

RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 29.04.2021.

ORIGIN

Southern Africa. (Standard supplied by the Kennel Union of Southern Africa and the Zimbabwe Kennel Club).

UTILISATION

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is still used to hunt game in many parts of the world, but is especially prized as a watchdog and family pet.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is presently the only registered breed indigenous to southern Africa. Its forebears can be traced to the Cape Colony of Southern Africa, where they crossed with the early pioneer's dogs and the semi-domesticated, ridged Hottentot hunting dogs. Hunting mainly in groups of two or three, the original function of the Rhodesian Ridgeback, or Lion Dog, was to track game, especially lion, and, with great agility, keep it at bay until the arrival of the hunter. The original standard, which was drafted by F.R. Barnes, in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, in 1922, was based on that of the Dalmatian and was approved by the South African Kennel Union in 1926.



Illustration courtesy of J McFarlane

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Rhodesian Ridgeback should represent a well-balanced, strong, muscular, agile, and active dog, symmetrical in outline, and capable of great endurance, with a fair amount of speed. The emphasis is on agility, elegance, and soundness, with no tendency towards massiveness. The peculiarity of the breed is the ridge on the back, which is formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the rest of the coat. The ridge is the escutcheon [*ed. emblem*] of the breed. The ridge must be clearly defined, symmetrical, and tapering towards the haunches. It must start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to the hip bones (haunches). The ridge must contain only two crowns, identical, and opposite each other. The lower edges of the crowns must not extend further down the ridge than one-third of its length. A good average width of the ridge is 5cm (approx. 2").

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

Dignified, intelligent, aloof with strangers, but showing no aggression or shyness.

HEAD

Cranial Region:

Skull: Should be of a fair length (width of head between ears, distance from occiput to stop, stop to end of nose, should be equal); flat and broad between the ears; the head should be free from wrinkles when in repose.

Stop: The stop should be reasonably well-defined and not in one straight line from the nose to the occipital bone.

Facial Region:

Nose: The nose should be black or brown. A black nose should be accompanied by dark eyes, a brown nose by amber eyes.

Muzzle: The muzzle should be long, deep, and powerful.

Lips: The lips should be clean, closely fitting the jaws.

Cheeks: Cheeks should be clean.

Jaws and teeth: Jaws strong, with a perfect and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws. The teeth must be well-developed, especially the canines or holders.

Eyes:

Should be moderately well apart, round, bright, and sparkling, with intelligent expression, their colour harmonising with the colour of the coat.

Ears:

Should be set rather high, of medium size, rather wide at base, and gradually tapering to a rounded point. They should be carried close to the head.

NECK

Should be fairly long, strong, and free from throatiness.

BODY

Back: Powerful.

Loin: Strong, muscular, and slightly arched.

Chest: Should not be too wide, but very deep and capacious; the brisket should reach to the elbow.

Forechest: Should be visible when viewed from the side.

Ribs: Moderately well-sprung, never rounded like barrel-hoops.

TAIL

Should be strong at the root and gradually tapering towards the end, free from coarseness. It should be of moderate length. It should not be attached too high nor too low, and should be carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: The forelegs should be perfectly straight, strong, and well-boned, with the elbows close to the body. When viewed from the side, the forelegs should be wider than viewed from the front.

Shoulder: The shoulders should be sloping, clean, and muscular.

Metacarpus (pastern): Should be strong with light spring.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: In the hind legs, the muscles should be clean and well-defined.

Stifle (knee): Good turn of stifle.

Hock joint: Strong, well let down.

FEET

The feet should be compact and round, with well-arched toes and tough, elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Straight forward, free and active.

COAT

Hair should be short and dense, sleek, and glossy in appearance, but neither woolly nor silky.

COLOUR

- Light wheaten to red wheaten.
- * A little white on the chest and toes is permissible, but excessive white hairs here, on belly, or above toes is undesirable. * A dark muzzle and ears permissible.
- * Excessive black hairs throughout the coat are highly undesirable.

SIZE

Height at withers:

Males: 63cm – 69cm (approx. 25" – 27").

Females: 61cm – 66cm (approx. 24" – 26").

Weight:

Males: 36.5kg

Females: 32kg

N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

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, and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

Faults:

- Incorrect crowns on ridge

Disqualifying Faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs
- Dogs without ridge
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.

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FCI Standard No 146: RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

FCI Classification: Group 6 – Scenthounds and related breeds.

Section 3. Related breeds.

Without Working Trial