



OFFICIAL BREED STANDARD OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK MASTIFF

PREAMBLE

Historically the S A Black Mastiff developed as a general farm dog for the pioneers who settled in South Africa since the seventeenth century. The colour “black” was well known amongst older breeders of Boerboels, but as it was not an acceptable colour in the Boerboel fraternity, and could not be registered with them, the need arose for an organisation that could take care, preserve and perform the much-needed task as custodians of this unique dog breed, with deep roots in the history of Southern Africa. These dogs often were a first line of defence against predators and were valuable in tracking and holding down wounded game. Old farmers told many a tale of the strength, agility and courage of these old farm dogs. The dangers and harsh conditions of Southern Africa allowed only the fittest to survive.

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

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

BREED STANDARD

1. GENERAL APPEARANCE

The S A Black Mastiff

- Is large, with a strong-boned structure and a well-developed musculature.
- The profile of the head and body appears blocky.
- Has an impressive demeanour created by the combination of conformation, carriage, confidence and powerful movement.



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- Has powerful, buoyant and unencumbered movement, notwithstanding its size.
- Is symmetrical and perfectly balanced within the desired proportions for the breed.
- Has a distinct sexual dimorphism, with the bitch less prominently developed.

2. TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

The S A Black Mastiff

- Is intelligent, trainable and manageable.
- Has a strong protective instinct and is loyal to members of the family, with a special preference/liking towards children.
- Is steadfast and calm, with a balanced and confident nature when approached.
- Is fearless and shows courage when threatened.
- Requires training and firm handling from an early age.

3. THE HEAD

- The head is impressive and a distinctive feature of the S A Black Mastiff
- The ideal male ratios for head circumference, wither height and body mass are:
 - 1.05: 1.0: 1.0. (Minimum 1.0: 1.0: 1.0 to secure proper masculine male form).
- The ideal female ratios for head circumference, wither height and body mass are:
 - 0.95: 1.0: 1.05. (Maximum 1.0: 1.0 : 1.05) to secure proper feminine female form).
- It is blocky, broad, deep, fairly short and in proportion to the body. It is muscular with well-filled cheeks.
- The roof of the cranium (skull) is square, flat and muscular.
- The zygomatic arch (cheekbone) is well-muscled, but not too prominent.
- The stop is definite, but not prominent, gradually sloping and well-filled between the eyes.
- It should not be steep, or an almost straight line between the nose and the occiput.
- The muzzle is broad, deep, well attached, filled below the eyes and narrows slightly towards the nose. The top line is straight and almost on a parallel plane with the cranial roof.
- The muzzle measures slightly more than a third of the total length of the head (approx. 10 cm for the male and 8 cm for the female of ideal height).
- The nostrils are large and widely spaced, with the septum (vertical line) of the nose perpendicular to the lower jaw.



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- The jaws are strong, deep and wide, and taper slightly to the front.
- The teeth are white, strong, correctly spaced with complete dentition and a scissors bite (limited undershot discriminated against; overshot unacceptable).
- The upper lip is loose and fleshy. It just covers the lower lip and teeth in the front but should not hide the underline of the lower jaw on the sides.
- The lower lip is moderately tight without excessive jowls.
- The eyes are medium-sized, round, forward facing and widely spaced, with an intelligent expression.
- It is well protected against the environment by firm and black-pigmented eyelids, showing no structural weaknesses.
- The colour of the eyes is preferably dark brown but all shades of brown (preferably darker than the pelt) are acceptable.
- The ears are set wide and high and are carried close to the head.
- They are V-shaped with a broad base tapering to a rounded point that reaches almost down to a line extending from the mouth.
- When the dog is attentive, the top of the ears and the skull, in between, should form a straight line.
- The facial expression should be intelligent, attentive and confident (not evasive, shy or threatening).

4. THE NECK

- The neck is powerful, of medium length, strongly muscled and with a pronounced crest.
- In the female, the muscles are less accentuated but should remain in balance with the head and body.
- It is set medium high, flows smoothly into the sloping withers and forms a unit with the head and shoulders.
- The dewlap is noticeable but disappears towards the sternum.

5. THE BODY

- The body is approximately 15% longer than the height and is measured horizontally, from the point of the shoulder to a vertical line at the rear of the rump. (The length of the chest, loin and rump is approximately proportioned 2:1:1).
- It is blocky, muscular, solid and has good depth and width.
- The back is broad and straight, with pronounced muscles that form an imperceptible arch in the top line over the lumbar region.



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- The brisket reaches down to the point of the elbow, which is approximately half the total height at the withers.
- The transitions between the chest, loin and rump are well filled and flowing.

6. CHEST

- The chest is long, broad and deep, with well-sprung ribs and strong developed pectoral muscles. It is filled behind the shoulder blades.
- The point of the sternum is level with the point of the shoulder.
- The shoulder blades are well-attached (not loose).

7. THE LUMBAR REGION, LOIN

- It is short, straight and muscular, and slightly narrower than the chest and rump.
- The flanks are well-filled, only moderately tucked up and the depth is slightly less than the length of the loin.

8. RUMP, CROUP

- The rump is broad, strong, muscular and in proportion to the rest of the dog, depicting distinct sexual dimorphism.
- Its height should not exceed the height at the withers. The top line drops slightly towards the tail.
- The croup is broad and flat; it drops at an ideal angle of 23°; between 21° minimum and 25° maximum. This provides a perfect fulcrum (axel) towards the powerful reach of the hind legs.
- The tail is thick and set fairly high. It should be well covered with hair and without kink.
- Tails are traditionally docked but undocked tails are acceptable. Docking takes place at the 3rd or 4th caudal vertebrae.
- The natural tail should reach approximately to the hocks when the dog is standing.



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9. LEGS AND FEET

- The physical functionality, application, ability and incomprehensible stamina of the S A Black Mastiff, requires that he will have particularly strong muscled and thick legs with big, well-shaped, strong paws to utilize all that power.

10. THE FORELIMBS

- Are strong-boned, with well-defined muscles and sturdy joints.
- Are correctly angulated from the well-sloped shoulder blade down to the metacarpus (pastern).
- Form a vertical line from the point of the shoulder down to the paws, with the elbows held close and parallel to the chest when viewed from the front.
- Seen from the side the forearm is vertical from the elbow to the carpus. The metacarpus is short, thick and strong and angles very slightly forward.
- The forepaws point straight forward and are large, round, strongly boned and compact.
- The toes are well arched, with curved black toenails and protected by hair in between. The pads are thick, tough and black.

11. THE HINDLIMBS

- Are strong-boned, sturdy and muscular.
- The joints are sound, strong and correctly angulated to support the powerful propulsion from the hindquarters during movement.
- The upper thighs are broad, deep and muscular as seen from the side and the rear.
- The lower thighs have well-defined muscles and show substance down to the hocks.
- The metatarsus is broad, relatively short and perfectly upright. The front is in a vertical line with the rear of the rump.
- From the rear, the profile of the hindquarters should form an inverted U, with the stifles pointing straight forward and the hocks straight backward.
- The hind paws point straight forward and are slightly smaller than the forepaws but have the same quality.



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12. MOVEMENT

- The movement is strong, purposeful, buoyant and fluent, with comfortable reach in front and rear.
- The legs and body move in line, front to rear. The feet move closer to a centre line as speed increases, forming a V shape in the observer's mind.
- Whilst converging towards the centre line of travel, the legs never cross.
- At all gaits the top line is firm and strong, without swaying, or dipping in the middle, and without excess body roll.
- Weak, unsound or plodding movement should not be tolerated.

13. THE SKIN

- The skin is thick with a high hair count; it fits loose but smoothly, with no wrinkles.
- A small dewlap is permissible and moderate wrinkles over the forehead when the dog shows interest.

14. PIGMENTATION

- The S A Black Mastiff is well pigmented, especially on the lips, palate, the skin and hair around the eyes, nose bulb, paw pads, toenails, the anus and the skin and hair around the genitals.
- Only dogs with black eumelanin pigmentation are acceptable

15. THE COAT AND COLOUR

- The coat is short, dense, smooth and shiny.
- The recognized colours/colour patterns are:
 - Black
 - All shades of Red, Brown and Yellow (fawn)
 - Brindle: Brindle is a colour pattern with irregular vertical lines of only black hair on a Red, Brown or Yellow base
 - Piebald: Piebald is permissible to breed with, but should have exceptionally good pigmentation
 - Irish Markings: Irish Markings are permissible to breed with but should have exceptionally good pigmentation.



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

16. SIZE

- Is determined by the ideal height at the withers and desirable ratios between the height and the measurements of the various parts of the external anatomy.
- The ideal height for a dog is 68cm (lower than 60 cm is unacceptable).
- The ideal height of a bitch is 62cm (lower than 56 cm is unacceptable).

17. GENITALIA

- Male animals should have two visibly normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.
- Female animals should have a firm vulva and preferably a minimum of 10 nipples (teats).

18. FAULTS

- Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which it should be regarded should be in direct proportion to its degree.

19. DISQUALIFICATIONS

- Any dog that radiates undeniable opposite-sex characteristics. (Non-Dimorphic).
- A dog that is too small (Smaller than the minimum heights stipulated in the Breed Standard).
- A dog that is too big and out of balance.
- An overly aggressive dog.
- An over-anxious dog that shows fear and tries to hide when approached.
- A too small and untypical head.



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- Excessively undershot bite; more than 1 cm.
- Visible overshot bite.
- Blue eyes.
- Pricked ears.
- Long hair.
- A lack of pigmentation.
- Any dog with weak, unsound or plodding movement.
- Any dog clearly showing any serious physical or behavioural abnormalities.

Date approved by the Council of
The South African Black Mastiff Association.....

Date implemented.....

Signature Chairman, C R Boshoff.....

Signature Vice Chairman, G J Venter.....