

CRITIQUING

A PRESENTATION FOR ASPIRING/TRAINEE JUDGES



ANDREW BURT 2019

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Critiquing is about **sharing your views on the exhibits you judge**. It can be verbal or written.

Critiques come in many different forms:

- a word to the exhibitor or answering questions after the completion of judging
- critiquing individual dogs in a full written critique (often the norm in Europe)
- providing a critique whereby you discuss your placements in a class
- a combination of both the above

I always try to remember that my opinion is an individual one, decided on one performance in one day of the animal's development. As such, I try not to predict and always emphasize that I am forming **my judgement on that particular day**.

Opinions and critiques can be very enlightening and useful to exhibitors, just as they can be disappointing and hurtful. I believe, as professionals, we should be able to present **our opinion in a positive way**, and we should all think hard about how we do this.

With written critiques, my opinion is that they should be **honest, constructive and where possible positive**. There would be very few dogs that we judge that do not have some positive points that we can highlight. Very general and superficial critiques provide the exhibitors with very little information regarding their animal, and why decisions were made, and these generalist critiques (nice, nice, nice) should be avoided.

As a judge, critiquing can be threatening and stressful at first, and in our present ANKC system, trainees are given many chances to critique animals and this should be considered a great opportunity – because in most cases the result will not be shared with owners. Use your Group Leaders, Mentors and Lecturers to refine skills in this area before you are called upon to do the 'real thing'.



It is worth considering whether you are going to make **written notes**, for which a **prepared template** may be useful, or whether you are going to use a **voice recording device to provide you with notes for your critique**. Of course, European critiques are usually dictated direct to a writer, and thus are “on the spot” and require much thought and care.

Not many of us have a memory that would allow us to write a detailed critique on individual exhibits a day or two after the show. A digital camera is a great way of capturing the line up of place winners in each class during the show. I also now use a digital voice recorder, which is much more effective than the old tape ones, and is a real asset in this situation.





HOW TO CRITIQUE

- MAKE IT SIMPLE
- MAKE IT FACTUAL
- DON'T SAY WHAT YOU WANT, OR WOULD LIKE TO SEE, BUT WHAT THE DOG HAS
- SAY IT WHEN YOU SEE IT
- MAKE IT SYSTEMATIC
- TAKE AN OVERALL IMPRESSION FIRST, THEN START WITH THE HEAD AND WORK DOWN THROUGH THE BODY. FINISH WITH FORE AND AFT MOVEMENT, SIDE GAIT, AND THEN LOOK AT THE OVERALL IMPRESSION AGAIN

DETAILED CRITIQUE FORMAT

- AGE AND GENDER
- TYPE AND CARRIAGE
- SIZE, SUBSTANCE, BONE, PROPORTIONS
- HEAD, SKULL, STOP, MUZZLE, CHEEK (HEAD FORM)
- EARS, EYES, LIPS, PIGMENT, BITE AND TEETH
- NECK, THROAT, WITHERS, TOPLINE, UNDERLINE, RIBBING, FORECHEST
- FORE AND HINDQUARTERS WITH ANGULATION
- PASTERNS, HOCKS, AND FEET
- COAT, COLOUR AND MARKINGS
- TAIL – LENGTH, SUBSTANCE AND SET. TAIL CARRIAGE (MOVING AND STANDING)
- MOVEMENT FORE AND AFT, SIDE MOVEMENT
- TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

MORE GENERAL CRITIQUE FORMAT

- AGE AND GENDER
- TYPE
- SUBSTANCE, BONE, PROPORTIONS
- HEAD, EXPRESSION AND MOUTH
- NECK AND FOREQUARTERS
- BODY
- HINDQUARTERS AND TAIL
- MOVEMENT
- COAT

Of course the above will vary at times, depending upon the Judge, the breed, breed specific points and the show.

WORDS TO THINK ABOUT

GOOD WORDS:

- Typical
- Excellent
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory
- Correct
- Very good

WORDS TO STEER CLEAR OF:

- Nice
- Like
- Attractive
- Showy
- Good – tends to be used far too often and means little ...
- Lovely

However, the use of these words now and again causes no offence and can be fine – just not the basis of every critique.



UNDERSTANDING GRADING TERMS

No Grading

This grading is given when the judge for whatever reason cannot examine (or can not touch) the dog in gait, conformation, teeth, coat, testes, tail, etc. Or when it is apparent that the dog has been treated or operated on in some way to alter or conceal some faulty feature of the dog.

Insufficient

Is given to a dog that does not correspond to the typical prescribed type. It clearly also shows a behaviour that is not typical for the breed.

Sufficient

Is given to a dog which sufficiently corresponds to the breed standard without having the generally known characteristics or hallmarks of the breed and its physical condition and conformation leaves much to be desired.

Good

Must be awarded to a dog which displays the main characteristics or hallmarks of the breed, but which has obvious visible faults. A 'good' dog may still have 'excellent' parts but the visible faults lower the whole appearance.

Very Good

Awarded to a dog which displays the typical characteristics or hallmarks of the breed, who is of well balanced proportions and condition. Some minor faults will be accepted or overlooked, however not morphological ones (affecting breed

characteristics or hallmarks). This grading can only be given to a “classy” dog with a few visible faults.

Excellent

Awarded to a dog that is very close to the latest approved breed standard. Being in an outstanding condition and must have a harmonious and well-balanced character and temperament. It must possess class and an outstanding presence or posture. His superior quality as a breed specimen overshadows any minor imperfections, whilst the typical appearance of his gender is always apparent. Dogs to be Masculine and Bitches to be Feminine. An outstanding dog all round.

On the following page I have provided some sections of critiques that I have been called upon to write, and maybe these will provide you with some ideas, although most of you will have read countless critiques of varying types and style within your own chosen breed circles.

The below individual critique was an example from the **Bullmastiff Club of Victoria Champ Show in 2006**. This show gained special permission from the VCA for each exhibit to be critiqued and graded. This is critiquing at its most detailed, similar to what might be expected by a specialist judge in a Specialty situation. A critique in an All Breeds Show ring might often be less detailed.



BULLMASTIFF CLUB OF VICTORIA

33RD CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

KCC Park, Sunday 1st October 2006



INDIVIDUAL CRITIQUE OF EXHIBIT

NAME OF EXHIBIT	XXXXXXXXXXXX		
EXHIBIT NUMBER	30	WHELPED	28-1-2004
OWNER	XXXXXXXXXXXX		
SIRE	XXXXXXXXXXXX		
DAM	XXXXXXXXXXXX		
BALANCE	2 years 8 months fawn male. Very good height to length ratio.		
HEAD AND MOUTH	Excellent headpiece. Good breadth of skull. Good depth of skull. Correct length of muzzle. Correct eye shape and colour. Just undershot. I would like to see a broader underjaw.		
BODY AND TOPLINE	Reasonable breadth of chest. A little more length of upper arm needed. A little pinched in elbows. Good bone. Nice feet. Slightly east west. Excellent spring of rib. Strong short loin. Reasonable hind angulation. Strong thighs. A little steeper in croup than I like to see.		
COAT & COLOUR	Excellent colouring, both on body and with head markings, although orbits could be slightly more defined.		
MOVEMENT	Pleasing heading away from me. A little restricted coming back towards me. Pleasing side gait with the correct reach and drive.		
OTHER COMMENTS			
GRADING	EXCELLENT		

PLEASE NOTE: This is an individual critique given in the opinion of the Judge, based on the qualities and performance of this exhibit today.

October 1, 2006

Judge ~ Mr. Andrew Burt



Below are two excerpts from the more general critiques written for Club Newsletters after the show This is worth considering in terms of how one might write some general statements about the dogs judged, together with providing detail on placegetters.

It is my view that if you are accepting a Specialty appointment, you should be:

- Willing to critique your placings
- Willing to make some general statements about the breed quality you found on the day
- Fully prepared – in terms of research, standards, extended standards etc (note my excerpt from the Amstaff Club of Qld show ... not a breed I was anywhere near a specialist in, but I did a lot of research to make sure I was up to speed before the appointment.)



CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW CRITIQUE ANDREW BURT – OCTOBER 2006

Firstly, thank you very much to the committee of the Bullmastiff Club of Victoria for the invitation to judge at this show. I have attended every one of the past Championship Shows since the first one, back in 1974, at the Dandenong Showgrounds, judged by the late David White of Queensland. It is 28 years since my New Zealand import, Ch Arabella of Arapeti won this show just a month after returning from Queensland, ten months after she was stolen and three weeks after she returned to Melbourne! Thus, as you will appreciate, this particular event holds many great memories for me.

I would like to also thank my stewards, John Thompson and Annie Briglia, together with the ticket writer Debbie Parker and the VCA representative, Sue Emary. Particular thanks to Jessamy Morrissey for her outstanding effort as typist for the critiques ... I am not sure she realised what a long and demanding job it would be!

Hopefully my critiques were accepted in the manner they were given – an honest and constructive assessment of each exhibit. Of course each judge has their own perspectives, and interpretations of the breed standard, and critiques and gradings will vary accordingly. The only variations in placings to gradings occurred in situations where dogs, once critiqued and graded, failed to continue to move consistently, or in one case, improved their movement as the show progressed. In the case of several exhibits who were lame on the day, I was happy to provide a critique for them, but not a grading on this occasion.

My general impressions well there have certainly been improvements. Generally heads were pretty good, with few very plain heads or long and snipey muzzles. Some exhibits could still improve in muzzle, and I was fairly harsh in penalizing muzzles that tapered considerably. There were some outstanding heads, which were mainly on the dogs. For me, in dogs, XXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXXXXXX were the stand out heads, with excellent square skulls, full and broad muzzles, good rise of stop and generally correct eye shape. The bitches, although generally fairly good, lacked the 'extra something' of a great head. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX together with XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX were very good and from memory the most typical of the bitches' heads. This is not a gender related issue, as in the past there have certainly been bitches with fantastic feminine heads that could hold their own with any male of the breed.

Toplines still need some work, but the 'hooped over the loin' topline, which are something I really dislike, were much less evident on the day. However, in saying that, there were far too many steep croups for my liking, and this is an area that I feel breeders need to watch in the future. The Bullmastiff tail should be set on fairly high, with only a very slight slope of croup (the part of the back from the front of the pelvis to the root of the tail).

Mouths were generally quite good, but as usual some exhibits do need to have wider underjaws. I did spot a couple of wry mouths (type of mouth with some twist of the jaw so that upper and lower jaws are out of alignment). This is an area where breeders and exhibitors need to become more proficient in being able to detect the defect, mainly in terms of being able to correctly assess their breeding stock and make appropriate decisions as to whether to breed, and if so, what dogs and lines to breed to.

The two areas that did concern me were in the front assembly:

There were many exhibits with varying degrees of 'east west' feet. This problem, in examination, related to pinched elbows which result from a lack of breadth of the brisket area between the front legs, and thus generally to chest width overall.

I was also concerned at the number of exhibits with short upper arms (this is the humerus bone which runs from the elbow to the point of shoulder, meeting the scapula). When the upper arm is short, this brings the front legs forward, rather than them being placed under the withers (the highest point of the shoulder blades and the point where the dog's height is measured). This misplacement of the front legs means that exhibits have less fore chest than the ideal and the reach in front movement is somewhat restricted in many cases.

In most cases, bone and feet were pleasing. Light eyes were in the minority, and masks were dark, orbits (dark colour around the eye) were good, and ears were darker than the overall body colour, providing the correct expression desired in the Bullmastiff.

Overall, I was very pleased with the quality entry and my Challenge and Reserve Challenge winners were in my opinion excellent specimens. I would like to thank all exhibitors for the sportsmanlike way they accepted my decisions together with what appeared to be a positive acceptance of my critiques and gradings.

I must say, that it was a rather exhausting day, but I thoroughly enjoyed myself and was very happy with my winners. I found some classes difficult, but tried to work the classes consistently, but as is always the case in judging, there were some decisions which I found easy and others where I had to weigh up positive and negative points and make a decision accordingly.

I was aiming to find reasonable heads, good balance and substance, together with specimens with good reach, drive and construction and I felt that I was able to achieve this in my overall winners on the day. Thankyou for a great day, and below is my assessment of exhibits that placed on the day.

Good luck to you all with your future exhibiting and breeding pursuits.

OPEN BITCH

These three bitches are quality bitches with some very good attributes.

1. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

5 year old fawn bitch. Reasonable body proportions, slightly longer than high. This bitch does not have a pretty expression in my opinion, but she still possesses many of the necessary head qualities. Good breadth of skull. Good depth of skull. Sufficient stop. Nice eye shape and colour. Fair strength of muzzle. Slight taper. Excellent mouth. Good fawn colouring but some smutty colouring on chest. Good head markings. Excellent breadth and depth of chest. Very well angulated in front. Have a look at this bitch to see an upper arm that matches the length of the scapula, thus providing correct front angulation. Reasonable spring of rib. Strong well-angulated hindquarters. Toes in a little going away. Excellent coming towards me. Outstanding reach and drive from the side. Holds topline well on the move.

As I stated, this bitch does not have what I would call a pretty head. However, she is typical, well constructed, and displays the best and most correct reach and drive on the day, along with a great topline on the move. She beat the reserve bitch on her angulation and side gait.

I was pleased to award her the bitch challenge, and Runner up to Best Exhibit in Show. She beat the Reserve Dog Challenge winner on her construction and movement.

2. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

4 year old fawn bitch. Very good height to length ratio. Good breadth of skull. Good depth of skull. Reasonable stop. Nice strength of muzzle. Muzzle could be a little bit more blunt. Very good mouth. Excellent width of chest and good fore-chest. Well angulated front. Good bone and feet. Good spring of rib. Well ribbed back. Short strong loin. Well angulated hindquarters. Reasonable width of thigh. Slightly more croup angle than I like. Well marked fawn with correct head markings. Slightly smutty on chest. True coming and going. Lifts a little bit in front. Good reach and drive on the move, although fairly flat in her temperament. She was out moved by the winner of the class.

3. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

3 year old fawn bitch. Longer than high and too long in body for me in . Very pleasant head. Good width and depth of skull. Good stop. Reasonably strong muzzle could be more blunt in front. Just undershot but could be wider in underjaw. Reasonably wide chest. Good forechest development. Well angulated in front. Reasonably good spring of rib. Longer loin. Good rear angulation and well developed thighs. Reasonably even fawn colouring but lighter on chest and minimal smutting. Very good head markings. Reasonably true coming and going. Adequate reach and drive. A little slack on the move.

I would suggest that critiques are, within our judging system, more often provided at Specialty level, and as such, one assumes, that having accepted an invitation to adjudicate at a Specialty, the judge will possess depth of knowledge of the particular breed, and be willing and able to provide deeper breed insights and more detailed individual critiques. Critiquing at a more 'general' level may well occur in less specialised shows. The above examples are included simply for those who may require some examples to help them out.



AMERICAN STAFFORDSHIRE TERRIER CLUB OF QLD Inc CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

**Judge: Mr. Andrew Burt (Vic)
October 2009**

Firstly, I would like to thank the Club for the opportunity to judge this wonderful entry. I have a great interest in the breed and certainly enjoyed the appointment. It was great to judge quality dogs, and work out my priorities when determining the placings in quality classes.

Thanks very much to the Club for their arrangements and Gwen Hovey for her job as Show Manager. My steward, Sue Jape, kept exhibitors organized and ready to go. I am sorry that I was on a 4pm flight, which made the end of the day a bit rushed, but I was determined to spend my time sorting and evaluating the dogs ... but missed the chance to speak with exhibitors at the conclusion of judging.

Congratulations to the Club on a wonderful day, with an outstanding array of trophies. It certainly was impressive!

I want to congratulate exhibitors on their sportsmanship and presentation of the exhibits. Exhibitors were polite, friendly and accommodating of my instructions in the ring. Generally the dogs were presented in spotless condition. It was a warm day, and exhibitors managed to give their dogs shade when necessary, but be back in the right place at the right time. Generally, the dogs were well trained and socialized, thus giving themselves the best chance of presenting to their very best.

Overall, I was fairly pleased with the quality, and the breed can certainly hold its own. For me, it was great to see evidence of mainly very happy, easy temperaments, which is very important in a breed such as this. There were many exhibits that had smiling expressions and tails that never stopped wagging, and I believe this is testament that breeders are focusing on the right priorities in their breeding programs. There were, however, a few shy ones, which is certainly uncharacteristic of this breed.

I did not find all classes easy, and there was continual weighing up of my priorities, the hallmarks of the breed, and consideration for the breed's function. In some classes there were clear winners, and in others it was very difficult to sort them out according to the criteria I was using. I tried to be absolute in my quest to find dogs with plenty of leg under them, partnered with good reach and drive. I was looking for dogs that then finished the picture off with a typical head and expression, correct tail set and carriage, and of course correct bites.

I will start by mentioning the wicketing. Obviously size is a controversial and topical subject in Amstaffs. Size is part of the standard for the breed, and must be considered along with other breed characteristics.

Personally, I found it very difficult to find what I wanted within size limits, and my approach on the day was to use the wicketed size for two purposes – to estimate the size reasonably accurately of all dogs in the lineup, and to evaluate exhibits accurately.

I want to emphasize here that size was one of my criteria, but not the only criteria, but certainly an important point that needed careful consideration in the determination of the placing of the best examples of the breed in the class. As I found that most entries measured right at the top of the standard for their gender, or over, I tried to keep placings within an inch or so of the top of the standard where possible, and in most cases I achieved this goal.

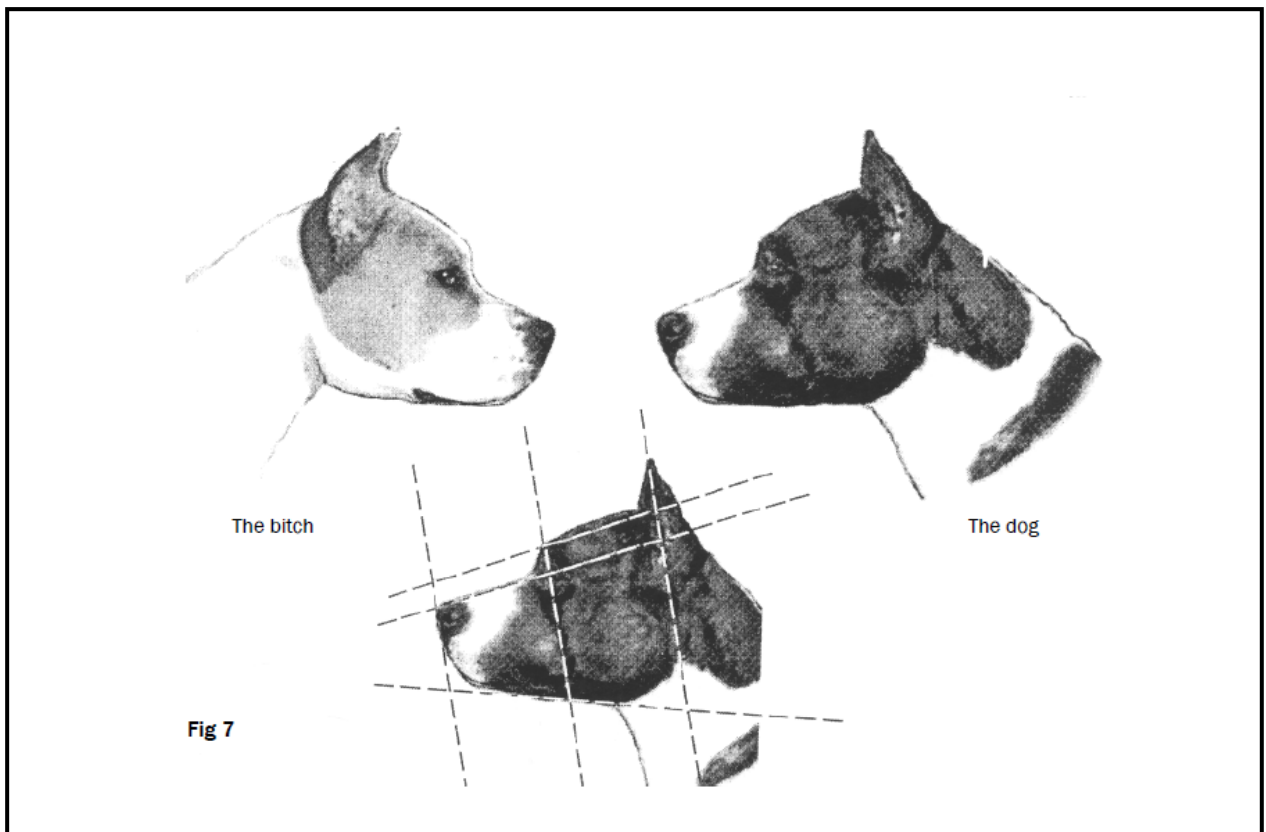
There were many positive points I found on the day:

- Temperaments, as mentioned above
- In general, movement was quite good, although of course the dogs with better angles demonstrated more fluent gait with more typical reach and drive.
- Heads did vary, but there were lots of reasonable ones, and quite a few very good ones.
- Overall, substance was usually good, and there were only a minority of exhibits lacking the necessary strength and bone.

I think, to explain some of my decisions, I should also add a little about the Amstaff head here. If some exhibitors/breeders have not yet read the Extended Breed Standard (found at http://www.ankc.org.au/uploads/docs/234553American_Staffordshire_Terrier_BSE.pdf , or by accessing the ANKC website and clicking on breed standards) then I think this is a really good idea as it contains detailed explanation of many breed points and features.

The Amstaff head is not easy to grasp at first. Although the standard calls for very pronounced cheek muscles, I believe it is not asking for bulbous cheeks on the outside of the head, but rather great strength, depth and musculature in the cheek region, and the difference can be hard to determine without experience.

I found some of the heads to be longer overall than my ideal. While maintaining strength, the extended standard is clear on the necessary head planes, as illustrated in the below diagrams.



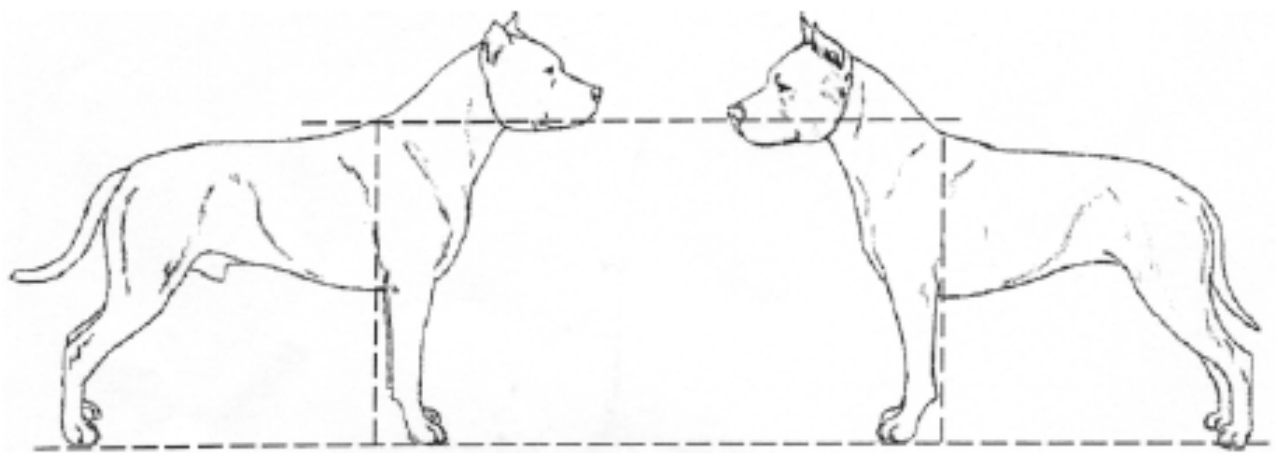
ABOVE: Diagram of head shape, balance and planes from Extended Breed Standard

The planes are clearly illustrated here. Parallel skull and top of muzzle planes are important. From the side, the head and muzzle top planes should be near parallel and there should be a convergence of top and bottom head planes as one moves toward the front. You may have seen me looking at each head from the side to determine these.

I still believe that the Amstaff head needs to exhibit strength, but with refinement, to make it a beautiful typical picture. Clean, strong heads, with just some wrinkled alertness on the skull, set off with correct ears, will create the ideal picture. I found my BIS show bitch to have a beautiful head and expression .. and you will see through my critique where I also found other very nice heads in my place getters.

There were also areas of concern generally for me:

- Balance is certainly an issue, and quite a number of exhibits were too long for what I was looking for. Similarly, I believe that the breed, considering its function, needs plenty of leg under the body, and I found quite a number of exhibits lacking in this area. Generally, if you have a look at my class winners, you will see the balance I was looking for, and I think this is typified in the examples used in the ANKC extended breed standard (see below diagrams). I believe it is VERY important to adhere to the correct breed proportions (this had nothing to do with actual height, but rather height to length proportions) as in my opinion long and/or low Amstaffs are untypical.



ABOVE: Amstaff balance as illustrated in the Extended Breed Standard



ABOVE: The balance and topline of the BIS winner

- Bites were surprising to me. I had expected to find almost all dogs having a scissor bite, whereas in reality there were quite a number of undershot and pincer/level bites. A scissor bite is far more healthy than a level bite in a dog such as this – otherwise teeth tend to rub against each other and incisors tend to eventually grind down a little.

Undershot bites are completely intolerable for me. As spectators, you will not have realized the bites of the exhibits, and may not have been aware why I might have left out an exhibit that may otherwise have been placed higher in the class. There was one class in particular where there were at least three poor bites.

As breeders, I believe you should give this occurrence due consideration in your breeding programs.

- Ears – the standard calls for “*Set high. Ears should be short and held rose or half pricked. Full drop to be penalised*”. I found quite a number of dogs with full drop ears, or one full dropped ear, and this mars the beautiful, characteristic, Amstaff expression.

The standard is not really specific on fully erect ears, but I did penalize these to an extent, as in my opinion they also affect the overall expression. However, you may have noticed on some occasions dogs with less than ideal ears did gain placings ... and this relates to my criteria. I would certainly prefer a correctly proportioned, sound Amstaff with a poor ear, rather than a long, low bodied one, or an unsound one, with good ears.

- Toplines and tail sets were also a concern. The diagram above demonstrates the correct Amstaff topline - “*slightly sloping from withers to rump with gentle short slope at rump to base of tail*”, and this helps us maintain the correct tail set and carriage – “*not curled or held over back*”.

Unfortunately I found many untypical toelines that marred the overall outline of the exhibit. Most exhibits possessed no slope from withers to rump, and often there was no slope to the croup, and in some cases the hindquarters were higher than the wither.

It is a good idea for exhibitors and breeders to view their dogs on the move and look closely at the topline ... and evaluate how it adheres to the standard. In my opinion, the Best In Show winning bitch, among her other attributes, demonstrated a very typical topline, from withers to croup, and over the croup.

My awards, and subsequent comments, are based on my observations on one day in the development of these exhibits. Obviously interpretation of the standard is sometimes subjective, but each and every exhibit was given detailed consideration and evaluated according to my interpretation of the standard.

I do not believe in writing a “padded critique” full of niceties ... but would much rather present you with a constructive discussion of my placements, and the basic reasoning behind them. This is certainly meant to be a positive discussion, and not to offend anyone. I hope that you can all read the below comments with that idea in your minds!

It is also worth noting that these are just my observations on the day, and my interpretation of the standard. Other judges will have different observations and interpretations, and realistically that is what makes a dog show – as if the same dogs continually won, many others would not come along. However, I believe we can all learn by listening to judges’ reasoning for their placements, and even if we disagree, and sometimes we will, but honest, well thought through reasonings may provide some interesting points for future thought and consideration.

Congratulations to all the winners, and best wishes for all future ring and breeding pursuits to all exhibitors and breeders.

Andrew Burt October 2009 kazumi2000@optusnet.com.au

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON CRITIQUING

I suggest that trainee judges attend a German Shepherd Specialty Show, as not only is EVERY dog critiqued from first to last in the class, the judge after placing the first ten placegetters on the pegs, is given a microphone and verbally critiques the dogs in front of them to the general public and other exhibitors.

I believe that it is probably more important for the dog LAST in the class to be given a written critique than the first three, because the people can then compare the critique on their dog to those that were placed in front of them, so they can learn why they were placed last.

I have judged several Specialities of my breed, both in Australia and overseas, and have always critiqued every dog from first to last.

When critiquing, your opening line should be an overall picture of the dog and could be something like, "Masculine, strong, tri coloured dog, of excellent (very Good, or good) type." Then you start with the head, forequarters, body, hindquarters, then feet, coat, and lastly movement.

If the head is too heavy or too fine, you use words like "very strong" head or "I would like to see the head a little stronger" or things like "eyes could be a little more almond, or round", or whatever.

The same would apply to angulation. Would like to see a little more angulation in the forequarters or hindquarters? Maybe back could be a little firmer on the move? These are polite ways of saying straight in shoulder, no rear angulation and a dippy back. While you are critiquing honestly, you are saying things in a positive vain, rather than the negative.

Be careful when critiquing to never use words like "lovely", "beautiful" etc, as I do not know of any standard that has those words in them. My other pet peeve is "not as good a head as the dog in front" as I cannot see the dog in front when reading the critique, and then to compound the stupidity of the statement, when you flip back to the "dog in front" there is no mention of the head. Use words like "correct" and if the dog has an excellent head or shoulders, then say things like "Excellent head that is balanced has correct eye shape and colour, strong underjaw with scissor bite."

I use the words "Excellent" when describing something that is closest to the standard, "Very Good" for things that are pretty close to standard, and "Good" being just within standard.

I always write a bit of a preamble at the beginning of my critiques, explaining what I mean when using the words, excellent, very good and good.

I normally do my critiques into a tape recorder, and always say what the exhibit number of the dog I am critiquing into the tape at the beginning so it would, for example, begin as "Exhibit No 29 - Small, (Medium or large) brindle dog etc".

I like to critique as I go over the dogs rather than after they are on the pegs. I keep my tape recorder in my pocket, go over the dog, stand back and critique, then ask the dog to move, and as they are moving I record a description of movement. That could be, moved true and correct behind, has very good reach and drive (seen on the side during triangle) but would like to see elbows a little firmer on the come back.

When you critique on the pegs, you are relying on your memory of the movement of the placed dogs, and you could have judged 15 to 20 dogs in the mean time. This way I believe that I am doing a critique in front of me to the standard, rather than a comparison of the dogs on the pegs.

A critique is, after all, a verbal picture of the dog being critiqued.

Gwen Ford
Beagles & Dobermanns
Melbourne



How do Gradings work?

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Gradings are normally awarded at Specialist Rottweiler shows.

The Judge would normally do the placings as he/she would in a normal breed show. However he/she would attach a "quality" value to exhibits. The closer the dog resembles the Breed Standard, the higher the grading.

The following is a summary about the gradings that can be given. **Please note that these are short summaries and the whole process can be quite a bit more complex.**

For puppies:

Grading	Explanation
WVN	Little promising
VSP	Promising
VVN	Very Promising

For adult dogs:

Grading	Symbol	Explanation
No Grading	OB	This grading is given when the judge for whatever reason cannot examine (or can not touch) the dog in gait, conformation, teeth, coat, testes, tail, etc. Or when it is apparent that the dog has been treated or operated on in some way to alter or conceal some faulty feature of the dog.
Insufficient "Nicht Genügend"	NGGD	<p>Is given to a dog that do not correspond to the typical prescribed type. It clearly also shows a behavior that is not typical for the breed.</p> <p>Disqualifying faults that will cause the dog to be graded NGGD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An over aggressive dog, Or a dog that bites the judge. Very shy or nervous dogs. • A dog with a missing testicals (Crypt orchid or Monorchid). • A dog with inheritable dentition faults or jaw abnormalities. (Missing teeth) (Overshot or Undershot) • A dog with a coat abnormality (Long hair, White markings, Total lack of markings wrong coloured dogs). • Dogs with very light eye colour (Yellow eye colour). (Eyes of different colour) (Entropion, Ectropion • Dogs with obvious reversal of sex characteristics (Bitchy dogs or the reverse).
Sufficient "Genügend"	S	<p>Is given to a dog which sufficiently corresponds to the breed standard without having the generally known characteristics of the breed and its physical condition and conformation leaves much to be desired.</p> <p>Very obvious noticeable fault that will cause the dog to be down</p>

		<p>graded from a G to a GGD are as follows:</p> <p>Four or more of the visible faults as mentioned before for a grading of GOOD.</p>
<p>Good</p> <p>"Gut"</p>	G	<p>Must be awarded to a dog which displayed the main characteristics of the Rottweiler, but which has obvious visible faults to the extend that they cannot be disguised.</p> <p>Obvious visible fault that will cause the dog to be down graded from a SG to a G are as follows:</p> <p>Three or more faults must be visible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A level bite, age 24 months is not good. Age 4 –5 years not so bad. Or other dentition faults. 2. A pink mouth and gums. 3. A dog lacking clear and well defined markings or one with severe smudges in the markings. Very light colour markings. 4. A dogs who's back is getting soft whilst running (Dip in the back). Or a roached back., also showing other movement faults. Lack of rich and drive. Cow hocked, Splayed feet, Soft pasterns, 5. A dogs with incorrect ear carriage. 6. A Dog with a lighter eye colour. (light brown) 7. A dog with straight front and hind quarters. (Lacking rear angulation, rich and drive.) 8. A dog with a shallow stop 9. A dog with a lot of dewlap. 10. A dog with loose shoulders or out in elbow. 11. A dog with a light nose colour 12. Too heavy dogs or too thin bitches. 13. Lethargic dogs or timed dogs.
<p>Very Good</p> <p>"Sehr Gut"</p>	SG	<p>Only awarded to a dog which displays the typical characteristics of the Rottweiler, who is of well balanced proportions and in good condition. Some minor faults will be accepted. or overlooked, however not morphological ones (affecting type). This grading can only be given to a "classy" dog with very few visible faults.</p> <p>Obvious visible fault that will cause the dog to be down graded from a V to a SG are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A level bite, age 24 months is not good. Age 4 –5 years not so bad. Or other slight dentition faults, like a twisted P3. 2. A pink mouth and gums. 3. A dog lacking clear and well defined markings or one with severe smudges in the markings. Very light colour markings. 4. A dogs who's back is getting soft whilst running (Dip in the back). Or other slight movement faults.

		5. A dogs with incorrect ear carriage. 6. A Dog with a lighter eye colour. (medium brown) 7. A dog with straight hind quarters. Lacking rear angulation, rich and drive. 8. A dog with a lot of dewlap. 9. A dog with loose shoulders or out in elbow. 10. A dog with a light nose colour.
Excellent "Vorzuglich"	V	May only be awarded to a dog that is very close to the latest approved breed standard of the Rottweiler. Being in an outstanding condition and must have a harmonious and well-balanced character and temperament. It must possessed class and an outstanding glowing presence or posture. His superior quality as a breed specimen overshadows any minor imperfections, whilst the typical appearance of his gender is always apparent. Dogs to be Masculine and Bitches to be Feminine. An outstanding dog all round.

When the dogs are placed from first to third, a further value is attached to the Grading. The position the dog has been placed is put at the after the actual grading:

Examples:

Placing	Grading
1	V1
2	V2
3	V3

It is not to say that all dogs placed, will have the same grading:

Placing	Grading
1	V1
2	SG2
3	SG3

Note that effectively a dog that has a "V" grading is of better quality than a dog with a "SG" grading. Therefore, a "V" grading will always stand in front of a "SG" grading



JUDGING UNDER FCI RULES

Anne Indergaard, Annwn Welsh Corgis, Trondheim, Norway

First, an introduction to explain on what basis I can write this article. First and foremost, I am a dedicated Corgi breeder on a very small scale, but I also have been a long time member of the Norwegian Kennel Club board of directors and on the Judges' Training Committee. In addition to judging Corgis, which I have judged on three continents and in most countries in Western Europe, I am also qualified to judge around 30 other breeds with CC.

The first thing non-FCI judges worry about when invited to judge in FCI countries seems to be the grading of the dogs. The second is writing critiques. But one thing you don't have to worry about is your Judge's Book. All paper work is taken care of by the ring steward and all you have to do is give it a check and sign it at the end. Basic ring procedures are also the same.

Grading

As in all countries, you get the full class in the ring and are able to get an overview. Then each dog has to be gone thoroughly over, given a written critique and graded. When all in the class are graded, they come back for placement, as in other countries. In some countries all, in others only those with sufficient grading. This may vary from country to country, but rest assured, your ring steward will keep you up to date on this. The same goes for choosing best male and best female, - rules may vary, but your ring steward is responsible for keeping the right dogs in the ring and informing you from which class they come.

The highest grade is EXCELLENT. This means the dog is close to the ideal of the standard of the breed, in excellent condition, well tempered and well presented. Minor imperfections can be ignored, but a male must be masculine, a bitch feminine.

VERY GOOD is awarded to dogs who are typical for their breed, well-balanced and in good condition. A few minor faults may be tolerated, but none that affect the soundness of the dog.

GOOD is to be awarded to dogs who have the main features of the breed, but show faults that detract from type or soundness.

SUFFICIENT means you can recognize which breed it is, but the dog has serious faults that detract from type and/or soundness.

Dogs who are severely untypical, or are aggressive, must be DISQUALIFIED. The same goes for males who do not have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. FCI policy is to adopt the breed standard of the country of origin. That means for Cardigan Welsh Corgis that they are judged according to the standard accepted by the British Kennel Club.

The British standard has no disqualifying clauses. However, one has been added to all the FCI breed standards: «Dogs displaying sign of aggression or physical defects affecting the dog's health/soundness must be disqualified». FCI goes on to explain that this also goes for flawed bites, coats and colours other than asked for in the standard, plus albinism. This means that overshot or undershot mouths in our breed should lead to disqualification, and also a fluffy coat, even though the standard doesn't clearly say so, as well as dogs with the colours that go with brown noses. Bear in mind that dogs with a really unsound anatomy also should be disqualified under this clause, but not dogs that are temporarily lame.

Dogs that are difficult or impossible to assess, due to not being trained to move on the leash or not used to being handled by others so that the judge can go over it, but not aggressive, (which should lead to disqualification), or if the judge suspects the dog has been tampered with or operated on to conform to the standard, should be given CANNOT BE JUDGED and excused from the ring, but the critique must clearly state why this dog receives no award. This can also be used for dogs showing lameness on the day or dogs who are obese.

For the complete wording of the definitions, check FCI's web site <http://www.fci.be>

In Scandinavian countries we do not use the terms given above, but award 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes, which roughly conform with Very Good, Good, and Sufficient, and then all those with a 1st come back in to be placed and the judge decides how many are of such quality that they could be awarded a «Certificate Quality». A 1st with Certificate Quality equals Excellent in other countries. This just to confuse overseas¹ judges, but don't worry, the ring steward will know the ropes.

Critiques

The second worry seems to be having to write critiques. You will have a secretary in the ring, writing as you dictate. The secretary should write exactly what you say. This means that the show committee has to find someone that can write fluently in the language used in the critiques and not one who translates directly as he/she writes. It is wise to check the text, at least in the beginning, and also to bring a list of the words you will use most often, so that you don't have to stop and spell them out. This helps you keep the necessary speed.

What also helps, is to stick to a pattern. Thus you make sure that you have covered all aspects and that all dogs get equal attention. We recommend you build up your critique like this:

You start with size, colour and sex plus your overall impression,- « Brindle male, up to size, of Excellent type/Very good type/Good type/Sufficient type».

Normally, excellent type would indicate a grading of Excellent, but then later on in your critique you may describe faults that must detract from the grading, even though the type still is excellent. So one must not necessarily follow the other, but often does.

Then, for instance, you start in one end, with the head and all the features you find necessary to comment on, continuing with neck, front construction, chest and ribcage, topline, tail set and carriage, hind construction, movement from all sides, coat and temperament. Below follow two examples. Both critiques are based on actual dogs.

«Brindle male of excellent size, substance and type. Masculine head with well placed, nicely rounded ears of correct size, dark eyes, correct stop. Correct bite. Would like a stronger lower jaw. Excellent length of neck coming from well laid back shoulders, with excellent forechest, front angulation and length of upper arm. Very good bone going down into correctly rounded feet. Well sprung ribs, but rib cage could be somewhat longer and loin somewhat shorter. Still, a strong and level topline ending in a well set tail carried correctly both standing and moving. Moves with excellent reach and drive, correct coming, could be more parallel going. Dense, short coat. Excellent temperament.»

Now, what grading should he have, do you think, from reading this critique? Will the owner recognize his/her dog with both faults and virtues?

Here is another one, the other end of the scale:

“Small, but masculine sable dog of sufficient type. Very good head with correct proportions, dark eyes, but expression is disturbed by small and high set ears. Correct bite. Would like better lay-back of shoulder and better angulation in the front, giving him a forechest. Good bone and feet, but appears leggy and has too much wrap-around. Short, cobby body in excellent condition, well muscled. Topline very good, but too much tuck-up due to too short ribcage. Tail set quite high. Would like

better angulation in the rear. Short and stilted movements. Excellent, dense, short coat. A happy, extrovert dog that will bring his owner much joy.”

Can you also picture this sable male? And if so, what grading does he merit?

Remember to use adjectives of correct value to describe the different parts of the dog;- an excellent lay back of shoulder and front angulation is better than a very good, and very much better than a good. It is too easy to slip into listing the different body parts, adding just nice or good, giving a bland critique that doesn't really say very much to the reader. Also, remember that in the FCI countries, exhibitors are used to having the faults mentioned, not only the virtues. Also, here, it is possible to consider how to say it;- «would like a better turn of stifle» sounds less harsh than «lacking in hind angulation», although in some cases there is no way of wrapping things up nicely, for instance «would like to see better reach and drive» implies that the dog has the construction to do so, but not the inclination. If that is not so, one simply has to say that the movements are short and stilted. The important thing is; when the owner reads the critique, he or she should be able to understand the grading.

Another important thing to remember, both when writing critiques and grading the dogs;- is not to get too hung up in details, in spite of the critiquing system, but to see the whole dog. AND to look for virtues where they are to be found, and to ignore minor imperfections. «To their virtues ever kind, to their faults a little blind». If every little fault should lead to subtraction from the grades, some dogs, like the poor little sable male above, could end up in minus! AND we could end up with winners who perhaps had few faults, but also few outstanding virtues. Personally, if a dog gives me goose bumps and closer inspection reveals a fault, I turn a blind eye and risk getting a reputation for one who «doesn't see» things.



Junior in Show and BOB in Canberra 2010

A COMPARISON OF TWO CURRENT AFGHAN SPECIALTY CRITIQUES – YOU DECIDE WHICH ONE SUITS YOU, WHICH ONE PROVIDES MORE INFO?

CRITIQUE ONE – SOME EXCERPTS

DOGS

CLASS 1 BABY PUPPY DOG

1st. No.3 KARAKUSH TAKIN THE HIGH ROAD

Bred by: H & L Gibson Owner: K & R Hutchings, H & L Gibson

Black & Cream male, substantial, nice balance, nice ringed tail free moving for a puppy

2nd. No. 1 KARAKUSH THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Bred by: H & L Gibson Owner: S Avery, T Ross, H & L Gibson

Black & Cream male, nice balance, showed well

CLASS 2 MINOR PUPPY DOG

1st. No. 4 KJAVU IS IT SWEET

Bred by: C & H Hamilton Owner: G Heaton-New

Charcoal Blue male, very balanced heavily coated, very masculine

2nd. No. 5 KJAVU BLACK TIE AFFAIR

Bred by: Exh. Owner: C & H Hamilton

Nice lay back of shoulder, very heavily coated black male

CLASS 3 PUPPY DOG

1st. No. 8 KARAKUSH U TURN

Bred by: Exh. Owner: H & L Gibson

Vibrant Red Brindle male, beautiful type, leggy, beautifully balanced, long necked, very showy, pleasantly angled. Outstanding moving. I felt this male was the top contender in this class the minute he walked into the ring with his wonderful balance, carriage, and free flowing gait

2nd. No.6 TAHKIRA TAKE A CHANCE ON ME

Bred by: B Ferguson Owner: B & K Carr, B Ferguson

blue & Cream domino, nice moving, nice balance, heavily coated

3rd. No. 7 TAHKIRA DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

Bred By: Exh. Owner: B Ferguson

Black & Tan male, heavily coated, nice balance, nice substance. His show career will progress with more ring experience

CLASS 4 JUNIOR DOG

1st. No. 11 ALAQADAR Q

Bred by: Exh. Owner: Alaqadar Kennels

Lovely shaded-masked red, masculine, heavily coated, nice balanced movement which won him this class. Nicely constructed

2nd. No. 19 KHANDHU RATTATAT

Bred by: Exh. Owner: Khandhu Kennels

Very elegant and, houndy, beautiful detail, leggy, nice moving, beautiful tail, lovely head, nicely coated, natural patterning

3rd. No. 23 KINGSLEAH PARADIS LATIN (IMP SWE)

Bred by: G Holmgren Owner: C Khoury, C Robinson

Cream & blue brindle, nicely constructed, nice shoulders, nice balance, could have given a little bit more, nicely handled.

CRITIQUE TWO – SOME EXERPTS

DOGS

Baby Puppy Dog

1st Place # 1. Karakush Takin The High Road

A lovely leggy puppy with a more open side gait than the second place puppy. Expected to find that both puppies were littermates as their movement and balance were quite similar with both having a very nice follow through and kick in the rear

2nd Place #3. Karakush The Road Runner

A nice puppy but more moderate than the class winner in most every way. Both puppies were and narrow with slightly loose fronts as you'd expect at this age

Minor Puppy Dog

1st Place #5. Kjavu Blacktie Affair

Both puppies in this class are at a stage where they are quite leggy and short backed which that their movement is more underneath them. I suspect that this will change as they get a little older and their bodies will lengthen allowing for a more open stride. Head shape and balance on the class winner was nicer than the second place puppy

2nd Place #4. Kjavu Is It Sweet

Leggy masculine puppy with nice balance but not as good in the topline as the class winner

Puppy Dog

1st Place #7. Karakush U Turn

This lovely puppy struck me immediately with his beautiful proportions and gorgeous detailing. Neck/shoulder flow, topline, croup, all were excellent. The puppy was very jazzed up at first but his handler did a nice job of settling him down and he came together nicely coming and going. When viewed from the side he came off the ground in a very easy balanced manner

2nd Place #8. Tahkira Take A Chance On Me

Domino dog. Beautiful neck, pretty type, and a lovely long tail with a perfect ring. Like the class winner this dog too was a prettier mover once he slowed down a bit. A very nice puppy overall

3rd Place #6. Kjavu Just Beat It

This puppy showed flashes of having a pretty side gait but for the most part it was hard to see as he moved rather "bunched-up" underneath himself. Very pretty look.

Junior Dog

1st Place #11. **Kingsleah Paradis Latin (Imp Swe)**

Blue Brindle. Beautiful type with an excellent topline and short back. Moderately angles front rear. A very nice mover once he settled down.

2nd Place #12. **Khandhu Ratta Tat Tat**

Cream dog who was more moderate dog than the class winner in most respects. Beautiful eyes and a lovely head profile. Nice outline but would like to see a bit more neck.



I think it is also worth noting that breed specialty critiques are often more detailed than in the general show ring – where critiques are dictated in the ring. Possibly critiques on Rottweilers and German Shepherds may on occasion also be more detailed than in some other breeds.

Here are a couple examples of Critiques dictated to a writer in an all breeds show in Europe – solid but not overly detailed – but with some breed specific information and I consider to be a good general standard....

15 month old black and white male. Excellent overall shape, with typical bone and substance. Excellent head type, with well shaped skull and eyes and correct length of nose. Just undershot, with good sized teeth set straightly. Good chest width and depth, typical angulation fore and aft, well sprung ribs, level top line, tail well coated but carried a little flat and I would prefer carriage to be more level with the middle of head. Correct coat texture. Moves true coming and going, with good reach and drive, showing pads.

3 year old fawn bitch of excellent type. Stands over the ground well, exhibiting shape and top line both on the move and standing. Elegant in bone and substance, but in no way shelly. Excellent head and expression, dark oval eye and soft expression, correct width of skull and small, fine rose ears. Correct front angulation, well filled front, slight spring of pastern. Typical top line and underline, fine coat, moves true with correct reach and drive and low to ground front action.

Good luck with your critiquing!

It is an art – and one you will get better at with more experience.

Remember, say what you see, be honest, be constructive, and be respectful.

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