to complete this important work. It has been a grueling process during difficult times. Our committee accepted this challenge knowing the importance a Mastiff illustrated standard would be to our breed. This has been something long overdue.

WHAT WE DID:

Each committee member used their unique breed expertise to help visually bring our Mastiff standard to life through a great deal of discussion and deliberation. Our committee includes representatives from the Mastiff breeder, handler and judging community. We used digital drawings to illustrate the words of our standard. We have included no commentary. Instead, we have used only the words of the standard (in full, in order, and without alteration) and illustrations which demonstrate the standard, the explicit faults and some deviations that are detailed in the standard. Our purpose was to help everyone fully understand the words of our standard—the blueprint of our breed. For complete understanding of our standard the standard representations need to be compared to the faults and deviations.

DETAILS ON THE CREATION PROCESS:

We used digital drawings. They are not portraits or photos. They are hand drawn on an iPad to simplify the multitude of edits and changes required to get from start to finish. They are digital images specifically drawn to reflect the words of our standard. No part of these drawings is a portrait of an existing dog, living or deceased.

We studied other breeds' illustrated standards and learned from them. We shared articles about structure, movement and correct angles that would apply to our illustrations. We used all Mastiff material we could find. We applied all of these things when reading our standard to produce the standard images. We found the words of our standard to be the most important tool to keep us on the right track

and avoid the pitfall of creating something that was an individual's preference rather than firmly rooted in the words of the standard.

Finding correct photos to use as references for the digital drawings became one of the most challenging aspects of our project. Not only did the photos need to show the correct traits as described in our standard, but the photos also needed to show the traits from the correct angle, at eye level, in a natural pose, and clear enough for an artist to see all the details necessary to reference for illustration. While this may seem like a reasonably simple task in theory, it was quite impossible in practice to find all that was necessary for any given view in a single photo. We needed a profile dog, profile head (standing and in motion), front on head, a correct front view (standing and in motion) and rear view (standing and in motion). We have albums of many, many photos and we shared even more photos during discussion, and all of these were used to help inform the illustration of the standard drawings. We needed even more reference photos to serve as reference for the deviation drawings.

It became evident that we had to use bits and pieces from many different photos as references and meld those references all together in order to create the standard drawings. We called our dog Frankenstein, as he was drawn with parts referenced from so many different sources. The digital technology made us able to, in real time using Zoom video calls, work on different parts of the drawings, making changes here and there for comparison and discussion, while maintaining the integrity of the initial illustration we were starting from at the beginning of the session.

Early on, we decided we needed to meet once a week to keep things fresh in our minds. Many, many hours were spent on Zoom calls by the members of this committee, with our artist Lora Myroup drawing in real time for all to see, discuss and tweak. We could have kept it simple

just use line drawings like some of the other breeds have done, but our committee was committed to do the best job possible, and that meant creating fully shaded illustrations, with color versions for the standard drawings. We invited guest consultants to participate in calls and we shared our work-in-progress with other respected experts of our breed for their input. We added new members to our committee as needed.

DETAILS ON THE APPROVAL PROCESS:

In 2021, a progress report was presented to the MCOA membership at the annual MCOA membership meeting. In 2022, once the committee had completed its final draft, a preview of the project was presented to the MCOA membership at the annual MCOA membership meeting as well as separately to the MCOA Board and the Judges Education Steering Committee. Feedback from those presentations was overwhelmingly positive, with only a few items that needed to be addressed. Some of the feedback indicated a possible need for an additional training tool that addresses issues that are beyond the scope of the actual words of the standard.

Our committee addressed the pertinent changes prompted by feedback from these presentations and submitted the final product to the MCOA board in mid-June 2022 for consideration at the next MCOA Board meeting. Certain issues beyond the scope of this committee that were brought up at the presentations have been directed to Members Education and Judges Education committees for further discussion. The board approved this revised final product at that meeting in July 2022. In October 2022, we met to discuss revisions based on feedback from the membership. Those revisions were completed in February 2023.

This document is available online at mastiff.org/mcoa-illustrated-mastiff-standard. There are plans for the club to print this document for distribution to the Mastiff Club of America membership.

ANATOMY OF THE MASTIFF

