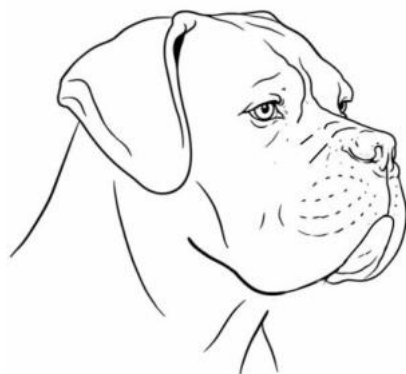


COMMENTARY ON THE ITALIAN CANE CORSO BREED STANDARD

prepared by the Technical Committee of the Società Amatori Cane Corso

April 2026

Translation by Denise Flaim



THE STORY OF AN ANCIENT GUARDIAN

The Italian Cane Corso is not simply a dog breed: it is a presence. A silent and watchful figure that has moved through the centuries alongside humankind, sharing its work, its hardships, and its land. Its name, often misunderstood, does not refer to distant places, but to a very specific function: cohorts, chors, cors — guard, defense, protection. A name that is already a destiny.

In Southern Italy, even today, to say “corso” means to say strong, authoritative, solid. Words that describe not only a dog, but a character.

The roots of the Cane Corso date back to Roman times, as a direct descendant of the Canis Pugnax, the molossian dog that accompanied the legions and defended their camps. With the fall of the Empire, it did not disappear: it remained. It adapted. It chose to stay beside ordinary people—the farmers, the drovers, the keepers of rural estates.

During the Middle Ages and in the centuries that followed, the Cane Corso became the guardian par excellence: of land, livestock, and family. Strong without being aggressive. Courageous without being reckless, it knew when to act and when to observe. It was the dog that did not bark without reason, yet was always present.

Literature preserves its powerful image: Erasmo Valvasone, in 1591, praised its tenacious grip; Giovanni Verga, in his novel *I Malavoglia*, used it as a measure of a force that leaves no escape. Signs of a breed so deeply embedded in life that it became part of the language.

With the twentieth century and the gradual abandonment of rural life, the Cane Corso too risked being forgotten. In the 1960s, deprived of its natural role, its numbers declined drastically. The breed survived only thanks to a few remaining specimens in the most rural areas of Southern Italy, particularly in Puglia, where they continued their work far from the spotlight.

For a moment, it seemed that a part of Italy's rural history was destined to vanish.

The revival of the Cane Corso did not arise from fashion, but from research—from a discerning eye able to recognize value where others saw only a farm dog. In the late 1970s, thanks to the commendable efforts of scholars and enthusiasts, a long and complex recovery began.

It was not easy: few specimens, varied morphologies, logistical challenges. Yet there was a clear vision: to save a breed without distorting it, respecting its function, character, and type.

Recognition by ENCI in 1994 was not merely a formal act: it marked the official return to dignity of a breed that had never ceased to exist, but rather had stopped being seen.

Today, the Cane Corso is a modern breed—selected, studied, and appreciated worldwide. Yet it has not forgotten who it is. It still carries within it the scent of the land, of barns, of whey. It bears the imprint of the calloused hands of those who bred it without books, but with experience and respect.

As Professor Danilo Mainardi wrote: the Cane Corso is the beaten paths, the rural estates, the water buffalo and the flocks. It is one of our deepest roots.

And perhaps this is what makes it unique: it is not a dog bred to please, but to be useful—not to appear, but to guard.

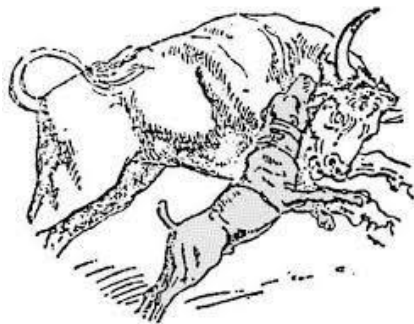
A breed that tells the story of yesterday's Italy and continues to walk, proud and silent, alongside that of today.



Basir, Founding Sire and Fundamental Prototype for the Revival and Preservation of the Cane Corso



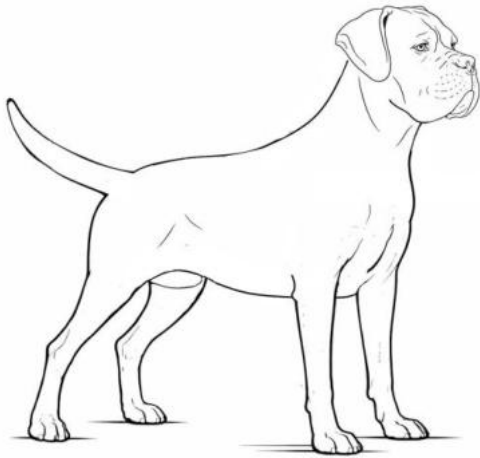
The Fountain of Diana and Actaeon



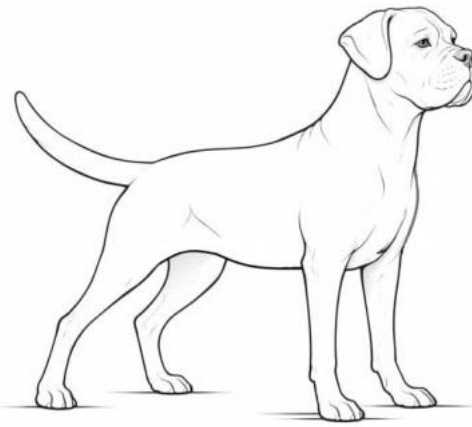
Bartolomeo Pinelli (1781–1835) and the Cane Corso Dogs Depicted in His Works



GENERAL APPEARANCE



IDEAL MALE



IDEAL FEMALE

Medium-to-large sized dog, strongly built yet elegant, characterized by a solid and compact structure combined with powerful, long, and well-defined musculature. The overall morphology expresses strength, agility, and endurance—functional qualities closely linked to the historical selection of the breed.

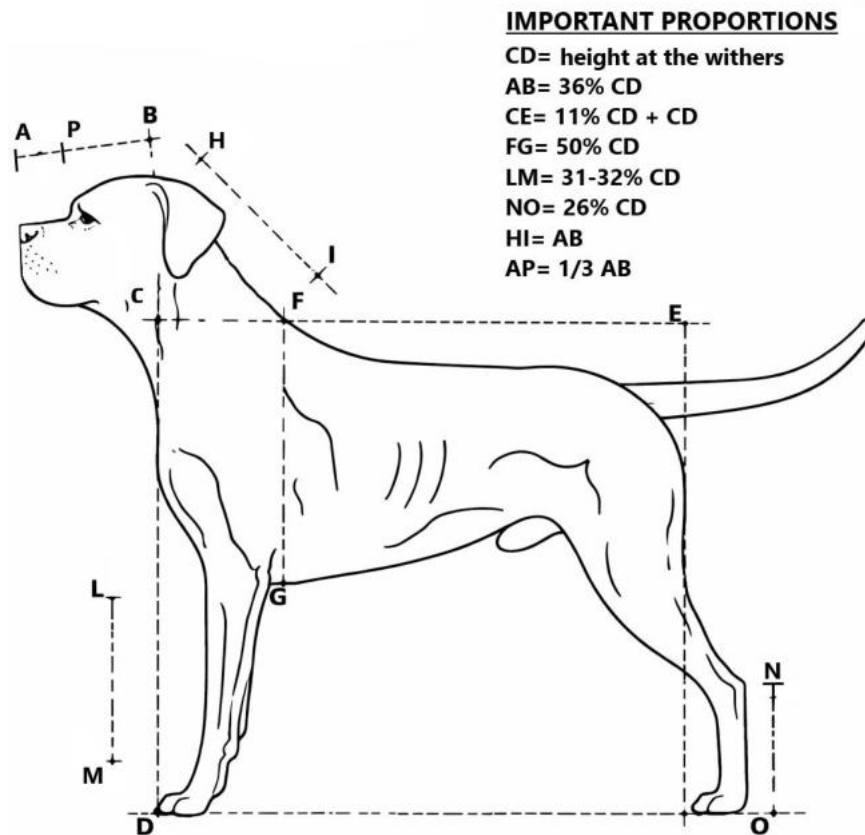
The Cane Corso is a mesomorphic dog, harmonious in its proportions and disharmonious in its profiles. From a constitutional standpoint, it falls within the mesomorphic or medioliner type, where the proportions between height and width are well balanced. The structure is neither excessively longilinear (tall and thin) nor brevilinear (short and stocky), but instead shows a correct balance between skeletal development and muscular mass, ensuring efficient movement and working functionality.

According to the principles of heterometry—the discipline that studies variations in format in relation to body size—the Cane Corso is defined as harmonious in terms of format. The relationship between body mass (weight and volume) and stature (height at the withers) is proportionate, with a balanced distribution of mass. In practical terms, all body regions are proportional to each other and referable to a single standard format, without evident disproportion between forequarters and hindquarters, between trunk and limbs, or between musculature and bone structure. This structural harmony allows the dog to express power and agility without losing elegance and solidity, even in movement.

With regard to allometry, which analyzes morphological profiles, the Cane Corso is considered disharmonious in its profiles. The profile of the head is concave-lined, with slightly converging craniofacial axes, while the profile of the trunk is straight. This morphological contrast gives the dog its typical authoritative and determined expression, without compromising its overall functional balance.

The main and essential proportions, fundamental for the correct structural and functional balance of the Cane Corso, are as follows:

- Length of body: exceeds the height at the withers by approximately 11%, giving the dog a rectangular appearance
- Total length of the head: about 3.6/10 of the height at the withers and equal to the length of the neck
- Length of the muzzle: one third of the total head length, defining the typical craniofacial ratio of the breed (2:1)
- Chest height: equal to half of the height at the withers (5/10) and corresponding to the height of the limb to the elbow, ensuring proper balance and stable support



BEHAVIOUR AND TEMPERAMENT

The Cane Corso is a breed whose character and aptitude have been shaped by centuries of close cooperation with humans. Strong, tenacious, and endowed with a solid temperament, it shows a deep attachment to its family and property—qualities that make it an excellent guard dog.

At the same time, it stands out for its versatility and functionality: throughout history it has been used as a protection dog, a guardian of property and livestock, a hunter of large game, and a protector of carters and butchers. In all these roles, both as a puppy and as an adult, the Cane Corso displays balance, dedication, adaptability, trainability, and extraordinary loyalty to its owner.

Today, these same characteristics also make it an outstanding family dog, capable of integrating perfectly into modern life and serving as a reliable, affectionate, and protective companion for both adults and children. The combination of strength, intelligence, and balance makes the Cane Corso a unique animal, able to adapt to multiple roles without ever losing the bond with those it loves.

HEAD.



MALE



FEMALE

The head of the Cane Corso is described by the standard as: broad, typically molossoid, and without evident wrinkles. The upper axes of the skull and muzzle are slightly convergent.

The Cane Corso is a brachycephalic breed; its cephalic index—that is, the ratio between the width of the head and its length—ranges between 64 and 66, thus well above 50, which is the minimum value above which, in cynotechnics, a dog is considered brachycephalic.

Dog breeds can be classified into three types according to the relationship between the upper longitudinal axes of the skull and the muzzle (craniofacial axes). These axes are usually assessed empirically by eye by an expert; however, to determine their exact course, the use of measuring instruments and precise anatomical reference points is required.

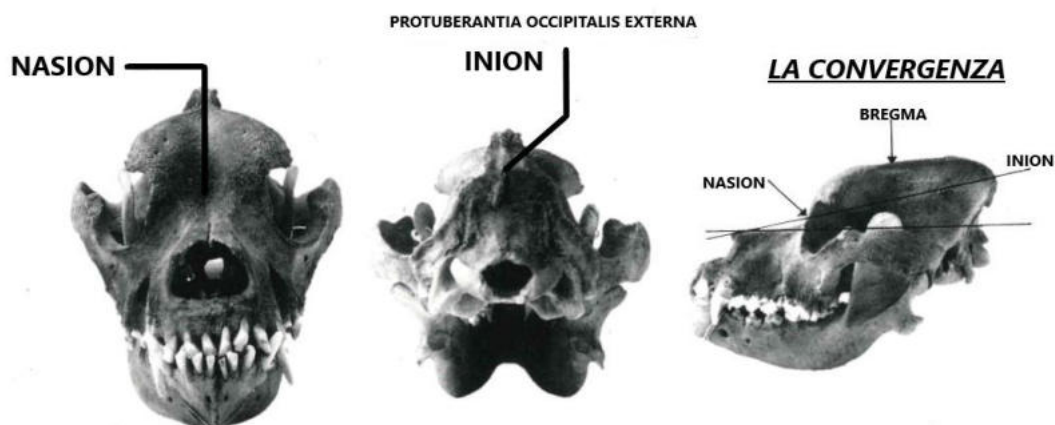
The upper longitudinal axis of the skull runs from the craniometric point “inion” (located at the apex of the external occipital protuberance) to the craniometric point “nasion” (located at the junction of the nasal and frontal bones). The upper longitudinal axis of the muzzle follows the upper profile of the nasal bridge from the nose to the stop.

Once these craniofacial axes are defined, their relationships can be identified as follows:

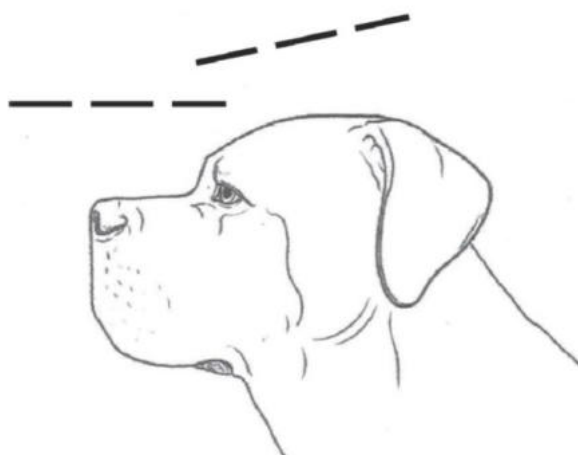
- Parallel planes: the two axes never meet (straight profile)
- Convergent planes: the forward projections of the two axes meet (converge), and the backward projection of the upper axis of the muzzle always passes behind the occipital crest (concave profile)
- Divergent planes: the forward projections of the two axes do not meet (diverge), and the backward projection of the upper axis of the muzzle always passes in front of the occipital crest (convex profile)

In the Cane Corso, convergence is an essential breed characteristic. However, two types of convergence can be identified:

- Monoconvergence: only the axis of the skull converges toward the axis of the muzzle
- Biconvergence: both the skull axis and the muzzle axis converge toward each other

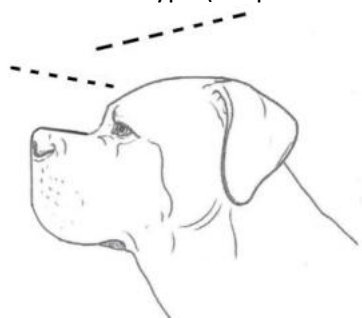


The Cane Corso is monoconvergent.

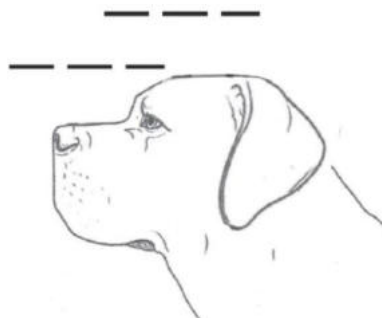


Correct Convergence

Biconvergence leads to hypertype; conversely, parallelism results in hypotype, while divergence leads to total lack of type (disqualification).



***Biconvergence
(Serious Fault)***

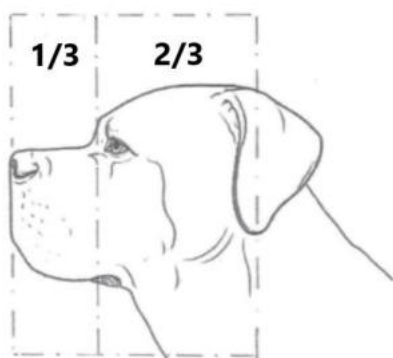


***Parallel Planes
(Serious Fault)***

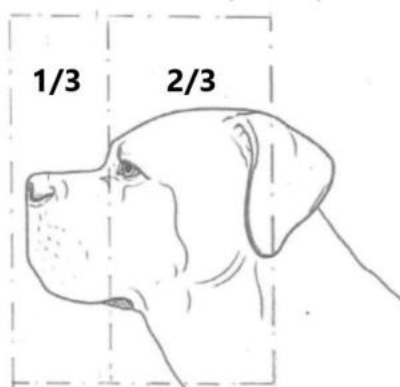


***Divergent Planes
(Disqualification)***

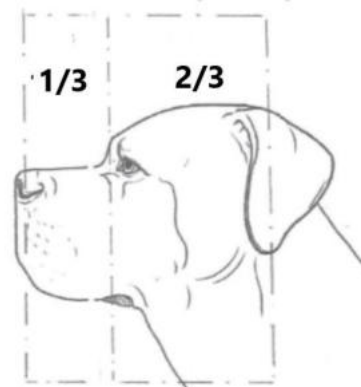
The head of the Cane Corso must be clean-cut and well-defined, of good volume, without wrinkles or excess skin, of adequate length, and in accordance with the craniofacial ratio of 2:1.



***Correct Proportions
Skull/Muzzle***



***Muzzle Too Short
(Fault)***



***Muzzle Too Long
(Fault)***

Another fundamental characteristic, in addition to correct length, is angularity (being moderately sculpted). In the Cane Corso, any roundness of the head should be penalized. The skull is in fact well-angled, with clear and well-defined lines of demarcation and transition between the planes of the muzzle.

The supero-lateral profile of the skull is convex—i.e., curved—only in its first third, then becoming rather flat in the remaining two-thirds towards the occiput.

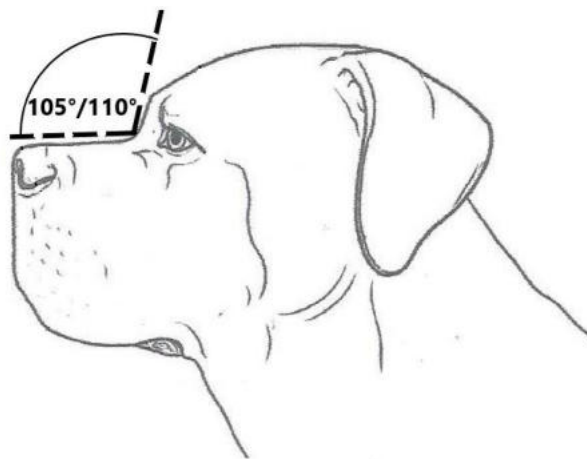
Cranium.

Slightly arched when viewed from the front, in profile it draws an irregular curve which, more pronounced in the frontal region, gradually flattens aborally along the external sagittal crest. The frontal eminences are well developed in all three dimensions, the frontal fossa is deep, and the median groove is visible; this median groove originates from the naso-frontal depression and fades around the middle of the skull, sagittally dividing the two frontal sinuses near the craniometric point called the “bregma”.

The supraoccipital crest is not excessively prominent, and the supraorbital fossae (conchae) are marked but only slightly. **The skull must be as wide as it is long and high, thus appearing almost cubic in shape from every perspective.**

Naso-frontal depression (stop)

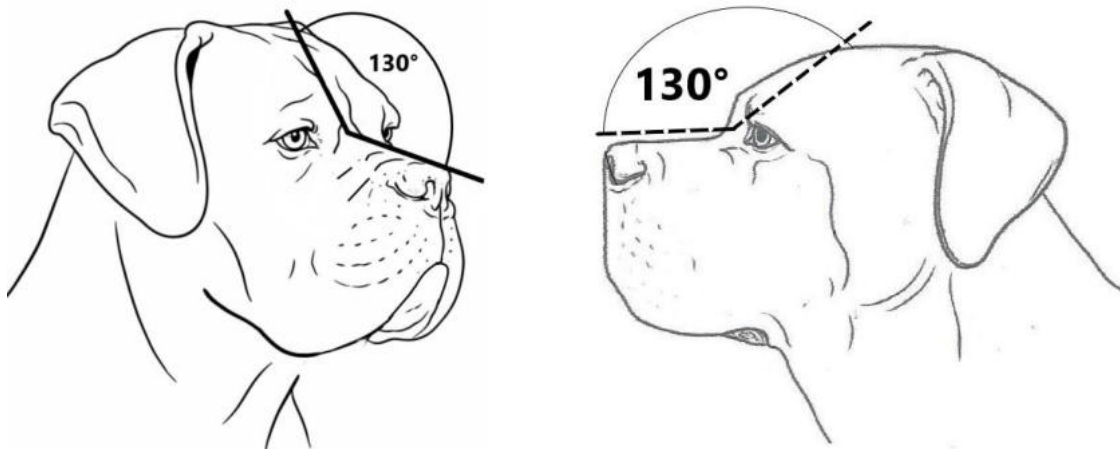
Strong and well-defined. The degree of stop prominence can be easily assessed visually by observing the head in profile and evaluating the naso-frontal angle (formed by the intersection of the upper longitudinal axis of the muzzle with that of the frontal eminences), which should measure 105°–110°.



Naso-frontal angle

However, the correct and precise assessment of the stop must be completed by evaluating the craniofacial angle (formed by the intersection of the upper longitudinal axis of the muzzle with the axis passing through the median groove), which should measure 130°.

Therefore, an essential breed characteristic is the simultaneous presence of the correct naso-frontal and craniofacial angles.



Craniofacial Angle

Nose.



Nose:

Approaching a parallelepiped shape. Nostrils are large and well-opened

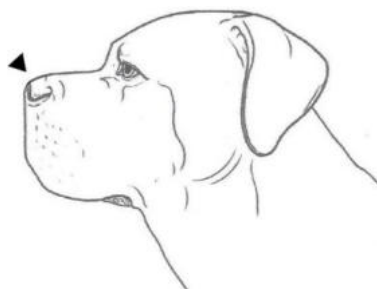
It must always be black, except in grey-masked subjects where it is grey, and never of any other colour. It must not be small, as this would indicate a conical muzzle (fault). It must not be set low or project forward (a common feature in dogs with parallel or divergent craniofacial axes), nor should it be set back relative to the anterolateral profile of the muzzle (a frequent trait in hypertypes). It must not be rounded, but rather have a flat upper edge, with an angular appearance and well-opened nasal wings.



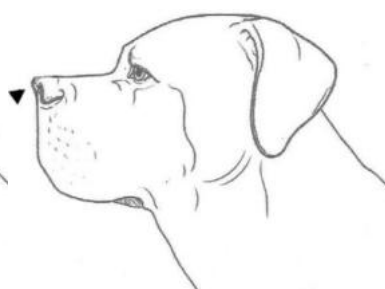
***Narrow and Small Nose
(Fault)***



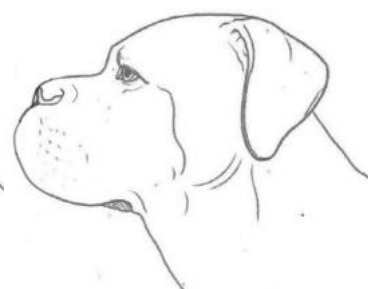
***Rounded Nose with Closed Nostrils
(Fault)***



***Nose with rounded
upper margin
(Fault)***



***Protruding Nose on the anterior
surface of the muzzle
(Fault)***



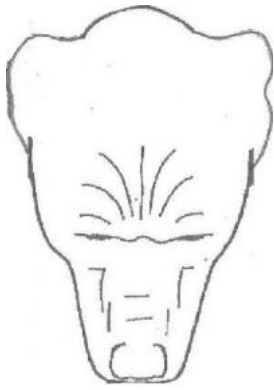
***Upturned Nose
Short Nasal Bridge
(Serious Fault)***

Muzzle.

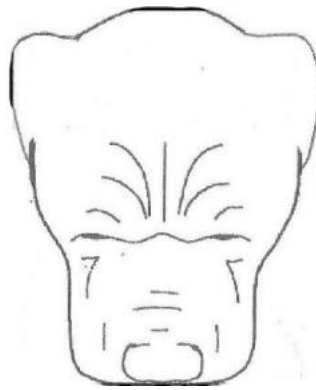


Excellent Muzzle Squareness

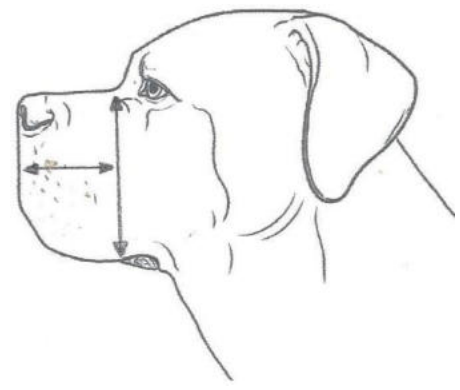
An indispensable element of typicity in the Cane Corso is that the width of the muzzle should be approximately equal to its length (therefore the muzzle is as long as it is wide), furthermore, the muzzle, measured at its base from the upper edge of the nasal bridge to the lip commissure, must be at least one-third greater in height than its length.



***Convergence of the
Lateral Planes of the Muzzle
(Conical Muzzle – Fault)***

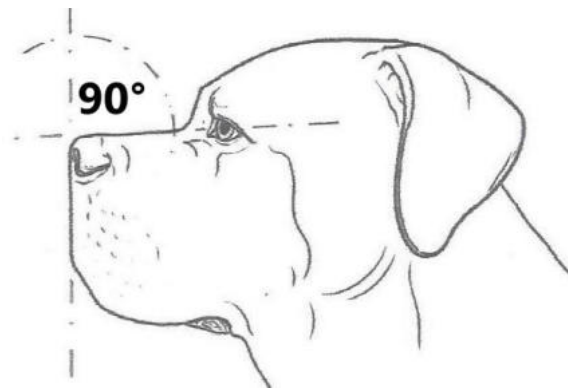


***Parallelism of the Lateral
Planes of the Muzzle
(Correct)***

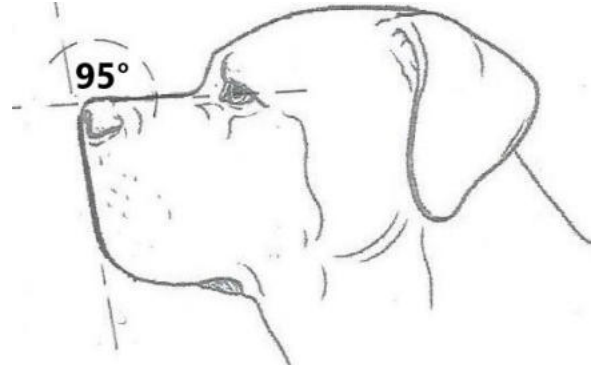
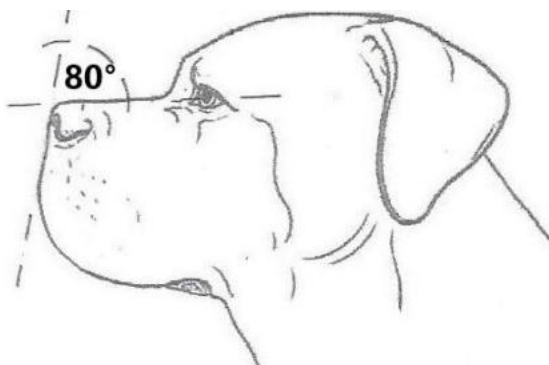


***At its root, the muzzle
is at least one third
deeper than its length.***

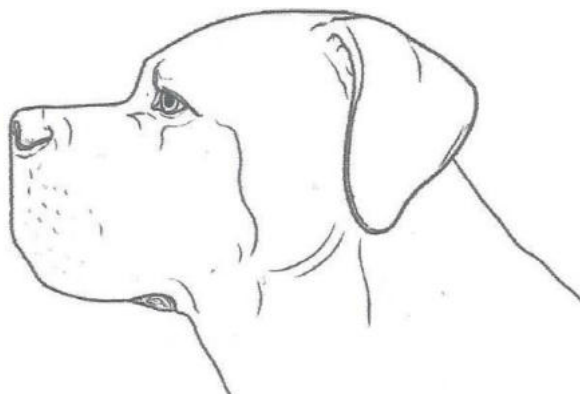
In the Cane Corso there is very slight chiselling. Its complete absence deprives the head of expression and elegance. The suborbital region must never appear lean or hollow. The upper line of the muzzle and the extension of the straight line tangent to its anterior face form an ideal angle of 90 degrees.



An angle between 90° and 80° is still considered correct, whereas an angle exceeding 90° is undesirable and may be faulted, and if it exceeds 95° it can be so serious as to effectively eliminate the dog from consideration.

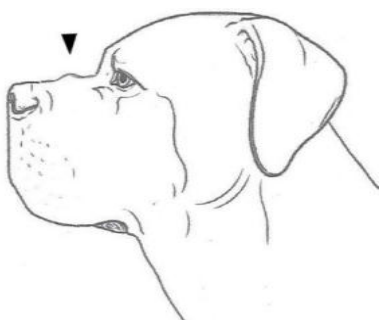


Nasal Bridge.

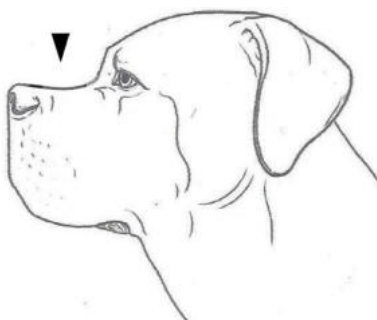


Rectilinear and rather flat, consistent with the parallelism of the lateral planes of the muzzle, the nasal bridge must strictly maintain the same width from its base to its tip. Roman nasal bridges are often associated with parallelism or divergence of the craniofacial axes.

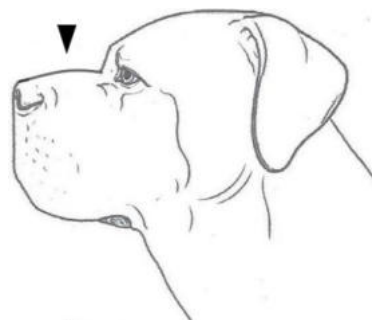
At times, a more or less pronounced convexity is present at mid-length of the nasal bridge, which is not desirable. A slightly concave nasal bridge is often associated with shorter muzzles and a retracted nose, expressing a tendency toward hypertype (and should be penalised). Likewise, a nasal bridge shorter than the muzzle is to be penalised, as it would place the nose out of alignment with the anterior profile and therefore in an upturned position.



***Nasal Bridge Small bump
(Fault)***



***Concave Nasal Bridge
(Disqualifying Fault)***



***Convex Nasal Bridge
(Disqualifying Fault)***

Lips.

Rather substantial. The upper lips, seen from the front, form an inverted “U” at their junction; seen in profile, they appear moderately pendulous. The labial commissure is moderately evident and always represents the lowest point of the lateral profile of the muzzle. Pigmentation is black or grey in dilute subjects.

In some subjects, the anterior face of the muzzle is not sufficiently broad and flat, but tends to blend, through a wide curve, with the lateral faces of the muzzle due to insufficiently wide jaws. In such cases, if the upper lips are sufficiently developed, they—finding no adequate supporting base—form an inverted “V” rather than the typical “U” at their junction. This situation must always be penalised, and even more so when associated with subjects showing convergent lateral muzzle planes.

Insufficiently developed, tight, or receding lips must be penalised (they are generally typical of conical-muzzle subjects). Excessively developed lips are generally associated with a general looseness of the skin, distort the typical expression of the breed, and are therefore to be penalised.



***Labial junction
in an inverted "U" (Correct)***



***Labial junction
in an inverted "V" (Fault)***



Labial commissure

Jaws.

The jaws are very broad and thick, with curved mandibular side.

In a working breed such as the Cane Corso, a strong, wide, and thick mandible with a well-defined chin and a slightly curved profile is an essential condition to ensure a firm and secure grip.

A straight mandibular profile (spatula-like) is to be excluded, as it reduces the skeletal robustness of the muzzle. Moreover, the spatula-shaped mandible is often associated with a receding chin, which is not reached by the upper lips at their point of junction. This results in a marked lack of typicity and is to be excluded (typical of conical-muzzle subjects).

Undershot bite (enognathism), due to insufficient development of the mandible, constitutes a serious morphological and functional defect: affected subjects must be disqualified.

The considerable distance between the canines and the wide transverse development of the maxillae means that the lateral faces of the upper lips do not fall perpendicularly, but project slightly outward, so that the anterior surface of the muzzle tends to form (when viewed from the front) an isosceles trapezoid with the longer side at the bottom.



***Anterior surface of the muzzle
forming an isosceles trapezoid
(Correct)***



***Anterior surface of the muzzle
with a parallelepiped shape
(Fault)***



***Anterior surface of the muzzle
forming an inverted
isosceles trapezoid (Serious Fault)***

Teeth.

The dentition shows a slight undershot bite (prognathism), not exceeding 5 mm. A level bite (pincer bite) is permitted, but not desired.

Slight prognathism is defined as a maximum forward projection of 5 mm of the lower incisors beyond the corresponding upper incisors.

A level bite is allowed. A scissor bite is always considered a serious fault. Excessive prognathism is a serious fault.

It should be remembered that very young subjects generally show a transient scissor bite before developing slight prognathism. Therefore, in very young dogs (4 to 8 months), a scissor bite should not be penalised; from 9 months onwards, however, it must be considered a serious fault, as indicated by the standard.

In summary, in a working breed such as the Cane Corso, a strong, broad, and thick mandible with a well-defined, slightly curved chin is essential to ensure a firm and secure grip. On the other hand, excessive prognathism becomes counterproductive to the stability of the bite. The ideal and desired bite remains slight prognathism, with the lower canines still interlocking within the canines.

The absence of P1 premolars, on one or both dental arches, does not constitute a serious fault, the Cane Corso being a brachycephalic breed. Conversely, the absence of major premolars and molars, although not mentioned in the breed standard, must be penalised in morphological evaluation and breeding selection.

The dentition is of primary functional importance and must be complete, powerful, and correctly proportioned to the volume and structure of the head. Incisors must be well aligned. Microdontia should be monitored.

Cheeks.

The masseter region is full, evident, but neither hypotrophic nor hypertrophic. Underdeveloped (hypotrophic) masseters overly refine the head, whereas hypertrophic masseters deprive it of nobility and give the skull an excessive roundness. In both cases, the square appearance of the anterior aspect of the head is compromised, whereas it should correctly present a cubic configuration.

Eyes.

Of medium size, slightly prominent but never excessively so. They approach an oval shape, are well set apart from each other, and are positioned in a sub-frontal placement. The eyelids are tight and well-adhering to the eyeball. The iris is as dark as possible, in harmony with the coat colour. The expression is lively and attentive.



Correct Eye (male)



Correct Eye (female)

The Cane Corso's eye is "oval-like," meaning, as prescribed by the standard, it approaches an oval shape, is slightly prominent, and in a sub-frontal (optimal) position, with dark colour.

Sunken, small, and closely set eyes must be severely penalised, as must protruding eyes, as they alter the breed's expression.

The Cane Corso eye is of normal size and volume, healthy and clearly visible, without any excess or exaggeration. A frontal eye position (occurring when the palpebral axis forms a right angle with the median axis of the head) must be penalised, as it is typical of hypertype and coarse subjects, and is almost always associated with a round palpebral rim and exophthalmos (abnormal protrusion or bulging).

An even more serious fault, even in females, is a semi-lateral eye position, generally associated with an almond-shaped eye. In desirable males, the eyes are well spaced apart.

Closely set eyes alter the expression and breed type, and are often associated with frontal sinuses that are poorly developed in width and a flat skull.



***Round Eyes
in Frontal Position
(Fault)***



***Small and Closely
Set Eyes
(Fault)***



***Almond-shaped Eye
in Semi-Lateral Position
(Serious fault)***

The eyelids, as explained above, must be fairly tight to the eyeball and must therefore not show ectropion (outward rolling of the eyelid margin), typical of lymphatic subjects, nor entropion (inward rolling of the eyelid margin).

Regardless of coat colour (including light fawn and light grey), the eyelid margins must be pigmented black, or grey in grey-masked subjects, as must the nictitating membrane (third eyelid).

The colour of the iris in the Cane Corso deserves further clarification, as the standard states that it must be as dark as possible in relation to coat colour. Its chromatic range is therefore as broad as the range of coat colours (from light fawn and light grey to dark brindle and black). In general, the iris should reflect the darker tones of the coat, excluding the mask. Therefore, the iris should be dark brown in black and dark brindle coats, and progressively lighter shades in fawn and grey coats. Even in lighter coats, these tones must not be any lighter than reddish brown, as eye colour is always related to the colour of the nose and eyelid margins (which in the Cane Corso are black or grey in grey-masked subjects). The eyes must never be black or yellow. Even in fawn subjects with a black mask, the eye colour must not be light.

A wall eye (blue eye, fish eye, pearl eye), in which the iris shows depigmentation ranging from slate grey to light blue, is strictly disqualifying, as it indicates arrested development and is always congenital.

Ears.

Intact, of medium size, and carried hanging and close to the skull. The shape is that of an isosceles triangle with a rounded tip. The ear set is high, i.e., above the zygomatic arch, but not too close to each other.

Neck.

The neck is strong, very muscular, with a well-marked separation from the nape, of an oval and not cylindrical shape. Its length equals that of the head and corresponds to 36% of the height at the withers.

A slight looseness of the skin may be tolerated, but dewlap must never be present, as it is a sign of lymphatic constitution. The length of the neck is fundamental for the function it performs in the dog's locomotor mechanics. In fact, the cephalo-cervical lever (neck and head), by shifting the centre of gravity forward, acts as a regulator of body balance (the instability of which determines speed) and therefore of gait.

A neck that is not well fused with the withers, shoulders, and chest must always be severely penalised, as it almost always results in low withers and straight shoulders (the neck being inserted into the trunk in a "tube-like" manner).

Body (Trunk).

Compact, robust and muscular, it is built in a "rectangle", as the length of the body exceeds the height at the withers by 11%. The Cane Corso is therefore clearly a rectangular breed, never square. Compactness is determined by a short loin region. A square outline is a very serious fault, as it alters the morphological type and removes a fundamental breed characteristic.

Chest.

Broad, well-descended, and open, with well-developed pectoral muscles. Seen from the front the manubrium of the sternum is located at the same level as the tip of the shoulders. In profile, the chest is well projected forward and slightly convex between the forelimbs.

When, due to insufficient muscular development, the profile of the sternal margin appears overly prominent, the subject must be severely penalised.

Thorax

Well developed in all three dimensions, with long, oblique, broad, and well-arched ribs. It is well descended to the elbow, and its depth corresponds to half the height at the withers.

Depth: In a general visual assessment, it can be determined whether the thorax is adequately developed in depth by verifying that the sternal profile (at its lowest point relative to the ground) and the olecranon tip (the bony base of the rounded elbow prominence) are aligned. However, a correctly proportioned chest may appear too high due to a low withers, which—by reducing the distance between elbow and withers—lowers the sternal margin below elbow level (a fault to be penalised).

At times, in females (especially if pregnant), in elderly or particularly heavy dogs, or in subjects with a relaxed shoulder assembly, a perfectly formed thoracic cage may appear overly deep. A shallow chest compromises the animal's functionality (very serious fault).

Width: In an empirical visual assessment, the width of the chest and that of the forechest should approximately correspond. A flat chest is to be excluded. A barrel-shaped chest, which reduces nobility and hinders movement, is to be penalised, as is a narrow or keeled chest.

Keel formation, caused by a sudden reduction in the transverse diameter in the lower part of the ribcage, creates a void between the chest and the elbow, causing the elbow to become detached and sometimes unstable. This defect is especially seen in young and longilinear subjects, particularly of large size.

When the transverse diameter exceeds 35% of the height at the withers, the dog appears broad in front with forelimbs too far apart; when it is below 35%, the dog appears narrow in front with forelimbs too close together. The latter defect is more serious than the former and must be severely penalised.

Length: Chest length is of fundamental importance, as it is related to the extent of intercostal spaces and rib obliquity (angle). A shallow chest is almost always associated with insufficient rib inclination, resulting in reduced respiratory capacity (a very serious fault).

An insufficient thoracic perimeter also compromises the dog's functionality. If the xiphoid process (the terminal point of the lower sternum segment) is curved inward, the abdomen will appear tucked up, as several abdominal muscles insert on the xiphoid process (fault to be penalised).

Withers

It is high, long, broad, and lean, and blends harmoniously with the neck and the back. It rises clearly above the dorsal line and exceeds the level of the croup.

A prominent (relative to the dorsal line) and long withers is an essential asset in a working breed.

Back.

Straight, very muscular, and firm.

The back is broad and muscular, as is the entire upper line of the trunk, slightly rising from rear to withers.

It has a supporting function and serves to transmit the propulsion of the hindquarters to the forequarters.

A strictly straight and slightly rising back line from rear to front allows for optimal transmission of the propulsive impulse from the hindquarters to the forequarters. Indeed, by enabling this conformation to shift the centre of gravity towards the rear, it lightens the forehand, allowing a more effective forward projection of the body.

Kyphosis, or a convex back (roach back), indicates that the vertebral column traces a convex profile in the dorso-lumbar region. Dogs presenting this condition are shorter and less flexible, with reduced movement and speed capacity, as the propulsive impulse from the hindquarters is hindered and attenuated by the kyphotic profile.

Lordosis, or a concave back, indicates a yielding spinal profile. Dogs with this defect are weak and poorly mobile, as—like kyphotic subjects—they experience an obstacle to the transmission of hindquarter propulsion and must expend energy to counteract the unnatural lowering of the spinal column.

Loins.

Short and solid.

A short, broad, and firm lumbar region is an irreplaceable functional asset in the dog and can compensate for many other anatomical shortcomings.

The loin must be short, as a "short bridge" is known to be more resistant than a long one. A long loin results in a swinging hindquarters, to the detriment of the transmission of motor impulses. The lumbar region must also be broad, as well-developed transverse vertebral processes are accompanied by equally well-developed surrounding musculature. A narrow, weak loin is always poorly resistant.

An unacceptable fault is a loins region that is sloping to the sides (knife-like). Also to be penalised is a low, dipped loin, poorly connected to the back and croup (as previously stated regarding the back), as the propulsive force of the hindquarters tends to break down in this region and the subject must expend significant energy to counteract the lowering of the lumbar axis.

The profile of the loin should be slightly convex, arched, as this shape best suits the extension and contraction movements performed by the dog in trot and gallop. A flat lumbar region is poorly adapted to changes in

profile, resulting in a rigid movement. It is therefore essential to always assess the firmness of the loin by hand.

Belly and Flanks.

The profile of the abdomen is closely related to that of the back. A too-tucked-up abdomen is generally associated with a convex back, while a straight or pendulous abdomen is almost always linked to a concave back. The same considerations made for kyphosis and lordosis therefore apply.

However, a pendulous, swollen abdomen may also be due to obesity, incorrect feeding, parasitic infestation, or lymphatic constitution. Very often, an excessively tucked-up abdomen is associated with an overly compact body.

Croup.

The croup must be long, broad, and slightly sloping (28°/30°).

It is of fundamental importance in animal biomechanics, as it is the key transmission point for impulses from the hindquarters (hocks) to the forequarters, and its inclination (according to the axis of the coxal bone) is directly related to the length of the hindquarter muscles (gluteals and especially the ischio-tibial muscles) and therefore to the angulation of the hindlimb. In fact, the femur forms an angle with the pelvis (coxal bone) ranging from 90° to 120°, and since the metatarsus is always perpendicular to the ground, it is evident that the inclination of the thigh (femur) and leg (tibia) depends on the inclination of the croup.

A horizontal croup, typical of galloping breeds, presupposes long ischio-tibial muscles, with a greater capacity for contraction and therefore a wider range of limb motion. A sloping croup, typical of trotting breeds, presupposes shorter muscles. In the Cane Corso, the croup is slightly inclined; therefore, its typical gait is the extended trot.

The croup must be long, as its effectiveness as a transmission fulcrum is directly related to its length. Its width is related to skeletal structure and consequently to muscular development. In the Cane Corso, the croup must be broad, as the breed is required to develop power rather than speed in its functions.

Subjects with a short croup must be penalised, as this is often associated with poorly angulated hindquarters.

Tail.

In the Cane Corso, the tail—as already described by Morsiani—at rest should reach the hock or slightly beyond, presenting a typical sabre-like shape. It is thick at the root and progressively tapers towards the tip. In movement, it may also be carried above the dorsal line. It must never be carried like a “flag” or set low. Kinked tails constitute a serious fault and must be severely penalised. The tail is intact.

Forelimbs.

Correct limb alignment (front and side views): the height of the forelimbs up to the elbow is 50% of the height at the withers. The limbs are well proportioned to the dog's build, strong and robust.

Correct alignment – side view:

- 1) The vertical line dropped from the point of shoulder to the ground should just touch the tips of the toes.
- 2) The vertical line dropped from the centre of the elbow joint should divide the limb into two almost equal parts (the fore part being slightly longer) and should touch the ground just behind the foot.

Correct alignment – front view:

- 1) The vertical line dropped from the point of shoulder to the ground should divide the forearm, pastern, and foot into two nearly equal halves.
- 2) The length of the forelimb up to the elbow corresponds to half the height at the withers.

Shoulder.

Long, oblique, strong, equipped with long, powerful, well-defined and distinct muscles, closely attached to the chest while remaining free in movement.

The shoulder is of fundamental importance in the dog's locomotor mechanics, as the muscles that act on the upper arm and forearm—and therefore on stride length—are inserted into the scapulae. For this reason, a long shoulder with long muscles is associated with a long-reaching stride. A short shoulder, often associated with a straight shoulder, negatively affects movement and overall structure, as it is always accompanied by excessive inclination of the upper arm, which causes the body to project forward, shifting the centre of gravity (forward-leaning body).

In addition to being long and correctly angled, the shoulder must be mobile; therefore overmuscled (loaded), weak, restricted (tied-in), or loose scapular girdles must be penalised, as well as shoulders with points that are too close together or too far apart, or short shoulderblades.

Upper arm.

Slightly longer than the shoulder, strong. With excellent bone and muscle development, well attached to the trunk.

The length of the humerus is closely related to that of the scapula. Conversely, its inclination acts as a compensatory factor to the direction of the scapula. Straight shoulders correspond to overly inclined upper arms ("front heavy" dogs), with short-stepping and reduced limb lift. Conversely, an excessively sloping shoulder corresponds to a too-straight upper arm, which shifts the centre of gravity backward, overloading the hindquarters and resulting in an upright neck carriage. Both faults must be strongly penalised.

A correct inclination of the upper arm relative to the horizontal ($58^{\circ}/60^{\circ}$) is essential, together with a correct scapulo-humeral angle (106° – 110°).

Forearm.

Straight and very robust.

Perfectly vertical, with an oval cross-section, well-muscled especially in the upper third, and with a very strong and compact bone structure. The posterior part of the forearm is characterized by a groove, known as the carpo-cubital groove, formed by the insertion of the tendon of the flexor carpi ulnaris muscle into the pisiform (accessory carpal bone), which acts as a lever arm. The more developed (rearward) the pisiform bone is, the more effective the lever action (powerful forearm), and the more pronounced the carpo-cubital groove will be.

Elbows that are turned outwards or detached (open) often result in toeing in, while tied-in elbows produce easty-westy fronts. The latter defect is, in the Cane Corso, more frequent than the former. Short, thin, and weak forearms must be excluded, as they are often associated with a narrow chest, while curved forearms (spongy bone structure) are always indicative of rickets.

Carpus (Wrist)

Dry, broad, mobile, and strong.

The carpus in the dog corresponds to the human wrist. A hypertrophic carpus, particularly when exhibiting pronounced bony enlargements, should be considered a fault and penalized accordingly. The presence of exostosis (new bone formation) indicates the persistence of inflammatory or irritative states and is a very serious fault.

At times, the carpus may be displaced forward (knuckling over), beyond the vertical line drawn from the forearm, or curved backward (hollow carpus). Both defects result in incorrect limb alignment.

If the metacarpus is rigid (upright pastern), the dog tends to walk on its toes. This is a fault, although rare in the Cane Corso.

Metacarpus (Pastern)

Very strong, dry, elastic, and slightly sloping.

Among the anatomical parts that make up the forelimbs, the metacarpus can be defined as a “shock absorber.” In fact, due to its angle and elasticity, it acts as a spring between the upper parts of the limb and the foot, every time the latter makes contact with the ground during movement.

In young subjects, a slightly flexed pastern may be tolerated, but never in adult dogs.

Foot.

The foot is of good size, round in shape with short and well-arched toes (**cat foot**).

Hind Limbs.

Strong and powerful, with correct alignment both in profile and from behind, well proportioned to the dog's format, robust and powerful.

Correct alignment – side view:

- 1) The vertical line dropped from the point of the buttock to the ground should just touch the tips of the toes.
- 2) The metatarsus is always perpendicular to the ground.

Correct alignment – rear view:

- 1) The vertical line dropped from the point of the buttock to the ground divides the entire limb into two equal parts.

Thigh

Long and broad, with prominent muscles, so that the point of the buttock is clearly defined.

A long upper thigh is an essential asset, especially in a working dog, as it results in a greater range of limb motion and long, powerful muscle masses. As important as length is its development in width.

A narrow, flat upper thigh with insufficient volume (“chicken thigh”) indicates reduced development or even muscular atrophy. An important aspect to assess in the Cane Corso is the quality of musculature. The muscles, especially those of the thigh, must appear strong and well developed, never hypertrophic.

Lower thigh (Leg)

Long, dry, with strong bone structure and musculature: the leg groove is well defined.

The length of the lower thigh is slightly less than that of the upper thigh.

The importance of adequate development of musculature, bone structure, and length in ensuring a wide range of limb motion and the effectiveness of the propulsive thrust of the hindquarters has already been mentioned in the section on the thigh.

Hock

Moderately angulated.

Broad and thick. Dry, clean, with well-defined bony prominences. The hock point is well pronounced and clearly shows the continuation of the lower thigh groove.

The hock or tarsus is a very important region, not only for its supporting function but also as a propulsive spring of the hindquarters (its width and thickness indicate the development of this spring). From the point of the hock to the ground, the length is approximately one quarter of the height at the withers.

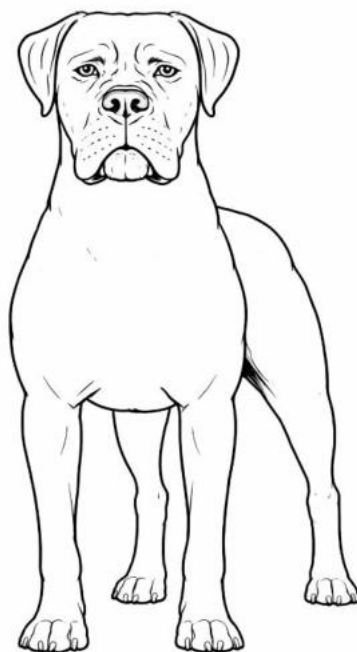
Metatarsus (Rear Pastern).

Thick, dry, and rather short.

Cylindrical, always perpendicular to the ground, both in profile and from behind. The standard does not require a dewclaw, although it is still present in some subjects.

Rear Foot.

Less compact and slightly more oval in shape than the forefoot.



Skin.

Rather thick and firmly attached to the underlying layers in every region.

Coat.

Short, with a glassy texture, shiny, glossy, tight-fitting, firm, very dense, with a slight undercoat. Its average length is 2–2.5 cm. On the withers, croup, back of the thighs, and on the tail it may reach up to 3 cm without forming fringes. On the muzzle, the coat is short, smooth, and tight-fitting.

Coat colours.

Black, grey in its various shades, fawn (from light to dark), and brindle in its various gradations. In brindle and fawn subjects, a black or grey (blue) mask is always present and well defined; it must not extend beyond the eye line but gradually fade as it approaches it.

With regard to the fawn colour, excessively pale shades are not acceptable and must therefore be penalized in judging. This includes tones tending towards cream, off-white, or otherwise very washed-out colours, with only barely perceptible shading of a slightly darker hue. The fawn colour must always retain good intensity and richness of pigmentation, maintaining a clear, distinct, and well-defined colour expression.

Brindling should preferably be distributed in a harmonious and balanced manner over the entire body, without localised or irregular concentrations in specific regions (e.g., the extremities of the limbs).

All colours recognised by the standard have equal value and importance. Conversely, non-recognised colours must be considered disqualifying faults (e.g., white, liver, or black and tan). The absence of a mask must likewise be severely penalised.

White markings, whether on the toes or on the chest (provided they are not too extensive), are permitted, as is a white blaze on the muzzle.

The white marking on the chest is accepted by the standard as “small”, but the exact extent of what is considered small has been the subject of long discussion and misunderstanding.

Let us take a step back. The presence of white markings (on the chest, toes, and muzzle blaze) is genetically linked to the S locus (spotting), now associated with the MITF gene, which regulates the absence of pigmentation in specific areas of the coat. White represents a non-colour, due to the absence of melanocyte migration during embryonic development. The different expressions of white are not independent traits but manifestations of a single genetic mechanism.

In light of this, it would appear genetically inconsistent to allow white on limbs or muzzle while at the same time requiring the chest patch to be strictly limited in size. The extent of white does not seem to be precisely controllable in specific regions but rather expressed as a quantitative and variable trait.

Advances in the understanding of coat colour genetics over recent decades therefore suggest that a revision of the breed standard may also be warranted with regard to the presence and extent of white markings on the chest.

In light of the foregoing, we consider a somewhat larger white patch on the chest to be acceptable, provided that it does not reach or extend beyond the anatomical boundaries of the chest region.

Given the current state of the breed, we also consider it appropriate to tolerate, although not encourage, the presence of a small white “ribbon” or “neck marking” on the neck. This feature is now relatively widespread within the population and must therefore be taken into account in breeding and judging evaluations.

Nevertheless, it remains desirable that future selection efforts aim to progressively limit the overall extent of white markings, keeping them within boundaries consistent with the breed type and identity.

Height at the withers.

Females: 60–64 cm / Males: 64–68 cm (± 2 cm).

With regard to the measurements prescribed by the standard, it is suggested to favour, as typical of a molossoid breed of good size, the upper two centimetres of tolerance, and to avoid the lower two centimetres of tolerance.

Weight.

Modern breeding methods, supported by rigorously balanced nutritional protocols, have led over time to a progressive increase in body weight compared to the subjects taken as reference in the breed standard. Therefore, weight must be well proportioned to the dog's overall size.

MOVEMENT.

A = naso-frontal angle (stop)

B = neck inclination

C = scapular inclination

D = humeral inclination

E = metacarpal inclination

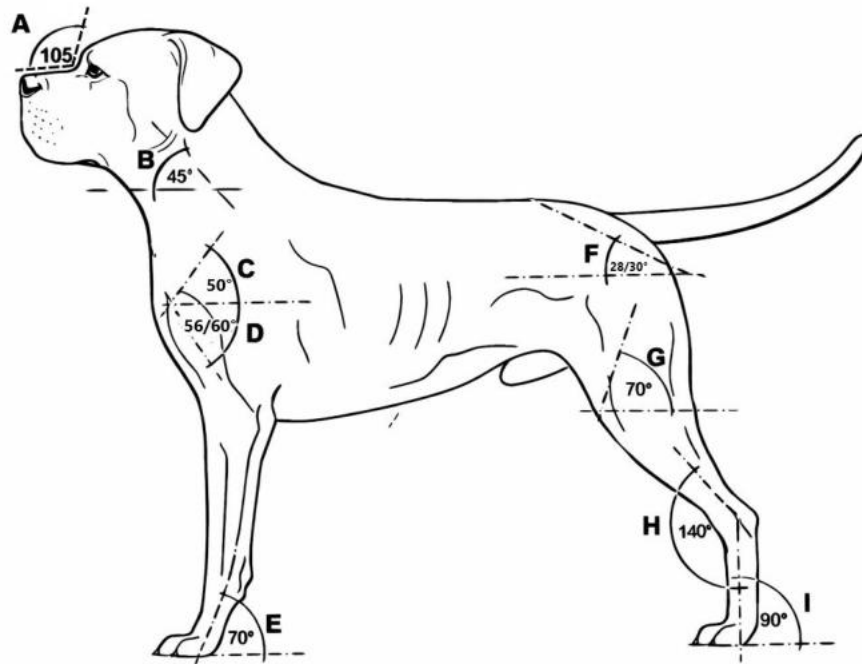
F = croup inclination

G = femoral inclination

H = tibio-metatarsal angle

I = hock inclination relative to the ground

C + D = scapulo-humeral angle (106° – 110°)



Extended stride, extended trot; the preferred gait is the trot.

Structure and movement, like the head, represent “breed type.” The variety of tasks for which the Cane Corso was historically used required an adaptable structure meeting three fundamental requirements: power, endurance, and speed. These characteristics make the Cane Corso a trot–gallop dog, in which, however, the trotting element is predominant.

Typical gaits of the Cane Corso are:

- Extended walk: the footprints of the hind feet overstep those of the forefeet. The neck at the walk is slightly raised, conferring the typical nobility to the subject.
- Extended trot: the dog overreaching; the head and neck are carried further forward than at walk; propulsion remains strong and the vertebral column, in motion, remains firm and stable.