

The Neapolitan Mastiff

Five keys to interpreting the standard

The Neapolitan Mastiff, as many breeds, is an amazing complex and wonderfully interesting animal. Judging it can be marvellous adventure. Without taking away from the challenge of understanding the essence of the beast, we'd like to present five basic things to understand.

Remembering these five aspects when reading and learning the standard, and when meeting the breed specimens, will help you understanding and appreciate the monstrous beauty embodied in this ancient canine.



- The first three aspects are the essence of Breed Type. And we call this the "WHAM factor"
- Wrinkle
- Head
- and
- Mass

The proper mastino **MUST** have Wrinkle. There must be loose skin all over the body. There must be wrinkles and folds on the head, and there must be a dewlap.

In the USA lack of wrinkle is a disqualification.
Lack of a dewlap is also disqualification.

The proper mastino **MUST** have the distinctive head. The Head is large in proportion to the body. The proportions of the head are very important...the description of the head takes up over 1/3 of the entire Standard.

The proper Mastino **MUST** be Massive.

Massive bone, massive structure,
massive massive massive.

And we don't mean Mass such as you see when you see a solid stocky blocky Labrador and say, wow, look at the bone on that Lab...we mean MASS...the dog must have a presence. Lack of Mass is again a disqualification in the US.

When the mastino walks in the ring, you should
be almost hit in the face with the **WHaM** factor
...WOW...

what a dog...

look at that head...

look at that wrinkle...

Look at that DOG!!!

- The last two critical aspects of the breed to understand relate to the Purpose and Function of the breed.
- Emotional Impact -- call this the "Big E"
- endurance (Low) -- call this the "little e"

Emotional Impact (high)



Emotional Impact (high)



The Mastino was created by Italians who wanted the viewer of the dog to undergo an emotional experience upon seeing this creature. All the Italians who talk about the breed talk about the Emotional Impact that the proper Mastino must generate.

Your eye is drawn to this dog when it walks past. The emotion some viewers experience is amazement ("My gosh, look at THAT!") Some viewers are overwhelmed and awestruck. ("Wow, look at that incredible dog!") Some are riveted by revulsion ("Who would want a dog that ugly!" or "Ugh, look at that slobber!")



The Neapolitan Mastiff head, its face, is formed by the wonderful wrinkles and folds. The eyes are deep-set, and the dog, when it looks directly at you, has a piercing look. Bad guys look at this dog, and their emotional impact should be one of "Oh boy, let's not disturb this dog....I don't wanna know what that dog can do!"

Actually, one could say that it's not so important what the emotion is, (awe, disgust, amazement, incredulous wonder....) just that you have one when you see the proper mastino! You should never be bored, or left unmoved.

endurance (low)



endurance (low)



The Neapolitan Mastiff was not bred for endurance. Its job is to guard and repel intruders from the home and the near-by environs. It does not have to run or be active for hours and hours. It must be able to patrol its territory, under its own schedule, and then it mostly lies on the porch, or in the shade of a tree or a bush and drowns. When it detects an intruder, the dog will investigate. If assured that no danger exists, it goes on about its own business.

If the dog interprets danger, or is startled, it can leap up very quickly and like a bear, move surprisingly fast for such a large animal. If needed it will chase an intruder away. But it is not meant to chase for miles and miles. It is meant to chase the intruder off the estate....and then the dog goes back to its chosen spot and lies down again.



Most dogs in the Utility Group, indeed, in the Gundog, Hound, Terrier, and other groups, require endurance. They are expected to run in the fields for hours on end, to follow a carriage for miles, to walk around the estate with the gamekeepers all day, to chase vermin for endless hours.

And many what I will call "nuances of construction" are designed to support that assumption. A level topline is desirable for most breeds because a strong spine and strong muscles support endurance. Straight fronts, parallel metatarsals, strong "reach and drive" are desirable in many breeds because they lend themselves to efficient movement which supports endurance in the field, on the farm, on the job.



But the Neapolitan Mastiff is not constructed for endurance. So, while the standard does call for a straight front, a level topline, and yes, we do want these things, we do not want them at the expense of the critical aspects of the breed: **Wrinkle, Head and Mass--and Emotional impact.**

When judging the Neapolitan Mastiff, it is very important to always always always select **Wrinkle, Head, and Mass...**and then to assess the construction of the body in light of the function of this dog. And you must remember that yes, this is a giant, heavy dog, but his function is to repel by his awesome incredible looks, and his physical function is to be able to spring up and chase an intruder away.

What this means to us is that we often "forgive" some construction issues that in other more "normal" breeds judges will be inclined to fault more heavily and would, indeed, immediately mean the dog would be disqualified from selection. For example, in a given that the largest, most massive, dog with the best wrinkle and the best head does not have a level topline....and the only other dog in the ring has a perfectly level topline, perfectly straight front, but is not massive in bone, or is lacking in wrinkle...as long as the bigger, typier, dog can do its job....**it is the proper dog to select.**

No, we don't want a crooked front. No, we don't want piano legs...or a sway-backed dog, or a dog high in the rear. The standard states straight fronts, level topline, moderate angulation and that is what we want. But over all of that, we **MUST HAVE** Wrinkle, Head and Mass. And once we've assessed and found the dogs with Wrinkle, Head, and Mass, from among those we then select the dogs with the best topline, the best front, and the best rears.

Remember **FORM AND FUNCTION**

What was the function of the breed?

Is the dog built to do the job?

Does the dogs construction enable it
to do the job?





