

The Niche-Based Standard of the American Sentinel Bandog

by

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The American Sentinel Bandog developed as a family companion guardian first and foremost; therefore, being a stable sentinel minded family companion should be considered the breed's primary niche. That said, the attributes required to excel in this niche result in a very driven, determined, confident, athletic, powerful, stable, loyal, clean, and structurally sound animal, and as a result these working dogs are also very capable of excelling in other working canine fields such as hog hunting or protection canine sports. Described below is a detailed "niche-based" list of criteria required of the American Sentinel Bandog, and breeders of the American Sentinel Bandog should review these criteria very carefully when selecting breeding stock to protect and further develop the evolution of the breed. All cosmetic and structural references should be considered secondary to performance. The American Sentinel Bandog is a working dog.

MENTAL NICHE: The American Sentinel Bandog should...

1. **DISPLAY STABILITY WITH FAMILY IN ALL SETTINGS** and not turn on the ones it lives with. Clarity of mind to distinguish between friend and foe is of vital importance in a protective or otherwise stressful situation. To reduce the likelihood of the dogs challenging anyone in their family unit, American Sentinel Bandogs should also display low rank drive within the human "pack." Dogs that display stability under stress are preferred, while dogs that redirect under stress are to be selected against.
2. **DISPLAY A STRONG PACK INSTINCT.** While being capable of working independently, the American Sentinel should desire to please their master/family and be very loyal to those it has accepted "within its circle of trust." Dogs that lack the desire to please their master or display a high degree of independence are selected against.
3. **BE VERY CONFIDENT** when encountering strange areas, strange things, strange people, or strange animals...only "yielding" to their master, family, and close friends. Dogs that display high confidence are preferred, while dogs with low confidence are selected against.
4. **DISPLAY A REASONABLE LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE** and should be highly trainable. Dogs that display high intelligence and problem-solving skills during their keep, while working, or when training are preferred, while dogs lacking a display of intelligence or trainability are to be selected against.
5. **DISPLAY HIGH PREY DRIVE.** Prey drive is very beneficial when training obedience, is essential for a hog catch dog, and is also beneficial when doing protection work. As a result, dogs with extreme prey drive are preferred, while dogs with low prey drive are to be selected against.

6. **DISPLAY SUSPICION TO STRANGERS** when they are not introduced by their owners. An alert, bold, and forward defensive response towards strangers that have not been introduced to the dog(s) is beneficial, as such makes it difficult for strangers to befriend a dog for the purpose of criminal intent. Dogs that are extremely defensive should be evaluated very carefully to make sure they are not nervous or fearful. Evasive, fearful, insecure, or nervous dogs that yield or show stress to strangers are to be selected against.
7. **BE WILLING TO WORK MAN OR BEAST.** Statistically speaking, a person in the US is approximately five to eight times more likely to be attacked by a dog than they are to be killed, raped, or mugged. What good is a "guard dog" if it will not protect themselves or their owners from threats coming from either a man or beast? While it is obvious a hog catch dog is expected to display predatory behavior and animal aggression, for the reasons stated above, it should be noted that dogs that display aggression towards strangers or other dogs should not be discriminated against. Dogs that are willing to engage man or beast in either legal hunting or protection applications are preferred, while dogs that refuse to engage either are to be selected against.
8. **DISPLAY EXTREME DETERMINATION** "to impose its will" onto its opposition. No canine can subdue all threats or come out victorious on every hog hunt; however, it is unlikely that an attacker or a wild hog will effectively harm the dog's handler as long as the dog is committed during the engagement of said threat or hog. For this reason, the American Sentinel should display great willingness to remain engaged until they are called off or physically removed from the engagement. While the dog's ability to subdue opposition is important, subduing the opposition is less important than the dog's determination to remain engaged despite whatever stressors the dog encounters or endures. In fact, as stressors escalate, so should the dog's display of commitment to the engagement. For this reason, dogs that display extreme determination (aka, "gameness") are preferred, while dogs that are unwilling to remain engaged (aka, "cur out") while sustaining stress during combat are to be selected against.
9. **DISPLAY HIGH PAIN TOLERANCE.** A high pain tolerance reduces the likelihood the dog will yield to the pain experienced during extreme hunting situations or experienced while subduing a threat and helps minimize redirected aggression towards those within the dog's "circle of trust" when the animal is injured. For these reasons, dogs known to display low pain tolerance are to be selected against.
10. **HAVE A RELENTLESS GRIP,** comparable to that of a vice, with pressure noted. Dogs that maintain a solid grip and not "mouthy" are preferred. While regripping is both acceptable and even preferred when the dog's previous hold was ineffective or in a poor location, dogs that are noticeably "mouthy," meaning they regrip excessively or that regrip despite already having an effective hold, are to be selected against.

PHYSICAL NICHE: The American Sentinel Bandog should...

11. **MAINTAIN A FIT BODY CONDITION** even when not in so-called “peak condition,” as unfit dogs are unable to perform their duties effectively. Reported weights should not be exaggerated and should be the actual weights of the animals when they are in reasonably fit condition, as an overweight dog is less dog when it comes to performance testing. Fitness does not just improve working ability, it also benefits health for longevity, reduces injury, and prolongs working ability over the dog’s lifespan. Dogs that are sloppy in body type should be viewed with discrimination and skepticism; however, ultimately the actual performance of the animal takes priority over physical conditioning.
12. **BE VERY POWERFUL AND CAPABLE CANINES.** It should be exceptionally difficult for any opposition to control an American Sentinel physically or mentally during combative situations such as hunting or protection work. Dogs that display great strength and capabilities are selected for, while dogs that display weaknesses are selected against.
13. **DISPLAY SOUNDNESS OF STRUCTURE.** American Sentinels may be “prescreened” by static X-rays and such that suggest sound skeletal structure; however, such prescreening should not replace actual physical testing to ensure the dogs are indeed structurally sound. Dogs that display a quick recovery time after long periods of work and are fluid in their movement display true sound structure and are therefore preferred, while dogs that frequently display lameness after work are to be selected against.
14. **DISPLAY GOOD ENDURANCE** of both the mind and body, capable of sustaining long periods of intense work when necessary. For this reason, dogs that display great endurance are selected for, while dogs that tire easily or injure easily are selected against.
15. **BE CLEAN:** American Sentinels should not drool excessively or even moderately. Their lips should be tight, and drooling should be minimal. Their coat should be comprised of short hair, and they should shed very little to minimize the amount of necessary cleanup by their owner. Dogs that are clean are preferred as long as they meet the other performance criteria of the niche-based breed standard, while dogs that are “nasty” due to excessive drooling or shedding are selected against.
16. **BE REASONABLY LARGE, BUT NOT GIANT:**
 - A) having the mass required to control prey or threats while working, yet small enough to maintain a high degree of agility.
 - B) having good weather tolerance. Given their size, even though they are short coated, they are able to endure weather temperatures from below freezing with minimal bedding while also being not so large that they sacrifice a reasonable amount of heat tolerance when working in warm 90 degrees F (30+ degrees C) weather.
 - C) Size typically ranges between 70-110#, but dogs outside of this size range are accepted without prejudice if they fulfill the performance-based aspects described within this niche-based breed standard.
17. **DISPLAY A STRONGLY BUILT MUZZLE** that is well proportioned to the head, neck, and body, and not be overly short or long. The muzzle should be balanced in such a

manner that there is sufficient ability to maintain one's hold during hog catch work or protection work, sufficient ability to apply pressure to the grip as needed, maintain efficient respiration, and provide efficient cooling while panting when working.

18. DISPLAY A SCISSOR BITE; however, an ideal bite positioning means nothing if the functional aspects of the grip (see "grip" section above) does not display determination, power, and steadiness in hold. Dogs with a functional grip and scissor bite are preferred, dogs with functional grip and even alignment or reverse scissor bite are acceptable, while dogs that display non-functional grips or more than 1/8" gap in their bite should generally be selected against with discrimination being proportional to the severity of the condition.
19. DISPLAY EFFICIENT MOVEMENT. The American Sentinel should display a fluid gait, spring like agility, and be capable of quick deliberate changes of direction. Dogs that display non-fluid movement with "ticks" or rolling of joints are more likely to suffer from structural issues, will have lengthened recovery time, shorter working careers, are more prone to injury, and are generally less efficient when changing direction. As a result, dogs that move with efficiency are preferred, while dogs that are inefficient are selected against, especially if they tire easily or display lameness or prolonged recovery times.
20. DISPLAY EXCEPTIONAL WRESTLING ABILITY and control of its body during combat. Dogs that maintain some degree of evasiveness to being targeted and avoid taking damage while also subduing and controlling their opposition are preferred; however, this should not be confused with dogs that are evasive out of fear or confused with dogs that display avoidance to combat itself, as such dogs should be considered "curs" and therefore selected against. This said, dogs that are not evasive at all may very well possess so much determination they are willing to sacrifice themselves to some injuries and appear to lack self-awareness, and such dogs are not to be discriminated against.
21. DISPLAY WORKING POTENTIAL EARLY and maintain their working abilities well into their maturity without signs of physical or mental discomfort, as animals with long working careers are preferred. While x-ray screening should be done as a preliminary measure, the length of the dog's working career is of greatest importance since working ability is a systemic measure over time, and includes mentality, skeletal structure, ligament strength and durability, tendon strength and durability, endocrine efficiency, circulatory health, respiratory efficiency, etc. Systemic health measured via niche-based performance measures over time is the ultimate assessment. Dogs that display discomfort working when older should be noted, with preferences towards dogs and the working descendants of dogs that did not display such discomfort in their mature years.
22. DISPLAY CROPPED. While cropped ears are preferred, uncropped ears that are "rosette-like" (perky) are not to be discriminated against. The ear canal should be open and functional, and it should be noted that no wild mammal has floppy ears. Erect ears are better able to catch and direct sounds into the ear canal and better able to ventilate making them less prone to yeast or fungal infections. Dogs with good hearing and without ear infections are of course preferred, while dogs with poor hearing or prone to ear infection are to be selected against.

23. DISPLAY A TAIL DOCKED TO MIDLENGTH; however, dogs with full-length tails should not be discredited or treated with prejudice as this is not top priority. That said, in no case should American Sentinels have a have short-docked tails unless it was noted by vet record to dock the tail short following a tail injury. When the tail is docked, it should be comparable to the tail lengths of the close quarters ambush combat cats as is seen on the bobcat or lynx (not to be confused with high-speed coursing cats such as the cheetah). Our reason for this style crop is fivefold...

- A) Full-length tails are prone to injury (seen it many times),
- B) Full-length tails can be used against the dog by a secondary threat that can grab the dog's tail in attempt to control the dog's movement during combat,
- C) full-length tails are also more inconvenient when living indoors in family or business settings as full-length tails often knock items off coffee tables (drinks, candles, etc.) and often hit small children in the eyes, and
- D) the mid-length tail dock not only accommodates all these above concerns, and
- E) also maintains enough tail length to allow the dog to protect the anus or genitalia regions or to use tail positioning while express body language signaling form of communication.

24. MAY BE ANY REASONABLY CAMOUFLAGED COLOR UNASSOCIATED WITH DISEASE. Dogs that are all white or that display large areas of white in highly visible areas are to be avoided not only because white coats are associated with cancer, blindness, and deafness, but also because camouflage is of great value to both hunters and protectors, for this is the intended purpose of the American Sentinel. Merle and harlequin are both to be avoided since individuals that have homozygous genotypes for these phenotypes are associated with high frequencies of deafness and blindness. As a result, to protect the long-term health of the gene pool, it is best to keep all genes known to be associated with such genetic diseases completely removed from the population.

OTHER NICHE CONSIDERATIONS: The American Sentinel Bandog should...

25. DISPLAY THE ABILITY TO REPRODUCE WELL. No matter how good a dog is, if it cannot reproduce excellence then it is of little or no importance to the gene pool of the population. For this reason, individuals that are "Producers of Excellence" (POE) should be noted and take preference, so their ancestors can be tracked accordingly, and preferences should be placed on individuals with high working abilities that also produced many descendants with exceptional working abilities. A system for earning POE points to assess the prepotency of breeding individuals is currently in development. Dogs that have been bred multiple times and are known to be poor producers should be selected against.