



# The Staffordshire Bull Terrier

Interpretation & Illustration  
of the  
Written Breed Standard

## \*DISCLAIMER

All drawings depict actual Staffords (both living and deceased). No dog is perfect. Therefore, the illustrations are included to assist in explaining the written breed standard and may or may not be “ideal” in every case.

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# The Breed Standard

∞ General Appearance,  
Characteristics

∞ Size, Proportion, Substance

∞ Head

∞ Eyes

∞ Ears

∞ Mouth

∞ Neck, Topline, Body

∞ Forequarters

∞ Hindquarters

∞ Coat

∞ Color

∞ Gait

∞ Temperament

∞ Faults

# Historical Notes to Consider

'Bull-and-Terrier' mixes were being bred for competitive 'blood sports' nearly 100 years prior to the name "Staffordshire Bull Terrier" being established in the official records. In fact, it was the conformation ring that began to replace the fighting pit in the 1930's and established social legitimacy to the fraternity surrounding the dogs. This gave rise to the name Staffordshire Bull Terrier as a recognized breed, distinguishing him from all other 'Bull-and-Terriers'.

As the fraternity's competitive focus shifted from the pit to the show ring the dogs function, and thus his form, also transitioned. Still, many of the first Staffordshire Bull Terriers shown in England secretly earned their keep in the pit. Because of this dual-purpose, the original breed standard described the show dog in terms of what you might look for in a 1930's fighting dog. There was an allowance for the dogs to be much taller than today's standard while carrying considerably less substance. The first breed standard described a dog built much more like a modern American Pit Bull Terrier calling for an 18 inch to carry just 38 pounds. As time went on the show fraternity wished to further distance themselves from the underground world of dog fighters that still existed. Thus in 1948/49 the standard was changed to include the single most significant alteration to the breed's makeup clearly defining the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as a show dog, not a fighter. The top end of the height range was reduced by 2 inches, yet the weights remained the same, thus calling for a more compact dog of greater substance, no longer ideal for the pit. This change would mark the show Stafford's official severance of its ties to the fighting world.

# Historical Notes to Consider

When judging the Staffordshire Bull Terrier one of the first questions that comes to mind is “How do I determine which parts of the standard are more important than others?” As mentioned, the Stafford was RE-established as a show dog in 1949. However, the basic answer to this question is the same as it is with most all other breeds: Always give priority considering the original function of the breed. As unsavory as it may be, those elements most important to the historic function as a fighting dog should not be forgotten. In fact, they are to be given the greatest attention.

For historical reference consider the following 100 pt judging system that was proposed in 1948/49 for that updated version of the standard:

<b>General Appearance and Coat Condition</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Head</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Neck</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Body</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Legs and Feet</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Tail</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>General Movement and Balance</b>	<b><u>10</u></b>
<b>Total = 100</b>	

This system is **not** used today as the UK Kennel Club discontinued inclusion of all 100 pt judging systems as a part of published breed standards. However, it does give us some perspective as to how the ‘forefathers’ of the **show** Stafford prioritized the importance of the individual elements and characteristics of the breed after its departure from his original function as a fighting dog.

# General Appearance

“The Staffordshire Bull Terrier is a smooth-coated dog.

It should be of great strength for its size and, although muscular, should be active and agile.”



# General Appearance

The Stafford is an efficient athlete. Everything about him should reflect this. There are to be no exaggeration in his make-up. Excess would inhibit the breed's original function as well as its health.

He needs enough bone, enough muscle, and enough substance to support his powerful, athletic endeavors, but not an excess of any of these features. He will need strength and vigor, allied with speed and suppleness. The Stafford should have stamina in abundance. He should feel hard to the touch, never soft.

The cloddy, heavy-boned, over muscled dog may look impressive but he'll lack the speed, agility and stamina of the athlete.

The racy, light-boned dog may be agile and athletic, but will lack strength and resilience.

The one in the middle will get the job done.



# General Appearance

## Smooth coated

A first glance one may think that all Staffords are smooth coated. However, when you put your hands on them you may notice a wide range of coat lengths, textures & thicknesses. The correct coat should feel slightly hard to the touch, not soft nor silky. It should be tight, short and lay flat against the skin - without the use of additives.

## Great strength for its size, Muscular, Active & Agile

The Stafford is a medium sized dog. Their appearance should be that of an athlete or a gladiator. They should be quite active indeed - sometimes too active for many people.

A Stafford should be very agile. He will exhibit "economy of effort" in every move and is in general nimble - both physically AND mentally.

Amazing athletes *when kept in good condition*, Staffords excel in many sports such as agility, fly ball, coursing, weight pull, Frisbee, dock jumping and more. Mentally they are agile thinkers whether it be for obedience, rally, tracking, search and rescue, nose work, barn hunt, or as service or therapy dogs. As the breed standard points out, the Stafford is "a foremost all-purpose dog."

# General Appearance

Staffords should be shown in fit, athletic condition. This doesn't mean completely 'stripped down' as if they are getting ready to go into the pit, but it certainly doesn't mean the dog should be carrying any excess fat. Excess weight is unhealthy and interferes with the dog's function. Always look for a well defined waistline and 'tuck.' The Stafford is "rather light in the loins."

Also look for a close, short coat shining with a natural gleam.

Expect great strength for his size comprised of long, lean, hard, resilient muscle; not bulky, rounded muscle that has power yet lacks stamina.

"Great strength for his size" again alludes to efficiency. You would expect a large, heavy dog to be very powerful. Do not fall for such an animal. A Stafford's strength is sometimes surprising since the package should be much more compact than other dogs of similar strength.





# Characteristics



With a keen, intelligent expression and awareness of his surroundings a Stafford should stand his ground without being too troublesome.

Overtly shy, meek or cringing Staffords are not displaying the correct breed temperament, and should be thus be penalized. A bold, confident personality is an essential characteristic of the breed.

Exceptions should be made for young ones just starting out in the ring. They will more than likely melt into a wiggling ball of exuberant licking as soon as you speak to them. As long as they are happy and not overly fearful this behavior is typical in puppies.

# Size, Proportion, Substance

“Height at shoulder: 14 to 16 inches.  
Weight: Dogs, 28 to 38 pounds; bitches, 24  
to 34 pounds, these heights being related to  
weights.

Non-conformity with these limits is a fault.

In proportion, the length of back, from  
withers to tail set, is equal to the distance  
from withers to ground.”

*Withers to tail set = withers to ground appears  
ONLY in the US standard. By most accounts this  
is incorrect, and calls for a dog to be longer than  
he is tall. In fact, the Stafford should appear  
square.*



# Size, Proportion, Substance

The breed standard sets the ideal range of height for males at 14-16" and weight at 28-38 pounds. Females may also be 14-16 inches but will carry from 24-34 pounds.

The key to understanding proper substance and proportion is explained in the standard with the notations: "These heights being related to weights" and "Non-conformity with these limits is a fault." Although size is important (staying within the limits), the correct weight for a given height is what will help you define BALANCE. A 14 inch, 38 pound dog may be within the size limits. However his substance and proportion are far from ideal. The same could be said for a 16 inch dog carrying just 24 pounds. BALANCE is paramount, and understanding the relative height to weight ratios is the key to recognizing balance.



# Size, Proportion, Substance

## *“Heights Being Related to Weights”*

If we extrapolate what the standard gives us for the height to weight ratios the following table represents the most ideal / correct substance throughout the range.

*“Non-conformity with these limits is a fault.”*

### **Males**

**14” ..... 28 lbs**  
**14 ½” ...30.45 lbs**  
**15” .....32.85 lbs**  
**15 ½” ...35.5 lbs**  
**16” ..... 38 lbs**

### **Females**

**14” ..... 24 lbs**  
**14 ½” ... 26.25 lbs**  
**15” ..... 28.8 lbs**  
**15 ½” ... 31.31 lbs**  
**16” ..... 34 lbs**

This is one of the least subjective passages in the entire standard, yet probably the most liberally interpreted (aka ignored) by unkeen eyes and novice judges. Proper substance is of extreme importance to any athlete. It is of even greater importance to the Stafford given the breed's original function as a competitive fighter. It defines the Stafford apart from other 'bully breeds' and remains an essential element of breed type. Do not hide behind the absence of scales and a wicket in the ring. Familiarize yourself with what a 15” 29 lb bitch looks like and learn to recognize this when you see it.

# Size, Proportion, Substance

The standard is our guide to the ideal. Nonconformity to height or weight is a fault, not a disqualification. You will get quality dogs outside the mark, and you should always be willing to appreciate and reward quality. Make allowances, but be careful do not stray far. The breed standard always trumps opinion.

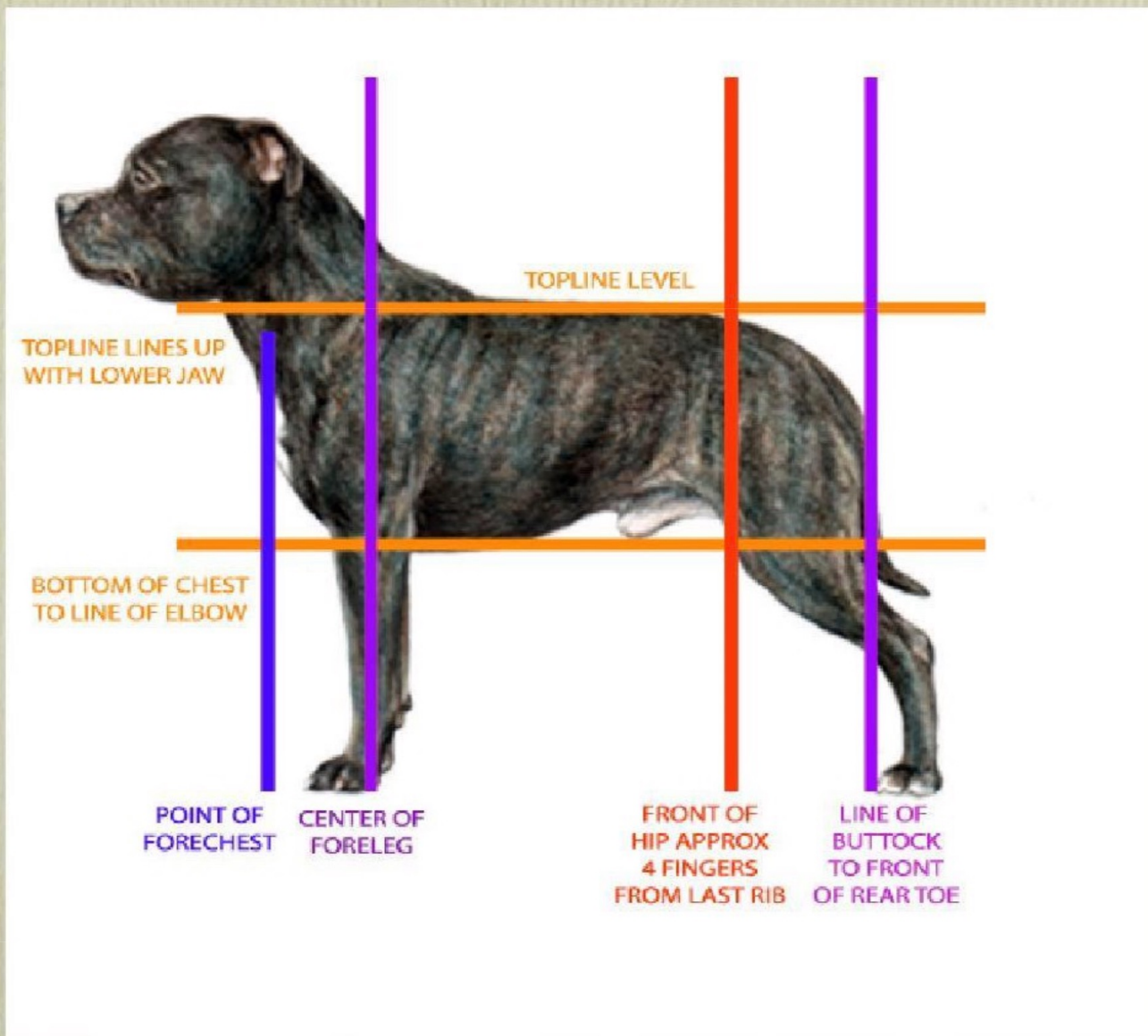
You may hear people refer to the Staffordshire Bull Terrier as having 3 distinct types; A 'Terrier type' a 'Bulldog type' and a 'Balanced type.' This is **not** correct. It is faulty logic to define *type* (that which makes a Stafford uniquely Stafford) by three different combinations of two diametrically opposing elements. In reality, what the standard calls for is only one type; i.e. the one in the middle – the Balanced Type. This is the perfect blend between bull and terrier. Call it what you will, but remember: If an exhibit is not of the 'balanced type' he is by default of the 'unbalanced type.'

**Picture an old fashioned balance scale. The ideal is right the middle just at the point of the fulcrum between bulldog and terrier.**

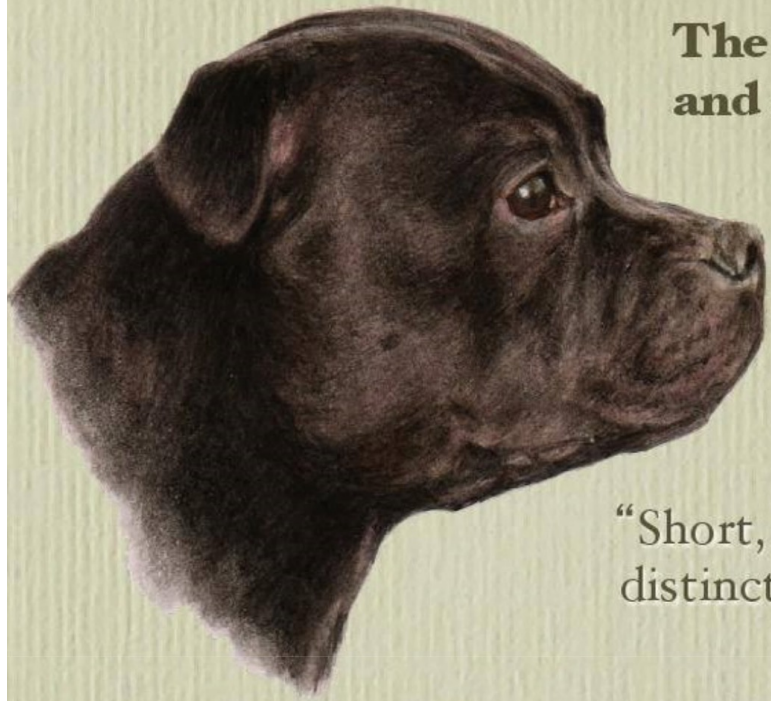


# Proportion

The head should extend above an imaginary horizontal line across the topline. The head and the apex in the crest of neck extends just in front of an imaginary vertical line upward through the center of foreleg.



The distance from withers to ground and the distance from withers to tailset should be equal. This means that the Stafford is NOT a truly 'square' breed as defined by many other breed standards. However, length should be measured from the top of the withers to very top of the set, so the length is only SLIGHTLY greater than height. At the top of the tail set many Staffords exhibit a classic 'thumbprint' which is a dimple above the tail where a (human) thumb fits nicely when marking the set of the tail and evaluating the length in relationship to height at withers.



**The Stafford's head is one of the hallmarks of the breed, and much like proper substance, it helps define breed type.**

# Head

“Short, deep through, broad skull, very pronounced cheek muscles, distinct stop, short fore-face, black nose. Pink (Dudley) nose to be considered a serious fault.

Eyes--Dark preferable, but may bear some relation to coat color. Round, of medium size, and set to look straight ahead. Light eyes or pink eye rims to be considered a fault. The US version of the breed standard does make an exception to this indicating that “...where the coat surrounding the eye is white the eye rim may be pink.”

Ears--Rose or half-pricked and not large. Full drop or full prick to be considered a serious fault.

Mouth--A bite in which the outer side of the lower incisors touches the inner side of the upper incisors. The lips should be tight and clean. The badly undershot or overshot bite is a serious fault.”

# Head - ratio, skull, fore-face

The head should have an approximate skull/muzzle ratio of 2 parts skull and 1 part muzzle when measuring from the tip of the nose to the stop, and then measuring from the stop to the occiput. So the fore-face/muzzle is short in relation to the rest of the head, shorter in this respect than most terriers' but not so short it interferes with function.

The Stafford's skull should be balanced for equal width and depth and be well padded with muscle including well-developed cheek 'bumps.' These are the muscles which close the jaw and enable the Stafford to grip with power and endurance. The Stafford should not have a domed head. There should exist a 'furrow' formed by the temporal muscles on the top of a mature Staffords head. Puppies and young Staffords may not get this muscling until they reach 12 months or more, but it should be present as adults. The same is true for the pronounced cheek muscles. Until the Stafford reaches maturity (between 2-4 years) the head will continue to change and mature.





# Head - ratio, skull, fore-face

The Stafford's foreface is comprised of the muzzle and jaw. It should also be balanced in terms of width and depth. The strength of foreface should be congruent with the rest of the head. A foreface which falls below his eyes makes for a 'foxy' head. But too much bone will create a heavy muzzle make the dog coarse taking away from the quality of expression and head in general.



# Head - ratio, skull, fore-face

The Stafford should have a muscular, clean head of good depth & breadth, with pronounced cheek muscles and well defined stop. Although substantial and quite powerful the head should still be in balance with the rest of the dog.

It should **not** appear as if it doesn't fit with the overall structure. A female's head will generally be smaller and exhibit a more elegant, feminine expression.

She should never look 'doggy.'



While the male head is a more powerful and exhibits an overall more masculine expression, loose or wrinkled skin and pendulous lips on either sex should be penalized.

# Head - underjaw, lip, muzzle



In evaluating for a strong underjaw keep in mind that untidy lips / large flews can hide the underjaw giving it the illusion of weakness. A hands-on examination is often required to determine if the underjaw is weak or if it is actually untidy lips causing this perspective. In either case it is a fault.

The Stafford should have a clean lip that lies tightly against the teeth. Not only does a fleshy lip create an unattractive, foreign expression, but in considering the breed's original purpose it could be a hindrance in an altercation by creating an obstacle for the dog and a target for his opponent. There should be no looseness, wrinkle nor spongy appearance.



The muzzle should appear as a rounded-off block widening until just below the eyes while gradually deepening through to the rear of the lower jaw. Still the muzzle is more square rather than wedge-shaped. Get your hands on the exhibit. Feel for a rigid, smooth muzzle without excess flesh or wrinkles which indicate an inappropriate coarseness. Also feel that the muzzle does not narrow abruptly, but tapers rather gradually from the point under the eye to the nose. The female muzzle may have slightly more taper than the male, again defining her as decidedly more feminine.





# Head - stop, nose

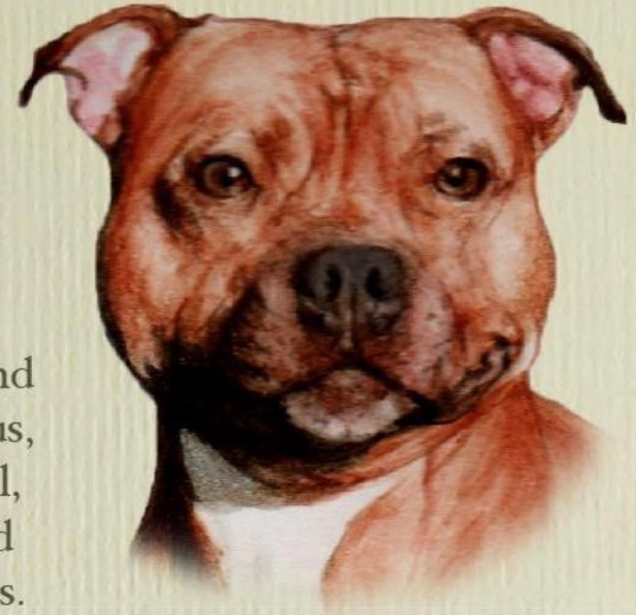
The stop (the step down from the top of the skull to the top of the muzzle) is well defined. It is not as deep as brachycephalic breeds such as the Boxer or Bull Mastiff, but it should be strong and apparent. A shallow stop will adversely affect the eye placement and overall strength of expression.

The stop can be deceiving without putting your hands on the dog. The angle should be almost vertical. Place your thumb on the stop to measure the ratio of foreface to skull and to evaluate the angle of the stop. When simply looking at the profile the eye socket may cause distraction or distortion. Further, coat color, patterns and room/venue lighting can create illusions when it comes to depth and angle of stop.

The Stafford's nose is black. Absence of pigment (pink or Dudley) is a serious fault. The nostrils should be wide and open. He will need to breathe freely through them when the mouth is engaged. Small or pinched nostrils will not suffice.

Remember, the Stafford is an athlete so all his parts will have to function well.

# Head - eyes



Eyes are to be round with a keen expression. They are medium-sized and set in the skull to look straight ahead. Although round in shape, bulbous, protruding eyes are incorrect. On the other end of the spectrum, small, almond eyes are also to be faulted. Staffords usually have very animated eyes resulting in a lively expression. The round shape contributes to this.

To complete the expression, the darker the eye the better. An allowance is made for there to be some relation between eye and coat color, yet dark is always preferred.

Keep in mind that all parts of the head are interrelated. If the stop is too shallow the eye shape will often be almond and the expression will suffer.

If the stop is exaggerated, the eyes may be overly large and prominent, again moving from the correct expression.

Eye rims should also be dark. As mentioned previously, there is an exception in US standard allowing for pink eye rims where the coat surrounding the eye is white.

# Head - eye color



Acceptable example of dark eyes on  
Black Brindle.



Acceptable example of  
SLIGHTLY lighter eyes in  
keeping with coat color on a  
mahogany brindle dog.



Acceptable example of dark eyes  
with pink eye rims where the  
white coat borders the eye on a  
piebald dog.(USA)

# Head - ears

Check for size, shape, thickness, evenness, and set. They should be small and thin, set tightly rose or half prick, and not large nor heavy in leather. They should not droop low nor appear too large in proportion to the overall head itself. It is important that they should be tidy. The acceptance of "1/2 pricked" ears (USA) should not be used as a license for rewarding 3/4 or more pricked ears. The higher the ear the more it detracts from expression. Rose is preferred to all others.

Ears should not be set high on the head, giving a flighty appearance, nor too low giving an inattentive appearance. When the ear is flattened and pulled forward the tip should extend to the corner of the eye. When at ease in a passive state the ears may fold back close to the skull exposing more of the inside, but they should never lose their fold and drop.

Ears are a barometer for how the Stafford shows emotion and alertness. Perfect rose ears round out the classic Stafford expression. Although they seem like a minor cosmetic detail they are very important in typifying the breed. An incorrect ear can ruin the entire expression and create a foreign look on an otherwise lovely-headed Stafford. As such, the standard dictates that a full drop or a full prick is a serious fault.



# Head - mouth

A clean scissor bite with large teeth is called for. At the same time there should be some consideration for otherwise excellent specimens with SLIGHT dentition problems. Badly undershot or overshot are serious faults, as is the wry mouth. Converging canines should also be faulted. It is important that the Stafford be able to bite with maximum power and efficiency. Anything that weakens the bite is a fault to the degree of it's severity in hindering the animal from performing its function.

The incisors should appear level at the tips, evenly set at the base and ideally in a straight line. The occlusion of the scissor bite should be uniform.

In general all teeth must be in line to support each other. Teeth which are not set square in the jaw and in line with one another will sustain more damage under stress and more wear with daily activity. The canines are an exception to this as they angle obtusely to the jaw so that the tight scissor may be formed.

Remember that the Stafford is an active animal with very powerful jaws. Missing or broken dentition due to an accident should be considered in relation to its severity. You can still assess the nature of the bite and check for developmental issues. Some environmental casualties may be observed from time to time.

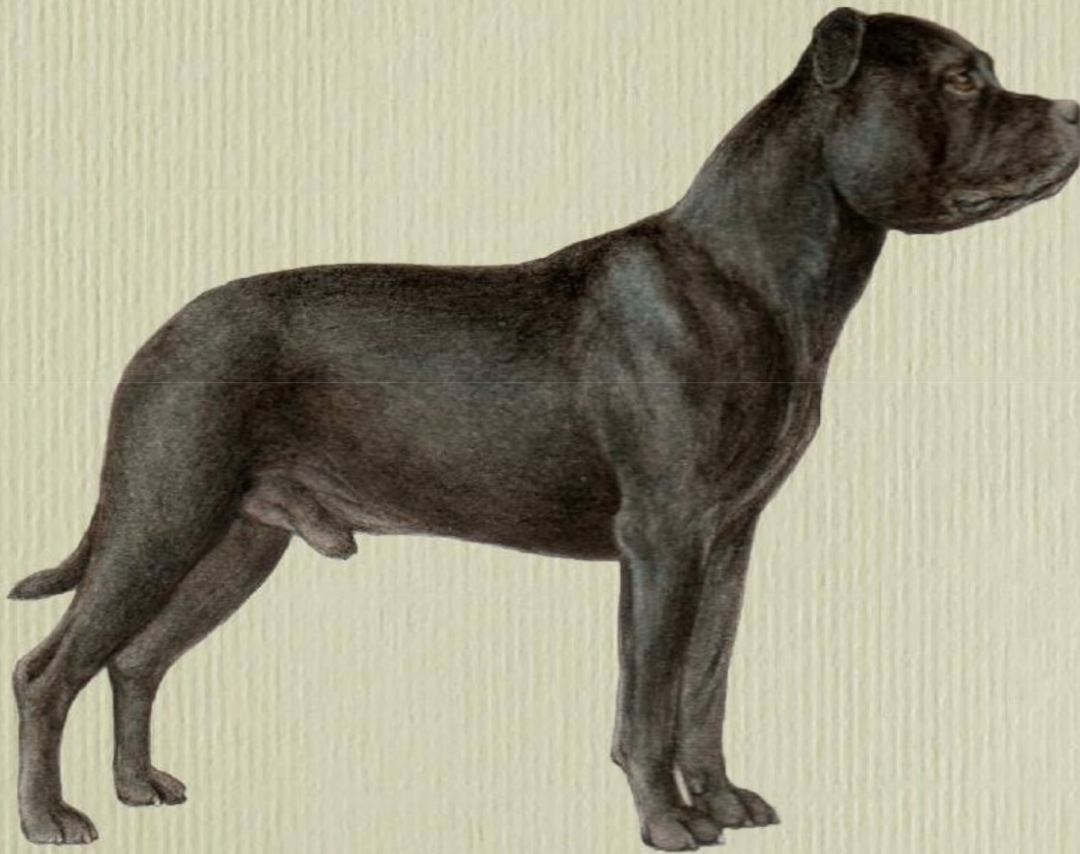


# Mouths & Bites



## Example of an ideal Stafford scissor bite

Note the large, white teeth with straight, evenly-set incisors. The outer surface of the lower incisors cleanly touch the inside surface of upper set with no gap. The occlusion lines up nicely. Canines angle outward enough to form a scissor with the lower tooth in front of upper tooth on outside of upper gum line. Also notice the dark pigment on the gums.



## Neck, Topline & Body

“The neck is muscular, rather short, clean in outline and gradually widening toward the shoulders. The body is close coupled, with a level topline, wide front, deep brisket and well sprung ribs being rather light in the loins. The tail is undocked, of medium length, low set, tapering to a point and carried rather low. It should not curl much and may be likened to an old-fashioned pump handle. A tail that is too long or badly curled is a fault.”

# Neck

The Stafford's neck is the foundation for what was originally the offensive end of his combat equipment. It gives direction to the head and must be strong enough to support the drive originating from the powerful hindquarters.

A short/stuffy neck lacks flexibility and speed when guiding the head. It also means the dog must shake with its whole forequarters when 'engaged' which is a very inefficient action. A long/elegant neck is weak and will buckle when driven forward.

The standard calls for a neck that is "rather short." It should be powerful, but still have enough length to maintain agility and flexibility. The back of the neck should form an arch or crest as it rises towards the head. It gradually widens into the shoulders seamlessly tying together the head and body.

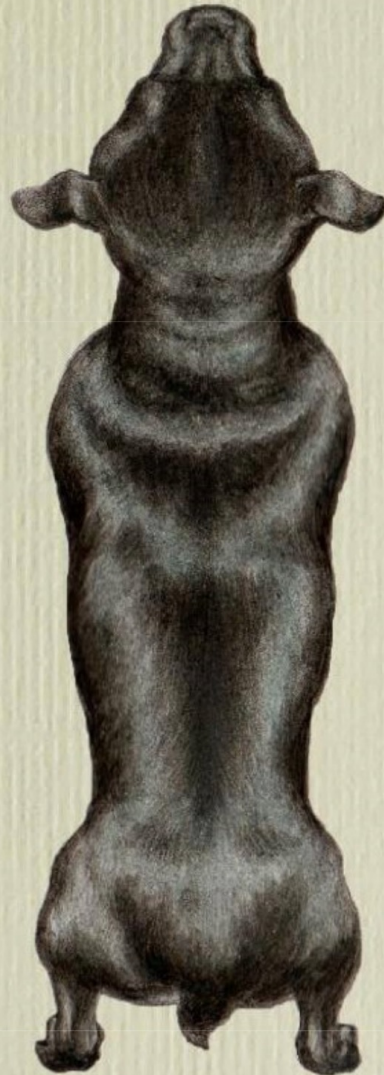
One way to recognize the proper length of neck is to stack the dog and look from profile. The neck should naturally position the head so that the underjaw is level or slightly above the top of the withers.



# Body & Topline

The peak of the withers is located just between the shoulder blades. At this point there is also a noticeable pad of muscle.

Viewed in profile, there should not be a dip in vertebrae behind the withers. However, on a heavily muscled Stafford in fit condition you may see a small indentation at this point when viewed from above. From the point of the withers to the croup the dog may exhibit a 'furrow' running the length of the spine that is created by the powerful muscles on either side. The effect is similar to the 'furrow' or 'cleave' on the top of the head created by the temporal muscles.



Look for a "level topline," that is strong and short coupled.

There should be ample depth of brisket and a relatively smooth contour of long, enduring muscle, not bulky, heavy muscle that lacks stamina. The ribs are well sprung and carry back to the rather short and light loin.

Overloaded muscle, short/heavy bones, long/weak backs, lack of brisket and/or spring of rib are all atypical and highly undesirable.

Viewed from overhead expect to see a classic, hourglass shape formed by a good spring of rib and light loin. From this angle also assess the nature of the muscling on the shoulders and hindquarters. Is it lean and enduring, or bulky and quick to expire?

# Body & Topline

A level topline is called for. However, the Stafford's spine is flexible and his muscles are dynamic. Do not expect an absolute "flat" back on a muscular, athletic dog in fit condition.



The croup is located after the loin and at a point of the hip bone just in front of the sacrum. There should not be a drop or slope at the croup. This should occur further back on the dog as the gluteus muscle round the hindquarters starting just before the tail set.

# Tail

The Staffordshire Bull Terrier breed standard mentions the tail in fairly detailed language and uses more words to describe its features than many other passages in the standard. This is quite interesting as the tail seemingly serves little purpose beyond balance and communication and many consider this a purely cosmetic part of the standard. Perhaps the importance of tail carriage was significant for its function in a fighting dog. Still, the original 100 pt system only allotted 5 pts for the tail.



# Tail

⊗ The Stafford tail remains undocked and of medium length. Measure the tail by pulling down. When straightened the tip should extend even with the level of the hock joints; not pulled to the side to touch the hock, but even with the hocks when extended between the hind legs.

⊗ Low set means it is set at a point below the spine, lower than the top line. There is often a 'thumbprint' or small divot formed just above a correctly low set tail on a muscular, fit dog.

⊗ The standard describes the tail as "Tapering to a point and carried rather low" meaning not up and over the back, but keep in mind that this breed can get 'excited' around other dogs so do not confuse excitement or agitation for a truly gay tail.

⊗ The tail should come to a point and not be a bushy or thick. It should not curl much however, should resemble an "old fashioned pump."





# Forequarters

“Legs straight and well boned, set rather far apart, without looseness at the shoulders and showing no weakness at the pasterns, from which point the feet turn out a little. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed. The feet should be well padded, strong and of medium size.”

The Stafford does not have the short upper arm associated with a 'Terrier' front.



# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm



The front legs should be straight with the feet turning out slightly at the pasterns. Legs are perpendicular to the ground, dropping straight down from the shoulder.

Shoulders are cleanly muscled, well laid back and will show no sign of looseness. Do not be impressed by exhibits with overloaded muscles in the shoulder. The Stafford is an agile athlete. ***Think middle-weight boxer, not body builder.***

Feel for the correct thickness and roundness of the bone, which should be ample rather than heavy.

A stilted or proppy action in the forward movement will indicate upright placed shoulders and/or short upper arm which is highly undesirable.

Elbows lie tightly against the body showing no looseness. The chest drops to the elbow or VERY slightly lower, not well below this point.

# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm



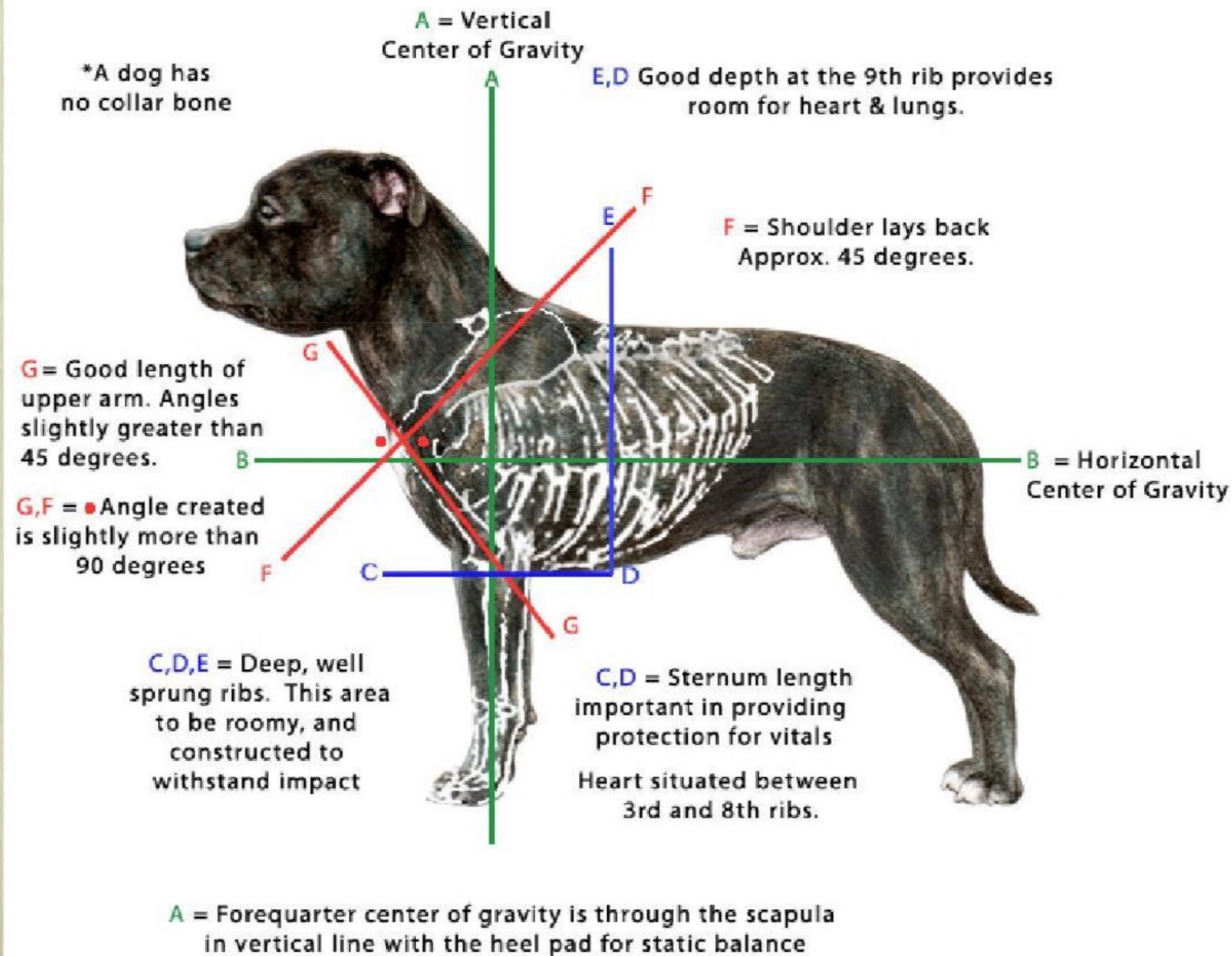
Ribs are “well sprung,” never slab-sided nor barrel-chested.

Moderation is key - Not overdone but showing strength - too much rib spring will hinder efficient movement and too much depth of brisket only adds bulk and heaviness not conducive to agile and free movement. Not enough chest or brisket weakens movement and crowds the vital organs important to an athlete.

The Stafford requires excellent balance to move freely.

*The Stafford is often shown on a 3/4 angle or facing in, towards the judge in most countries, unlike other terriers who are shown in profile. The Stafford is also often shown in the traditional leather ‘Stafford collar’ (with brass or nickel embellishments) which can be buckle or martingale.*

# Forequarters - legs, shoulders, upper arm





Clean & Correct

Shoulder, Arm, Front



Undesirable





# Hindquarters

“The hindquarters should be well muscled, hocks let down with stifles well bent. Legs should be parallel when viewed from behind. Dewclaws, if any, on the hind legs are generally removed. Feet as in front.”

# Hindquarters

Look for substantial muscle development in the inner and outer confines of the hind leg, not bulging nor overloaded muscle that compromises effortless movement.

When viewed from behind the line from hip joint to hock joint should be parallel. The hock joint (ankle) should be low on the leg, close to the ground. This gives stability to his hind limb in all its actions. The hock should NOT slip forward.

Stifles are described as “well bent.” In a comfortably freestanding dog the stifle joint should be sufficiently bent to place the hind foot just behind a vertical line from buttock to the tip of toes. It’s easy to stack a dog in this manner, so try to find him off duty. Having moved a dog in the show ring he should be allowed to come to a comfortable stop unaided. Then you’ll see the bend of stifle.

The ability of the stifle and hock joints to open and close is an essential element to movement. This is how the dog uses his legs to drive, changing the length of the limb to clear the ground and through its movement.

Legs are parallel when viewed from behind. Hocks, from joints to feet are also parallel. Look again for squareness. Look beyond the posed dog. Well-constructed Staffords should stand four square without any assistance.



# Hindquarters

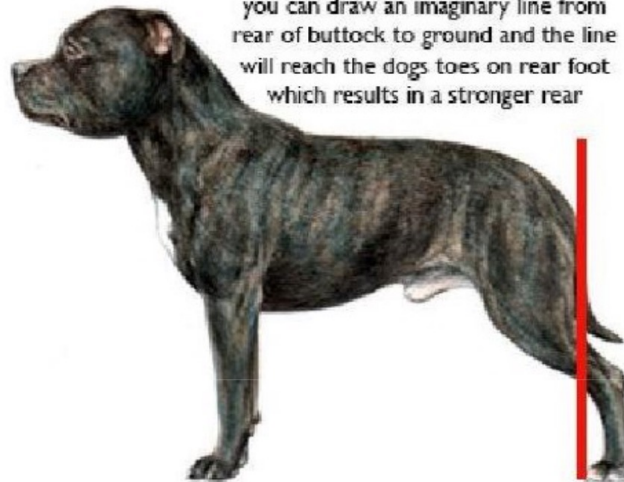
Too straight in rear



Over angled rear



If the dog has a correct bend of stifle you can draw an imaginary line from rear of buttock to ground and the line will reach the dogs toes on rear foot which results in a stronger rear



# Feet



Feet are well padded with strong wrists / pasterns. Feet should be tight, and toes short, but not to the point of being a 'cat foot.'

There should be no sign of weakness.  
(Remember standard says "feet turn out a little.")

Keeping in mind we have an active, athletic breed. Thin, flat or splayed feet constitute a fault as the foundation to all movement is weakened. Considering again the breed's original function, all parts of the Stafford should be able to hold up to forces equaling several times his own weight.

Look for short black nails in solid colored dogs.  
If a dog has white feet you can expect white nails.





## Coat

“Smooth, short and close to the skin, not to be trimmed or de-whiskered.”

# Coat

The easiest way to determine correct coat on a Staffordshire Bull Terrier is to put your hands on them. Run your hand along the coat from shoulder to croup. The coat should feel tight, slightly hard and smooth. The hairs themselves should be short and lie flat. When you rub your hand along in the opposite direction the hairs should feel somewhat 'spiky' and again, very close to the body.

The hairs should not be soft, wiry, silky nor long. They are short and straight. The Stafford should have equal covering of coat, not appear balding on the underside of the neck or chest.

There is no need for coat dressing of any kind, nor for frequent bathing.

In general, there is no need to take scissors to a Stafford's coat. However, many people do trim the underside of the tail for a clean appearance. The Stafford is to be shown with full whiskers.

# Pigmentation



The Stafford should exhibit clean colors with good pigmentation in every acceptable coat color.

This is apparent on the nose (which should always be black), eye rims, nails, ear leather and gums.

The area around the eyes shouldn't appear balding, nor light in color, except where pink eye rims are allowed adjacent to a white coat (USA).

Deep, solid pigment adds to the attractiveness of the Stafford.

# Color

“Red, fawn, white, black or blue, or any of these colors with white. Any shade of brindle or any shade of brindle with white.

Black-and-tan or liver color to be disqualified.” (\*AKC)

*\*\*Only in the AKC Breed Standard are Black-and-tan and Liver to be a DQ. In all other breed standards around the world they are only to be strongly discouraged. They are certainly not to be considered 'rare' or more valuable as some breeders may wish people to think. To the contrary, they should **not** to be encouraged.*



# Color

Since Staffords appear in so many colors, no judging preference should be made as to color with the exception of Black and Tan (correctly described as Tan Point Markings) and Liver color; both of which are disqualifications (USA) whether solid or appearing with white.

Black & Tan typically means marked like a Manchester Terrier or Rottweiler. However, sometimes this color is not clearly defined, and it is not always easy to notice the tan markings. The marks over the eyes, on the face, on the chest, inside the front & rear legs and under the vent can also appear as lighter brindle on an otherwise black dog or as cream on a red or fawn. Liver Staffords are recognized by their similarity to the color of the Sussex Spaniel. Likewise, there will be a lack of black pigmentation on the nose and nails which will be brown in color. Light eyes typically accompany. Lighter mahogany/mahogany brindle dogs sometimes will also have brown nails, but are not truly the same dilute color as liver. Careful study must be made before dismissing a dog for coat color.

# Color

Both Black and Tan and Liver colored dogs should never be shown, bred from nor touted as 'rare' or 'designer' in any way.

When judging the Stafford do not penalize minor scars. This is an active, fearless, and often assertive breed who doesn't give a second thought to running through brambles nor learning his lessons with a local hedgehog, raccoon or other intruder in the garden.

All feet in solid colored dogs should carry black toe nails. When the nails have been subjected to a good deal of wear and tear the black pigmentation can look shabby and worn. However, if you look at the root of the nail black pigmentation will be seen. All pigmentation in dilute-colored dogs, such as blues and fawns, would ideally be dark, but genetically these dogs are destined to carry at least one fault as they cannot have the pure black nose that is called for in the standard. Still, they should carry deep, even pigment and should not appear washed out.

# Color

Black & Tan is a DQ in America and is 'undesirable' elsewhere.

It is genetically referred to as the 'Tan Point Gene,' but can actually appear in many color combinations. A controversial topic is whether or not the Breed Standard refers to only a visually solid Black coat with Tan point markings or whether it refers to all combinations genetically possible.

Interesting to note also: Genetically, the Stafford does not exist with a solid black coat as they all will have red hairs somewhere on their bodies technically making them 'Black Brindle' even though the Breed Standard does indicate "Black."



# Gait

“Free, powerful and agile with economy of effort. Legs moving parallel when viewed from front or rear.

Discernible drive from hind legs.”





# Gait



Remember the key phrase:  
“Economy of Effort.”

When the Stafford is moving away you should view its rear pads pushing off effortlessly.

There should be a decided ease on the Stafford's part to get his feet and legs under his center of gravity.



Viewed from the side the tip of the front foot reaches approximately to the end of the muzzle.

When viewed coming towards you there is no paddling, circling, stilted movement, 'bulldog roll' nor looseness.

The front legs should block your view to the rear when moving at a proper (relatively slow) pace. This is parallel movement. Parallel does not mean in the very strictest sense that the dog's legs always extend exactly perpendicular to the ground when moving at any speed, but that the front legs and the rear legs are tracking on parallel planes to one another. The Stafford stands very square, with legs parallel when comparing the left to the right. He also moves this way at a slow walk, but to balance the dog it is necessary for the legs to angle in SLIGHTLY as the speed is increased. When moving quickly, this slight angle should be seen a straight line from the scapula to the foot, not an angle inward starting from the elbows, which could be a result of looseness.

# Gait

In the show ring, Staffords should be walked at a steady pace that may be relatively slow compared to other dogs of similar height. Always ask exhibitors to walk their Stafford on a loose lead and not so fast that the feet converge on a center line. If the front feet converge at a slow gait then shoulder and/or elbow construction is suspect.

The Stafford's movement is less dramatic and overly-emphasized than some breeds with bounding strides and rear pads that are thrown towards the sky as they drive. Do not expect this in a Stafford. The Stafford wastes no energy in getting from point A to point B. His gait is sometimes likened to that of a Rhino on a slow charge.

The front feet should never touch each other nor cross when moving. Any looseness in the shoulders or elbows is highly undesirable. The gait is fairly light, but very determined.

The Stafford is an efficient working machine, not a cloddy bulldog, nor a prancing terrier. Again, "Economy of Effort" with discernible drive from the rear is the simple goal.



# Stafford Puppies & Youngsters



6 month old male

A Stafford puppy or immature animal should not yet look like the finished article. They can and will go through many awkward stages. You may catch a glimpse of what the future holds at approximately 8-10 weeks of age when they sometimes look like miniature versions of adults, but after that stage allow them to mature. Full maturation often takes 3+ years to reach, so an 8 month old who is built like an adult should be a warning sign to breeders. Gaining their full height before their peak weight, youngsters may appear a bit rangy until the muscles, skull, etc. have had time to fully develop.

Their temperament should be confident, happy and fun loving. Many puppies have a hard time standing for a judge's examination as they are often wiggling with excitement at the prospect of a stranger petting them.

Even as youngsters, they should not be clingy nor innately fearful.



2 month old male

# Stafford Veterans

Staffords can easily be expected to live well into their teenage years. As such, you may often have the honor of seeing veterans in the show ring. Nothing makes the hair rise on your arm and the tears well up in your eyes faster than seeing a class of Stafford veterans cheerfully strutting their stuff at a large Specialty show. Some of them are just as happy and proud to be back in the spotlight as they were when they showed as youngsters.

Veteran Staffords should still be able to maintain a bit of their prime physique. You may perhaps see a lot of gray around the edges, but most will keep their jaunty gait and 'Stafford Smile' when brought back out for the big show. Keeping them busy both mentally and physically is the best thing an owner can do for their veteran. As such, you do not want to see excessive weight nor extremely soft muscling. Unless illness has caused a sedentary lifestyle, most Staffords will maintain an active physique as they reach 12-15 or even older. They will still want to go on daily walks and play sessions as teenagers. Most quality Stafford breeders will tell you they have at least 1 or 2 cherished oldies lounging at home.



11 year old bitch

# Temperament

“From the past history of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier, the modern dog draws its character of indomitable courage, high intelligence, and tenacity. This, coupled with its affection for its friends, and children in particular, its off-duty quietness and trustworthy stability, makes it a foremost all-purpose dog.”



# Temperament

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

If a Stafford gets a bit noisy in the ring, fires up, or 'talks back' this is normal and should be tolerated as long as it is controlled. This is no different than other terriers who are on their toes, particularly when asked to 'spar' in the ring. A judge should never ask handlers to spar their Staffords, but may find that many are already on their toes, alert to everything around them, and at the ready. He is, after all, a terrier!

A Stafford should never be shy nor cowering. Likewise he should not be indiscriminately aggressive and thus difficult to control. He should show no aggression towards humans, though many do not enjoy the company of other animals. As with other terriers he should also be judged on spirit and attitude. It's when the attitude becomes out of control then there is an issue. When in the show ring, a Stafford should appear confident and strut, showing off, appearing proud and happy to be there.

# Temperament

They should stand solid for exam, unflinching and not stressed by the process. Some degree of exception should be made, of course, for puppies new to the show ring. Most Stafford puppies, and some young adults will not stand still for long. They simply melt and wiggle when spoken to. This exuberance when making new human friends is totally normal behavior.

A Stafford being dragged around a ring on its belly, leaning away from human touch or, heaven forbid, snapping or snarling in fear is unacceptable. A Stafford showing overt fear or any kind of human-directed aggression may be asked to leave the ring.

Understand well the difference between aggression towards a human (NOT acceptable in Staffords), and aggression towards another animals (sometimes observed in the breed). These are **not** simply two expressions of the same temperament. They are totally separate characteristics. When observed they should be judged accordingly.

# Judging Faults

**“Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.” (UK)**

When judging you should first look at the whole dog and see his virtue, before drawing your attention to his faults. View all dogs from a distance assessing each one's overall quality and presence of breed type before moving close enough to get caught up in the details and cosmetics.

As discussed within, the standard mentions faults in several passages. Almost any novice judge can identify basic faults. A judge who has a firm grasp on the breed will not simply look for the dog with the least amount of faults, but will pick the one with the greatest overall virtue even if an obvious fault or two is present. Faults that interfere with function or health and those that detract from breed type are more serious than other, more cosmetic, faults.



# Judging Faults

The standard is a guideline which contains subjective language that is often open to interpretation. However, be very careful not to hide behind the excuse of subjectivity and allow opinion to win out over what is called for. Much of the breed standard is very straight forward – ‘cut and dry.’ If the standard indicates that full prick ears are a serious fault, do not claim that this is open to interpretation. If it calls for a 16 inch dog to weigh approximately 38 pounds, indicating that nonconformity with this is a fault, do not use ‘poetic license’ and claim that a more substantial ‘bulldog type’ or the less substantial ‘terrier type’ is also correct.

There is a right way and a wrong way to use the breed standard. Always look for virtues as defined within, not as current trends or fashion may dictate. Know the standard inside and out. Do not be afraid to call a fault ‘a fault.’ If you find that your opinions are in conflict with the breed standard then don’t try and bend the standard to meet your ideals. Admit that you are in the wrong. Learn from it, and change your perspectives to match the standard. Plain and simple – Judge to the standard above all else.