

## BREED PROFILE

# What's in a Head??

By Yvette Girling  
& Deborah Bloom

total length of head from occiput to nose leather.

Topline - Has been in debate over recent months on a world wide scale, the topline should be as straight as possible in a concave lined dog with a slight dip behind the well marked withers the back then slopes down to the very slightly arched loin.

This is a difficult question as so many points could be dedicated to the head alone. I have chosen these 5 points as the first 4 defines the basis of correct head aspects.

VI have made the topline as my 5th point for the fact that the topline is a little different and harder to grasp then the more general requirements of the overall body type.

A.5. I think basic knowledge or confidence with the head type is probably the biggest down fall. Apart from its specific requirements a Dogue's general body outline could be considered generic with many other molosser types. So we tend to find when the decision is not an easy one, the judge will choose a dog that may lack head type but presents well in the 'generic molosser body type' to avoid the challenge or doubt that may arise with awarding the dog that displays head type. Both 'type' and 'construction' must be there. As mentioned in the answers to the previous question the breed hallmarks should be present as this is what makes the dog a Dogue De Bordeaux!

I have heard many a judge comment that they prefer not too much undershot. The undershot and repandous chin mark are important breed hallmarks this is one distinguishing feature that sets the Dogue apart from any other molossers.

A quote from a leading breed Specialist Bas Bosch ( Netherlands) who gave a detailed breed lecture in Melbourne this year, the catch cry for the night was 'No Chin, No Win!!!!'

A.6. After enjoying a very exciting and educational trip visiting kennels across Europe last year there were many dogs that left a great impression on me for different reasons.

The dog that really left a mark for his tremendous head type was Int Ch. Rackham Kwan De La Seigneurie Des Chartreux in France. He oozed masculinity with his truly correct trapezium head shape as well as his great strength of muzzle and undeniable chin mark. Although, no longer in his prime at a healthy age of 7, I feel very privileged to have seen Rackham as he has given me a greater appreciation and understanding of the fundamentals of head type and inspiration to achieve this with in my own breeding.

I should also make mention of another dog that I saw tucked away in the eastern European country of Slovakia. From my own experience Enzo z vlckovskeho mylna would be the closest dog to the overall package. He excels in body type and his head clearly displays all of the required hallmarks without being overdone.

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When it comes to discussing the Dogue de Bordeaux and 'breed type', there is quite a lot in the head! Nearly two thirds of the breed standard is dedicated to the finer points of the head. However, despite so much of the standard being dedicated to it, people still seem to think that all that is required is for it to be large and wrinkled! To be able to differentiate a Dogue's breed type from that of any other Molosser seen in the Utility Group, more attention needs to be given to understanding what makes a strong head in our breed.

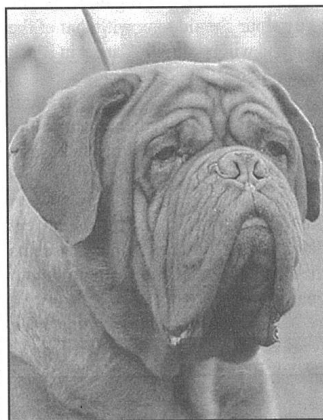
The standard's section on the head and skull commences with the word 'voluminous', so no guessing where the idea that the head is large comes from, but how large is ideal? In the section under 'General Appearance', we are told the perimeter of the skull in males corresponds, more or less to the height at the withers. A dog carrying a head whose perimeter is a lot greater than the height at the withers is described in many texts and articles as a 'monstrosity' to be avoided.

Now we can discuss the wrinkle. The forehead has a distinct symmetrical wrinkle pattern evident but these wrinkles while deep must remain mobile, if they are immobile, then the head appears too wet. The muzzle is described as only having moderately obvious folds. We do not want to see thick, deep, fleshy folds on the muzzle as seen on the Bulldog. There should not be fleshy wrinkle filling up under the eye (some chiselling under the eye is desirable). Also to be avoided is the deep wrinkle running from the outside of the eye down the cheek and to the flew. This is a characteristic of the Neapolitan Mastiff and if present gives the Dogue a very sombre look. The cheeks should be relatively clean. There is movement towards a somewhat lesser wrinkled, cleaner head at this time to avoid the comparison with the Mastino.

The sum of the following characteristics (in no order of importance) is what determines the degree of breed type seen in any particular Dogue:

The skull is angular with a 'trapezoid' shape and this shape should be apparent both from above and in front of the Dogue (see diagram). Trapezoid means that two sides only are parallel. The back skull is broad and slightly convex from one side to the other (this forms the base or top of the trapezium) with the ears set on high at this level to accentuate the width (although higher set, rose ears on top of the head are undesirable). The cheeks are described as prominent but once the cheeks become overdeveloped this trapezoid shape is quickly lost and the skull becomes square from in front; characteristic of the Mastino, the Bullmastiff and the Mastiff. Cheeks should be prominent

but not so developed that the trapezoid shape is lost. The Breed Club in France is putting a lot of emphasis on the trap-



the base or top of the skull. The upper line of the muzzle in relation to the skull forms an obtuse angle upwards lending to the term 'closed head'. While many comparisons can be made to the other Mastiff breeds perhaps the breed which nearest resembles the Dogue in profile is the Boxer. The Munich Silhouette fits very well with that of the Dogue's profile except that in the Dogue the length of muzzle should be slightly shorter and the lower lip is deeper and rounded by the 'moderately' pendulous flews.

As with the Boxer, the nose is slightly higher set than the root of the muzzle and may also be upturned. Nostrils should be well opened and the colour of the nose leather will be pigmented according to the mask colour. The stop is very pronounced, brows are well developed and the frontal groove is deep, diminishing towards the back of the skull. The forehead dominates the face but is never higher than it is wide. Again like the Boxer the lower jaw shows a distinct curve upwards (a repandous jaw) and the chin is well marked. The chin mark is a very important characteristic of type in the Dogue, and one that is quickly diminishing. Once again, the Breed Club in France is placing much emphasis on this area to ensure correct type is present.

