

SOUTH AFRICAN BOERBOEL

Official UKC Breed Standard

Effective January 1, 2016

Guardian Dog Group

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The goals and purposes of this breed standard include: to furnish guidelines for breeders who wish to maintain the quality of their breed and to improve it; to advance this breed to a state of similarity throughout the world; and to act as a guide for judges, while maintaining the characteristic diversity of this breed that makes the South African Boerboel a versatile farm dog and companion that is capable of a variety of working and performance endeavors.

Breeders and judges have the responsibility to avoid any conditions or exaggerations that are detrimental to the health, welfare, essence and soundness of this breed, and must take the responsibility to see that these are not perpetuated.

Boerboel Judging is focused on the sound working structure and temperament of the dog above all other criteria. The Boerboel should remain as close as possible to its ancestors, who were coveted as guardians against predators and intruders on the farms of South Africa.

It has the structure, temperament and heart to work tirelessly in the fields by day, and protect at night, while being trusted as a reliable and stable family companion.

Any departure from the following should be considered a fault, and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work. This breed standard should only be used as a compass, as the emphasis must remain on work and the physical capabilities to perform tasks. Function and work will protect type.

HISTORY

The origin of the South African Boerboel breed was not scientifically recorded, but evidence of the breed is interwoven with the history of the Afrikaner farmers. The evolution of the Boerboel was a result of geographic isolation, a harsh environment, and virtually no breeder interference, which resulted in a unique combination of physical and temperament characteristics in a dog internationally recognized as the South African Boerboel.

Historically the Boerboel developed as a utilitarian farm dog for the pioneers who settled in South Africa since the 17th Century. These European settlers were known as Afrikaners, or Boers, the Dutch word for Africans and farmers. The Boers continuously advanced deeper into the African continent. Dogs were very important to the daily lives of the settler as they not only protected livestock (essential to survival), but also

defended their families from predators and intruders. Additionally, it was not uncommon for early mastiff-types to be used for farm work, especially the work that required a large animal to be held in place, or in the hunting of big game.

Boerboels were often the first line of defense against predators and were valuable in guarding households and accompanying hunters and farmers. Boerboels fulfilled specific working functions through their strength, agility, stamina, reliability and courage. The dangers and harsh conditions of southern Africa allowed only the strongest and fittest to survive.

In the 1980's, a serious search started again for the original farm dog commonly known as the Boerboel, and the first Breed Society in South Africa formed to recognize the Boerboel as a breed. The Boerboel has been declared an indigenous landrace of South Africa and is protected under an Act of Parliament through the AIA (Animal Improvement Act).

The Boerboel was recognized by the United Kennel Club on January 1, 2016.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Boerboel is a large dog with strong bone structure and well developed musculature. The Boerboel has an impressive demeanour created by a combination of conformation, carriage, confidence and powerful, buoyant and unencumbered movement notwithstanding its size. The skin on the body is relatively loose-fitting and flexible, without major wrinkles.

The body is slightly longer than tall, being approximately 10 to 15 percent longer, measured from the breastbone to the point of the rump, than the height measured at the withers.

The Boerboel is a well-balanced dog with all body parts in proportion to each other, and with the sexes being clearly distinguishable in appearance. Its appearance exudes the immense power of which they are capable, and exhibits a fine balance between intimidation of most Mastiffs without compromising its athletic working abilities and stamina.

Disqualifications: Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchid.

CHARACTERISTICS

The protective character of the Boerboel is still evident today and much sought after, as is the calm, stable and confident composure of the breed. It remains the guarding breed of choice amongst current day farmers and is also very popular for the same reason in urban

communities. The origin and purpose of the Boerboel should be understood in order to preserve the unique identity and qualities of the breed as an indigenous South African mastiff. Type, conformation, functional efficiency and mentality are equally important in the evaluation of the Boerboel as a whole.

The Boerboel is a utilitarian farm dog suitable for a variety of working and performance tasks, along with companionship. Temperament, biddability and working structure must be emphasized over any shortcomings with respect to cosmetics/conformation. The Boerboel must be preserved as a working dog for which is was developed. This standard includes the full range of sizes needed for working, including Performance events. The Boerboel has the drive and working structure to become a dependable family guardian, and the courage to protect if called upon and work with his handler as a team. The real Boerboel has been preserved as a stable working dog. Boerboels have very strong protective instincts. They should be discerning and accepting of friendly strangers with proper introductions, although many will remain reserved and aloof.

Disqualifications: Viciousness or extreme shyness.

HEAD

The shape and size of the head is a distinctive and impressive feature of the Boerboel, and it is in proportion to the rest of the body. It is blocky, broad, deep, square and muscular. Moderate wrinkles are displayed on the head when attentive, but the head should be fairly free of wrinkles when relaxed.

The stop is well marked, definitive and well filled, but not steep.

The muzzle blends gradually and smoothly with the skull without areas of rapid indentation. The muzzle is broad and deep and tapers slightly to the front, on the same horizontal plane as the skull. The cheeks are slightly pronounced, with well-developed muscles.

The nasal bone measures approximately one-third the total length of the head. The length of the top of the skull, measured from the middle of the eye to the end of the occiput, is relative to the length of the nasal bone in a relation of 1:1 to a maximum of 1:1.5.

The lips do not extend below the lower jaw, and the bottom lip is moderately tight without excessive or open jowls.

SKULL - The skull is square, flat and muscular, with well-developed occipital muscles. The brows (superciliary ridges) are moderately raised. When the dog is alert, the upper level of the skull and the top edge of the ears appears as a level plane. The jaws are strong, deep and broad and taper slightly to the front.

NOSE - Nose leather is black with large, widely spaced nostrils.

TEETH – A full complement of strong, correctly spaced teeth meet in a scissors bite. A slightly undershot bite is

permissible, but not to the extent that it impairs health or working ability.

Working dogs may lose teeth honorably, so dogs should not be faulted for non-genetic teeth structure.

Disqualification: Wry mouth.

Serious Faults: An undershot or overshot bite of such extent that it impairs health or working ability.

EYES - Medium sized, forward facing, widely spaced, and with an intelligent expression. Not protruding, slanted or deep set.

Shades of brown preferred; darker than the lightest shade of the coat.

Eyelids are firm, well pigmented; not showing any structural deviations or haw (third eyelid).

Disqualifications: Entropionism. Ectropionism.

Fault: Eyes lighter than the lightest shade of the coat.

EARS – Set widely apart at the highest points at the sides of the skull, continuing the flat upper plane of the skull, and carried close to the head. V shaped; broad and flat at the base. Size is in proportion to the rest of the head. The tip of the ear should reach the corner of the mouth when gently pulled forward. Ear leather moderately thin.

Disqualifications: Prick ears. Semi-erect ears.

NECK

The neck gradually increases in width from the head to the shoulder, is of medium length, powerful and with an arched crest.

The head and neck does not show excessive skin. The scruff may be loose, the dewlap may be noticeable, but not excessive, and the skin is tight across the sternum.

FOREQUARTERS

The forequarters are well angulated, well-muscled, and matched with the angulation of the hindquarter for optimal mobility.

The scapula are well attached and spaced for optimal mobility. The upper and lower arms are of about equal length and well laid back.

The forechest is wide but not excessive, with a flat center profile, well pronounced and filled to ensure good volume, and placed deep between the forelegs, extending to at least the elbow.

FORELEGS - Of substantive girth, with well-developed musculature, good bone structure, and vertical to the ground in both front and side views. The elbows are stable, move parallel to the body, and do not limit the optimal volume of the torso or mobility. The elbow is the midpoint between the top of the withers and the ground. The pasterns must be in proportion to the rest of the leg, short, sturdy, and, when viewed from the side, form a slight angle in the pastern joint between the paw and the front leg. The pasterns must form a straight extension of the forearm when viewed from the front.

Removal of dewclaws is preferred but not mandatory.

Serious Fault: Weak pasterns.

BODY

The torso has adequate width and depth, with a level, straight-appearing topline and a defined muscular ridge above the withers. The ribcage is well sprung, with maximum volume. The back is broad, straight and well-muscled. The loin wide, with adequate depth, short (ideally one-third of total torso length), and flattened at the top. The abdomen should show a slight to moderate tuck up.

HINDQUARTERS

The hindquarters are well angulated, well-muscled and deep and broad (especially in bitches), when viewed from the rear. The croup is broad, of good length and set slightly sloping. The upper thighs are broad, deep and muscular, with substantial thickness when viewed in profile and from the rear.

The lower thighs must be correctly angulated, of equal length to the upper thigh, and display well developed musculature down to the hock. The hocks must be strong and sturdy, of medium length, in proportion to the rest of the leg, and parallel and in line with the rest of the leg when viewed from the rear.

The rear pasterns are relatively short, strong and of adequate girth. When viewed from the rear, they are parallel with each other. When viewed from the side, they are vertical. The front of the hind pastern is in line with the back of the haunch.

Removal of rear dewclaws is preferred but not mandatory.

Serious Fault: Sickie hocks.

TAIL

The thick tail is a natural extension of the spine, is set fairly high, and is well covered with hair. Long tails taper to the end, are sabre shaped, and reach down to the hocks or little below. Natural tails hang slightly curved when the dog is standing, and carried with a slight upward curve when the dog is excited or moving, and not curl over the back. The natural tail of the Boerboel is quite variable from dog to dog due to its genetic diversity, although most are long and tapering, but not quite as whip-like as those of some other Molossers. Docked tails are traditionally docked at the third or fourth caudal vertebrae. Tail set is more important than length.

Disqualifications: Kinked, corkscrewed, deformed, or tightly curling tails.

FEET

Must be in the correct proportion. The front feet are slightly larger than the rear. They are large, well

padding, rounded, with well knuckled up toes, and pointed forward. During stance, a slight turnout on the front feet is permitted.

The hind feet are well padded, rounded, with well knuckled toes, point straight forward and are slightly smaller than the front paws.

Serious Fault: Pink paw pads.

COAT & SKIN

The coat is sleek, short, smooth and dense.

The skin is thick, loose (but not excessively so), and shows dark pigmentation.

COLOR

The recognized colors are:

- all shades of brown (tan, red) or fawn;
- Brindle: a color pattern with irregular, apparent vertical lines of only black hair on a brown (tan, red) or fawn base color;
- Piebald: white spots on a brown (tan, red), fawn or brindle dog;
- Irish: a brown (tan, red), fawn or brindle dog with a white blaze, a white chest that can extend to a white collar, and white feet and legs.

A black mask is optional.

All the colors and associated patterns should be accompanied by good pigmentation.

The dog should have adequate overall dark skin pigmentation, and the nose leather, eye lids, lips, sexual organs, anus, ears and paw pads should show adequate melanin pigmentation.

Disqualifications: Any color or combination of colors other than described. Liver color on any basic breed standard color. Ticking on any basic breed standard color. Split face on any basic breed standard color. Dilute/powder and solid blue colored dogs. Black and tan dogs. More than one-third white of the total body surface. Solid black. Tri-color.

Serious Fault: Excessive/large white areas in all colors.

GAIT

The movement of a Boerboel is powerful, purposeful, buoyant and fluent, with comfortable reach in front and rear. Propulsion must come from the rear without crabbing or twisting. The legs must, when viewed from the front or rear, be retained as a straight column both walking and trotting. Elbows, pasterns and hocks must remain firm. The topline must be stable, without roaching or drooping in the middle or with excessive body roll. Limited mobility must be severely penalized. Absolute soundness and freedom of movement is essential.

HEIGHT

The Boerboel is a well-balanced dog in form and function. Its height is in balance with mass, overall balance, and overall conformation.

Males: ideal height is 26 inches, to be no shorter than 23 inches.

Females: ideal height 24 inches, to be no shorter than 21.

Eliminating Faults: Males less than 23 inches in height. Females less than 21 inches in height.

ELIMINATING FAULTS

(An Eliminating Fault is a Fault serious enough that it eliminates the dog from obtaining any awards in a conformation event.)

Males less than 23 inches in height.

Females less than 21 inches in height.

DISQUALIFICATIONS

(A dog with a Disqualification must not be considered for placement in a conformation event, and must be reported to UKC.)

Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchid.

Viciousness or extreme shyness.

Albinism.

Entropionism.

Ectropionism.

Prick ears.

Semi-erect ears.

Any color or combination of colors other than described.

Liver color on any basic breed standard color.

Ticking on any basic breed standard color.

Split face on any basic breed standard color.

Dilute/powder and solid blue colored dogs.

Black and tan dogs.

More than one-third white of the total body surface.

Tri-color.

Wry mouth.

Long or curly hair.

Kinked, corkscrewed, deformed, or tightly curling tails.

The docking of tails and cropping of ears in America is legal and remains a personal choice. However, as an international registry, the United Kennel Club is aware that the practices of cropping and docking have been forbidden in some countries. In light of these developments, the United Kennel Club feels that no dog in any UKC event, including conformation, shall be penalized for a full tail or natural ears.