

DOGUE DE BORDEAUX

A Breed Standard is the guideline that describes the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed, and ensures that the breed is fit for function, with soundness essential. Breeders and Judges should, at all times, be mindful of features that could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare, or soundness of this breed.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 31/03/2016

ORIGIN

France.

UTILISATION

Guard, defence, and dissuasion.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The Dogue de Bordeaux is one of the most ancient of French breeds, probably a descendant of the Alans and, in particular, the Alan Vautre of which Gaston Phebus, Count of Foix, wrote in the 14th century, in his *Livre de Chasse* that “he holds his bite stronger than three Sighthounds”. The word “dogue” appeared at the end of the 14th century. In the middle of the 19th century, these ancient dogues were hardly known outside the region of Aquitaine. They were used for hunting large game such as boar, for fighting (often codified), for the guarding of houses and cattle, and in the service of butchers. In 1863, the first French dog show took place in Paris in the Jardin d’Acclimatation. The Dogues de Bordeaux were entered under their present name. There have been different types: The Toulouse type, the Paris type, and the Bordeaux type, the latter being the origin of today’s Dogue. The breed, which had suffered greatly during the two World Wars, to the point of being threatened with extinction after the second World War, got off to a fresh start in the 1960s.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Typical concave-lined, brachycephalic molossoid. The Dogue de Bordeaux is a very powerful dog, with a very muscular body, yet retaining a harmonious general outline. It is built rather close to the ground, the distance of sternum to ground being slightly less than the depth of the chest. Stocky, athletic, and imposing, it has a very dissuasive aspect.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS

- The length of the body, measured from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock, is superior to the height at the withers, in the proportion of 11 : 10.
- The depth of the chest is more than half the height at the withers.
- The maximum length of the muzzle is equal to one-third of the length of the head. The minimum length of the muzzle is equal to one-quarter of the length of the head.
- In the male, the perimeter of the skull corresponds to more-or-less the height at the withers.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

An ancient fighting dog, the Dogue de Bordeaux is gifted for guarding, which it assumes with vigilance and great courage, but without aggressiveness. A good companion, very attached to its master, and very affectionate. Calm, balanced, with a high stimulus threshold. The male normally has a dominant character.

HEAD

Voluminous, angular, broad, rather short, trapezoid when viewed from above and in front. The longitudinal axes [ed. head planes] of the skull out of the bridge of nose are convergent (towards the front). The head is furrowed with symmetrical wrinkles each side of the median groove. These deep ropes of wrinkle are mobile, depending on whether the dog is attentive or not. The wrinkle that runs from the inner corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth is typical. If present, the wrinkle running from the outer corner of the eye to either the corner of the mouth or the dewlap should be discreet.

Cranial Region:

Skull: In males, the perimeter of the skull, measured at the level of its greatest width, corresponds roughly to the height at the withers. In bitches, it may be slightly less. Its volume and shape are the consequences of the very important development of the temporal arches, supra-orbital arches *[ed. brow ridges]*, and zygomatic arches, and the spacing of the branches of the lower jaw. The upper region of the skull is slightly convex from one side to the other. The frontal groove is deep, diminishing towards the posterior end of the head. The forehead dominates the face but does not overhang it. However, it is still wider than high.

Stop: Very pronounced, almost forming a right angle with the muzzle (95° – 100°).

Facial Region:

Nose: Broad, well-opened nostrils, well-pigmented according to the colour of the mask. Upturned nose permissible, but not if it is set back towards the eyes.

Muzzle: Powerful, broad, thick, but not fleshy below the eyes, rather short, upper profile very slightly concave, with moderately obvious folds; its width hardly decreasing towards the tip of the muzzle. When viewed from above, it has the general shape of a square. In relation to the upper region of the skull, the line of the muzzle forms a very obtuse angle upwards. When the head is held horizontally, the tip of the muzzle, which is truncated, thick, and broad at the base, is in front of a vertical tangent *[ed. vertical S-shape]* to the anterior face of the nose. *[ed. in other words, the nose is slightly set back from the front of the muzzle]* Its perimeter is almost two-thirds of that of the head. Its length varies between one-third and one-quarter of the total length of the head, measured from the nose to the occipital crest. The limits stated (maximum one-third and minimum one-quarter of the total length of the head) are permissible but not sought after. The ideal length of the muzzle is between these two extremes.

Lips: Upper lip thick, moderately pendulous, yet retractile *[ed. capable of being drawn back or in]*. When viewed in profile it shows a rounded lower line. It covers the lower jaw on the sides. In front the edge of the upper lip is in contact with the lower lip, then drops on either side, forming an inverted wide V.

Cheeks: Prominent, due to the very strong development of the muscles.

Jaws and teeth: Jaws powerful, broad. Undershot (the undershot condition being a characteristic of the breed). The back of the lower incisors are set in front of (but not in contact) with the front of the upper incisors. The lower jaw curves upwards. The chin is well-marked and must neither overlap the upper lip exaggeratedly nor be covered by it. Teeth are strong, particularly the canines. Lower canines set wide apart and slightly curved. Incisors well-aligned, especially in the lower jaw, where they form an apparently straight line.

Eyes:

Oval, set wide apart. The space between the two inner corners of the eyelids is equal to about twice the length of the eye (eye opening). Frank expression. The haw must not be visible. Colour: hazel to dark brown for a dog with a black mask, lighter colour tolerated, but not sought after, in dogs with either a brown mask or without a mask.

Ears:

Relatively small, of a slightly darker colour than the coat. At its set-on, the front of the base of the ear is slightly raised. They must fall down, but not hang limply, the front edge being close to the cheek when the dog is attentive. The tip of the ear is slightly rounded; it must not reach beyond the eye. Set rather high, at the level of the upper line of the skull, thus appearing to accentuate its width even more.

NECK

Very strong, muscular, almost cylindrical. This skin is supple, ample, and loose. The average circumference almost equals that of the head. It is separated from the head by a slightly accentuated transversal furrow, slightly curved. Its upper edge is slightly convex *[ed. at the separation of the head and neck, there is a noticeable furrow positioned centrally behind the occiput]*. The well-defined dewlap starts at the level of the throat, forming folds down to the chest, without hanging exaggeratedly. The neck, very broad at its base, merges smoothly with the shoulders.

BODY

Topline: Well-sustained.

Withers: Well-marked.

Back: Broad and muscular.

Loin: Broad. Rather short and solid.

Croup: Moderately sloping down to the root of the tail.

Chest: Powerful, long, deep, broad, let down lower than the elbows. Broad and powerful forechest whose lower line (inter-axillae) *[ed. between the forelegs]* is convex towards the bottom. Ribs well let down and well-sprung, but not barrel-shaped. The circumference of the chest must be between 25cm – 35cm (approx. 9¾" – 13¾") greater than the height at the withers.

Underline and belly: Curved from the deep brisket to the rather tucked-up, firm abdomen, being neither pendulous nor too tucked-up.

TAIL

Very thick at the base. Its tip preferably reaching the hock and not below. Carried low, it is neither broken nor kinked, but supple. Hanging when the dog is at rest, generally rising by 90° – 120° from that position when the dog is in action, without curving over the back or being curled.

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: Strong bone structure, legs very muscular.

Shoulder: Powerful, prominent muscles. Slant of shoulder-blade medium (about 45° to the horizontal), angle of the scapular-humeral articulation a little more than 90°.

Upper arm: Very muscular.

Elbow: In the axis of the body [*ed. in line with the body*], neither too close to the ribcage nor turned out.

Forearm: Viewed from the front, straight or inclining slightly inwards, thus getting closer to the median plane, especially in dogs with a very broad chest. Viewed in profile, vertical.

Metacarpus (pastern): Powerful. Viewed in profile, slightly sloping. Viewed from the front, sometimes slightly outwards, compensating for the slight inclination of the forearm inwards.

Hindquarters:

General appearance: Robust legs with strong bone structure; well-angulated. When viewed from behind, the hindquarters are parallel and vertical, thus giving an impression of power even though the hindquarters are not quite as broad as the forequarters.

Upper thigh: Very developed and thick with visible muscles.

Stifle (knee): In a parallel plane to the median plane [*ed. vertical, when seen from behind*], or very slightly out.

Lower thigh: Relatively short, muscled, descending low.

Hock joint: Short, sinewy, angle of the hock joint moderately open.

Metatarsus (rear pastern): Robust, no dewclaws.

FEET

Forefeet:

Strong. Toes tight, nails curved and strong, pads well-developed and supple: the Dogue is well up on his toes despite his weight.

Hind feet:

Slightly longer than the front feet, toes tight.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

Quite supple for a molossoid. When walking, the movement is free and supple, close to the ground. Good drive from the hindquarters, good extension of the forelegs, especially when trotting, which is the preferred gait. When the trot quickens, the head tends to drop, the topline inclines towards the front, and the front feet get closer to the median plane [*ed. vertical plane; centre line*], while striding out with a long, reaching movement of the front legs. Canter with rather important vertical movement [*ed. maintaining convergence to the centre line*]. Capable of great speed over short distances by bolting along close to the ground.

SKIN

Thick and sufficiently loose-fitting, without excessive wrinkles.

COAT

Hair fine, short, and soft to the touch.

COLOUR

- **Self-coloured:** in all shades of fawn, from mahogany to Isabella. A good pigmentation is desirable.
- Limited white patches are permissible on the forechest and the extremities of the limbs.
- Mask:
 - **Black mask:** The mask is often only slightly spread-out and must not invade the cranial region. There may be slight black shading on the skull, ears, neck, and top of body. The nose is black.
 - **Brown mask:** (used to be called red or bistre). The nose is brown; the eye-rims and edges of the lips are also brown. There may be non-invasive brown shading; each hair having a fawn or sandy zone and a brown zone. In this case the inclined [*ed. appropriate*] parts of the body are a paler colour.
 - **No mask:** The coat is fawn: the skin appears red (also formerly called “red mask”). The nose can then be reddish.

SIZE

Height should more-or-less correspond to the perimeter of the skull.

Height at withers:

Males: 60cm – 68cm (approx. 23½" – 27").

Females: 58cm – 66cm (approx. 23" – 26").

1cm under and 2cm over will be tolerated.

Weight:

Males: at least 50kg

Females: at least 45kg

Females: Identical characteristics but less pronounced.

***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.

Severe faults:

- Disproportioned head (too small or exaggeratedly voluminous).
- Bulldoggy hysotype: Flat skull, muzzle measuring less than a quarter of the total length of the head.
- Swollen fold (roll) behind the nose. Prominent fold around the head.
- Prominent lateral deviation of the lower jaw.
- Incisors constantly visible when the mouth is closed. Very small incisors, unevenly set.
- Arched back (convex).
- Fused, but not deviated, vertebrae of the tail.
- Forefeet turning inwards (even slightly). Forefeet turning outwards too much.
- Flat thighs. Cow hocks or barrel hocks.
- Angle of hock too open (straight angulation). Angle of the hock too closed, dog standing under himself behind.
- Stilted movement or serious rolling of rear.
- Excessive shortness of breath, rasping.
- White on tip of tail or on the front part of the forelegs, above the carpus (wrist) and the tarsus (hock), or white, without interruption, on the front of the body from the forechest to the throat.

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities. Identifiable disabling defect.
- Long, narrow head with insufficiently pronounced stop, with a muzzle measuring more than one-third of the total length of the head (lack of type in head).
- Muzzle parallel to the top line of the skull or downfaced, Roman nose. Twisted jaw.
- Mouth not undershot. Canines constantly visible when the mouth is closed.
- Tongue constantly hanging out when the mouth is closed.
- Blue eyes; bulging eyes.
- Tail knotted and laterally deviated or twisted (screw tail, kink tail).
- Atrophied tail. • Fiddle front and down on pasterns.
- Angle of the hock open towards the rear (inverted hock).
- White on the head or body, any other colour of the coat than fawn (shaded or not) and in particular brindle or solid brown called "chocolate" (each hair being entirely brown).

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FCI Standard No 116: DOGUE DE BORDEAUX

FCI Classification: Group 2: Pinscher and Schnauzer, Molossoid type dogs, and Swiss Mountain and Cattle dogs

Section 2.1. Molossoid breeds.

Without Working Trial