



Breed Standard Explained

Originating in Germany, since Roman times, the Rottweiler is an above-average sized, very agile, black and tan dog. Extremely strong and imposing, he is easily obedience trained and is a dog that enjoys working. His expression is tranquil and kind but when aroused will hold his own against any opponent. He is not a dog for the inexperienced. He is very active and needs plenty of exercise to control his strong character and powerful build.

A good understanding of the canine skeleton is recommended before reading the interpretation of the standard

General Appearance

Above average size, stalwart dog. Correctly proportioned, compact and powerful form, permitting great strength, manoeuvrability and endurance.

Excessive size can lead to a clumsy, cloddy dog whose powers of endurance and manoeuvrability will be greatly curtailed. "Stalwart" is strong, sturdy, dependable, courageous. "Compact" – compact is sometimes used to describe a square dog. The Rottweiler should not be square, just off the square in a proportion of 9-10. Males are larger and more heavily built with stronger bone. Bitches are distinctly feminine, but without weakness of substance or structure. Reversal of the appearance [i.e. bitchy looking males] is not correct. The general muscle mass on a Rottweiler should be obvious with good definition and tone.

Characteristics

Appearance displays boldness and courage. Self-assured and fearless. Calm gaze should indicate good humour.

The Rottweiler should immediately display his characteristics by his 'bearing' – which should be bold yet steady, courageous yet confident, fearless yet friendly. Self-assurance should manifest itself in the calm gaze and good humour of correct character.

Temperament

Good natured, not nervous, aggressive or vicious; courageous, biddable, with natural guarding instincts.

One must differentiate between the Rottweiler's attitude to humans and other dogs, particularly the males. Whilst a belligerent attitude between males is tolerated to a certain extent, it is totally unacceptable towards humans. The Rottweiler has an inherent desire to protect home and family and is an intelligent dog of hardiness and adaptability with a strong willingness to work. He must be friendly towards strangers without being pushy; friendliness with a touch of reserve.

Head and Skull

Head medium length, skull broad between ears. Forehead moderately arched as seen from side. Occipital bone well developed but not conspicuous.

The Rottweiler head is immediately distinctive. It should be broad so therefore the width between the ears is important – seen from above it should give the impression of a blunt-ended triangle, with a 60/40 ratio of skull to muzzle [or foreface]. The topline of the skull between the ears should be almost flat with the fold of the ears extending this line. The moderate arch of the forehead means what it says – bulging foreheads are as undesirable as shallow ones. A rounded skull when viewed from front is not correct, especially when accompanied by low set ears.

Cheeks well boned and muscled but not prominent. Skin on head not loose, although it may form a moderate wrinkle when attentive.

Over-development of the cheeks and zygomatic arch will result in an undesirable heavy, coarse, Bullmastiff head; too little development produces a Dobermann type. The moderate wrinkle which is allowed when the dog is attentive should not be interpreted as encouraging wrinkle, it is merely a frown of concentration. A wrinkled head encourages Entropion. The term “dry head” is best used to describe the Rottweiler head, i.e. skin fits tightly.

Muzzle fairly deep with topline level, and length of muzzle in relation to distance from well defined stop to occiput to be as 2 is to 3. Nose well developed with proportionately large nostrils, always black.

The depth of the muzzle should be roughly the same through its length with a strong underjaw. The muzzle should be broad from under the eyes along its length but slightly tapering at the end, ie the muzzle end of the blunt ended triangle. The top of the muzzle should be level, not downfaced or upfaced; length of muzzle should be one third of the head length to the occiput. The stop should be well defined but not exaggerated; in profile should not be so steep that it forms a right angle with the muzzle. The nostrils should be large and open to enable good scenting skills; the nose should always be black although a “winter nose” is sometimes seen [this is a slight ‘pinking’ at the end of the nose].

Eyes

Medium size, almond-shaped, dark brown in colour; light eye undesirable, eyelids close fitting.

Eyes should be in proportion to the head, not too large and bulging – but not too small and ‘piggy’ either. The shape of an almond is pointed at each end and rising in the middle – not round like a filbert or a hazelnut. Dark brown does not mean black! A black eye will not give a tranquil, calm expression. Neither does it mean light brown, the standard is quite specific stating that a light eye [or bird of prey eye] is “undesirable”. Eyelids close fitting ensures that there will be no inward or outward rolling of the eyelids leading to Entropion or Ectropion.

Ears

Pendant, small in proportion rather than large, set high and wide apart, lying flat and close to cheek.

Ears are triangular, hanging down, close to the cheek; not too small so as to be light and fly-away but not too large and heavy; they are set in line with the top of the skull, giving the appearance of broadening the skull; if set too high they give a comical expression; they should hang flat with no creases, not stand away from the head and there should be no daylight between the inner edge of the ear and the face. Neither should they be low set which gives an impression of houndiness.

Mouth

Teeth strong, complete dentition with scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Flews black and firm, falling gradually away towards corners of mouth, which do not protrude excessively.

Large white strong correctly placed teeth – 42 in number as follows:

Upper jaw: 6 incisors/2 canines/8 premolars/4 molars.

Lower jaw: 6 incisors/2 canines/8 premolars/6 molars

Scissors bite means the front edge of the lower incisors should touch the inside edge of the upper incisors. That is the correct bite. If the upper jaw protrudes in excess of the lower jaw, that is an overshot bite; if the under jaw protrudes in excess of the upper jaw, that is an undershot bite. If both jaws meet edge to edge that is a level bite. All can cause problems for the dog and are incorrect.

Flews are the upper and lower lips culminating in the corners of the mouth; they should be tight without openness, in combination with the overall dryness of the head. Ideally mouth pigment should be dark with little, or no, pink pigment visible.

Neck

Of fair length, strong, round and very muscular. Slightly arched, free from throatiness.

The length of neck is essential to the correct profile of the Rottweiler although “of fair length” could be misinterpreted to mean that the neck should be fairly long. ‘Moderate length’ would be a better description. There is no doubt that the neck must be slightly arched, muscular and strong to carry the noble head. Throatiness means too much skin hanging around under the neck which is not desirable. A “clean dry outline” should be aimed at.

Forequarters

Shoulders well laid back, long and sloping, elbows well let down, but not loose. Legs straight, muscular, with plenty of bone and substance. Pasterns sloping slightly forward.

Shoulder blade (scapula) should lay well back into the withers, forming a good angle (90 degrees is the normal interpretation) with the upper arm (humerus) which should be of equal length; elbows held close against the body. Viewed from the front the forelegs should be straight; bone proportionate to the body [“plenty of bone” could be misconstrued to mean heavy and cloddy]. Viewed from the side there is a slight “give” or slope to the pastern which

acts as a shock absorber as the dog moves. If the leg is completely straight it would pound into the foot, which would cause problems over time.

Body

Chest roomy broad and deep with well sprung ribs. Depth of brisket will not be more, and not much less than 50 per cent of shoulder height. Back straight, strong and not too long, ratio of shoulder height to length of body should be as 9 is to 10. Loins short, strong and deep, flanks not tucked up. Croup of proportionate length, and broad, very slightly sloping.

There should be a discernable forechest [sternum]. The desired straight back is measured from withers to hip bone; the croup is from hip bone to tail root. Viewed from the side the bottom of the chest should be half the height to the withers. It is essential that the back is straight and strong, without weakness. The ratio of height to length is 9 to 10. [see above] With the loins short, strong and deep this gives the desired level underline and ensures that the flanks are not tucked up. Croup is proportionate and broad and the emphasis is on “very” slightly sloping. A croup that is too short and level gives a high tail set and a terrier outline. The croup (atop the pelvic girdle) acts as a fulcrum to the body transmitting forward thrust to the spine. If too sloping, momentum is lost; if too flat the stride often becomes short and choppy.

Hindquarters

Upper thigh not too short, broad and strongly muscled. Lower thigh well muscled at top, strong and sinewy below. Stifles fairly well bent. Hocks well angulated without exaggeration, metatarsals not completely vertical. Strength and soundness of hock highly desirable.

Hindquarters should balance the angulation of the forequarters, with a broad firmly muscled upper thigh. A good width to the thigh gives the desired anchor for strongly developed muscles and well bent stifles. Lower thigh is long and powerful with extensive muscling leading into a strong hock joint. The strength and soundness of the hock is vital in an endurance trotting herding breed. Viewed from behind the hind legs are straight and strong, and wide enough apart to balance the width of the body. There should be good width to the inner thigh giving the appearance of a substantial ‘bottom’.

Feet

Strong, round and compact with toes well arched. Hind feet somewhat longer than front. Pads very hard, toenails short, dark and strong. Rear dewclaws removed.

The word “strong” is used here based on the dog’s working heritage. Feet are round and compact [cat-like] with nails short, strong and black and toes well arched. Flat or splayed feet are not capable of producing the arch necessary to keep the toenails short; neither are they capable of supporting a trotting dog over any long distances. Pads are thick and hard. Feet should face forwards – not turning east to west, which is the sign of a weak pastern. Correct feet and pasterns are a necessity on a correctly built Rottweiler [akin to having good tyres and shock absorbers on a car]. Short toe nails come from a correctly shaped foot.

Tail

Docked: Docked at first joint. Strong and not set too low. Normally carried horizontally but slightly above horizontal when dog is alert.

Docking has been banned by law in the UK since 2007 but as there are still dogs being shown that are docked, that part of the standard needs no further clarification.

Undocked: Strong. Thickness and length in proportion to overall balance of dog. Set as a continuation of the croup, neither too high nor too low. Carried horizontally. May be raised when alert and carried in a half moon or sabre fashion when moving. May hang down when at rest. Kinked tails and tails with lateral deviation undesirable.

A Rottweiler tail may be carried in a half-moon or sabre fashion, it should NOT curl right over the dog's back in a double curl, nor should it touch the back or curl to one side of the back [lateral deviation]. The base of the tail should NOT come away from the spine at a vertical angle. Also kinks along the tail should be penalised as they are likely to be caused by genetic defects of the spine. The tail normally hangs down when nothing is happening but will immediately move above the horizontal when the dog is alert. The tail is most important for working as it helps with the dog's balance acting as a rudder; it also signals the dog's intentions very clearly, particularly to other dogs.

Gait\Movement

Conveys an impression of supple strength, endurance and purpose. While back remains firm and stable there is a powerful hindthrust and good stride. First and foremost, movement should be harmonious, positive and unrestricted.

The Rottweiler is an endurance trotter; a 'flying' trot akin to GSD movement is neither desirable nor correct. His original purpose was to maintain a steady trot over varied terrain and long distances whilst driving cattle. His movement should be powerful, unhindered and sure with a strong reach of the forequarters and a powerful rear drive. The motion is effortless, efficient and ground-covering without loss of ground coverage by an exaggerated lift of feet and pasterns. 'Upward' movement wastes energy and reduces endurance. Front and rear legs are thrown neither in nor out as the imprint of the hind feet should touch those of the front feet. In a trot the forequarters and hindquarters are mutually co-ordinated while the back remains firm and level. As speed increases the legs will converge under the body towards a centre line, but do not cross. Viewed from the rear the hocks should not be close together as if they are almost touching [this is moving 'close behind' and is incorrect]. Neither should the dog crab; this is usually indicative of an unbalanced skeleton.



[Correct movement – 10 week old puppy]

Coat

Consists of top coat and undercoat. Top coat is of medium length, coarse and flat. Undercoat, essential on the neck and thighs, should not show through top coat. Hair may also be a little longer on the back of the forelegs and breechings. Long or excessively wavy coat highly undesirable.

Topcoat is straight, coarse to the touch, dense, of medium length and lying flat. Not too coarse like a Terrier, but not so soft like a Spaniel. If the coat is correct it should be water resistant. Undercoat should be present on the neck and thighs but should not show through. Undercoat is grey, tan or black. The coat is short on head, ears and legs, longest on the breechings. There should be no wave to the coat. Open or excessively short coats without undercoat are not correct. Long coats are not desirable.

Colour

Black with clearly defined markings as follows: a spot over each eye, on cheeks, as a strip around each side of muzzle, but not on bridge of nose, on throat, two clear triangles on either side of the breast bone, on forelegs from carpus downward to toes, on inside of rear legs from hock to toes, but not completely eliminating black from back of legs, under tail. Colour of markings from rich tan to mahogany and should not exceed 10 per cent of body colour. White marking is highly undesirable. Black pencil markings on toes are desirable. Undercoat is grey, fawn or black.

There should be no blending of the black into the tan. Markings are “clearly defined”. Main faulty areas here are too much tan on the muzzle; across the front of the chest where the “bow tie” becomes so large it covers practically the whole of the chest; excessive black or “sooty” markings on the feet; so little markings that the dog appears almost black all over. The colour should range [on the lower scale] from a rich tan to a darker tan or mahogany [on the upper scale]. Excessively light, straw or yellow tan is unacceptable. Occasionally some puppies will carry a few white hairs on the sternum which eventually disappear. If this marking is too large and continues into adulthood that is an indication of the Rottweiler’s historical relationship to the Sennenhunds and is highly undesirable on a Rottweiler.

Size

Dogs height at shoulder: between 63-69 cms (25-27 ins); bitches between 58-63.5 cms (23-25 ins). Height should always be considered in relation to general appearance.

Correct proportion is the key, as long as the dog is within the standard’s size range.

Faults

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

Whilst one should not look for faults in judging the external appearance – and there are too many to list here – virtue should not be measured by statistics alone. The breed standard is merely a blueprint of perfection which should be aimed at.

Note

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

Unilateral cryptorchid or cryptorchid males is a disqualifying fault in the FCI breed standard.

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Working Group

**Undocked tails updated: April 2018*