

# The AKC Breed Standard for the Neapolitan Mastiff



Color guide to the presentation:

White :  
Official AKC standard

Light Blue :  
Commentary

Presented By:

**United States Neapolitan Mastiff Club**



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# THE ESSENCE OF THE NEAPOLITAN MASTIFF

What best describes a legend... is the history of the breed as an archaeological find in modern-day breeding. The Neapolitan Mastiff is not like any other breed of dog. He is not like any other breed in type, in build, in movement, in terms of temperament or character. For this reason the Neapolitan Mastiff may be among one of the most difficult breeds to judge.

The Neapolitan Mastiff is an ancient breed dating back some 40 Centuries in History, and one should approach the breed with a great deal of respect for its history, resilience, fortitude and perseverance; the Neapolitan Mastiff has been to Wars, has been starved, and has survived near extinction in his evolution to the present day.



# Historical Background Breed History



Synonymous of the Italian Mastiff, this large breed is the result of at least four thousand years of both natural and human selection based on the various descriptions obtained as a gift from the past. According to different sources, the progenitor of this mastiff is a Tibetan dog which directly affected the phenotype of the Persian Mastiff used in battle by King Porus against Alexander The Great.

It was Alexander The Great who admired the strength of these dogs and brought them to his kingdom in Greece to a region of Epirus called “Molossia” (from which the term Molossus used by the Romans to describe this dog, freely translated in English a Molossian), and thereafter, were bred for many years.

The Roman Emperor Paolo Emilio, at his triumphal return to Rome after a military campaign in Greece, brought a hundred of these dogs back as war booty. Based on reports of Quinto Aurelio Simmaco, the Romans widely employed these dogs for their fighting games at the Colosseum (“giochi circensis”).



# Historical Background Breed History



At the time of Julius Caesar, the original Greek strain was supposedly bred with the mastiffs encountered during the military campaign in Britannia (the actual Great Britain), most likely brought there by the Phoenicians.

The status of this breed following the decline of the Roman empire is less clear but the breed fortunately survived the Medieval Ages as witnessed by several authors who cite this dog in their works (see the Molossian in the literature).



During this age Molossian dogs were used for guarding castles and for wild boar hunting. A crucial step for the selection of the present day phenotype of the N.M. was the contribution of the Spanish “Perro de Presa” that was bred with the ancient Italian mastiff at the time of the Spanish domination in southern Italy; (the so called “Kingdom of the two Sicilys”) around the middle of the XV century (1450 A.D.)

# Historical Background Breed History



This dog became in vogue for kings as well as for their servants in the region ruled by the royal families of Aragona and later Borboni. This was so evident that the mastiff became a common theme in both sculptures and paintings present throughout the southern Italian peninsula.

In the centuries that followed the end of the Spanish kingdom, in Italy the breed survived in the countryside around Naples thanks to the devotion of individuals who loved the strength, the character, and the loyalty of this dog.

The Italian nickname used to describe these N.M. owners (“Mastinari”) is still used by the Italian breeders in southern Italy. However, the contribution of these people would have been unrecognized without the work of another passionate writer, Piero Scanziani, who, following World War II, collected some subjects from the Neapolitan countryside and bred them at the zoo in Rome. This led to the official recognition of this ancient dog in Italy in 1949 by the Italian Kennel Club (ENCI).



# The Molossian Dog In Literature

*From the first chapter of Daniel Chavarria's novel El Ojo Dindimenio:*

*“A young slave was worth 200 dracme” while “a well trained Molossian dog was worth 500.” “Well trained was a Molossian who would bite at the buttocks, and would conceive the slave fugitive alive and without bone fractures.”*

*“With a single bite they could break off a man's wrist.” “They were bigger and much more massive than wolves”, and “wolves living in pack in the same land, would always avoid the lonely Molossian.”*







# The Rediscovery (In 1946)



**...by famous literary author Piero Scanziani, responsible for the formulation of the first breed standard.**





# Purpose or Function

- **The Romans widely employed the breed for their fighting games at the Coliseum. Following the decline of the Roman Empire, the dogs fortunately survived the Medieval Ages and during this age Mollossian dogs were used for guarding castles and for wild boar hunting.**
- **This dog became in vogue for kings and their servants for protection.**
- **“It is such a loyal and resolute guardian that it will not go far from home even if the territory is not enclosed. It is a true armed guard, always aware and ready, and it will not allow any stranger to violate the boundaries of its territories.”**





# Purpose or Function

- **The present day Neapolitan Mastiff has maintained his original purpose as a guardian and protector of his home and companion to his family.**
- **"It should be remembered that the Neapolitan Mastiff shows its true personality when it is defending the living space of its friends, especially at night when it is silent, tense, and as vigilant as a spider waiting in the shadows for the insect which sooner or later will become entangled in its web."**



# History Of The Neapolitan Mastiff In The United States



- The Neapolitan Mastiff has been documented in the United States since the early 1970's when ads for an "Italian Bulldog" appeared in the New York papers.
- The NMCA (Neapolitan Mastiff Club of America) was founded in 1973 by Michael Sottile Sr., Jane and Carmine Pampalone. This was the first United States registry established for the breed at this time. The NMCA acted as the focal point for information on the breed, distributed a newsletter, and hosted a few select large-scale rare-breed shows.
- During the early 1990's, two clubs formed, one being the ANMA (American Neapolitan Mastiff Association), and the other was the USNMC (United States Neapolitan Mastiff Club). In 1991 the nucleus of the founding members of the USNMC were located in the Northeast. The USNMC incorporated in this year and with use of computerization focused on the need to procure a new and viable registry. They worked to improve on education, and promotion of the breed by hosting local rare-breed shows. Shortly thereafter Michael Sottile retired and relocated from the Northeast and the USNMC would become the main registry for the Neapolitan Mastiff.
- It is safe to say that all dogs in the United States today are descendants of dogs obtained from nearly all of the most renowned breeders in Italy. Those Americans serious about breeding then went on to develop their own kennel names, which should appear on the progeny of dogs originating from a successful American breeding kennel.



# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type



- **Breed Character:**
- **Massive, Powerful, Heavy Boned, Awe-Inspiring Bestial Appearance, Formidable Looks, Covered In Thick Loose Skin.**







# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

- **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.**





# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

## Imposing Size:

Like that of a Greek Temple... Huge columns for legs that support all of the architecture of the body, which is very massive, harmonious, muscular, and powerful in its construction.





# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

## Attitude:

Steady and loyal to his owner, “not aggressive or apt to bite without reason.”

A true guardian of his property and family entrusted to him.

“Calm yet wary....in the show ring he is majestic and powerful, but not showy.”







# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

## ■ Movement:

- Due to his massive structure, the characteristic gait of the Neapolitan Mastiff is not flashy, but rather rolling and lumbering.
- The strides are long and elastic, at the same time powerful....covering the ground like those of a lion.



•The movement is fluid and flat, and the bones of articulating joints may be seen to undulate beneath the thick skin.





# The Gait Of The Neapolitan





# The Gait Of The Neapolitan Continued...

While trotting is the preferred gait...



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







# 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.



# General Appearance Commentary

The (Italian) standard defines the NM as a “Heavy Brachiomorph”. By the term ”Brachiomorph”, we mean a dog with highly accentuated diameters, in other words the width of the head, the width and perimeter of the chest, and the thickness of the bone. As a consequence a good NM will demonstrate massiveness, with an importance in weight, strength, and musculature. Which supports an impressive, and imposing head.

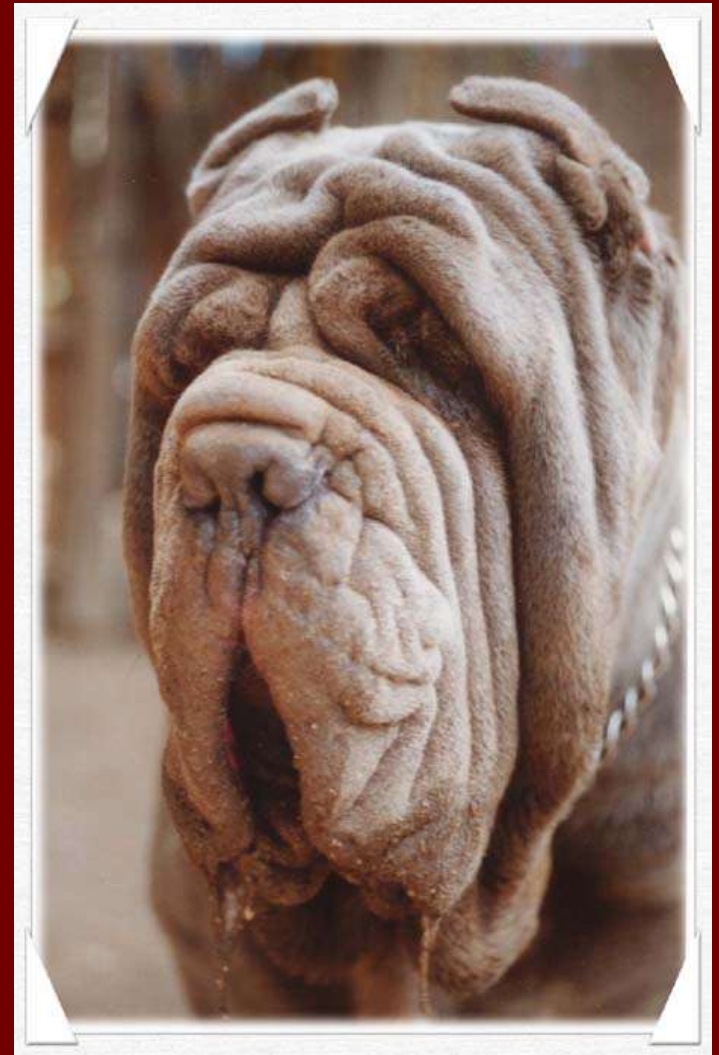






# General Appearance Commentary

- A very important breed feature is the skin, which must not be too tightly adhering to the subcutaneous tissues, but be loose, and mobile as to form several folds and delineated wrinkles mainly represented in the head, neck and dewlap.
- As the NM was a breed used as a war dog, the loose thick skin served the specific function of protecting the vital arteries of the neck, as well as creating the classical intimidating formidable look to ward off any potential enemy.
- We have to be careful though...skin too loose, exhibiting an overload of wrinkles and folds covering the body or the legs, has absolutely no function and should not be rewarded. This condition referred to as "Hyper-Typical" in fact is often combined with relaxed ligaments, weak joints and a weakened lymphatic system.





# 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.***







***“Length of body is 10% - 15% greater than height”***



**Body that is rectangular in shape**



**Body almost squared in shape**

- **Current view of body length represents proportions that are 15% greater than the dogs height when measured from the withers to the ground.**
- **A specimen appearing squared in profile (overall body length less than 10% greater than the total height), and should be faulted over a dog that is longer when measured from the point of the shoulder to the furthest point of the buttock.**





# Size And Proportion Commentary

- We are looking for a dog that stands rectangular in profile, as the NM is a dog with a low center of gravity and with withers not pronounced or “*rampart*”, i.e. higher than the topline.
- The length of the body should lean towards 15% greater than the height to create a rectangular outline.





# Breed Character

Is the sum of all those mental and physical attributes that clearly define not only what the breed should look like but how it should conduct itself....







# 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.





# Head Commentary

The head is unique to the breed and there is none like it among all other canines. It is difficult however, to describe it and just as difficult to acquire the correct concept of it. It is massive and brachycephalic, meaning that the bone structure is very heavy, the width of the cranium as measured between the cheekbones (zygomatic arches), and is greater than half the total length of the head when measured from the point of the nose to end point of the occipital bone.

The head is covered by loose skin which forms well delineated wrinkles and folds. If these wrinkles and folds should be missing, the head would not be that of a mastino. If on the other hand, the skin were too copious, to the point of excess, then the wrinkles and folds would be improperly formed and confused in their design, and therefore would not make a correct head type.

In addition this overly excessive loose skin is an indication that the bone structure of the entire head and the muscles which cover it are not as strong as they should be in a dog which is bred to be able to use its jaws for biting. Also, the excessively loose skin is often a sign of a lymphatic problem that is associated with a generalized constitutional weakness.



# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

- **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.**





# Head: Expression and Eyes

- **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.







# Head Commentary (Continued)

To fully understand the NM, before even reading the breed standard, One needs to sit down calmly in front of it and patiently observe the rippling movements of its body while listening to its guttural rumblings.

One must take the time to scrutinize the expressions created by the wrinkles and folds of the skin on its head, in-order to notice the fasciculation which alternately Intensifies or softens the features of the mask designed on its face, or which ruffle the great coat which drapes its body.

Only then can someone understand the message it is trying to convey when it widens the thick eyelids to expose its eyes ( like crevices in a mountain), revealing an expression of joy and intelligence...and thereby learn the secrets hiding behind its enigmatic expression which is both serious and smiling at the same time.





# Eye Colors

**Eye Color:** Shades of amber or brown, in accordance with coat color. Pigmentation of the eye rims same as coat color.





# Eyes Commentary

In all of the design of the wrinkles on the head you have the eyes which are considered the windows to the soul of the NM. They must be expressive and show the ability of the dog. They should never be too light. If they are too light as in (sky blue) then you are looking at a severe fault, and incomplete pigmentation of the eye rims is to be severely faulted as well.

The NM has deep-set sunken eyes that are hidden especially when the dog is resting . It can be very challenging to read or determine the disposition of the NM by looking into what you may believe to be his eyes. Due to the loose heavy thick skin it is common for the lower haw to be exposed and slightly red in color. The opening may be more prominent than what you are typically accustomed to in other breeds, and the shape of the eye appears oval and is covered by folds of skin.

The pigmentation of the eye rims should be in relationship to coat color, i.e. the Blue or Grey dog has grey rims, black dog has black rims, and the recessives mahogany colored dogs have brown rims, and the tawny have Isabelle rims. The iris is slightly lighter or the same as the coat color on all four colors.

Most important is the eye placement in relationship to the skull. The eyes should be wide set on the skull. They should be positioned under prominent frontal bones which are important for muscle and skin support to prevent the eyes giving the appearance in expression of being closed or shut down. We do not want to see cross-eyed dogs this is a serious fault.

Anatomically you will observe those specimens that clearly have ectropion of the lower lids, and you may experience some dogs that may display slight evidence of entropion; this is customary in the breed. Please do not penalized or excuse these dogs. Unless you can visibly see ulceration on the eyes, or the eyes appear to be closed shut due to infection or otherwise they should be considered in your placements. Furthermore, it is not advised to start peeling back the skin and examining the eyes, it is our experience that the NM will not tolerate much of this type of inspection. One last condition of the NM as seen in many other breeds is a condition known as "Cherry Eye". This condition is a result of a prolapsing of the third eyelid due to the very loose connective tissue surrounding the head, and it will appear to look like a small cherry protruding from the eye. Please do not penalize a dog for this condition as it may have very well popped up on the way to the show! Stress can bring these on suddenly, and while they are usually more prevalent during the teething stages of the NM; the cherry eye condition can arise later in life.





# 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 Commentary

The ear is usually cropped for health reasons and is small in relation to the head. The ear should be cropped to an equilateral triangular in shape, and placed well above the zygomatic arches (cheek bones).

The standard does not specify how long the crop should be, and as you judge the breed you will see a variance in length and styles of cropping.

The important factor here is the set of the ear in relation to the head. You should not penalize the dog if the ear falls or droops off to one side of the head due to weak cartilage.

Also, some ears may be cropped so small as to only give a slight impression of an ear.



In either case the ideal specimen will have a cropped or natural ear that is placed correctly on the head and acts a frame for the head in completing the expression.





# Ears Commentary (Continued)

In the case of the natural-eared dog, the shape of the ear is triangular, medium in size, and the insertion of the ear is set well above the horizontal aspect of the corner of the eye. When viewed from the front we do not want to see an ear that is inserted into the skull below this point. This is to be considered a hound-type ear.

Furthermore, the total length should not exceed or go beyond the margin of the throat. The ear when at attention, should lie close to the skull and frame the head. Pay considerable attention if the ear is rosed, curled, or folded like a hound, as these types of ears, are not desirable for the mastino.



*It should be noted that with the banning of cropping in many European countries today more and more NM are being exhibited with natural ears so consequently we must pay particular attention to the set and shape of these natural ears in our selection to continue to improve and maintain the desired expression of the NM.*





# Head: Skull and Stop

- **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.
- **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.





# Head Commentary

- **The head of the NM is characterized as a massive Brachycephalic head. When examining the head of the NM is critical to evaluate the proportions of skull to muzzle. The skull must be equal to two-thirds of the total length of the head, and its width as measured between the cheekbones is approximately the same as its length.**
- **When viewed from the front the muzzle is one cube representing 1/3rd of the total length of the head. The width of the muzzle should be equal to its length, and the skull is a separate cube representing 2/3rds of the total length of the head.**







# Head Commentary (Continued)

The cranium is broad and flat between the ears, slightly convex in the anterior portion, and should never tend towards or appear spherical. Any rounding of the cranium which extends towards the posterior part of the cranium should be penalized. If this spherical condition were present the head would take on the impression of appearing round.

The cranio-facial axes when viewed frontally or laterally are in perfect parallelism, and the head is massive in its diameters. The skull is well muscled, and covered in thick heavy loose folds of skin that are well delineated and organized wrinkles. The skin should never be thin or excessive.

The stop should be well defined, and forming a 90-degree right angle. This is extremely important as the stop will contribute to the positioning of the anterior portion of the frontal bones which create the brow. A dog lacking in stop or with insufficient stop will tend to express undesirable divergence of the head planes. You must look carefully to the folds and wrinkles that are present in this area of the head to properly determine if the stop is sufficient for the skull.







# Head: Nose and Muzzle

- **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.
- **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.





# Head Commentary (Continued)

- **The top of the nose is a continuation of the line of the bridge of the muzzle. As seen in profile, it shall extend beyond the anterior vertical plane of the lips; rather the anterior face of the nose must be in the same vertical plane as the anterior face of the muzzle.**
- **The nose must be large, moist, with well open nostrils. The color must be consistent with the coat color: black in the black coat, brown in the mahogany coat, and dark in all the other coat colors.**
- **The bridge of the nose is straight. Its width is measured at the midpoint of the muzzle, must equal about 20% of the total length of the head and about 50% of the length of the muzzle.**

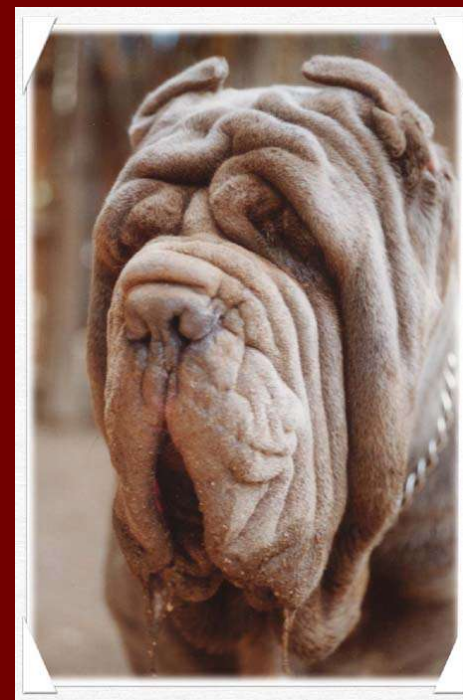






# Head Commentary (Continued)

- **When examining the muzzle it is imperative that the quintessential heavy folds of skin are present over the bridge of the muzzle. There should be a minimum of three distinct rope-like folds covering the muzzle, starting just behind the nose, and extending back to the bridge of the muzzle at the point of insertion of the stop.**
- **Upon examination one should lightly touch or lift these folds to feel for density and thickness. The folds of skin will not replace proper bone structure and this will be evident when peering down on top of the muzzle as there will be an indication of narrowness of the bone structure underneath the folds of skin.**
- **These distinctive heavy folds of skin are characteristic of a correct head and the expression of the NM. They are essential in the expression which creates the "squared" appearance.**







# Head: Lips and Bite

- 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.





# Head Commentary (Continued)

“...more extensive wrinkling and pendulous lips which blend into an ample dewlap...”

- **Ample dewlap has to be fully divided and symmetrical. Each side of the dewlap has to extend below the corner of the lip and must not drape below the level of the prosternum.**
- **An undivided dewlap is a serious fault and a dewlap extending below the lower 2/3rds of the neck is not ideal.**



**Correct dewlap and lips**





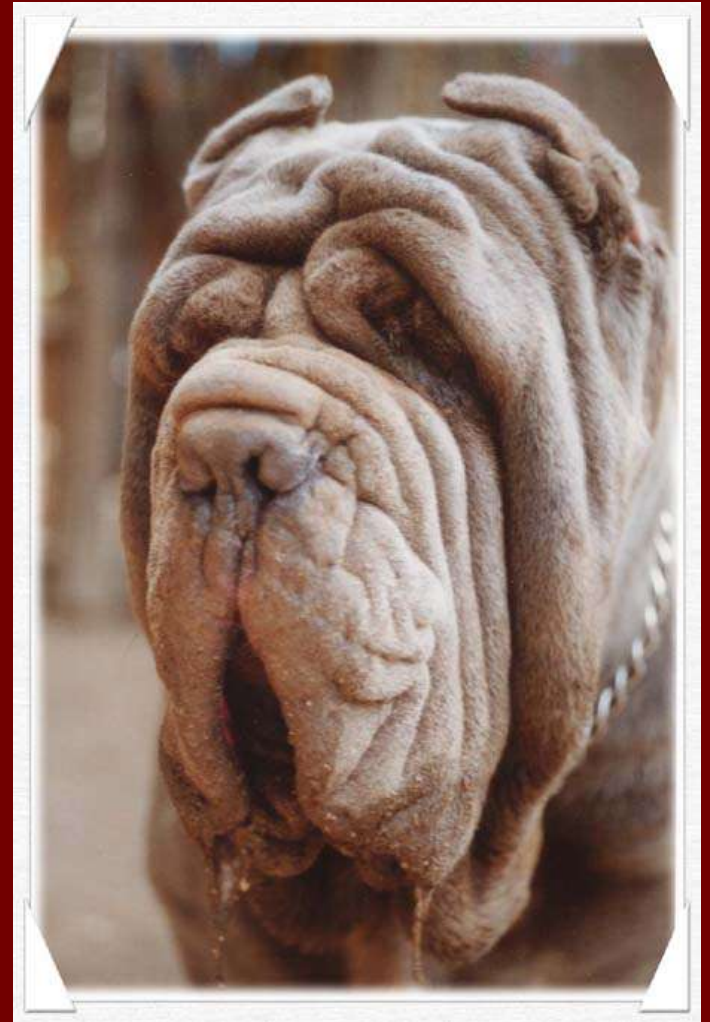
# Lips and Bite Commentary (Continued)

- **Heavy, thick and abundant. The upper lips, viewed from the front, create at their point of junction and (upside-down V) a Lilly-Flower like formation.**
- **The lower lateral border of the muzzle is formed by the upper lips. The lowest part of the lower border is the labial commissure, with its visible mucosa, and is situated in line with the vertical drop from the external angle of the eye.**
- **We do not want to see a U shaped lip line as this is an indication that there may be a prominent undershot bite. A slight prognathic i.e. the lower jaw protrudes in front of the upper jaw (undershot) is acceptable, and all brachycephalic breeds tend to be prognathic.**
- **Whereas the standard call for a level bite or scissors bite, prognathism is not heavily penalized unless it is excessive or distorts the profile of the face. Therefore, giving the impression of a Bulldog or Bullmastiff.**
- **Enognathism or overshot jaw is written as a serious fault into the standard. However, the lower jaw of the NM keeps growing throughout their life. Many puppies at 6 months will have perfect scissors bites and by the time they reach one and half years to two years the bite has shifted and will be slightly undershot. On the other hand those puppies with a slightly overshot jaw, as long as it is not a pointed deformed upper jaw, usually end up with a perfect scissors bite by the time they reach two years of age.**
- **When evaluating the bite we recommend that you allow the handler to present the bite and request to see the sides of the jaws to visibly see if the existing premolars are present. In many short nosed breeds there is often insufficient room for 3 premolars present in the lower jaw and for this reason we are concerned if there are two or more missing teeth. Pay particular attention to missing molars in both the upper and lower jaws.**





# Head Evolution (1960-1990)



# Male Heads (1990-Present)





# Female Heads (1990-Present)







## Age Comparison (6 vs. 12 Months Female)



Note the rounded shape of the back skull in this young subject.



...and the flat-shaped skull of the same subject six months later.

# 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 Commentary



- The neck of the NM is of extreme importance. The short well muscled neck is a contributing factor to the power of the jaws which are used for biting and holding. The length is approximately 28% of the height at the withers. The circumference is approximately equal to eight-tenths the height at the withers.
- The neck must be strong to support the massive head of the NM.
- The dewlap must be well divided into two. You do not want to see an apron like dewlap as seen in the English Mastiff.
- Absence of a divided dewlap is DQ.





# Neck Commentary (Continued)



- In the photo you will see an apron like dewlap that is “NOT” correct in the NM. The dewlap must be well divided, voluminous and should extend from lower jaw to the lower neck.



# 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.



# Topline and Underline Commentary

When evaluating the topline of the NM we want to see as level of a back as possible with no indication a roaching or a sloping topline. Many NM will stand slightly higher in the rear than in the front with a slight dip behind the shoulders, and a horizontal line from the mid point of the back extending to the highest point of the croup that may be slightly elevated.



*The horizontal Underline is created by the loose skin that hangs from under the trunk of the body and tuckup creating a skirt like effect.*





# Topline Commentary (Continued)



The following photos are of dogs that represent acceptable toplines in the breed.



❖ The above photo represents typical old style NM topline.



- We do not want to see an inverted topline in motion or one that is running down hill. This type of topline is usually a result of a dog with a soft back, insufficient rear angulation (straight stifled), a steep croup, and high tail set.



# Topline Commentary (Continued)



Comparison of the Neapolitan Mastiff, English Mastiff, and Great Dane topline.





# 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  $\frac{1}{3}$ . 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  $\frac{2}{3}$  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  $\frac{1}{3}$  the length from point of insertion of the tail to the hock - joint.







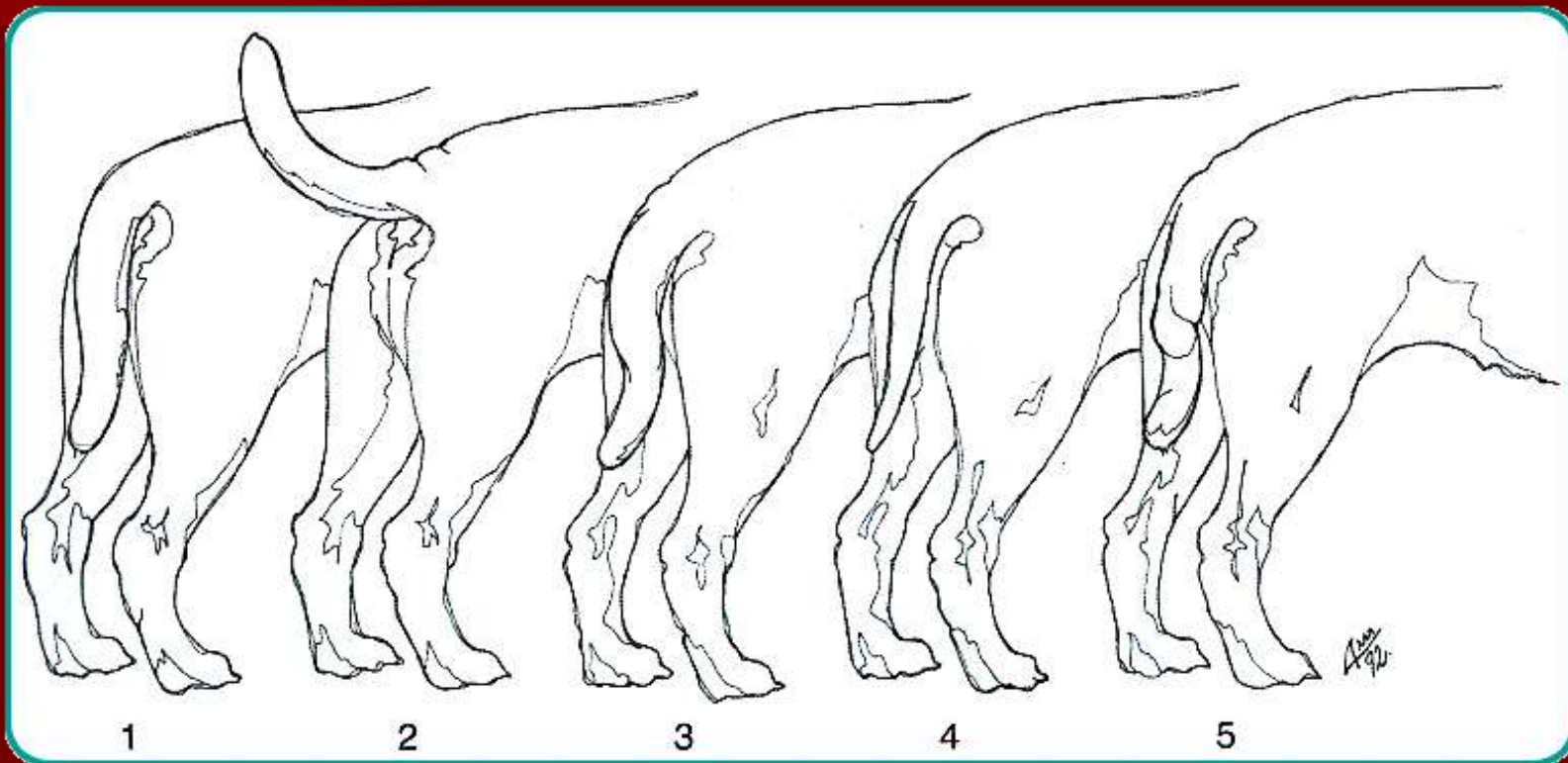
# Tail Commentary

- **When assessing the tail of the NM it must be evaluated both in the standing and moving position.**
- **The tail is set slightly off of the back, and is not a direct extension of the spinal vertebrae. The shape of the tail is saber like with a slight "S" like curve to the tail. The position at rest is held low and relaxed never tucked.**
- **In motion, the tail will be carried slightly higher than the horizontal aspect of the topline, and should never be carried straight up like a flag pole, or curled over the back like that of a hound.**
- **The length of the tail is typically measured by checking to see if the tail will at least extend to or meet the point of articulation of the hock joint. This measurement is more than sufficient length.**
- **More importantly, in the case of a short tail the tail should be long enough to protect the reproductive organs. If the tail is less than 1/3 in total length from the point of insertion to the articulating point of the hock this would be considered a DQ.**
- **There are several instances where a NM tail may appear short due to a man made error in docking, or because the tail was docked to hide a defect known as a kink. If a kink appears anywhere on the tail you can determine this by simply running your fingers down the vertebrae of the tail and feeling for these hard bony like calcifications. Many of them are present at the base of the tail. It is impossible to dock this portion of the tail to hide the defect so it is up to you to find it.**
- **There is nothing in NM standard which speaks to how long the tail can be. Typically, as long as the tail is not carried incorrectly or curled over the back it is acceptable to place this dog accordingly. There are some NM which have never had their tails docked due to its natural growth, and they should not be penalized if presented for examination.**



# Tail Faults

**\*Note: All tail lengths in diagrams 1-5 are above the point of the hock.**



**1. Set high**

**2. Carried  
above the  
point of  
insertion**

**3. Too Curvy**

**4. Too thin**

**5. Kinked tail  
(severe fault)**



# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

## Imposing Size:

Like that of a Greek Temple... Huge columns for legs that support all of the architecture of the body, which is very massive, harmonious, muscular, and powerful in its construction.







# 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  $1/3$  the height of the dog.
- **Elbows:** Covered with abundant and loose skin; held parallel to the ribcage, neither tied in nor loose.





# Forequarters Commentary



- The NM is a Heavy built, muscular, powerful, well pronounced fronted dog.
- The upper arm should be almost  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  of the total height of the dog with long sloping shoulders. This enables them to move with long elastic strides like that of a lion.
- The elbows are covered with abundant loose skin; held parallel to the ribcage, but not tied in as to obstruct the movement, or loose giving the appearance the dog is weak, and inefficient in his movement.
- The forelegs are thick like Greek columns, heavy boned and stand well apart. There should be no curvature or bend of the forearm.





# 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.





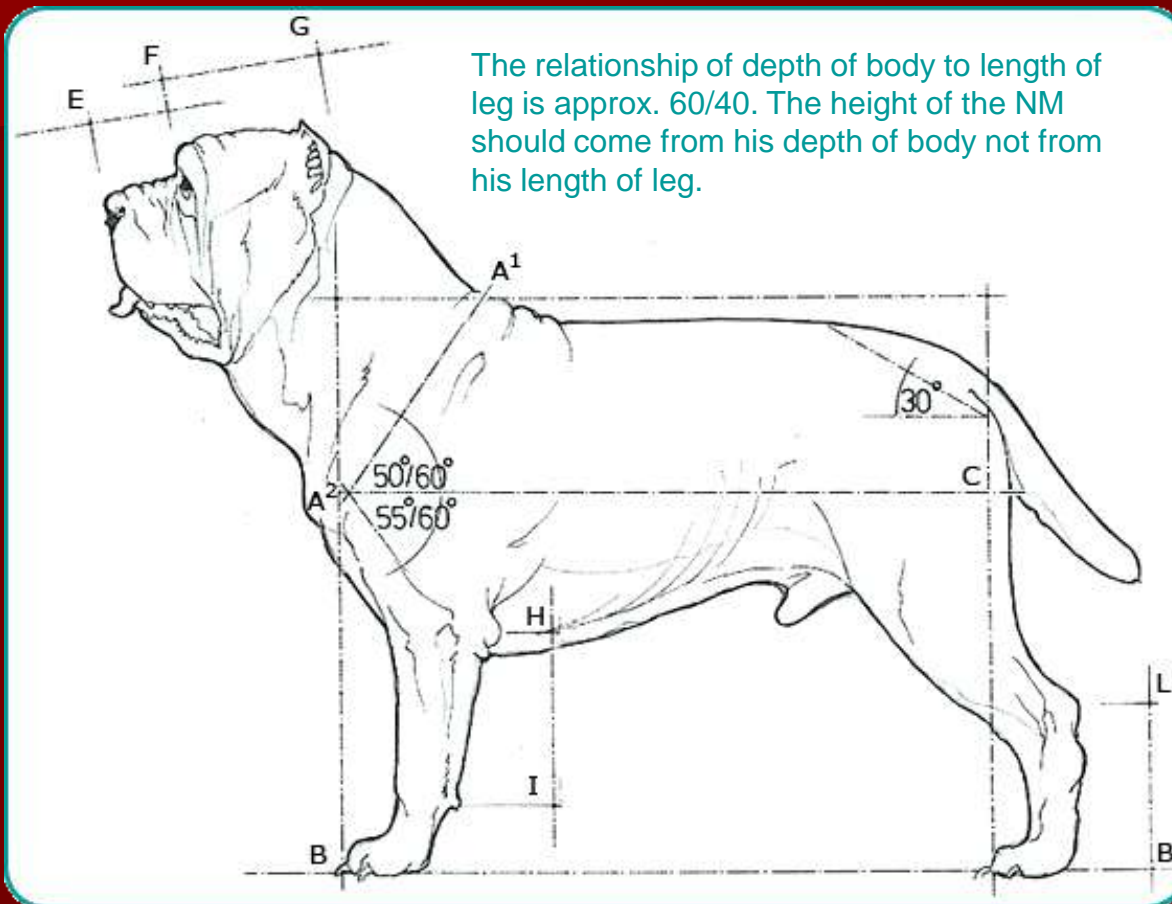


# Hindquarters

- **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 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the total height at the withers.**
- **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.



# 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



# 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





# 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)



While  
trotting is  
the preferred  
gait...



Pacing in the  
show ring is  
“NOT” to be  
penalized....







# The Gait Of The Neapolitan

## ■ Movement:

- Due to his massive structure, the characteristic gait of the Neapolitan Mastiff is not flashy, but rather rolling and lumbering.
- The strides are long and elastic, at the same time powerful....covering the ground like those of a lion.



•The movement is fluid and flat, and the bones of articulating joints may be seen to undulate beneath the thick skin.



# An In-Depth Look At The 5 Essential Elements Of Breed Type

## Attitude:

Steady and loyal to his owner, “not aggressive or apt to bite without reason.”

A true guardian of his property and family entrusted to him.

“Calm yet wary....in the show ring he is majestic and powerful, but not showy.”







# Temperament

## 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.





# 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**



**Correct**



**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 as compared to a dog with both type and “presence”.



**Incorrect**



**Correct**



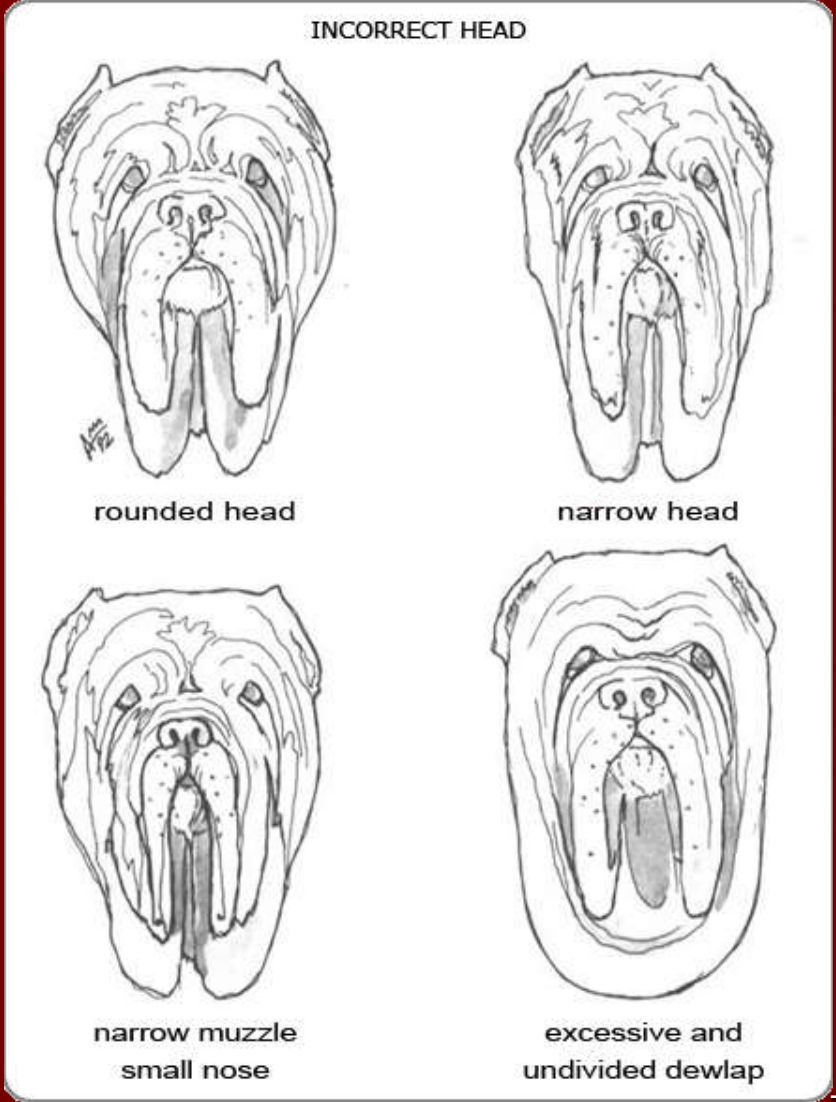
**Incorrect**





# Head Faults (Diagram)

Ideal Head Type

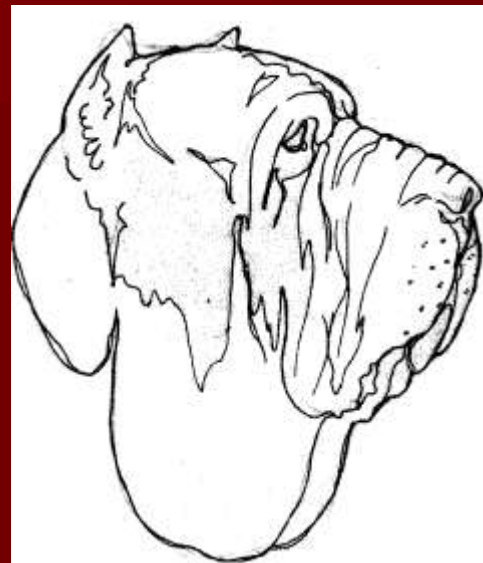




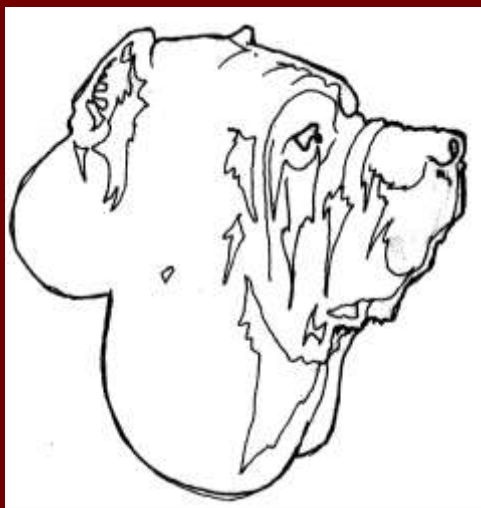
# Head Faults Diagram



Correct  
Muzzle



Diverging  
Planes



Muzzle  
Narrow,  
Lips Short



Converging  
Planes





# 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 faults 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



Proper round feet



Acceptable turning out of feet

Weak Pasterns

Classical NM Stance 85



# Faults Summary

## 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.

### ■ 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





# Disqualification Summary

## ***Disqualifications:***

*Absence of wrinkles and folds*

*Absence of dewlap*

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

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

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

**Approved: January 13, 2004**

**Effective: May 1, 2004**



# Examining and Judging The Neapolitan Mastiff

- **Examining the NM:** When first approaching the NM is it important to remember this breed is a guard dog of estate and family. One should be considerate and not to come up from behind or from the side in your initial approach. The peripheral sight of the NM is limited due to the loose folds of skin surrounding the head. The best approach is to come from the front of the dog. Assuming the handler has experience in showing this breed they should have the head controlled, and positioned so that the dog can clearly see you approaching them. Many NM will stand with their heads down or looking towards the ground. This is not a sign of shyness, but a common stance for the dog while resting. They may even be considering looking for a place to lie down. It is even recommended that you greet the handler with a simple "How are you" to ease the mind of the new owner-handler, and the dog now recognizes you are not a threat.
- If the dog is trained for the ring you will have no problem examining him like any other breed as you check for muscle tone, topline, neck, and tail length.
- We recommend that you **DO NOT** try to examine the bite, but ask the handler to present the dentition from the front, and lateral aspects of the mouth. To inspect the bite for overshot, undershot, and level occlusions, and inspect to see if there are any missing teeth. Typically the premolars are most commonly missing teeth. P1, P2, P3's the first three small teeth sitting just behind the upper and lower canines
- In your approach to examine the head and body you can check the face or muzzle wrinkle by lightly lifting and feeling for density and thickness. As you move to the main body **DO NOT** start by lifting the folds of skin over the shoulders, and topline and stretching the skin. This method is not necessary to evaluate loose skin. When examining the tail **DO NOT** pump the tail in any fashion. Simply check the tail for kinks, by running your fingers down the tail from the base to the tip. Also, check to see if the tail length is sufficient to extend to the reproductive organs, and beyond to the point of the hock.
- When the dog is stacked in the ring you **DO NOT** want to see handlers pulling up on the collar to hide the dewlap, and to clean up the neckline. The dewlap is a characteristic trait of the breed and should never be hidden or tucked away. Also, when gaiting the NM we want to see the dog gaiting of his own volition, and the handler should not be stringing the dog up, pulling tight on the lead therefore, distorting the dewlap.





# Examining and Judging The Neapolitan Mastiff (Continued)

- **Assessing Movement:** When individually gaiting the dog you should then evaluate the loose connective tissue as the skin will move from one side of the body towards the other. You will see the bones of articulation begin to undulate (move) beneath the skin as the dog is trotting. We *DO NOT* want to see a tight skinned dog moving like Doberman or Bullmastiff.
- There are three basic gaits of the NM the walk, trot, and pace. We prefer to see the dogs judged at the trot, but this is not a customary trot as you may have experience in other working, sporting, or even herding breeds. This breed is not a patrolling dog, and when they are trotting they are moving at a much slower speed. The NM is capable of short quick burst of energy much like that of a sprinter. They simply get the job done and return to their resting place.
- You will find some specimens that can move quicker than others due to a lack of massiveness or conformational differences. We are not looking for a dog that races around the ring, absent of the "characteristic lion-like motion", but one that can do the job, and will move efficiently across the ring at his desired gait. If the dog begins to pace please do not penalize the dog as this may be a state of mental immaturity in some dogs, or laziness in others. Simply try to re-gait the dog and if again, the dog does not want to trot place him accordingly. If he is the best example of type and soundness on the day you would be expected to reward him with high honors.
- The movement of the NM is unlike that of any other dog, and in the group ring you will experience a very capable dog that can compete with all other working breeds. As long as you evaluate him based on his standard, and not that of any other working breed you will find that the NM has earned his place in the world of the AKC.

# Breed Comparison



Cane Corso (Italy)



English Mastiff (UK)



Dogue de Bordeaux (France)



Mastino Napoletano (Italy)



Bull Mastiff (UK)



# Presenter: USNMC President Sharon M. Costello



AKC approved breeder judge since 2006.

Breeder/Exhibitor of Neapolitan Mastiffs since 1989.

Founding Member of the USNMC 1991.

Past President and co-founder of the Garden State Neapolitan Mastiff Club (GSNMC).

Owner of the 1997 USNMC National Specialty Winner!  
Breeder and exhibitor of Bulldogs, and French Bulldogs for 18 years.

Affiliated memberships include: BCA, BCNJ, Boardwalk K.C. (board member), French Bulldog Club of America.

Professionally: Sole proprietor of a wholesale Seafood Company "The Fish Lady", supplying the greater NY area with fresh, frozen, and live Seafood.



# Presenter: Jim Deppen

- B.A., B.S. Agriculture Animal Science- Reproductive Physiology.
- AKC approved breeder Judge 2006 for Neapolitans, Mastiffs, Danes, GSP, CSP, Havanese, Bulldogs, Bichons, Chows, Dalmatians, Poodles, Newfoundlands, Juniors.
- Actively breeding and exhibiting AKC purebred dogs both Nationally and Internationally for over 30 years. First introduction to the Neapolitan Mastiff in 1980.
- Accomplishments in the breed include, Top Producing Sires in the breed, Top producing ROM Dams, National Specialty BOB Winner Multiple times, Working Group 1<sup>st</sup>, and multiple placements, Top honors at Westminster KC and Eukanuba Championships.
- Professionally: Professor of Equine Studies to include stable management, business, reproduction, nutrition, and anatomy of the horse.





# *...The End*





# Authors:

**Graphic & Layout of “The AKC Breed Standard for the Neapolitan Mastiff” CD presentation made by gr@z! at “art-damage.net design” and Jim Deppen.**

**Text and Photos created and contributed by the USNMC judges education committee and collaboration with the A.S.P.N.M. education committee.**

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