

The Rhodesian Ridgeback



A Breed Education Presentation

An Official Presentation of
The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States
("RRCUS")



Agenda

- History and Purpose
- The Breed in Africa
- Highlights and Illustrations of the Standard, as Elaborated
- Booklet with illustrations, the Standard and the Elaboration is being distributed
- How to Approach a Ridgeback
- Judging Priorities
- Other places for information

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The Khoi Dog

- The pastoral Khoi people provided the native dog that passed on its ridge to the Rhodesian Ridgeback.
- The Khoi were once referred to as Hottentots, but that is considered a culturally insensitive term today.
- These ridged dogs accompanied the Khoi and helped herd their cattle by day, and were turned out to guard the livestock by night.

A 1731 account describes the Khoi dogs as “**brave, honest, loving** Creatures, **extremely cherished** by their Masters for their Fidelity and Good Services.”

But they were not considered very attractive:

“He is more like a fox than any sort of dog that we have among us. His mouth is pointed, his ears are erect, his tail is long and narrow, and he drags it on the ground. His hair, which is thin, but long, points every which way, and falls nowhere sleek upon his body.”



From "Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa," by Frederick Selous, 1893

History: Lion Dog

- The modern Rhodesian Ridgeback was created by Rhodesian big-game hunter Cornelius van Rooyen in the 1890s. He crossed two ridged rough-coated Greyhound bitches with his pack of lion dogs.
- Foundation breeds were believed to include Greyhounds, Wolfhounds/Deerhounds, Irish and Airedale terriers, Bulldogs and, later, Great Danes.
- The ridged offspring were reportedly better hunters, and van Rooyen soon became famed for his African Lion Dogs.



Cornelius Van Rooyen (far right) and hunting party.



Cornelius
van Rooyen
with the last
lion he shot.

His Lion Dog
shows
unmistakabl
e
Sighthound
influence.

*From "Rhodesian
Ridgeback
Pioneers" by
Linda Costa*

First Standard

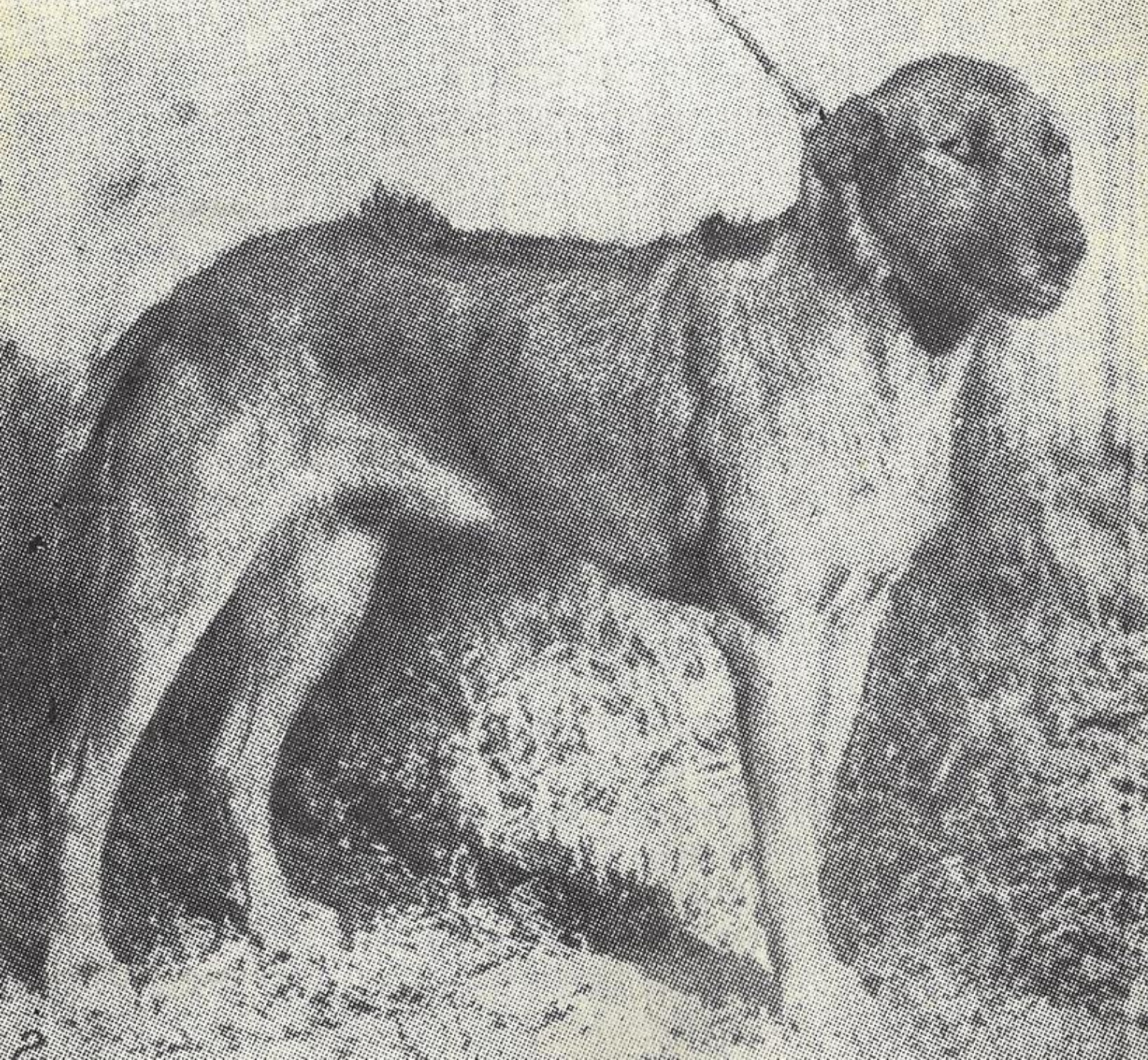
- In 1922, a meeting of Lion Dog owners was convened in Bulawayo, Rhodesia.
- An attendee noted that the 20 dogs present ranged from “an undersized Great Dane to a small Bull Terrier.”
- Based on that meeting, Frances Barnes wrote the first Ridgeback standard. He borrowed much of the language from the Dalmatian standard of the period.

Breed Name

Originally known as the African Lion Dog, the breed was renamed the Rhodesian Ridgeback because while any dog can theoretically hunt lions, not every dog carries the stripe of backward-growing hair that marks its African legacy.

Rhodesia is now known as Zimbabwe.





Some early dogs had rough coats. This is Eskdale Connie, whelped in 1925.



The first standard allowed for multiple-crowned “fiddle ridges,” like the one pictured here.

Note brindle dog in background.

Brindle was an accepted pattern until the 1940s. It is extinct in the breed today. This is Rhodian Revel, whelped in 1926.



Hollywood movie star Errol Flynn was the first American breeder of Rhodesian Ridgebacks, acquiring his stock from the U.K. in the 1930s. None of their blood survives in pedigrees today.





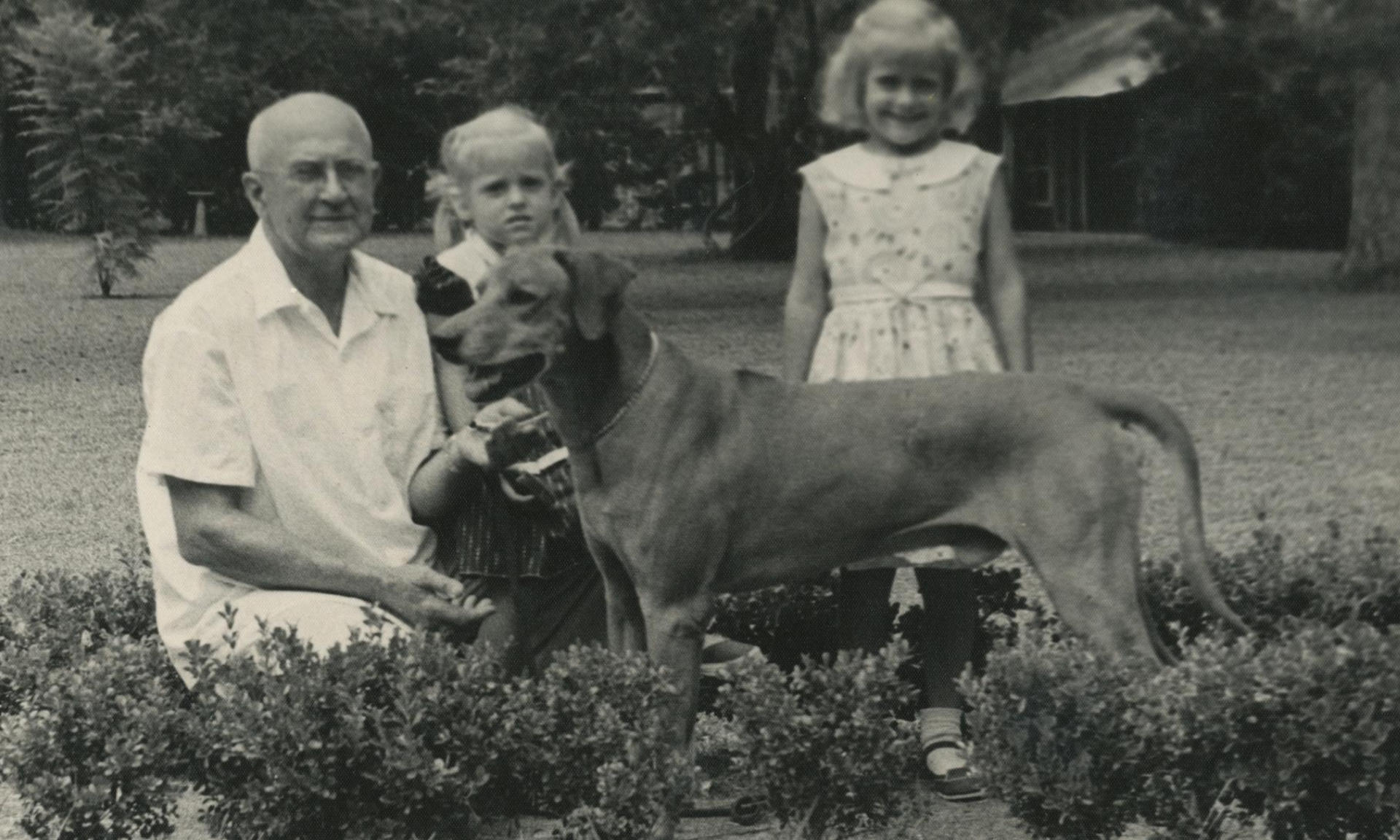
PROBATION LION HOUNDS
ERROL FLYNN
CHASES THE HOUNDS FROM
THE MOUNTAINS IN '42'

E. F. P. A. 35



In 1950,
Massachusetts-
based wool trader
Bill O'Brien
brought the next
wave of dogs to
the United States.

In 1955, the AKC
officially
recognized the
Rhodesian
Ridgeback.



The first AKC champion was Ch. Swahili's Jeff Davis, owned by Col. Morrie de Pass in Mississippi.

Breed Standard

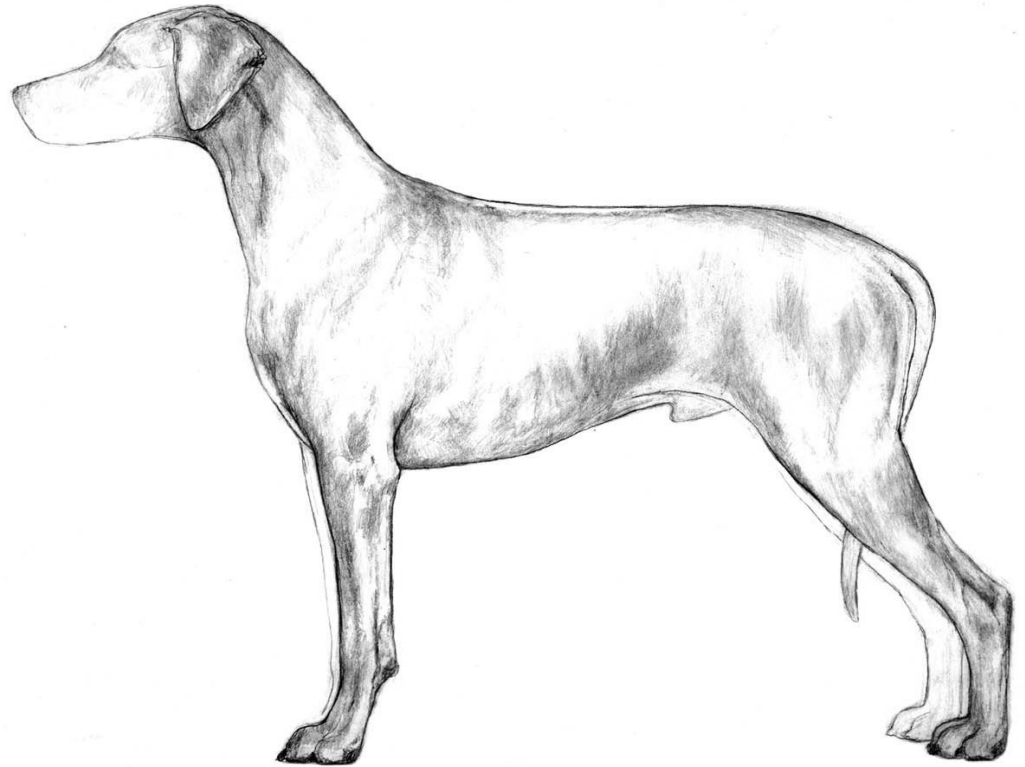
Conformation Point Scale

Trait	Points
General Appearance (size, symmetry, balance)	15
Ridge	20
Head	15
Legs & Feet	15
Neck & Shoulders	10
Body, Back, Chest & Loin	10
Gait	10
Tail	2
Coat & Color	3
Only disqualification - Ridgelessness	

Highlights

General Appearance

- Deep and capacious chest
- Withers to brisket equals brisket to ground
- Short/Moderate coupled
- Well laid back shoulder, head and neck set over front legs, supporting most of the weight
- Withers are the highest point of the topline
- Gradual tuck-up from thorax to loin, not as severe as Whippet



Highlights

General Appearance





Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

Male Head

- Parallel Planes-muzzle and top of head
- Squaring off of muzzle, avoiding wedge or snipey profile
- Lips “closely fitting the jaws” with moderate flew
- Size, placement and tapering of ear
- Nostrils, large and open
- Muzzle long with level plane, out of the line of vision
- Length of muzzle most nearly equals that of the head



Male Profile

Highlights

Male Head

- Back skull flat between ears, not domed
- Head is chiseled, not cheeky under eye to jaw (between zygomatic arch and mandible)
- Planes level with a reasonably defined stop--not excessive or too little
- Eyes are round and open (not sunken) and moderately well apart
- Muzzle is long, deep and powerful
- Muzzle square at end, chin visible from front, not snipey
- Ears set rather high and carried close to head
- In alert position ear should frame face in balance to proportion to the head



Male 3/4 Profile

Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Male Head



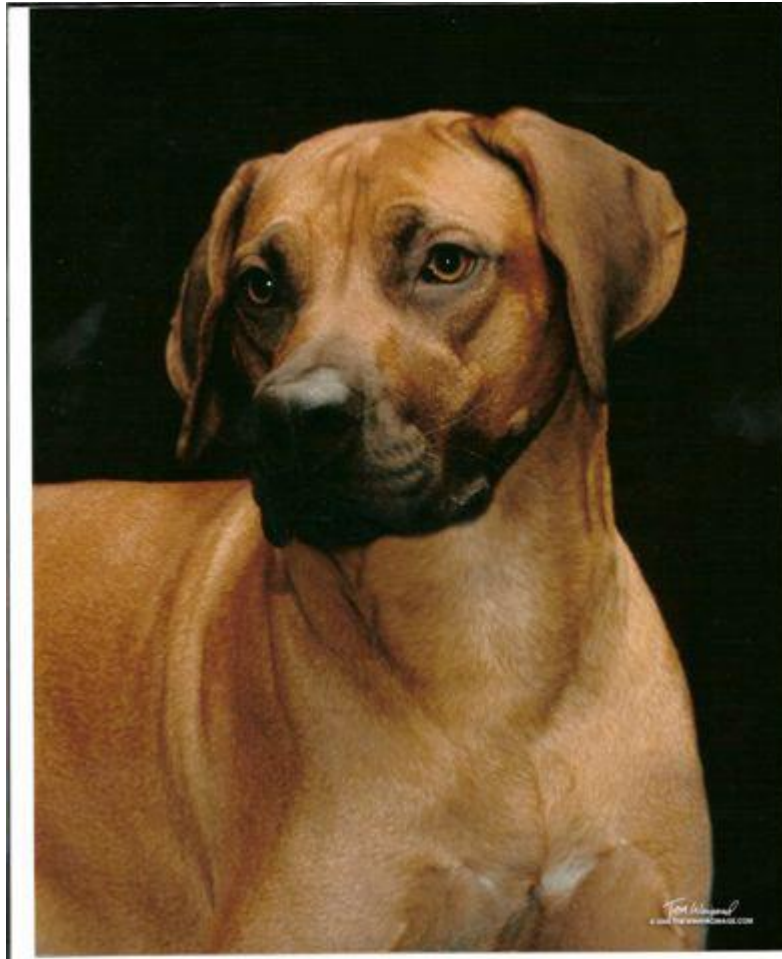
Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Male Head



Highlights

Female Head

- Back skull flat between ears, not domed
- Head is chiseled, more than the male, not cheeky under eye to jaw (between zygomatic arch and mandible). With femininity
- Planes level with a moderately defined stop--not excessive or too little
- Eyes are round and open (not sunken) and moderately well apart
- Muzzle is long, deep and powerful
- Muzzle square at end, chin visible from front, not snipey
- Ears set rather high and carried close to head
- In alert position ear should frame face in proportion to the head



Female 3/4 Profile

Highlights

Female Head

- Same as $\frac{3}{4}$ Female Head but notice the correct proportionality of the muzzle and back skull
- When alert, wrinkles converge on the median line which runs between the eyes up through the forehead (this median line is the scissura)



Female Profile

Highlights

Female Head



Highlights

Female Head



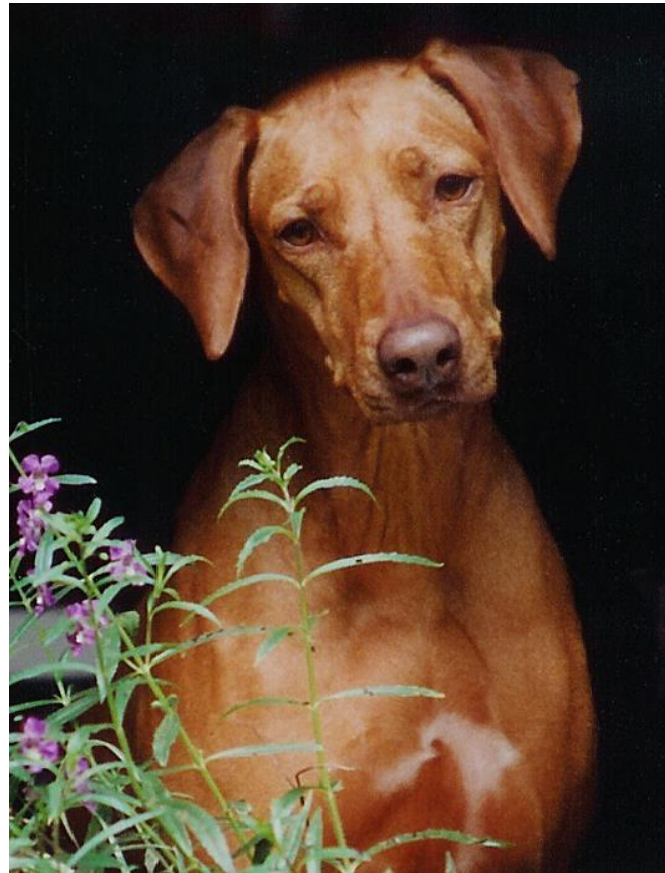
Highlights

Female Head



Highlights

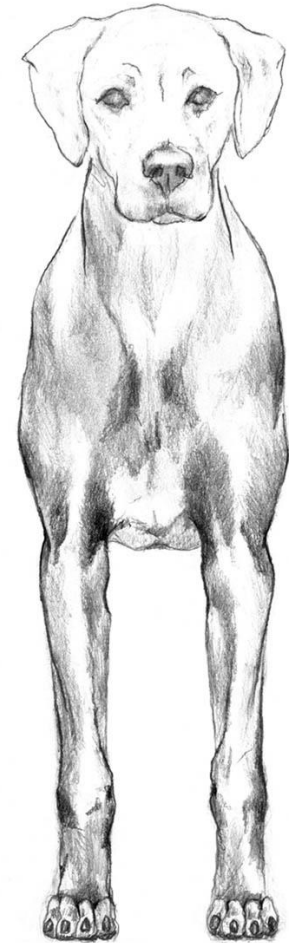
Female Head



Highlights

Forequarters - Standing

- Good fill under sternum, no cathedral/concave chest
- Front legs have plenty of substance, good bone
- Feet –well knuckled up with thick pads
- Good amount of muscles on the shoulder and forearm
- Legs are well under body with the elbows held close to the body
- Feet should be compact with well-arched toes and round, thick and tough elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads

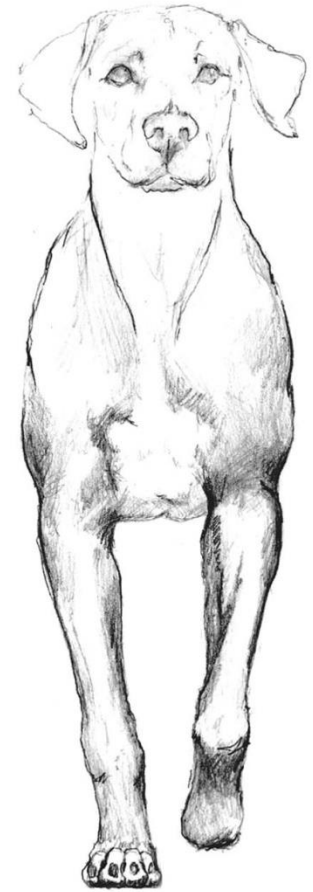


Front (Standing)

Highlights

Forequarters - Coming

- As speed increases, the legs angle inward toward a center line beneath the body
- Good muscle in forearms, under the elbow
- Head slightly elevated
- Good fill under sternum
- Elbows tight and clean moving

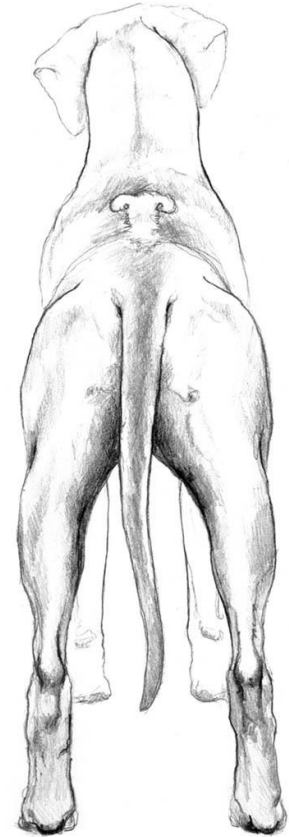


Coming (Moving)

Highlights

Hindquarters - Standing

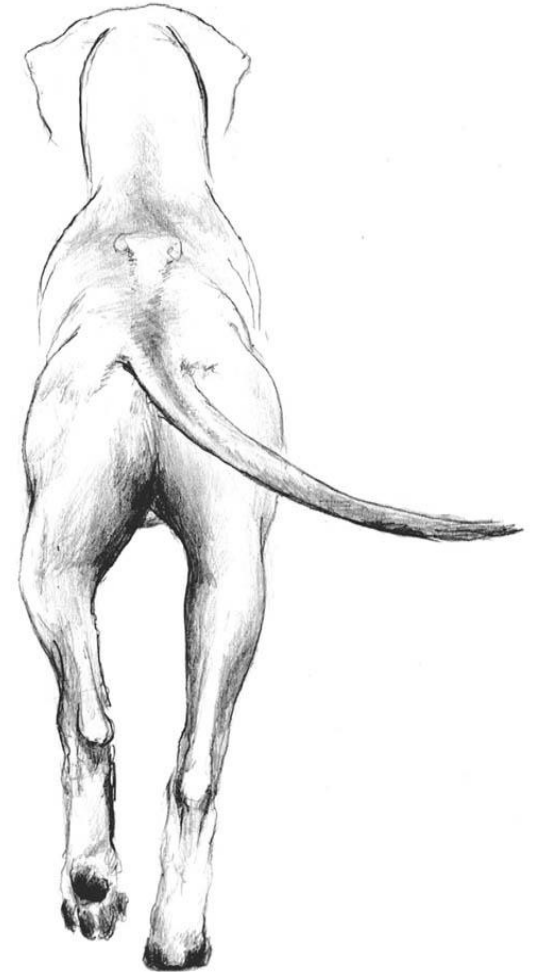
- Good muscular inner and secondary (i.e. lower) thighs
- Hocks are well let-down
- Tail should at least reach to the hock



Rear (Standing)

Highlights Hindquarters - Going

- See strong drive from the hock
- Nicely muscled and symmetrical
- Rear pad should be visible

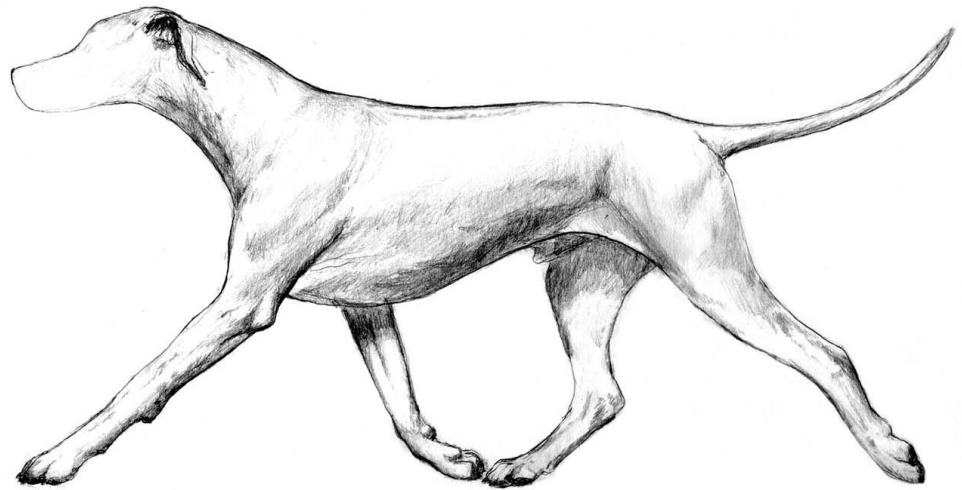


Going (Moving)

Highlights

Gait

- Head elevated slightly higher than backline
- Front leg to nose, no bend or break at knee or elbow
- Front foot on ground at full stride, not elevated
- Deep and capacious chest (from withers to bottom of brisket)
- Long rib cage tapering into short strong loin (short coupled)

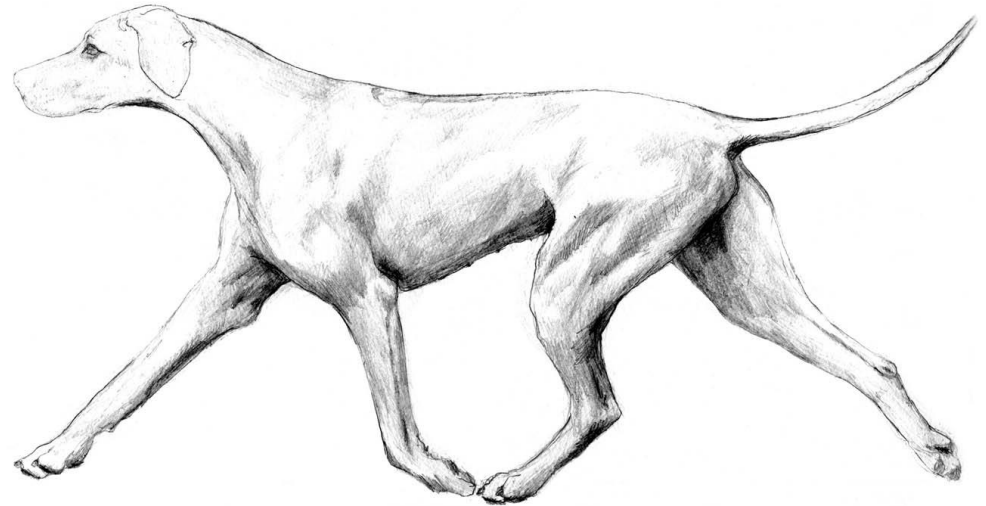


Side gait - Left Extended (Male)

Highlights

Gait

- Firm back with a strong level topline
- As Major Hawley, a most respected breed expert says, “the neck is fairly long and flexible and elegantly arched.... carrying the head high”—but not as high as an Afghan or Saluki
- Tail carried slightly above the level of the back, stressing the balance between the head and tail carriage and the smooth finish of the topline



Side gait - Right Extended (Female)

Highlights

Gait



Highlights

Gait



Highlights

Gait



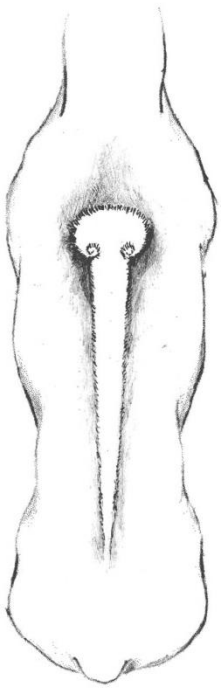
Highlights

Gait

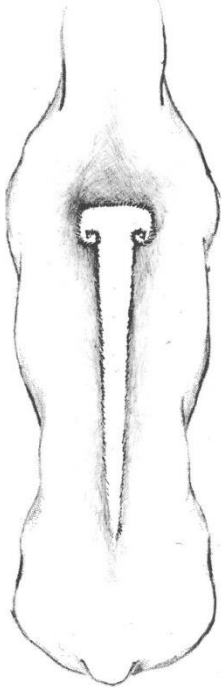


Highlights

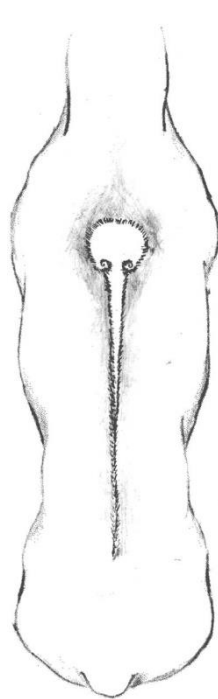
Ridge (Desirable)



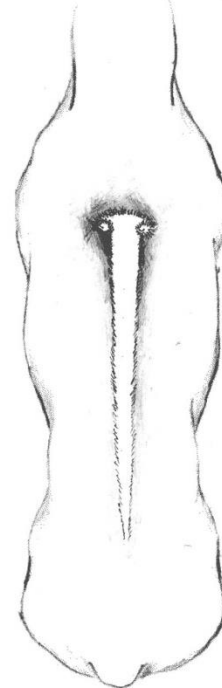
**Desirable
ridge**



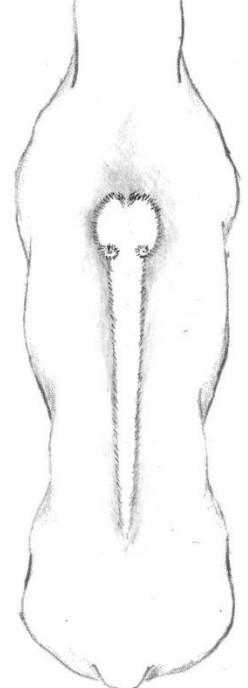
**Desirable
with box
on top**



**Desirable
with
narrow
ridge**



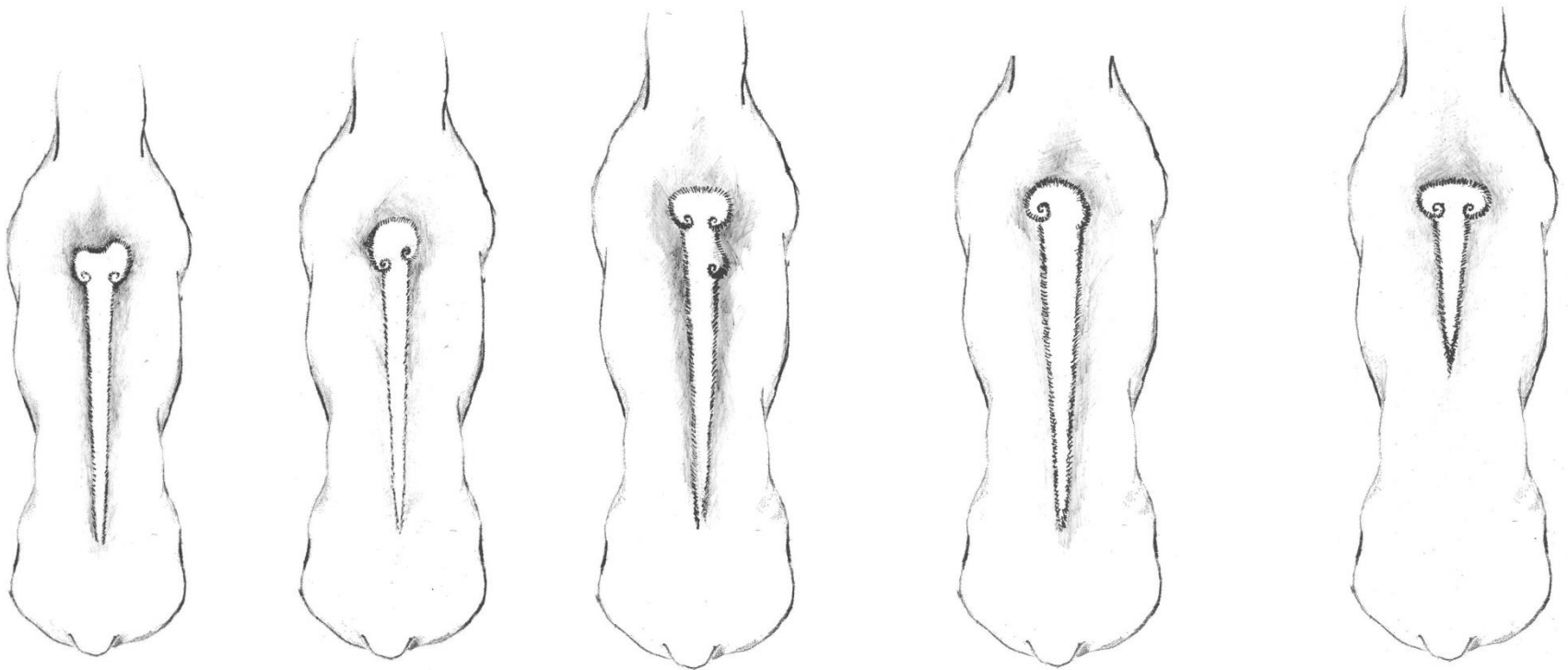
**Desirable
with
flattened
top**



**Desirable
with
parting at
top**

Highlights

Ridge (Acceptable, Serious Fault & Undesirable)



**Acceptable ridges;
asymmetrical fan and slightly
offset crown**

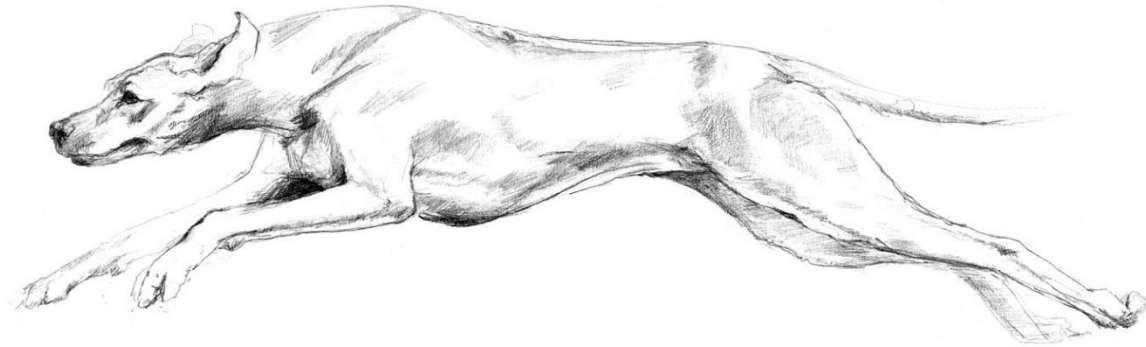
**Serious fault ridges; single
crown (whorl) and more than
two crowns (whorls)**

**Undesir-
able ridge:
Too short**

Highlights

Gallop - Extended

- Layback of shoulders allows the neck to fall forward facilitating the pumping motion
- Extension of the shoulders allowing maximum reach
- Hip, knee, hock and carpus joints are all extended together for maximum drive with the rear pad turned up at the end



Galloping - extended

Highlights

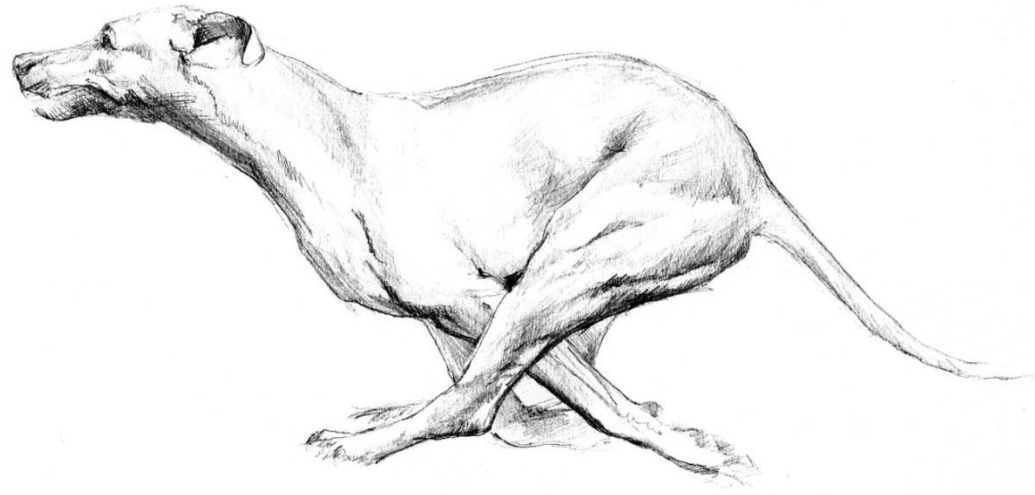
Gallop - Extended



Highlights

Gallop - Contracted

- Shows how a strong loin propels a dog
- Back feet extend only to the sternum



Galloping - contracted

Highlights

Gallop - Contracted



Highlights

Coat

- Short
- Dense
- Sleek
- Not too soft or too coarse

Highlights

Color

- **Wheaten MUST dominate the coat color**
- Light wheaten to shades of gold to red wheaten with hair lighter at the base and darker at the tip, all shades acceptable
- Black hair may be interspersed throughout coat but excessive black is unacceptable
- Clear faced or black on the muzzle, ear and around the eyes are equally acceptable. However, these black points should not continue as a solid mask over the eyes.
- Care should be taken not to confuse black masking with the "widow's peak," darker shading which comes to a point from the skull to between the eyebrows.

Highlights

Color--Continued

- **Wheaten MUST dominate the coat color**

- Small socks and white on the chest on an otherwise typey, sound dog should not eliminate him from consideration.
- Major Hawley quote: “We must avoid, at all costs, a fetish that white is taboo.”
- Ridgebacks may also be liver/brown-nosed and may have dark brown hair interspersed throughout the coat.
- The color of the eyes should harmonize with the color of the dog. Black-nosed dogs should have a brown to dark brown eye. Liver or brown-nosed dogs should have an amber-colored eye, with preference given to the darker shades of brown or amber. Yellow eyes on a black-nosed dog are undesirable as they are on a brown or liver-nosed dog.

Highlights

Color



Highlights

General Appearance



Highlights

Color



HIGHLIGHTS

Temperament

STANDARD:

Dignified and even-tempered. Reserved with strangers.

ELABORATION:

Stable, fearless, intelligent, reserved with strangers, yet accepting of his master's judgment. In the show ring, a reserved attitude should not be confused with shyness.

Unnecessary aggression is not to be tolerated.

Highlights

How to Approach a Ridgeback

- Confidently approach from the front or shoulder—never from the rear
- Do not stare into the eyes
- Ask for the bite to be shown
- Use firm but gentle hand

Evaluating the Ridgeback - Judging Priorities

- Overall Impression
 - Athletic, Agile, Balanced, Powerful, Upstanding, Handsome
- Strong bladed bone, more oval than round
- Ridge

Other places for information

- Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the U.S.
website: www.rrcus.org
- Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the U.S.
Breed Standard and Elaboration
- Revised Breed History

Summary

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- The Breed in Africa
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