

# ***Molosses Breed Comparison***



**A Comparison study of two closely related  
Molosses breeds: Neapolitan Mastiff / Cane Corso**



# ***Molosser a Brief Explanation***

- No other group of dog breeds seems as difficult to define as the Molosser dogs. While most theories agree on the origin of the word, they diverge when it comes to defining the breeds that belong to the Molosser group.
- “Molossian Hound” was a term used to describe these dogs, but not to be interpreted as a “hound-type” dog. This term hound was used for all types of dogs and eventually was coined by the “Middle English”, and referred to a dog that was used for hunting. Thus in Old English the nonspecific name for dog was “hund” or “hound”, whereas the word “dog” (docga in Old English) was the name of a powerful breed of dog, which the Continental languages borrowed to form *dogue* (French for mastiff), *dogo* (Spanish), *dogge* (German).
- Historical evidence shows that there were two types of Molossers, one of which was mainly used as flock guardians, the other as home guardians. For the flock guardian, white was the preferred color, because they blended with the color of the animals at night. Black dogs, on the other hand, were used as home guardians, because that color proved more dissuasive to would-be intruders. Moreover, black dogs were not used as flock guardians because they would scare the animals they had to guard.
- All molosser breeds are characterized by their immense courage, loyalty towards their owner, and a strong sense of territory.
- In the FCI the molosser or “Mastiff-type” breeds are exhibited in Group 2 ranging from a variety of working type breeds.... maybe a better term would be Molossers of the “dogge-type” referring to a powerful breed of dog relating back to how all Continental languages derived the words...dogue, dogo, Dogge all referring to the same kind of dogs.



# General Appearance



**An ancient breed, rediscovered in Italy in the 1940's, the Neapolitan Mastiff is a heavy-boned, massive, awe-inspiring dog bred for use as a guard and defender of owner and property. He is characterized by loose skin over his entire body, abundant, hanging wrinkles and folds on the head, and a voluminous dewlap. The essence of the Neapolitan is his bestial appearance, astounding head and imposing size and attitude. Due to his massive structure, his characteristic movement is rolling and lumbering, not elegant or showy.**



**The Cane Corso is an ancient Italian breed, medium-large sized molossoid. Sturdy, with a strong skeleton, muscular and athletic. It moves with considerable ease and elegance. It has always been a property watchdog and hunter of difficult game such as wild boar.**



# Size, Proportion, Substance

A stocky, heavy boned dog, massive in substance, rectangular in proportion. Length of body is 10% - 15% greater than height.

**Height: Dogs: 26 to 31 inches, Bitches: 24 to 29 inches.**

Average weight of mature Dogs: 150 pounds; Bitches: 110 pounds; but greater weight is usual and preferable as long as correct proportion and function are maintained.

*The absence of massiveness is to be so severely penalized as to eliminate from competition.*

A muscular, balanced, large boned dog, rectangular in proportion. The length of the dog, measured from the point of the shoulder to the point of the buttock, is 10% percent greater than the height of the dog measured from the highest point of the shoulder to the ground.

**Height: Dogs: 25-27.5 inches, Bitches: 23.5-26 inches.**

**Weight: Proportionate to height.**



**Greater to 10-15% in length**



**Greater to 10% in length**



# Head

Large in comparison to the body. Differentiated from that of other mastiff breeds by more extensive wrinkling and pendulous lips which blend into an ample dewlap. Toplines of cranium and the muzzle must be parallel. The face is made up of heavy wrinkles and folds. Required folds are those extending from the outside margin of the eyelids to the dewlap, and from under the lower lids to the outer edges of the lips.

**Severe Faults:** Toplines of the cranium and muzzle not parallel.

**Disqualifications:** Absence of wrinkles and folds.

Molossoid, large, its total length reaches 36% of the height at the withers. Planes of the skull and muzzle are slightly convergent, they are not parallel. The circumference of the head measured at the cheek bones is more than twice the total length of the head; skin is firm and smooth.





# Head of the Neapolitan/ Cane Corso

- **Astounding Head and Expression:**
- **Unique to the breed, Massive Brachycephalic head, cubic bone structures, cranio-facial axes viewed both frontally and laterally with perfect parallelism, covered by loose skin, well delineated wrinkles and folds. Harmonious in proportion to the body.**
- **Molossoid, large, its total length reaches 36% of the height at the withers The planes of the Corso head are NEVER parallel and must show slight convergence. Muzzle to skull proportions are 1-3, with a 90° angle the the frontal plane of muzzle.**



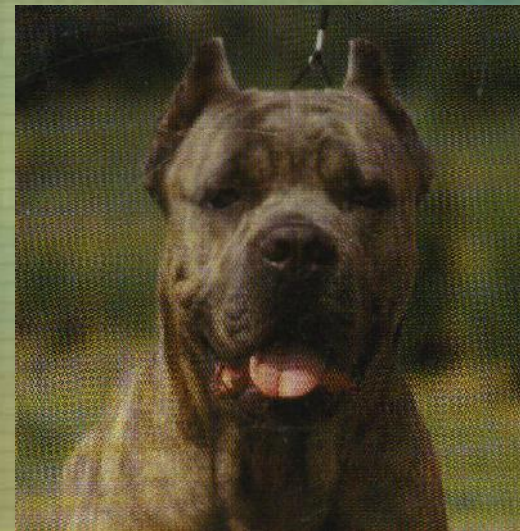


# Head (Continued)

- **Skull:** Wide, flat between the ears, slightly arched at the frontal part, and covered with wrinkled skin. The width of the cranium between the cheekbones is approximately equal to its length from occiput to stop. The brow is very developed. Frontal furrow is marked. Occiput is barely apparent.



**Skull:** Viewed from the front is wide and slightly curved, width is equal to the length. From the side a prominent arch begins above the eyes and then flattens backwards towards the occiput, viewed from the top it has a square appearance due to the zygomatic arches and powerful muscles swathing it.





# Head (Continued)

- **Stop:** Very defined, forming a right angle at the junction of muzzle and frontal bones, and then sloping back at a greater angle where the frontal bones meet the frontal furrow of the forehead.



- **Stop:** Well defined due to developed and bulging frontal sinuses and prominent arch above the eyes.





# Head (Continued)

- **Expression:** Wistful at rest, intimidating when alert. Penetrating stare.
- **Eyes:** Set deep and almost hidden beneath drooping upper lids. Lower lids droop to reveal haw.  
**Eye Color:** Shades of amber or brown, in accordance with coat color.  
**Pigmentation of the eye rims same as coat color.**



- -----
- **Expression:** Very alert and attentive. Some wrinkling on forehead occurs when alert.
- **Eyes:** Medium sized, almond shaped, not round or bulging, tight fitting rims preferred with only a minimal amount of haw being visible.
- **Eye Color:** Dogs with black muzzles (black, fawn, red and these colors brindled) lighter shades are acceptable. Pigmentation of the eye rims is complete, pigmentation of eye rim matches pigment color of dog.
- **Disqualification:** *Yellow bird of prey, blue eyes. Wall eyed.*





# Head (Continued)

- **Ears:** Set well above the cheekbones. May be cropped or uncropped, but are usually cropped to an equilateral triangle for health reasons.
- If uncropped, they are medium sized, triangular in shape, held tight to the cheeks, and not extending beyond the lower margin of the throat.
- **Ears:** Set well above the cheekbones. May be cropped or uncropped, if cropped it is in an equilateral triangle. If uncropped, they are of medium sized, triangular in shape, held tight to the cheeks, and not extending beyond the jaw bone.





## Head (Continued)

- **Nose:** Large with well-opened nostrils, and in color the same as the coat. The nose is an extension of the topline of the muzzle and should not protrude beyond nor recede behind the front plane of the muzzle.
- ***Severe Faults:*** Incomplete pigmentation of the nose.

**Nose:** Large with well-opened nostrils, pigment color to match pigment color of the dog. Dogs with black pigment have black noses, gray pigmented dogs have gray noses, and pigmentation is complete. The nose is an extension of the topline of the muzzle and does not protrude beyond nor recede behind the front plane of the muzzle.





# Head (Continued)

- **Muzzle:** It is  $\frac{1}{3}$  the length of the whole head and is as broad as it is long. Viewed from the front, the muzzle is very deep with the outside borders parallel giving it a "squared" appearance. The top plane of the muzzle from stop to tip of nose is straight, but is ridged due to heavy folds of skin covering it. *Severe Faults:* Top plane of the muzzle curved upward or downward.

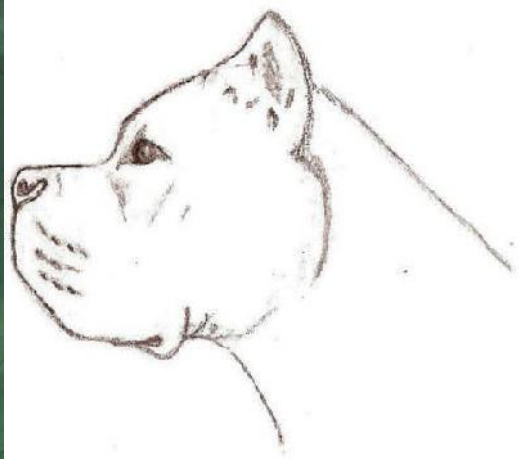


**Muzzle:** Very broad and deep, width is almost equal to its length which reaches 34% of the total length of the head; the depth of muzzle is more than 50% of the length of the muzzle. The top and bottom muzzle plains are parallel and the nose and chin form a perpendicular line. Muzzle is not narrow or snipey.

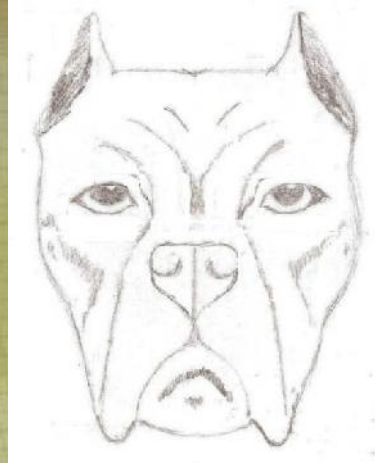




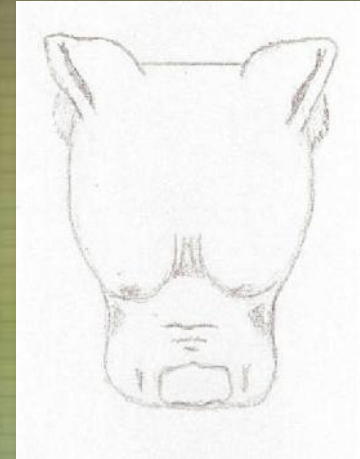
# Head Diagrams of the Cane Corso



**Correct Head Profile ^**

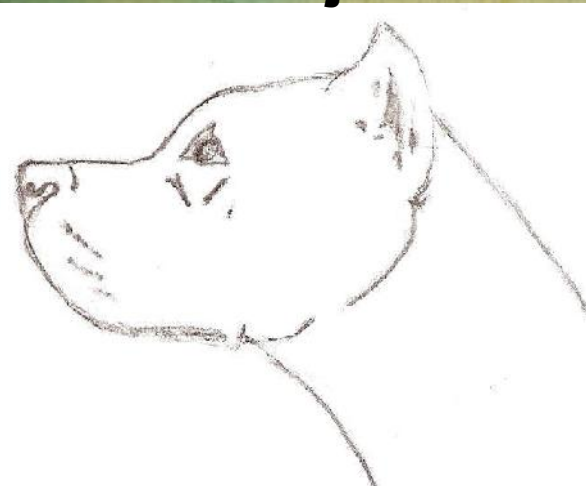


**Correct Frontal ^**

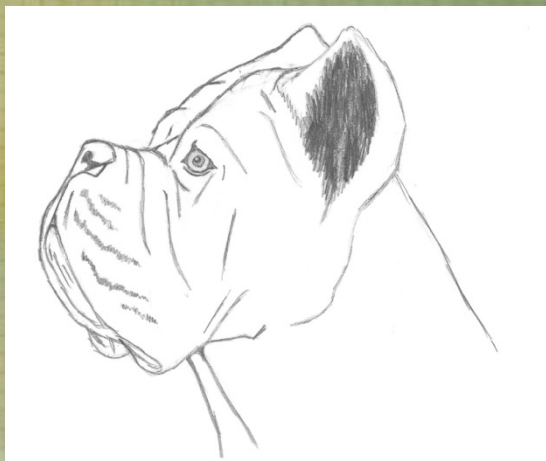


**Correct Anterior Cranial ^**

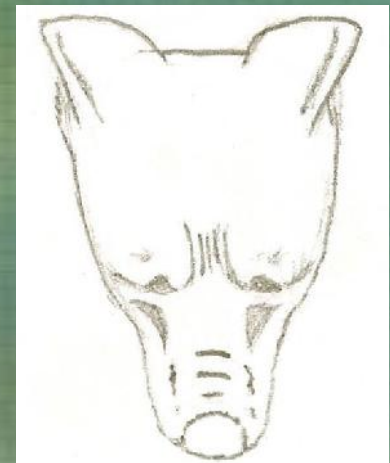
**Poor head Parallel planes  
Weak underjaw**



**Hypertypical  
over done**

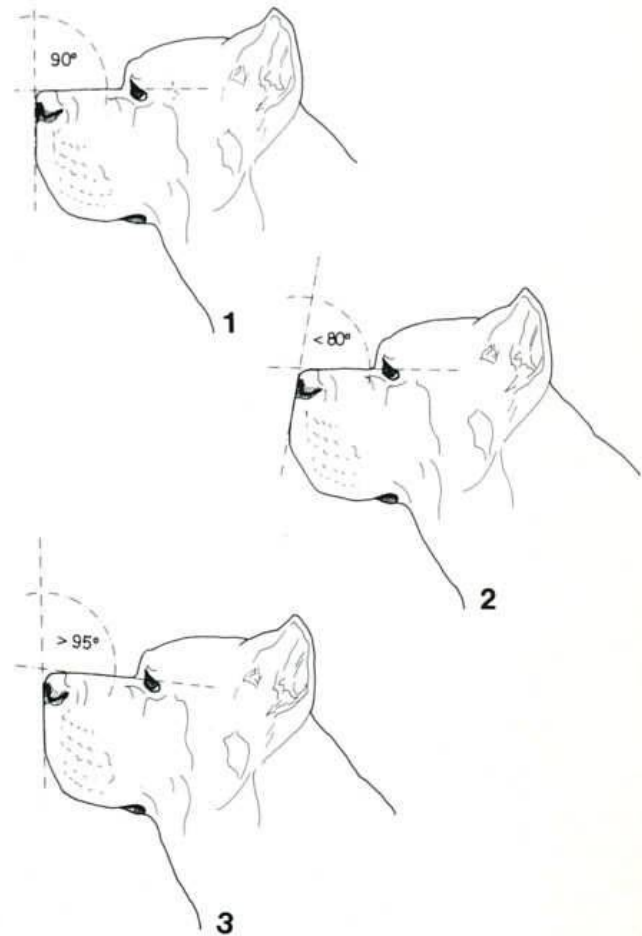
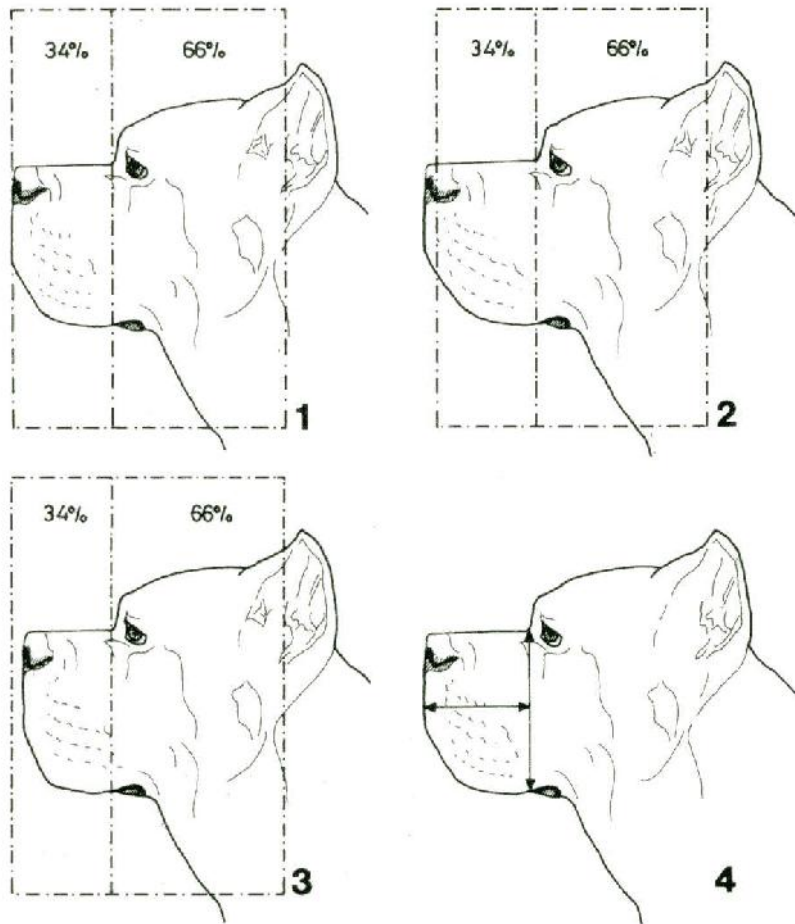


**Deficient Weak Cranium  
Lacking squareness**





# Head Diagrams of the Cane Corso





# Head (Continued)

- **Lips:** Heavy, thick, and long, the upper lips join beneath the nostrils to form an inverted "V". The upper lips form the lower, outer borders of the muzzle, and the lowest part of these borders is made by the corners of the lips. The corners turn outward to reveal the flews, and are in line with the outside corners of the eyes.
- **Bite:** Scissors bite or pincer (**level**) bite is standard; slight undershot is allowed. Dentition is complete. **Faults:** More than 1 missing premolar. **Severe faults:** Overshot jaw: pronounced undershot jaw which disrupts the outline of the front plane of the muzzle; more than 2 missing teeth.
- **Lips** Rather firm. Upper lips moderately hanging, they join under the nostrils to form an inverted "U". Pigmentation matches color pigment of the dog. Dogs with black pigment have black lips, gray pigmented dogs have gray lips.
- **Bite:** Slightly undershot (no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch) and level preferred, scissor bite is acceptable if parameters of the head and muzzle are correct. The incisors are firmly placed on a straight line. Dentition is complete with no more than two missing teeth.
- **Disqualification:** More than 2 missing teeth, wry mouth pronounced and undershot more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.





# Neck, Topline, And Body

- **Neck:** Slightly arched, rather short, stocky and well-muscled. The voluminous and well-divided dewlap extends from the lower jaw to the lower neck.

***Disqualification:*** Absence of dewlap.

- **Body:** The length of the dog, measured from the point of the shoulder to the point of buttock, is 10-15 percent greater than the height of the dog measured from the highest point of the shoulder to the ground. Depth of the ribcage is equal to half the total height of the dog. Ribs are long and well sprung.

- **Chest:** Broad and deep, well muscled.





# Neck, Topline, And Body Cane Corso

- **Neck:** Slightly arched, flowing smoothly into the shoulders with a small amount of dewlap. The length of the neck is 36% the height at the withers.
- **Body:** Depth of the ribcage is equal to half the total height of the dog, descending slightly below the elbow. Ribs are long and well sprung. Moderate tuck up.
- **Chest:** Broad, well muscled, strong forefront.





# Neck, Topline, And Body (Continued)

- **Underline and tuckup:** The underline of the abdomen is practically horizontal. There is little or no tuckup.
- **Back:** Wide and strong. Highest part of shoulder blade barely rising above the strong, level topline of the back.
- **Loin:** well-muscled, and harmoniously joined to the back.
- **Croup:** Wide, strong, muscular and slightly sloped. The top of the croup rises slightly and is level with the highest point of the shoulder.



When viewing the dog in profile, the underline is created by the excess skin, which creates the skirting that protrudes ventrally from the body.



# Neck, Topline, And Body Cane Corso

- **Back:** Wide, strong, muscular. Highest part of shoulder blade slightly rising above the strong level back.
- **Loin:** Well muscled, and harmoniously joined to the back.
- **Croup:** Long, wide, slightly sloping. Rump should be quite round due to muscular development.





## Neck, Topline, And Body (Continued)

**Tail:** Set on slightly lower than the topline, wide and thick at the root, tapering gradually toward the tip. It is docked by 1/3. When at rest, the tail hangs straight or in slight "S" shape. When in action, it is raised to the horizontal or a little higher than the back.

*"Currently, tail docking is preferred at 2/3rds of the total length or a fully intact tail extending to or slightly above the point of the hock".*

- **Severe Fault:** Tail carried straight up or curved over the back. Kinked tail.

**Disqualification:** Lack of tail or short tail, which is less than 1/3 the length from point of insertion of the tail to the hock-joint.





# Neck, Topline, And Body Cane Corso

- **Tail:** Tail set is an extension of the backline. It is thick at the root with not much tapering at the tip. When not in action carried low, otherwise horizontal or slightly higher than back, not to be carried in a vertical position, it is docked at the 4<sup>th</sup> vertebrae. Natural tails are accepted, though not preferred. In the case of natural tails, the tip reaches the hock but not below. Carried low, it is neither broken nor kinked but supple. Hanging when the dog is in repose; generally carried level with the back or slightly above the level of the back when the dog is in action, without curving over the back or being curled.
- **Disqualification:** *A natural tail that has atrophied or a natural tail that is knotted and laterally deviated or twisted.*





# Forequarters

- **Forequarters:** Heavily built, muscular, and in balance with the hindquarters.
- **Shoulders:** Long, well-muscled, sloping and powerful.
- **Upper arms:** Strongly muscled, powerful. In length, almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  the height of the dog.
- **Elbows:** Covered with abundant and loose skin; held parallel to the ribcage, neither tied in nor loose.



- 
- **Forequarters:** Strong and muscular, well proportioned to the size of the dog. Straight when viewed from the front or side, height of the limb at the elbow is equal to 50% of the height at the withers.
  - **Shoulders:** Muscular, laid back.
  - **Upper Arms:** Strongly muscled, with good bone, powerful.
  - **Elbows:** Held parallel to the ribcage, turning neither in or out.





# Forequarters (Continued)

- **Forelegs:** Thick, straight, heavy bone, well muscled, exemplifying strength. About the same length as the upper arms. Set well apart.
- **Pasterns:** Thick and flattened from front to back, moderately sloping forward from the leg.
- **Dewclaws:** Front dewclaws are not removed.
- **Feet:** Round and noticeably large with arched, strong toes. *Nails* strong, curved and preferably dark-colored. Slight turn out of the front feet is characteristic.



- 
- **Forelegs:** Straight and with good bone well muscled.
  - **Pasterns:** Almost straight, strong but flexible.
  - **Feet:** Round with well arched toes (cat like). Lean hard dark pads and nails except in the case of white toes.





# Hindquarters

- **Hindquarters:** As a whole, they must be powerful and strong, in harmony with the forequarters.
- **Thighs:** About the same length as the forearms, broad, muscular.
- **Stifles:** Moderate angle, strong.
- **Legs:** Heavy and thick boned, well-muscled. Slightly shorter than the thigh bones.
- **Hocks:** Powerful and long.

**Length of hock is preferred to be  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of the total height at the withers.**



- **Hindquarters:** As a whole, they are powerful and strong, in harmony with the forequarters.
- **Thighs:** Long, wide, angulated and well muscled.
- **Stifle:** Should be moderately angulated, strong.
- **Legs:** Strong bone and muscle structure.
- **Hocks:** Wide, thick and clean, let down and parallel when viewed from behind.





# Hindquarters (Continued)

- **Rear Pasterns: (metatarsus)** Heavy thick bones. Viewed from the side, they are perpendicular to the ground. Viewed from the rear, parallel to each other.
- **Rear dewclaws:** Any dewclaws must be removed.
- **Hind Feet:** Same as the front Feet, but slightly smaller.

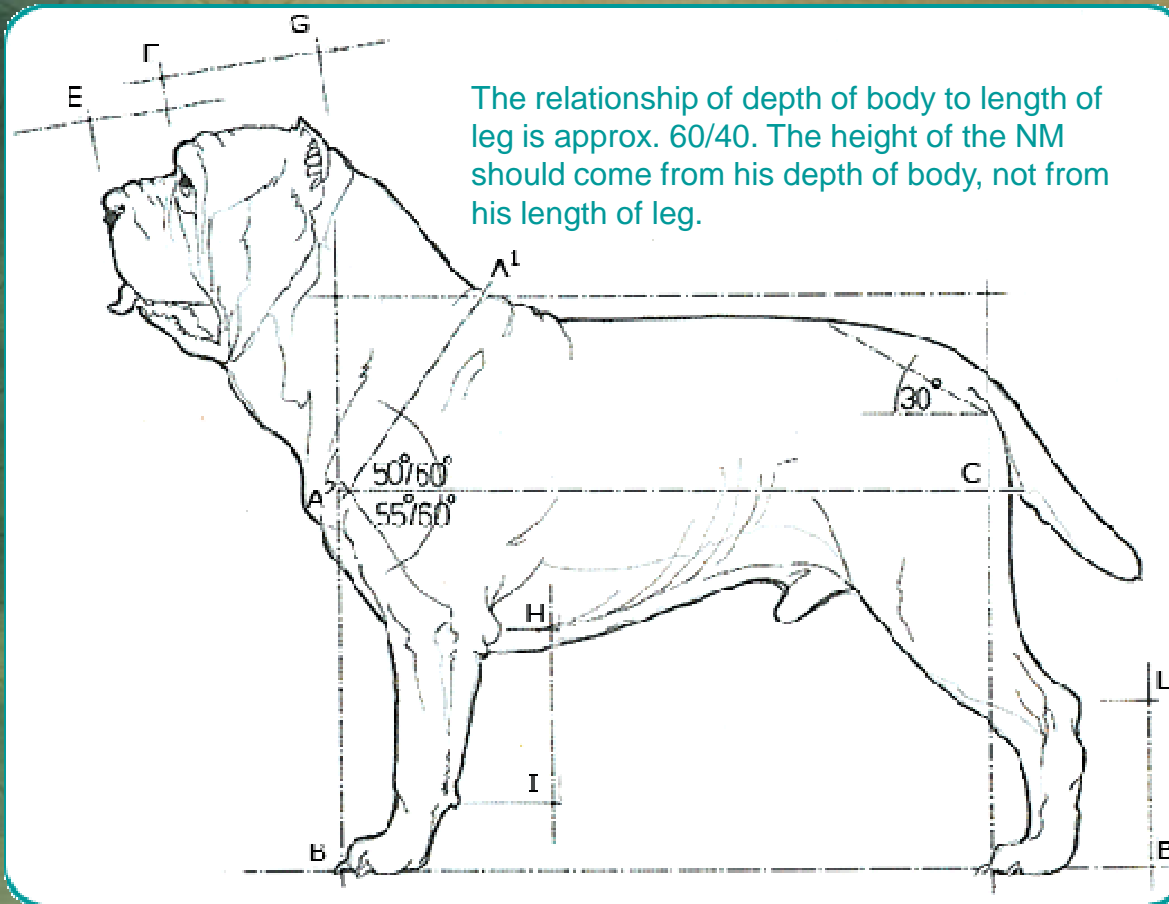


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- **Rear Pasterns:** Straight and parallel.
- **Rear Dewclaws:** Any rear dewclaws are removed.
- **Hind Feet:** Slightly oval shaped and less arched toes than the front feet.





# Breed Proportions: “The Summary”



The relationship of depth of body to length of leg is approx. 60/40. The height of the NM should come from his depth of body, not from his length of leg.

A1 to B= Height at the withers

A2 to C > A1B

EG = Length of the head

EF= 1/3rd EG

FG= 2/3rd EG

HI = Forearm

HI = 30% A1B

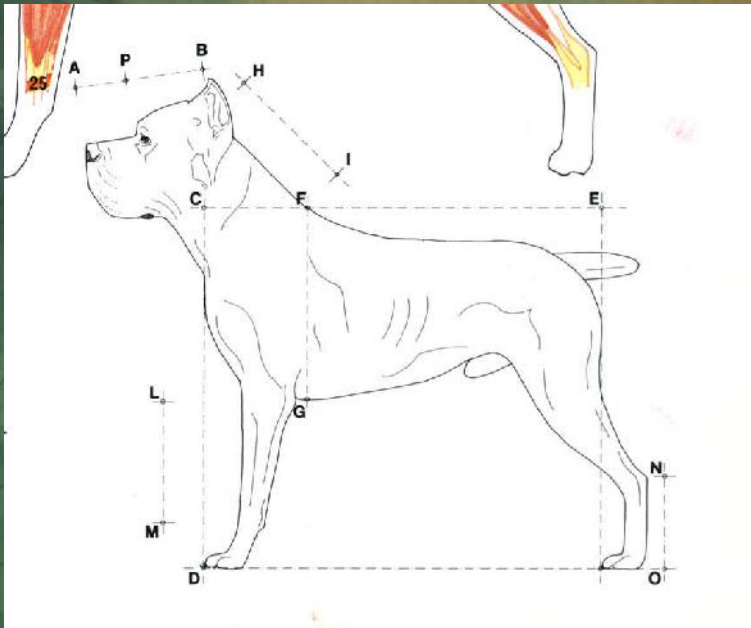
LB = ¼ A1B

A1 = Point of the withers  
 A2 = Point of the shoulder  
 B = Ground level  
 C = Furthest Point of the Buttock

E = Tip of the Nose  
 G = Occiput  
 F = Base of the muzzle  
 L = Point of the hock



# Breed Proportions: “The Summary”



## Important Proportions

**APB**-The total length of the head is equal to slightly more than 1/3 (36%) of the dogs height to the shoulders.

**CE**-The dog is proportionate at the height to the shoulders.

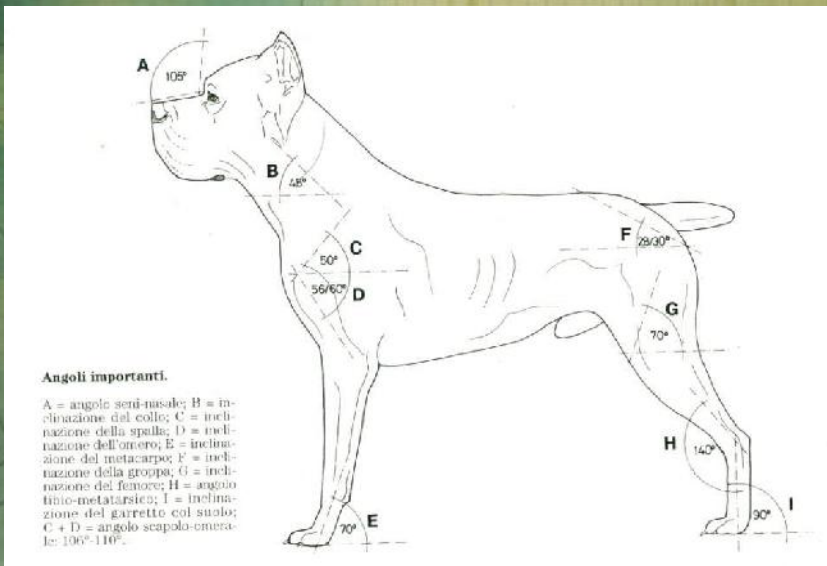
**DGF**-The depth of the chest is equal to 50% of the height to the shoulders.

**LM**-The depth of the Carpus to the elbow is equal to 32-33% of the height to the shoulders.

**NO**-The hock joint to the metacarpal is equal to 26% of the height to the shoulder.

**HI=AB**-Length of the shoulder to the back of the skull (encompasses the length of the cervical vertebrae) is equal to the total length of the dogs head and muzzle.

The width of the chest is 35% of the height to the withers.



## Important Angles

**A**-Angle of the stop 105 degree

**B**-Incline of the neck 45 degrees

**C**-Incline of the shoulder 50 degrees

**D**-Incline of the humerus 56/60 degrees

**E**-Incline of the metacarpal 70 degrees

**F**-Incline of the rump 28/30 degrees

**G**-Incline of the femora 70 degrees

**F**-Angle of the tibias-metatarsals 140 degrees

**H**-Incline of the hock 90 degrees



# Coat and Color

- **Coat:**  
The coat is short, dense and of uniform length and smoothness all over the body. The hairs are straight and not longer than 1 inch. No fringe anywhere.
- **Color:**  
Solid coats of gray (blue), black, mahogany and tawny, and the lighter and darker shades of these colors. Some brindling allowable in all colors. When present, brindling must be tan (reverse brindle). There may be solid white markings on the chest, throat area from the chin to chest, underside of the body, penis sheath, backs of the pasterns, and on the toes. There may be white hairs at the back of the wrists.
- ***Disqualifications:*** *White markings on any part of the body not mentioned as allowed.*





# Color (Continued)



From L To R  
Varying Shades  
of Blue & Black

- ❖ Steele-Blue
- Blue-Gray



❖ Blue With  
Brindling

➤ Black With  
Brindling





# Color (Continued)



❖ Left: Black

➤ Right:  
Black Brindle  
Heavy Brindled



❖ Left: Tawny

➤ Right:  
Mahogany





# Coat and Color Cane Corso

- **Coat:** The coat is short, stiff, shiny, adherent and dense with a light undercoat that becomes thicker in cold weather.
- **Color:** Acceptable colors are black, lighter and darker shades of gray, lighter and darker shades of fawn and red. Brindling is allowed on all of these colors. Solid fawn and red, including lighter and darker shades have a black or gray mask; it does not go beyond the eyes. There may be a white patch on the chest, throat, chin, backs of the pasterns, and on the toes.
- ***Disqualification:*** Any color with marking pattern as seen in black and tan breeds.





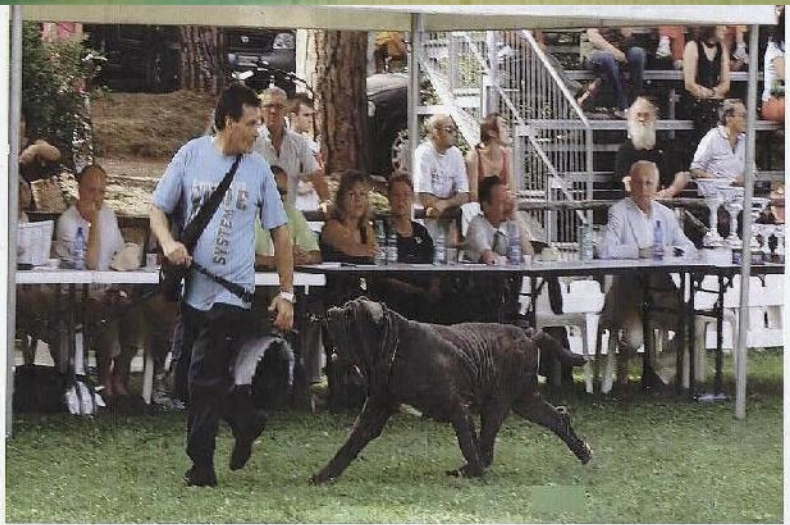
# Gait

**The Neapolitan Mastiff's movement is not flashy, but rather slow and lumbering. Normal gaits are the walk, trot, gallop, and pace. The strides are long and elastic, at the same time powerful, characterized by a long push from the hindquarters and extension of the forelegs. Rolling motion and swaying of the body at all gaits is characteristic. Pacing in the show ring is Not to be penalized. Slight paddling movement of the front feet is normal. The head is carried level with or slightly above the back.**





# The Gait Of The Neapolitan





# The Gait Of The Neapolitan Continued...

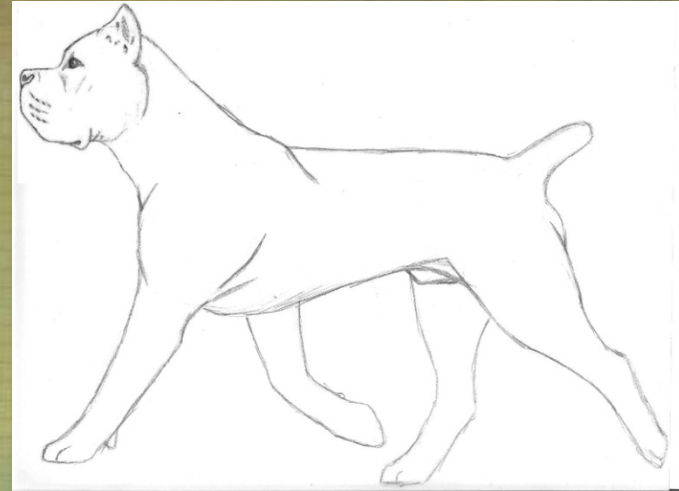


Pacing in the show ring is "Not" to be penalized....



# Gait Cane Corso

- **Gait/Movement:** The movement is free flowing, powerful yet effortless, with strong reach and drive. As the dog accelerates, the feet converge towards a center line of gravity in a near single track. When viewed from the side, the topline remains level, with minimal roll or bounce.





# Temperament

**The Neapolitan Mastiff is steady and loyal to his owner, not aggressive or apt to bite without reason. As a protector of his property and owners, he is always watchful and does not relish intrusion by strangers into his personal space. His attitude is calm yet wary. In the show ring he is majestic and powerful, but not showy.**



- **The Cane Corso as a protector of his property and owners is unequalled. Intelligent he is easily trained. Noble, majestic and powerful his presence is impressive.**
- **He is docile and affectionate to his owner, loving with children and family.**





# Summary and Disqualifications

## *Disqualifications:*

**Absence of wrinkles and folds**

**Absence of dewlap**

**Lack of tail or short tail, which is less than  $\frac{1}{3}$  the length from point of insertion of the tail to the hock.**

**White markings on any part of the body not mentioned.**

**Approved: January 13, 2004**

**Effective: May 1, 2004**

***Note - Males should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.***

## *Disqualifications:*

**More than 2 missing teeth, wry mouth.**

**Undershot bite more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch.**

**Yellow bird of prey, blue eyes, Wall eyed.**

**Any color with marking pattern as seen in Black and Tan breeds.**

**A natural atrophied tail or a natural tail that is knotted and laterally deviated or twisted.**

**Approved: January 2009**

**Effective: June 30<sup>th</sup> 2010**



# Introduction To Breed Faults

- *The foregoing description is that of the ideal Neapolitan Mastiff. Any deviation from the above described dog must be penalized to the extent of the deviation.*





# Head Faults

**Disqualifications:  
Absence of wrinkles and folds.**



**Correct type**



**Incorrect**



**Correct type**



**Incorrect**



# Head Faults

Toplines of the cranium  
and muzzle not parallel:  
Diverging Planes  
(severe Fault)



**Incorrect**



**Incorrect**



# Head Faults

**Toplines of the cranium  
and muzzle not parallel:  
Converging Planes  
(severe Fault)**



**Correct**



**Incorrect**



# Head Faults (Lack Of Stop)

A light or deficient stop caused by insufficient development of the frontal bones often causes an excessive load of skin closing down the upper eyelids, and reducing the eye opening. This usually gives a “turned off” look to the dog in the show ring. This lack of “presence” should not be preferred to a dog with both type and “presence”.



**Incorrect**



**Correct**



**Incorrect**

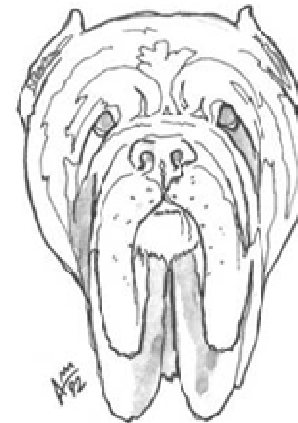


# Head Faults (Diagram)

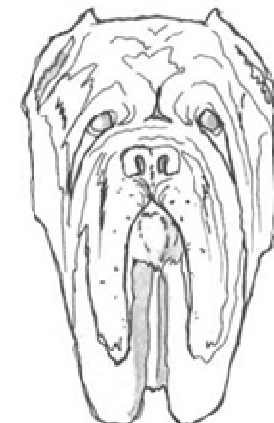
Ideal Head Type



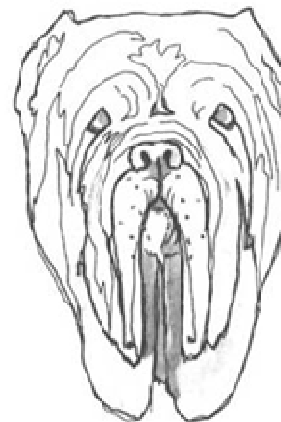
INCORRECT HEAD



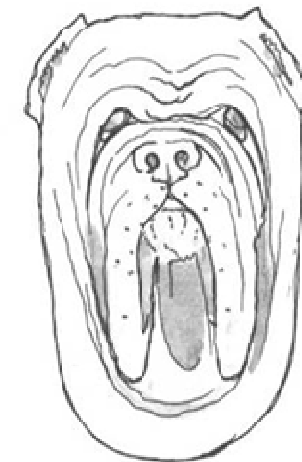
rounded head



narrow head



narrow muzzle  
small nose



excessive and  
undivided dewlap



# Defining Balance In Skin

- Well designed and distributed thick folds are present in his forehead, and foreface (muzzle) as opposed to an excessive number or disorganized wrinkles and folds lacking in density.



**Correct: Folds are thick and well distributed**



**Incorrect:  
Folds too thin and  
load of skin too  
excessive.**



## Defining Balance In Skin (Continued)



### ➤ Ideal type

- Main folds and wrinkles are NOT found in the dogs upper legs or in his hindquarters.
- The dewlap should not extend below the prosternum.



### ➤ Excessive dewlap



### ➤ Excessive body skin



# Faults And Disqualifications

- The absence of massiveness is to be so severely penalized as to be eliminated from competition.



**Ideal Type**



**Subject demonstrates a severe lack of mass do not reward this type of NM**



# Topline Faults

- Pictured here are four examples of topline in the NM that are not ideal. Our standards calls for a level topline and in some instances you may be faced with selecting a dog that has less than an ideal topline. The Center photo is acceptable but not “ideal” to place for winners and the breed.





# TAIL AND FOOT FAULTS

Acceptable tail is off to the side



- Examples of proper, and incorrect tail carriage.
- Below is a good example of a dog with a valgus deformity due to incongruous growth of the bones of the forearm.

Incorrect tail curls over back



Acceptable turning out of feet



Weak Pasterns

Proper round feet



Classical NM Stance





# Faults Summary

**The foregoing description is that of the ideal Neapolitan Mastiff. Any deviation from the above described dog must be penalized to the extent of the deviation.**

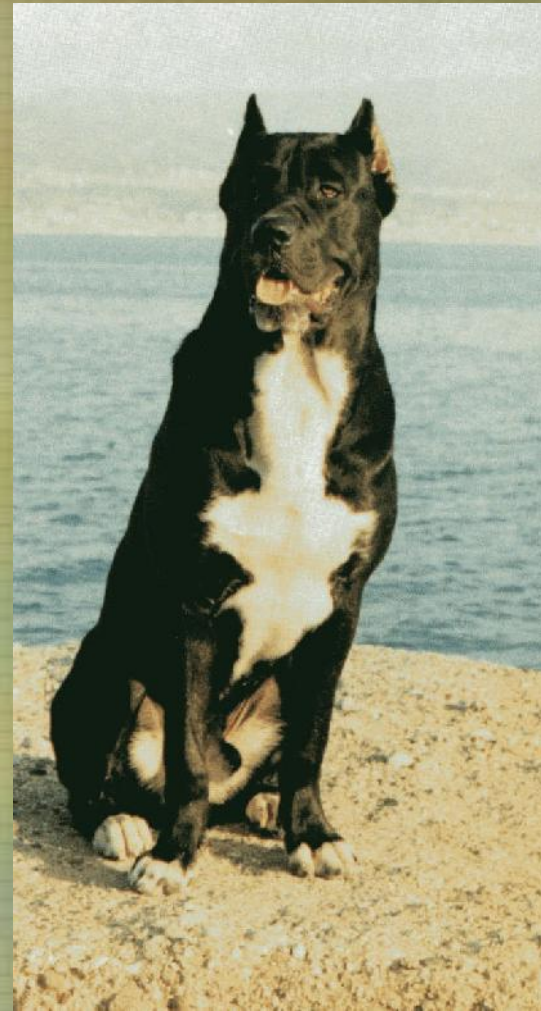
- **Summary of Faults**
- **The absence of massiveness is to be so severely penalized as to be eliminated from competition.**
- **Toplines of the cranium and muzzle not parallel.**
- **Whitish-blue eyes; incomplete pigmentation of the eye rims.**
- **Incomplete pigmentation of the nose.**
- **Top plane of the muzzle curved upward or downward.**
- **More than one missing premolar.**
- **Overshot jaw: pronounced undershot jaw which disrupts the outline of the front plane of the muzzle; more than 2 missing teeth.**
- **Tail carried straight up or curved over their back.**
- **Kinked tail.**

**Approved: January 13, 2004**  
**Effective: May 1, 2004**



# **Introduction To Breed Faults**

**The foregoing description is that of the ideal Cane Corso. Any deviation from the above described dog must be penalized to the extent of the deviation.**





# Head - Faults



**Correct type**



**Incorrect Weak Under jaw**



# Head - Faults, continued...

**Correct: Toplines of the cranium and muzzle should not be parallel: Slightly Converging Planes**



**Incorrect Parallel Planes of Skull and Muzzle**



# Topline, Rear and Skin Faults



**Left: Cow Hocked**



**Right: Excessive facial wrinkles and folds of Skin**

**Below: Long Bodied and weak topline**





*...The End*

