

## **PART THREE:**

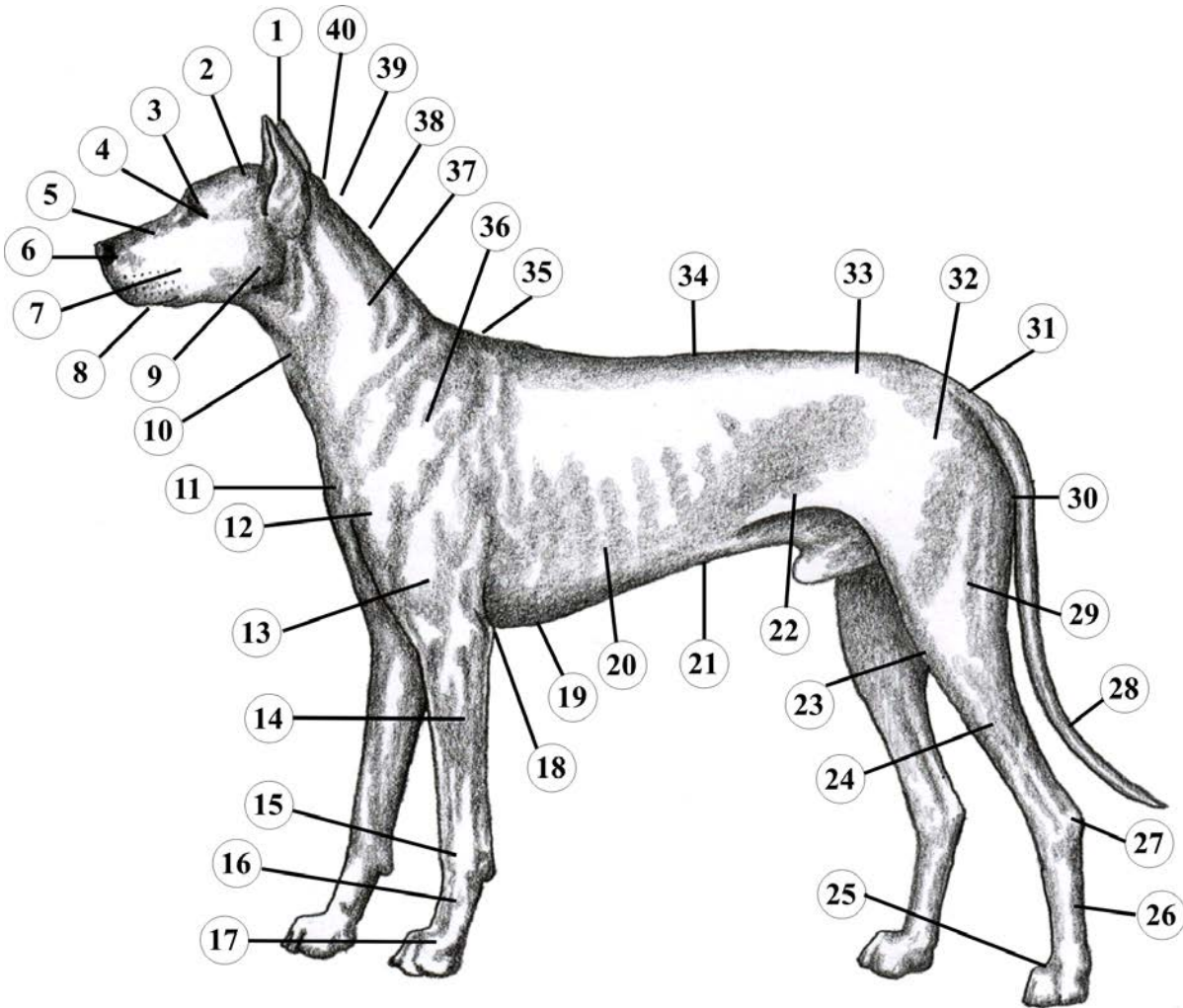
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## **CONFORMATION**

# CONFORMATION

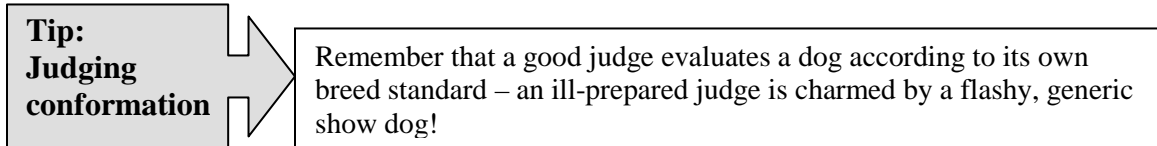
The term “conformation” refers to the outward appearance (topographical view) and the identification of the various regions of a dog’s body. These terms are most used when discussing and describing dogs.

There are approximately 227 recognised breeds of dog in the world, and more in various stages of development; their shapes and sizes are as varied as chalk is to cheese. Conformation is the term that refers to the dog’s externally-visible details, also referred to as the dog’s topology or the points of a dog.



- |             |                       |                      |              |
|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1. ear      | 11. prosternum        | 21. belly            | 31. croup    |
| 2. skull    | 12. point of shoulder | 22. flank            | 32. rump     |
| 3. stop     | 13. upper arm         | 23. stifle           | 33. loin     |
| 4. eye      | 14. forearm           | 24. lower thigh      | 34. back     |
| 5. foreface | 15. wrist             | 25. hind foot        | 35. withers  |
| 6. nose     | 16. pastern           | 26. rear pastern     | 36. shoulder |
| 7. muzzle   | 17. forefoot          | 27. hock             | 37. neck     |
| 8. chin     | 18. elbow             | 28. tail             | 38. crest    |
| 9. cheek    | 19. brisket           | 29. upper thigh      | 39. nape     |
| 10. throat  | 20. ribcage/chest     | 30. point of buttock | 40. occiput  |

Because there are so many different breeds, each with its own breed standard, we judge a dog's **conformation** in terms of how well it **conforms** to the breed standard. All dogs will possess the same conformational points, but the breed standard will define where these points will be positioned and what they should look like. Furthermore, within each breed's specific requirements, there will be minor differences in conformation, which will determine which exhibits deserve to be awarded, and which ones don't.



Whether judging a Bulldog or a Greyhound, a Chihuahua or an Irish Wolfhound, each specimen will possess the same points in different shapes, sizes and proportions. The terminology used is universal across all breeds so, if an exhibitor asks, you will be able to refer to the appropriate terminology, regardless of the breed. Your task, as judge, is to be completely familiar with conformation terminology and how these are presented according to particular breed standards. Judging is no walk in the park!

When examining a dog's conformation, the most logical way is to define the following divisions:

- head and neck
- forequarters
- body
- hindquarters
- tail

## **HEAD AND NECK**

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Some fanciers claim the head and expression is the be-all and end-all of the dog and, literally, everything behind the head is of little consequence. Others consider the head as something that sits on the top of the neck – after all, a dog doesn't run on its head! While it is absolutely essential that a judge evaluates the dog in its entirety, it is also useful to have an understanding of the reasons for certain breeds being considered "head breeds".

As a Judge, you can study the terminology inside out and stare at illustrations and photographs endlessly, but that will never make you a good judge. Essentially, you need to learn to identify good heads from mediocre or bad ones and the only reliable way to do this is to look at the dogs with discernment and comprehension. It is extremely beneficial to find a mentor who can help you identify good examples, and then show you how the other examples deviate from the good one. A good start is to fix in your mind the picture of a good head, beginning with the general shape and proportions of the head, the skull and the foreface. Can you recognise the basic shape of the breed's head – round, angular, square, etc? A Pekingese without a horizontal oblong-shaped head lacks one of its defining hallmarks and a Bullmastiff without a head that looks square from all directions is not typical.

## Head shapes

The variety of head presentations is as varied as there are various breeds:



*Apple head*



*Round head*



*Short, round head*



*Ovoid head*



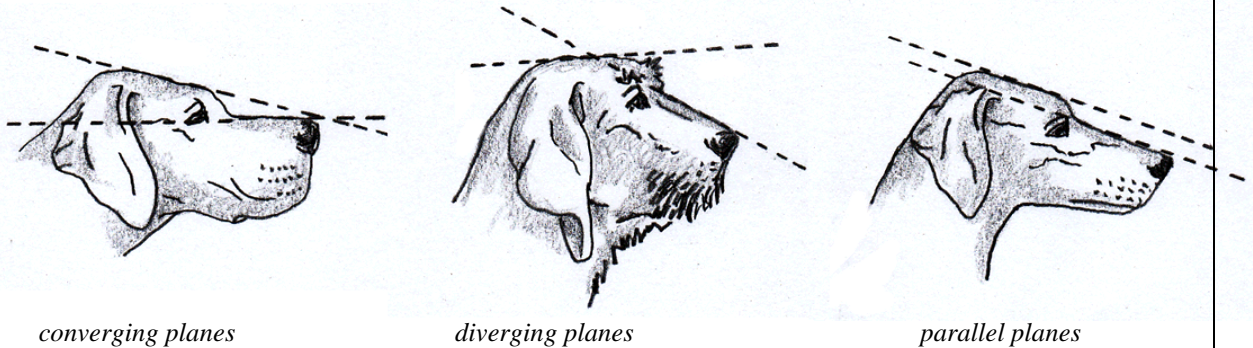
*Long, tapering head*

- **apple / domed skull:** very rounded skull, a particular requirement of the Chihuahua
- **rounded skull:** the skull is arched roundly; different from the domed skull in that it is not as exaggerated, eg. American Cocker Spaniel
- **flat skull:** flat between the ears and between stop and occiput, eg. Pointer
- **oval skull:** a gently-curved skull that contours from ear to ear, eg. English Setter
- **balanced head:** where the skull and the foreface are of equal length, eg. Gordon Setter and most breeds
- **blocky head:** a head broader than that which considered to be ideal, usually a fault
- **brick-shaped head:** long, rectangular head where the width of the skull and the foreface are relatively equal, eg. Great Dane
- **clean-cut head:** head properties that are smooth and refined, free of bumps and bulges, eg. Whippet.
- **coarse head:** generally not a complimentary description, meaning lack of refinement, heaviness, plainness, large size.
- **conical head:** cone-shaped, triangular in outline as seen from above and the side, eg. Dachshund
- **dry head:** taut skin on the head and neck, free of wrinkles and folds
- **egg-shaped:** an ovoid head, specifically required in the Bull Terrier
- **fox-like head:** a spitz-type head that resembles a fox by virtue of the placement of head properties, eg. Welsh Corgi
- **long, tapering head:** long, narrow and tapering, usually accompanied by a slight stop, eg. Borzoi
- **otter head:** the specific shape of the Border Terrier, which resembles that of an otter
- **pear-shaped head:** a specific description of the contours of the head of the Bedlington Terrier
- **round, short head:** the muzzle is fore-shortened and, together with the broad skull, gives a general impression of roundness, eg. Boston Terrier
- **squared-off head:** when the lips and the muzzle end abruptly in a square instead of tapering, eg. Pointer
- **wedge-shaped head:** triangular as viewed either in profile or from above, or both; it differs from a conical head in that the wedge shapes do not necessarily need to be equal in dimension, eg. Dobermann
- **dish face:** concave contours in profile where the tip of the nose is higher than the base at the stop, usually a fault but a requirement of the Pointer.
- **down face:** the foreface and skull planes diverge so that the foreface inclines downwards, usually a fault, but a requirement of the Bull Terrier
- **filled face:** clean and smooth facial contours showing no bony ridges or depressions, also refers to a well-cushioned face, eg. French Bulldog
- **frog face:** a faulty construction in brachycephalic breeds where the nose is set too far forward

## Head planes

In profile, a judge evaluates the head planes, ie. the angles at which the topline of the skull is set to the topline of the foreface. Generally, three types of planes can be found:

- **converging planes:** the topline of the skull slopes towards the topline of the foreface
- **diverging planes:** the topline of the skull slopes away from the topline of the foreface
- **parallel planes:** the toplines are in line with each other, separated by a stop



## Elements of the back skull

- **back skull:** the area of the head behind the foreface, ie. the brain case. Some breed standards call for well-developed back skull in the head.
- **occiput:** the rearmost part of the skull. In some breed standards the occiput is required to be prominent and clearly visible, while in other breeds it can be felt but not seen. The occiput helps to determine the shape of the head.
- **median line / median groove:** the longitudinal line down the centre of the skull towards the stop, formed by bone formation and/or muscle, required in some breed standards, eg. Weimaraner. The line may be visible or it may be felt with the fingers.
- **brows / eyebrows:** the skin and hair above the eyes, they vary greatly in prominence and hair coverage.
- **stop:** the depression between the skull and the foreface, usually positioned centrally between the eyes. Stop development varies vastly between breeds from an imperceptible stop, eg. Borzoi, to a well-defined stop, eg. Bulldog.
- **zygomatic arch:** the bony ridge under the eye that influences the contours of the face and the degree of fall away under the eye. Many breed standards require strong, prominent zygomatic arch, eg. Rottweiler

## Ears



*pricked ear*



*drop ear*



*bat ear*



*filbert ear*



*tipped ear*



*rose ear*



*rounded ear*



*button ear*



*hooded ear*

While there are many different types of ear shapes and set, they can basically be grouped as follows according to the way the ear leather (the cartilaginous ear lobe) is positioned:

- **erect / pricked:** eg. German Shepherd Dog
- **semi-drop / semi-pricked:** eg. Australian Shepherd
- **drop / pendant/ pendulous:** eg. Dachshund

Ears can be set high or low, wide or upright. In addition, the terminology (nomenclature) used in breed standards may define ear types as follows:

- **bat ear:** stiffly erect with rounded tips, facing forwards and set wide apart, eg. Cardigan Welsh Corgi
- **button ear:** semi-erect, where the lower lobe stands upright and the top is folded forward towards the eye, partially obscuring the ear's orifice, eg. Irish Terrier
- **candle-flame ear:** flame-shaped, erect ears specific to the English Toy Terrier
- **cocked / tipped / semi-prick ear:** erect ears in which only the tip fold forwards (not down), eg. Shetland Sheepdog
- **drop ear:** hang down from the junction with the head, eg. Beagle
- **filbert ear:** the specific requirement for a Bedlington Terrier's ears, derived from the shape of the hazelnut (filbert)
- **folded / rolled ear:** drop ears, usually somewhat long, that hang in longitudinal folds, eg. Bloodhound
- **heart-shaped ear:** shaped as a heart and hanging as a pendant, eg. Pekingese
- **hooded ear:** smallish, erect ears, where the lobe edges curve forwards markedly, eg. Basenji
- **rose ears:** smallish ears that fold over and back so that the burr of the ear is exposed, eg. Whippet
- **round-tipped ears:** blunt and well rounded, eg. Chow Chow
- **tulip ears:** slightly different from bat ears in that, while also erect with rounded tips, the edges turned slightly forward to resemble a tulip and set closer together (upright), eg. French Bulldog
- **triangular ears:** often carried pricked and quite wide apart, eg. Siberian Husky
- **v-shaped ears:** triangular-shaped ears, carried in dropped position, eg. Bullmastiff.

## Eyes



*almond eye*



*oval eye*



*round eye*



*triangular eye*

Many different shapes (as determined by the eye rims):

- **almond eyes:** bluntly pointed at both corners, eg. Basenji
- **oval eyes:** very similar to almond eyes, oval in shape, eg. Border Collie and most breeds
- **beady eyes:** small, round and usually listed as a fault.
- **deep-set eyes:** well-sunken eyes set deeply in the sockets, eg. Chow Chow
- **globular:** set in round apertures, often prominent without being protruding, eg. Chihuahua
- **round eyes:** set in round apertures, eg. Rhodesian Ridgeback
- **obliquely-set eyes:** when the outer corner of the eye is set slightly higher than the inner corner, eg. Bull Terrier
- **square-set eyes:** when the inner and outer corners of the eye are set at right angles to the longitudinal axis of the skull, eg. Bulldog and most breeds
- **protruding eyes:** bulging, full eyes, goggled eyes, usually described as a fault.
- **triangular eyes:** angular and usually set obliquely, eg. Afghan Hound

and colours:

- **bird of prey / hawk eyes:** yellowish to amber-coloured eyes, usually harsh and staring, usually a fault
- **China / fish / jewelled / marbled / wall eye:** incomplete, flecked distribution of the melanin on a blue iris, common in breeds that carry the merle gene, eg. Australian Shepherd
- most breed standards call for dark eye, ranging between hazel to dark brown.

## Eye rims

These are the upper and lower edges of the eyelids. Breed standards usually require a tight fit of eye rims – this as a health effect to prevent wear and tear and the introduction of debris into the eye. **Ectropion** (aka haw eye) is a condition where eye rims are loose and droop outwards. **Entropion** is a painful condition where eye rims turn inwards and the cornea is damaged through friction with the eyelashes. Eye rim colour is usually an indication of **pigmentation** in general, eg. the Maltese, in which black eye rims (haloes) are required. In some breeds, light eye rims are required, eg. Italian Spinone.

## Expression

Expression is obtained by the interaction of various elements; ears, eyes, facial coat, temperament:

- **Eastern / Oriental expression:** far-seeing, slanted eyes, aloof expression, eg. Afghan Hound
- **gruff expression:** a particular characteristic of the Bouvier des Flandres, enhanced by bushy eyebrows
- **monkey-like expression:** an apish expression, enhanced by facial coat growth, eg. Affenpinscher
- **saucy expression:** a perky expression created by the position of facial elements, unique to the Chihuahua
- **foxy expression:** describes the appearance of the combination of ear set and the properties of the face to appear fox-like, eg. Pembroke Welsh Corgi
- **varminty:** a game and spirited expression, indicated by the temperament and sparkle in the eye, a specific requirement of the West Highland White Terrier

## Elements of the foreface

The portion of the skull in front of the brain case.

- **blunt / square-cut muzzle:** a squared-off muzzle, forming a right angle with the upper line of the face, eg. Mastiff
- **chiselled foreface:** clean-cut lines and contours of the foreface, without bumps and bulges, eg. Borzoi
- **over-filled foreface:** the opposite of chiselled; a great amount of bone and muscle in the face, usually used to describe a fault
- **roman / ram's nose:** where the profile of the top of the muzzle curves slightly towards the nose from the beginning of the nose cartilage, eg. Scottish Deerhound
- **short muzzle:** stubby and short, a feature of the brachicephalic breeds, eg. Bulldog
- **snipey foreface:** usually a fault in which the foreface lacks substance.
- **tapering muzzle:** where the diameter is greater at the stop than at the nose; can be mildly tapered, eg. Pharaoh Hound, or acutely tapered, eg. Greyhound.
- **cheeks:** the fleshy region under the eyes at the side of the face. Cheeks, in breed standards can be described as: **cheeky / bulging:** fleshy, bulging, eg. Staffordshire Bull Terrier; or **clean:** structurally lean, unexaggerated. eg. Fox Terrier
- **whiskers (vibrissae):** harsh, thick, singular-stranded, thick and longish hairs that extend from the sides of the muzzle and on other areas of the face such as the eyebrows and on the cheeks, specialised in that they serve as sensory stimulators. They are considerably more rigid than other hairs and are embedded more deeply. At the base of each is a high concentration of touch-sensitive neurons.
- **flews:** the pendulous, fleshy upper lips of some breeds, eg. Bloodhound
- **chops / jowls:** the thick, well-muscled and very pendant flews, specifically of the Bulldog.
- **lips:** the fleshy portions covering the upper and lower jaws. Several types can include **clean lips:** tight-fitting, closing the mouth neatly, eg. Whippet; **pendulous lips:** loosely-hanging, hiding the jaw line as viewed in profile, eg. Saint Bernard; and **lippy:** excessively pendulous, usually a fault
- **commisures:** the lip corners; where the upper lip meets the lower lip on the sides of the muzzle.
- **upper jaw:** two identical halves joined at the centre, firmly and immovably attached to the rest of the skull; contains 20 teeth
- **lower jaw:** also two identical halves joined at the centre front, contains 22 teeth. A few breed standards call for punishing jaws, eg. Afghan Hound, meaning strong enough to bring down prey.
- **chin:** the lower portion of the muzzle, viewed from the front, prominent in, for example, Bulldogs.





## Nose

Two nostrils are divided by the **philtrum (nasolabial line, medial cleft)** – the vertical groove in the middle of the upper lip that extends into the nose. The purpose is to carry moisture from the mouth to keep the nose wet and enhance the trapping of odour particles. Most breed standards require wide nostrils to facilitate easy breathing. Breed standards define or deny certain nose colours and/or markings:

- **butterfly nose:** partially unpigmented with irregular patches typical of merle or harlequin dogs, eg. Australian Shepherd; may be a fault in some breeds
- **dudley nose:** weakly-pigmented, flesh-coloured nose, very undesirable in a Bulldog
- **flesh-coloured / pink nose:** can be acceptable in some breeds, eg. Weimaraner
- **self-coloured nose:** where the nose is the same or similar colour to the dog's coat colour, eg. a brown Dobermann
- **snow nose:** normally solid black, but it acquires a paler streak during winter; an acceptable characteristic of some breeds, eg. White Swiss Shepherd Dog

**Tip:**  
**Judging the head**

Once you have analysed and studied the myriad possibilities of shape and placement of all the elements of the head, and you have a complete understanding of how deviations of these can affect the total picture, it's important to synthesise these elements back into the whole – the head as a **whole**. Judging a dog's head is a matter of finding all the virtues that collectively determine quality and correct expression. It's more than simply the sum of all the parts; it's the way the parts interact and influence each other to define the make-up of the breed's head. It's not likely that you will find perfection in every detail, so you would be seriously failing the breed if you penalise a good specimen for an insignificant fault. As easy as it is to pick out the faults, remember, our task as judges is to find the best dog – the dog with the greatest number of virtues that makes an overall excellent picture.

## Neck

The section of body that joins the head to the shoulders, it is often an important indicator of the quality of a dog. The **nape** is the area of the neck at the junction with the skull



*Clean, dry crested neck*



*Bull neck*



*Upright neck*

- **bull neck:** powerfully muscled and very strong, usually has an accentuated crest, often rather short, eg. Staffordshire Bull Terrier
- **clean / dry neck:** the skin covers the neck tightly and smoothly, no excessive amounts of loose skin or dewlap, eg. Italian Greyhound
- **crest of neck:** the upper area of the neck, flowing from the juncture at the occiput. Many breed standards call for a well-arched crest, which indicates correct structure and solid muscling. An arched neck is better able to accommodate the pull from the shoulder muscles.
- **ewe neck:** concave neck, often called an upside-down neck – a fault because it denotes weakness and probably poor shoulder construction
- **goose / swan neck:** an excessively long and weak neck, tubular shaped – a fault because it denotes lack of strength
- **reaching neck:** the opposite of a short, stuffy neck; good length, well-muscled, refined and elegant
- **stuffy neck:** inelegant, short, often over-muscled and usually referred to as a fault
- **upright neck:** the neck is set into the shoulders very sharply, resembling an L-shaped angle, often indicated by wrinkling at the wither.
- **throaty / wet neck:** the opposite of clean and dry, the skin is loose and there are wrinkles and folds, often also a dewlap, can be a fault, but also a requirement in certain breeds, eg. Neapolitan Mastiff
- **dewlap:** loose, pendulous skin, hanging in folds around the throat as required in some breeds, eg. Basset Hound



*Ewe neck*



*Goose neck*



*Wet neck*

### Tip: Judging the head and neck

As a general rule, breeds with shorter heads tend to have shorter necks, while breeds with longer heads tend to have longer necks.

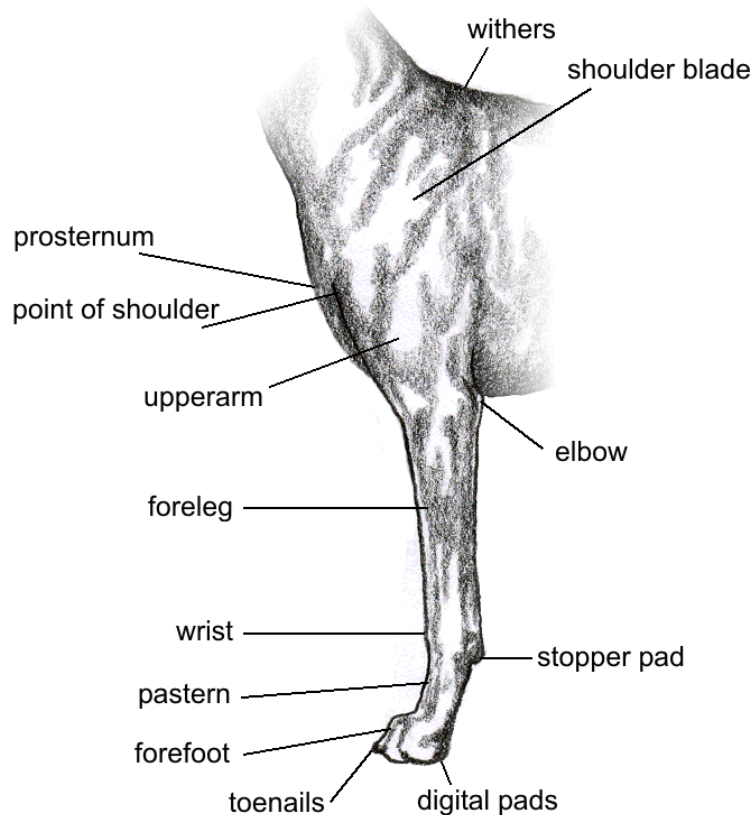
In a breed that calls for a long neck, a short neck may accompany a straight shoulder.

Dogs with short necks tend to lower their heads as they gait and may also display a roach back in action.

## FOREQUARTERS

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The forequarters may also be referred to as the **front assembly**, **the forearm** or the **forehand**; made up of the **shoulder**, **upper arm**, **foreleg**, **pastern** and **foot**.



### Withers

This word is an ancient Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'against', brought over from horse terminology to refer to the highest part of the shoulders of the horse that pushed against the harness when pulling a cart. You can find the withers at the top of the shoulders, at the juncture with the neck. Ideally, this connection should be smooth, which would indicate a correct juncture. A sharp, L-shaped juncture likely indicates a poorly-set shoulder.

When a dog lowers its head to the ground, the shoulder blades move closer together at the withers. Therefore, there needs to be sufficient separation of the shoulder blades. Dogs with marked muscle development in the shoulders will have the blades fairly widely separated while poorly-developed muscling will bring the shoulder blades markedly closer. Galloping dogs, such as Sighthounds, will have shoulder blades separated by a width of about 3 – 4 fingers.

### Shoulder

The shoulder blade is a wide, flat bone with a prominent ridge running down the centre. The ridge helps to attach the muscles – the longer the shoulder blade the more muscle attachment, the shorter the blade, less muscle attachment. Unlike humans, the shoulder is not attached to the dog's body at a joint. Instead, it is

held in place by muscles and tendons. This anomaly allows the dog greater flexibility in its forequarter, which it may not have with a rigid joint, but it also leads to a great variety of possibilities in the position and angle of the front assembly. Obviously, sufficient muscling in this area is essential, otherwise movement will be affected. As a point of interest, musculature has a high heritability, so puppies are very likely to inherit their parent's good or poor front assembly, which is why it is so difficult to breed out poor shoulder characteristics.

## Upperarm

The upper arm completes the shoulder angle, running downwards and back to join to the foreleg at the elbow joint. In most breeds, it is expected that the upperarm be of equal or nearly equal length to the shoulder blade to facilitate good reach in action. The upperarm is fairly straight and very strong, since it plays a role in supporting 60% of the dog's weight at its **centre of gravity**.

## Foreleg

When feeling for **bone (substance)** in a dog, it is the foreleg that a judge must feel for thickness, quality and strength.

## Wrist

The wrist is the joint between the foreleg and the pastern, also known as the **carpus**. Behind the wrist, is the **stopper pad** – a fleshy cushion that acts as shock absorber when a dog is in full gallop.

## Pastern

Most breeds require a certain amount of slope in the pasterns to allow sufficient shock absorption. Strong pasterns usually accompany well-built fronts because they are part of the shock-absorbing assembly.

The pasterns of different breeds present great difference in type, strength, length and slope:

- **bare pasterns:** in Afghan Hounds, a 'patterned' coat can present pasterns without long hair covering.
- **broken-down pasterns (sunken pasterns, down in pasterns):** pasterns with a greater than normal slope, may be caused by excessively long pasterns, but may also be a result of injury, illness or poor condition.
- **distended pasterns:** enlarged pasterns, often quite unsightly, could be caused by coarse bone, injury or arthritis.
- **sloping pasterns:** most-commonly required in breed standards, they serve as efficient shock-absorbers and contribute towards effortless movement.
- **upright pasterns (steep pasterns):** the opposite of being down in pastern, these are carried perpendicular to the ground and have little if any shock-absorbing qualities. Dogs with upright pasterns often also have shorter strides.
- **knuckling over:** a serious fault where the carpus joint bends forwards, causing weakness in the joint. Also known as **hyperextension of the carpal joint**.

Most breeds require short hocks (rear pasterns), especially endurance trotters, because it places less stress on the **Achilles tendon** and helps to reduce muscular effort. A dog with longer hocks (rear pasterns) will have greater jumping power and speed, but may waste energy.

## Forefoot

A dog's foot comprises four separate toes, equivalent to the fingers on a human hand. The toenails (claws) arise from the lowest joint in each toe. Joining each toe is a section of skin called **webbing**, which varies from breed to breed in its extent and development. Below the foot, each toe is cushioned by a **communal pad** at the base of the foot and **four digital pads**. These pads are made up of fatty tissue interspersed with elastic fibres, protected by a thick, rough and usually darkly-pigmented outer covering. Feet with strong, well-developed pads are referred to as well-cushioned and well-padded.

**Dewclaws** are the vestiges of thumbs, positioned on the inner part of the pastern and generally has no function. In many breeds, the dewclaw may be surgically removed.

Breed standards call for different types of feet:

- **cat feet** : as the name suggests, these feet resemble those of a cat, are round and compact with well-arched toes tightly cupped together eg. Boxer The two inner toes are only slightly longer than the outer two. The impression left by such a foot is round.
- **ferrety feet**: long, narrow, flat feet with toes insufficiently arched and poorly cushioned. Usually a fault indicating weakness, but not to be confused with hare feet.
- **flat feet**: as the name implies, feet without the desired arch in the toes. Usually a fault.
- **hare feet**: long feet, where the two inner toes are considerably longer than the outer toes. The arch must be strong, but slightly less arched than a cat foot. eg. Borzoi.
- **oval feet (spoon-shaped feet)**: similar to the cat foot, except that the inner toes are slightly longer so that the impression left by the foot is oval, rather than round, eg. German Short-haired Pointer.
- **snowshoe feet**: requirement of the Arctic breeds, these feet are oval-shaped, firm and compact and the well-arched toes are joined with firm webbing and furring between the toes. eg. Alaskan Malamute.
- **splayed feet**: regardless of the shape of the foot, if the toes are widely separated, it is a splayed foot and is generally considered a fault. Not to be confused with **spreading feet**, which is a requirement for the Irish Water Spaniel.
- **webbed feet**: all dogs have some webbing between their toes, but some water-retrieving breeds such as the Newfoundland, possess marked, strongly developed webbing for swimming purposes.



*cat foot*



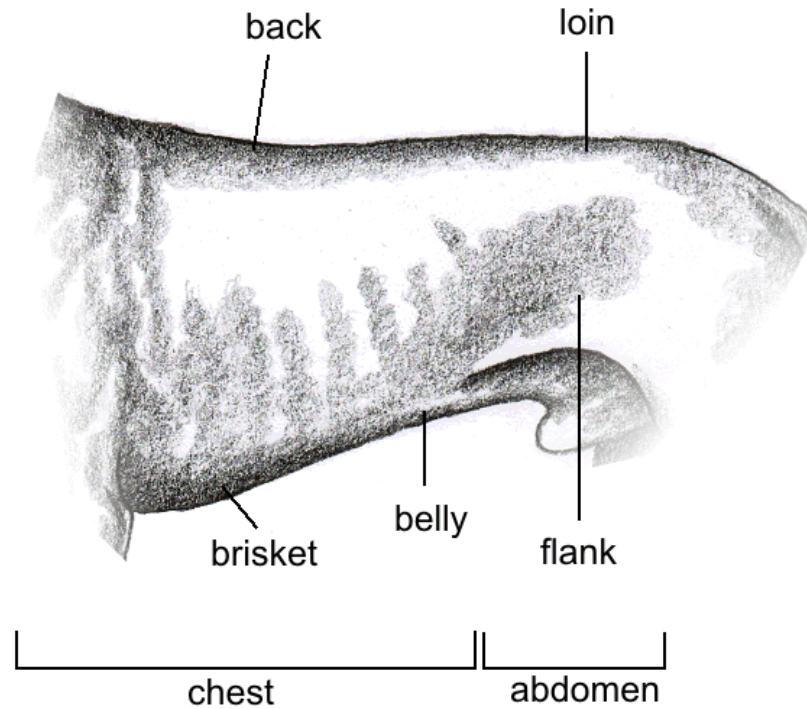
*oval foot*



*hare foot*

## BODY

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The **body** is the container that keeps together all the animal's essential organs and forms the anatomical section between the forequarters and the hindquarters. It doesn't exist in isolation – it is an integral part of the dog's being and its influence on the placement and function of limbs, head, neck and tail. It comprises the chest (**thorax**) (containing organs for breathing and circulation) and the **abdomen** (containing organs for digestion and reproduction). These two sections are separated by a sheet of muscle and tendons called the **diaphragm**, which also assists the breathing process.

### Chest

Essential organs are encased safely inside the **ribcage**. Viewed or felt in the front, between the points of shoulder, is the **prosternum** – the foremost tip of the ribcage. In most breeds, when the prosternum is visible in profile, it is indicative of a well-set front assembly. On the underside of the chest is the **brisket**, the deepest portion of the chest near the breastbone.

A judge will evaluate a dog's chest in three dimensions: depth, length and width. In most breed standards, descriptions call for a chest structure that will give maximum heart and lung capacity. Judges talk of evaluating the **spring of rib** in reference to the shape of the ribcage after the ribs emerge from their join at the vertebrae. Spring of rib refers to chest capacity – an oval-shaped ribcage may have more capacity than, for example, a flat, narrow ribcage. Of equal importance is how far the chest is **ribbed up**. Generally, the longer the ribcage, the greater the capacity. Also, a judge needs to evaluate the **depth of chest** – how deep is the measurement between withers and brisket? Breed standards call for an evaluation of different shapes:

- **barrel chest:** a rounded chest where the ribs begin to arch immediately from the attachment to the vertebrae. It can be a fault in many breeds, but a requirement in others, eg. Labrador Retriever.
- **deep chest:** usually develops in adulthood to the level of the elbow to allow sufficient heart and lung capacity.

- **oval chest (well-sprung chest):** the normal chest shape for most breeds. the ribcage is egg-shaped as viewed from the front.
- **shallow chest:** a chest that is insufficiently deep in adulthood, ie. at the brisket it falls far short of the level of the elbow.
- **flat ribs:** the opposite of barrel ribs, the ribcage is narrower than the oval-shaped chest. A requirement of the Bearded Collie. Not to be confused with **slab-sided ribs**, which is excessive flatness, leaving little heart and lung room and considered a serious fault in most breeds.

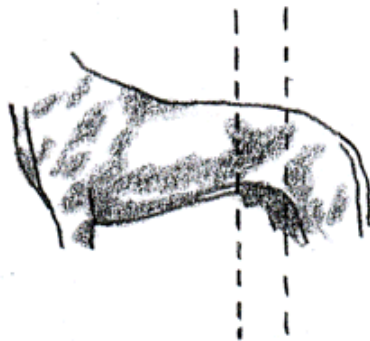
## Abdomen

This is the part of the body between the ribcage and the hindquarters. The **loin** is the muscular area positioned on either side of the spine behind the ribcage. The muscling around the loin is very often indicative of a dog's conditioning. The loin can be presented in various forms:

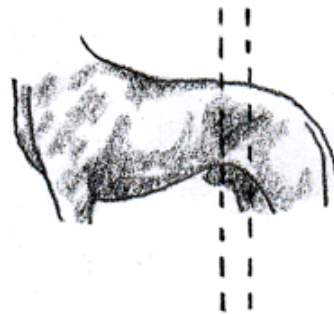
- **arched loins:** some breed standards call for a marked or slight arch over the loins. This is not a skeletal structure, but a reference to the amount of muscling in the loin. Slightly-arched loins facilitate strength and agility, eg. Greyhound.
- **light in loin:** light development in the loin creates a desirable waist in certain breeds, eg. Staffordshire Bull Terrier.
- **sagging loin:** a weakness due to loins that are too long and insufficiently muscled. In this case, it is the spine that sags because there is not enough muscle to support it, thus it is considered a fault.

The area beneath the loin is called the **flank** – the fleshy portion either side of the **belly**, which refers to the underside of the abdomen. This term has been borrowed from horse conformation and describes the same area.

Together, the loin, flank and belly (the area between the ribcage and the hindquarters) forms the **coupling**. Breed standards may specify **short coupling** – when the distance between the ribcage is relatively short, or a dog may be **long in coupling** – when the distance is greater. Bitches very often have longer coupling than males for reproductive purposes. Long loins (long coupling) is generally regarded as a structural weakness, unless specifically required for turning agility.



*long in coupling*



*short coupled*

As the **underline** sweeps from the brisket towards the hindquarters, the degree of **tuck-up** will be described in various breed standards. In galloping dogs like Whippets and Greyhounds, the tuck-up will be very tight as it curves from the deep chest to allow the legs to fold underneath during a double-suspension gallop, while in other breeds the tuck-up may be moderate, eg. Dobermann, or almost non-existent, eg. Rottweiler.

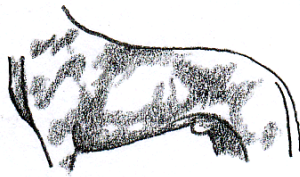


## Topline

Strictly speaking, the **topline** describes the top edge of the profile from the dog's occiput to the root of tail. Colloquially, however, most people prefer to use this term to describe the profile between the withers and the tail, although this is more technically correctly called the **backline**. Characteristics may include:

- **hollowed back (saddle back):** a small, shallow hollow or dip behind the withers at the anticlinal arch (where the vertebrae change direction). Can be a fault, but desirable in some breeds, eg. Poodle
- **level topline:** the height at the withers is level with the height at the loin.
- **roach back:** a roached back is an arched back, usually a fault of construction although in some breeds it is a requirement. Depending on where the roach occurs, it is given different names:
  - carp or camel back – first dips at the withers, then arches over the ribcage and loins, before dropping at the rump.
  - wheel back – a continuous curve that runs from the withers to the tail, eg. Bedlington Terrier. Can also be a fault in other breeds.
- **slack back (soft topline):** a mild form of sway back due to structural weakness – a fault.
- **sloping topline:** the height at the withers exceeds the height over the withers, eg. Boxer.

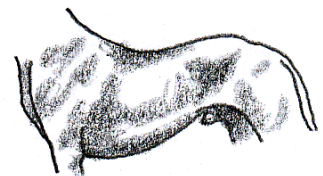
**sway back (dippy back):** a back that sags markedly in the topline, usually as a result of poor muscle development or weakness, sometimes can be due to overweight.



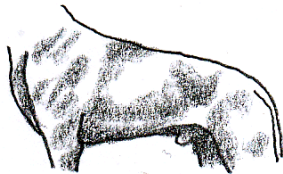
*level topline*



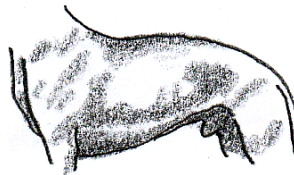
*slack back*



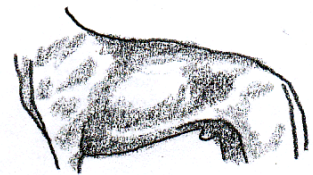
*sway back*



*sloping topline*



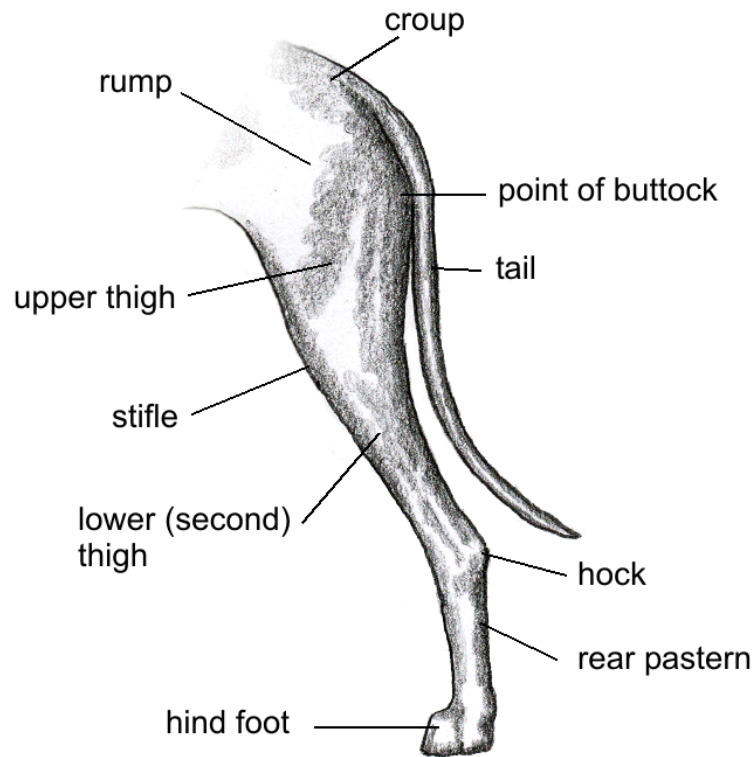
*wheel back*



*roach back*



# HINDQUARTERS

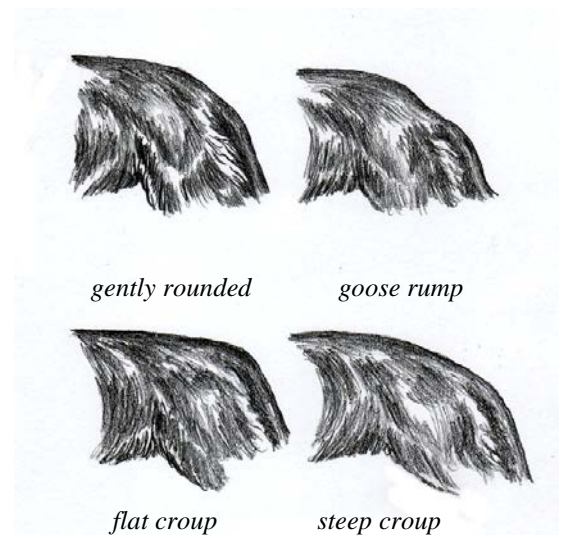


The hindquarters, also referred to as the **quarters**, comprise the **croup**, **rump**, **upper and lower thighs**, **hock**, **rear pastern** and **hindfeet**.

## Croup and rump

The croup is the muscular area around and above the set-on of tail. Croups are typically described as follows, mainly according to the influence of the pelvic slope:

- **normal croup:** gently rounded with the tail set smoothly set as a continuation of the spine
- **goose rump:** a rounded croup with a low-set tail resulting in a hollow at the tail juncture
- **flat croup:** usually associated with high-set tails
- **steep croup:** usually associated with low-set tails; also called a fall-away croup



## Upper and lower thighs

The **upper thigh** contains the femur, a long bone that runs downwards and forwards to end at the **stifle joint**, where it joins with the **lower (second) thigh**. A dog that lacks sufficient muscle in this region can be referred to as light in hindquarters, and it is generally a fault.



*wide thigh*



*narrow thigh*

## Hock and rear pastern

The **hock** is the name given to the **heel** at the joint where the second thigh meets the **rear pastern**, although colloquially, it is common to refer to the whole rear pastern as the hock. Ideally, the rear pastern should be short and positioned perpendicular to the ground.



*correctly-angulated hock*



*straight hock*



*sickle hock*

- **cow hocks:** as viewed from behind, cow hocks turn inwards, causing restricted action and, very often, the hocks can brush against each other when passing.
- **bowed hocks:** the opposite of cow hocks – the hocks turn outwards. This also indicates a weakness in hind structure and movement will be restricted, often appearing as a waddle.
- **straight hocks:** insufficient angle at the hock, often caused by a second thigh lacking length.
- **sickle hocks:** The contour of the hock and rear pastern simulates a sickle. Usually caused by an over-angulated rear, the structure is weak and movement is uneven.

# TAIL



*otter tail*



*scimitar tail*



*ring tail*



*tufted tail*



*double-curved tail*



*frou-frou tail*



*stern*

The tail is the final portion of the spine and its length varies in different breeds. The junction of the tail to the sacral region is called the **set-on of tail** and can vary from a high tail set to a low tail set. The **tail carriage** refers to the way the tail is carried, particularly in action, which can be dropped, horizontal, gay, sabre-like, curled, cascading, etc.

- **bobbed tail:** a dog born tailless or a tail docked very closely to the body, eg. Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Old English Sheepdog.
- **brush tail:** a tail covered in medium-length stand-offish hair, the same length on all sides, eg. Siberian Husky.
- **carrot tail:** a shortish tail strong and thick at the root, tapering to the tip, characteristic of the Scottish Terrier.
- **curled tail:** one type is a single curl with many variations, such as a single curl falling down one side, eg. Lhasa Apso, or a single tight curl, eg. Elkhound. A double-curved tail is typical of a Basenji and a Pug.
- **docked tail:** refers to a tail that has had a portion surgically removed.
- **flat tail:** a characteristic of the Chihuahua, where the tail is flattish and slightly broader in the centre, tapering to a point.
- **hook tail:** a tail that hangs downwards with a hook at the tip, eg. Briard.
- **kink tail:** a tail with a sharp bend somewhere along its length, usually a deformity or due to injury. Some breeds are permitted to have a kink at the tip of the tail, eg. Lhasa Apso.
- **otter tail:** a strong tail, thick at insertion, shaped as an otter tail and covered in dense hair, characteristic of the Labrador retriever and essential to serve as a rudder when swimming.
- **plumed tail:** a tail covered with longish or long hair and carried in the shape of a plume over the dog's back, eg. Pomeranian.
- **pot-hook (pot-handle) tail:** a tail covered up and over the back in a high arc, never touching or lying flat against the back – a fault in a Lhasa Apso and a requirement in a Shih Tzu.
- **pump-handle tail:** the tail arches out at the root before hanging down vertically, rather resembling an old-fashioned pump handle, characteristic of the Staffordshire Bull Terrier.
- **rat tail:** this tail has a thick root covered in soft curls with the lower section sparsely covered or devoid of hair, eg. Irish Water Spaniel.
- **ring tail:** a tail that curls in circular fashion – a requirement of the Afghan Hound, but usually a fault in most breeds.
- **sabre tail:** a tail shaped like a sabre that is carried erect in a slightly curved fashion, eg. Basset Hound.
- **scimitar tail:** similar to a sabre tail, but usually carried less erect, eg. English Setter.
- **screw tail:** a short, twisted tail, kinked and turned in a spiral fashion, eg. Boston Terrier.
- **stern:** the name given to a Beagle's tail – carried erect and covered with short, weather-proof hair, always with a white tip, called a flag.
- **tufted tail:** long or short with a plume on the end, eg. Chinese Crested Dog.
- **whip tail:** similar to a bee sting, this tail is thick at the root from where it tapers horizontally to a point, eg. Bull Terrier.