

ICON OF THE BREED



BY STEVE WOLFSON

At a conformation show, we often encounter a dissimilarity of breed type among the entries. Some are small, with heavy bones. Some are large, with fine bones. Several are long in body with too much angulation in the rear. Others are short in body with no angulation in the front or the rear. Along with these variations in body type come the erosion of the breed's icon, its head.

For many exhibits, dog and bitch head type are incorrect. Their heads are narrow in the top skull and the muzzle. A few are too long in the muzzle and possess a shallowness in the under-jaw. We also observe the hyper-type of the Mastiff, and others have no type. The distinction of the Rottweiler head has eroded. It is alarming.

I discussed the status of head type with another Rottweiler breeder and asked, "Where on the hierarchy of importance do you place head type?"

"Head type is not important to me," she said. "It's the whole picture that matters. Besides, a head could easily be attained in one or two generations, so why bother?" she added.

I was taken aback and realized she confirmed her opinion. None of her dogs had correct head type.

If asked, judges, breeders, owners, and spectators should have a consensus and equally describe the Rottweiler head with answers founded on the blueprint, the design of the Standard. For many, its description is not universal. Correct head type is uncertain and conflicting opinions and notions about its architecture abound. It is a significant problem. How did this occur?

Sadly, the geometry of Rottweiler head type is influenced not by the metrics of the Standard, but what is observed in the show-ring, photographs in periodicals, Facebook or what an exhibitor owns. These references are misleading. The show-ring and other sources can be trendy and unreliable as a marker for what is correct.

When a dog or bitch entering the ring that has model head type, spectators, breeders, and judges may not know how to react, they may question if what they see is acceptable or "Out of Standard." In the eyes of many, incorrect has become correct.

Proper Rottweiler head type is rare, and few possess it. Occasionally, it is present in a dog or bitch entered in a show. Once seen, it is inspiring and unforgettable.

"THE ROTTWEILER HEAD IS UNIQUE. ITS DISTINCTIVENESS SEPARATES THE ROTTWEILER FROM ALL OTHERS."

THE HEAD IS THE BREED'S ICON

The segment of the Standard describing the head has the most detail and where—I believe—the Standard places the accent mark. The AKC/American Rottweiler Club Standard has 273 words, six subcategories, nine serious faults, and six disqualifications. The head contains the most verbiage of any section in the Standard. Why so much detail if the accent were intended somewhere else?

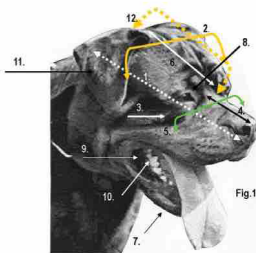
From the American Rottweiler Club Standard:

- **Head** of medium length, broad between the ears; forehead line seen in profile is moderately arched; zygomatic arch and stop well developed with strong broad upper and lower jaws. The desired ratio of the back skull to muzzle is 3 to 2. Forehead is preferred dry, however some wrinkling may occur when the dog is alert
- **Expression** is noble, alert, and self-assured.
- **Eyes** of medium size, almond shaped with well-fitting lids, moderately deep-set, neither protruding nor receding. The desired color is a uniform dark brown.
- **Serious Faults** Yellow—bird of prey—eyes, eyes of different color, hairless eye rim.
- **Disqualification** Entropion, Ectropion.
- **Ears** of medium size, pendant-triangular in shape; when carried alertly, the ears are level with the top of the skull and appear to broaden it. Ears are to be set well apart, hanging forward with the inner edge lying tightly against the head and terminating at approximately, mid-cheek.
- **Serious Faults** improper carriage—creased, folded or held away from cheek/head.
- **Muzzle** Bridge is straight, broad at base with slight tapering towards tip. The end of the muzzle is broad with well developed chin. Nose is broad rather than round and always black.
- **Lips** always black, corners closed; inner mouth pigment is preferred dark.
- **Serious Faults** total lack of mouth pigmentation—pink mouth.
- **Bite and Dentition** Teeth 42 in number—20 upper, 22 lower—strong, correctly placed, meeting in a scissors bite—lower incisors touching inside of upper incisors.
- **Serious Faults** Level bite, any missing tooth.
- **Disqualification** Overshot, undershot—when incisors do not touch or mesh—wry mouth, two or more missing teeth.

The Rottweiler head is unique. Its distinctiveness separates the Rottweiler from all others. Head and breed type are also correlated. A Rottweiler must have both to make his general breed type complete. One without the other renders his breed type incomplete. Now, with some having a tail, the Rottweiler is less distinguishable among breeds making proper head type paramount.

ESSENTIAL TRAITS FOR CORRECT ROTTWEILER HEAD TYPE

- Good length of skull from a well-developed stop to the occiput. The skull should measure 60% of the combined length of the skull and muzzle.
- Topskull is moderately arched.
- Good width from ear to ear in the topskull.
- Well-developed zygomatic arch. Well-developed stop.
- Strong depth and width of the muzzle (particularly in the base of the muzzle) with a strong lower jaw. The muzzle should measure 40% of the combined length of the skull and muzzle.
- A noble, serious expression.
- In appearance, the Rottweiler head should exude masculinity, power and substance, without exaggeration (the hyper-head of the Mastiff or Pitbull). Conversely, it should not possess an elongated, feminine, shallow zygomatic arch and muzzle type like that of the Doberman.



1. The length of the topskull and muzzle. Measured from the tip of the nose to the occiput.
2. Width of the topskull.
3. Zygomatic arch.
4. Muzzle length. Measured from the tip of the nose to the stop.
5. Broad muzzle at the base. Correlated to the prominence of zygomatic arch.
6. Length of the topskull. Measured from the stop to the occiput.
7. Strong lower jaw.
8. Almond shape, dark eyes, tight fitting eyelids, hair present on eyelids, no ocular discharge.
9. Dark gum pigmentation—the color of dark chocolate.
10. Complete, correct dentition.
11. Ears, set correctly hanging close to the cheeks, of medium size.
12. Correct, moderate arch of the topskull.

"EARS, CORRECTLY PLACED AND CARRIED HAVE A SUBTLE ROLE FOR THE CORRECT HEAD TYPE. THEIR PROPER SHAPE IS THAT OF AN ISOSCELES TRIANGLE, EQUAL ON ALL SIDES."

THE MUZZLE

Some Rottweilers come close to the ideal. Others possess essential traits in varying amounts. The most common problem of the head is a shallow zygomatic arch and a narrow muzzle at the base.

A shallow zygomatic arch creates a muzzle that is conical in shape. Conversely, a well-developed zygomatic arch—stated in the Standard—accompanies a muzzle broad and powerful at the base.

The zygomatic arch and muzzle width at the base are correlated. When incorrect, they diminish the powerful masculine head type the Standard indicates. Figure 2 shows a shallow zygomatic arch and narrow muzzle at the base.

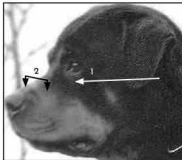


Figure 2

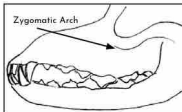


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

Above are three muzzle shapes we observe at shows. Only Fig. 4 is correct for the Rottweiler. It depicts a wedge shape, and blunt at the tapering end of the nostrils. We can observe both a conical shape—Fig. 5 and a rectangular shape muzzle—Fig. 6. Muzzles Fig. 5-6 are incorrect.

CORRECT SHAPE AND PLACEMENT OF EYES

The eyes of the Rottweiler play a pivotal role for correct head type. The Standard acknowledges it by detailing his self-assured, steady and fearless expression.

- Eyes, medium size
- Almond shape
- Well-fitting lids
- Moderately deep set, neither protruding nor receding
- Desired color is a uniform dark brown
- Serious faults—Yellow eyes—Eyes of different color—Hairless eye rim



Correct eyes and placement. Dark, almond shape, with eyelids tight-fitting, hair present on the eyelids, noble serious expression, clear with no ocular discharge. Set well apart.

EARS

Ears, correctly placed and carried have a subtle role for the correct head type. Their proper shape is that of an isosceles triangle, equal on all sides. When right, they augment the width of the head and give the dog/bitch a serious, focused appearance. Incorrect, they detract from a correct head.



Correct ears.



Incorrect ears.

ICON OF THE BREED



Correct head type: Powerful skull and muzzle, well-developed zygomatic arch and stop, strong lower jaw

Incorrect head type: No prominence in the zygomatic arch, conical muzzle shape, shallow stop.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DOG AND BITCH HEAD TYPE?

Certain Rottweiler devotees believe there should be a distinction in the architecture of head type between the dog and bitch for two reasons. One, only the dog should be the sole owner of power, substance, and masculinity. Secondly, because she is a female, the bitch should possess soft lines, be shallow in the top skull and muzzle and have little to no stop or zygomatic arch. For them, the bitch is less than the dog.

The Standard does not support this notion. It has no mention of a difference between the sexes other than a marked reversal of sexual type as a serious fault stating: "Reversal of sexual characteristics—bitchy dogs or doggy bitches."



Correct dog head type



Correct bitch head type

The geometry of the head should possess power in the muzzle, stop, and zygomatic arch. It is the same for the dog and the bitch with these two exceptions:

- The dog head is more massive throughout
- The dog head has more prominence in the stop and zygomatic arch

SUMMARY

Correct Rottweiler head type is a complex subject. Its comprehension is essential in knowing Rottweiler breed type. Dismissing its importance would be analogous to denying the value of the engine in a racing car. Both Rottweiler and the racing car will get by with less but are missing what makes them unique.

REFERENCES

American Rottweiler Club Standard
Rottweiler il Cane, Carla Romanelli Lensi
The Priority of Breed Type in the Rottweiler, Steve Wolfson