



# BREED FEATURE THE MASTIFF



## They answered

**A.1.** Paul had always wanted a Mastiff after seeing them in England before he immigrated to Australia. Once we purchased our own home which was on just over an acre of land,



and then through an unusual set of circumstances, our first Mastiff puppy joined us just three months after we moved in. This was in 1993 but it was not until 2000 that we registered our first litter. During these seven years, we owned three bitches: two had health issues and the other had fertility problems, but we had become completely hooked on the breed, conformation showing and were very involved with the Mastiff Club of Victoria.

**A.2.** Paul and I have been very fortunate to have been able to see Mastiffs in North America, Europe and New Zealand. In Paul's case, these have mostly been in the UK when he visits his family and he tries to time it around the Old English Mastiff Club Championship show which is held in August each year, the most recent being in 2015. To date, he has attended four, as well as other All Breeds Championship shows where Mastiffs have been awarded CCs.

For me, my first 'Mastiff adventure' was to the US in 2000 when Paul was working there for three months. We attended the MCOA National Specialty, as well as the MCOA supported show at Bucks. Since then, I have also attended another three MCOA National Specialties, as well as the Old English Mastiff Club of Netherlands and Old English Mastiff Club of Germany Championship shows, including visiting numerous Mastiff kennels on these trips.

Serious breeders in Australia have made efforts to import puppies, adults and semen. This has been with the aim to increase the gene pool in Australia to correct weaknesses but also to consolidate strengths that we have with our Mastiffs here in Australia. It is often a misconception that the dogs

that we have in Australia of any breed are lesser in quality than those in other countries around the world. As for Mastiffs, there are two Australian bred sires who have made quite an impact in many countries from the progeny they have produced from frozen semen: Australian Champion Yanoor Tip O The Iceberg (AI) (owned and bred by Gabrielle & Paul Simmonds and Debbie Hobbs) and Australian Champion Darkling Cockney Rebel (owned and bred by Janet & Ian Brownlee).

It is somewhat difficult to assess the overall quality of Mastiffs in Australia as so few appear in the show ring. However, from the first international show that I attended, I certainly felt that the Mastiffs that I bred and the majority that I saw in the show ring would be competitive in the countries that I had visited. This has not changed for me.

Breeders need to keep up to date with the health tests as they are developed for the breed. This may require swabs, blood or urine being sent out of Australia which can be quite expensive but the benefit for the breed needs to be weighed up.

**A.3.** 1. Temperament: Such an essential factor with a dog of this size.

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***I wouldn't add but would delete. In 2009, the Mastiff was one of 12 breeds included on the Kennel Club's (UK) High Profile list and as a result, changes were made to the standard. 'Absolute soundness essential' does not need to be emphasised in the Mastiff standard***

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It is important for a judge to approach this breed confidently and be able to recognise the difference between being 'indifferent with strangers' as described in the standard and timidity.

2. Head: In the Mastiff breed standard, details about the head make up a large proportion of it so it makes sense that the head is a key factor when judging the Mastiff. Short of going in to all the proportions that are detailed in the standard, these are some points that I think judges should look for:

Breadth of skull between the ears  
Gentle expression (light eyes give a predatory look so are not desirable)  
Undershot or level bite (Scissor bite is not correct)

3. Body: NOT square like a Bullmastiff. Slightly longer in body. With substance.

4. Movement: As the standard says – 'easy extension'.

## We asked Breeders

**Q.1.** How long have you been breeding Mastiffs? Why are they your chosen breed?

**Q.2.** How do you think the quality of Mastiffs across Australia is currently, and is there any one point Mastiff breeders should be working towards?

**Q.3.** Could you list in order of priority the 5 most important points you think a judge should look for in the Mastiff?

**Q.4.** If you were able to add a sentence to the Mastiff breed standard what would it be?

**Q.5.** Does the Mastiff have any health problems?

**Q.6.** What would your advice be to a potential puppy buyer when looking for a Mastiff?

5. Topline: Level on the move. Sometimes it is difficult to stack these 'big guys' (especially younger ones) so don't be too critical.

**A.4.** I wouldn't add but would delete. In 2009, the Mastiff was one of 12 breeds included on the Kennel Club's (UK) High Profile list and as a result, changes were made to the standard. 'Absolute soundness essential' does not need to be emphasised in the Mastiff standard.

**A.5.** As with other deep chested breeds, bloat can affect the Mastiff. Cruciate ligament injuries can affect the Mastiff which is not unique to the breed, however recovery post-surgery is often complicated due to the size of the Mastiff. Cystinuria (bladder stones) is a condition that can affect intact males. Research has been conducted by the University of Pennsylvania in conjunction with the Mastiff Club of America which has resulted in a urine test being developed which measures the levels of COLA amino acids. Also, a DNA test has been developed which can identify females who carry the gene for this disease, as well as identify high-risk males. For intact males, the urine test needs to be done annually as there have been cases of supposedly DNA clear males forming stones.

**A.6.** Make sure that the puppy is from purebred parents and if possible, see the parents to assess temperament. Ask for copies of health and DNA tests. Find a breeder that you feel comfortable with who can provide ongoing support. Check with the Mastiff Club of Victoria to determine if the breeder is reputable.

**Gabrielle Simmonds  
Marstenmoor Kennels**

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A.1. In the 1970's I was at a Dog show in the UK and I literally stumbled over what I later found out to be a Mastiff. I was smitten by the temperament and character of the breed and after visiting several breeders I was well and

truly hooked. I then patiently waited for a show puppy to become available from the breeder I had chosen. In 1978 my first Mastiff came home and the house has never been empty of Mastiffs since. I bred in partnership under the Darkling prefix with a friend in the UK up until I moved to Australia. Once I moved to Australia my husband Ian and I were able to continue the Darkling prefix in parallel with the UK registration. Between us we have had combined, direct, involvement with this breed for seventy years.

**A.2.** We would consider that the standard of Mastiffs in Australia is equivalent to the rest of the world and the best would easily be able to compete at the top breed level in the show ring anywhere.

We consider that there are two points breeders should be working towards, worldwide as well as in Australia. Firstly, all breeders have the responsibility of ensuring they breed healthy offspring and as such avail themselves of all relevant health tests to assist in making informed decisions. Also the current trend of exaggeration of traits such as excessive bone, excessive size and excessive wrinkling must be avoided. The approach of more is 'better' despite the consequences will, in the long term be detrimental to the health and welfare of this breed.

Secondly, having judged the breed last year in the US, Europe and the UK it became obvious that worldwide there appears to be a somewhat indifferent attitude, or even appreciation as to what constitutes breed type. It is of particular concern that the Mastiff is losing correct head type and breeders need to re think their understanding of head type. The breed standard is pretty clear as to what is required and becomes even clearer once you read and compare the standards of the other mastiff breeds.

Despite individual's preferences the head is square, not round and wrinkly and never houndy.

**A.3.** Breed type is essential and type  
*Continued on page 66*



# SUNNY

CH MARSTENMOOR HOT SUMMER KNIGHT



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DOB 1st December 2014

Thank you to the many judges who recognise  
and award this stunning youngster.  
Our multiple Class In Group and Class In Show winner.



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# BREED FEATURE THE MASTIFF



*They  
answered*

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includes temperament and movement. Most important is head type. Roughly forty per cent of the standard is devoted to describing what is required and is quiet specific. The head encompasses

“ **The Mastiff is a long dog, a trait that distinguishes from the other mastiff breeds. The body is broad, deep through with ribs carried well back. The chest is deep and well let down. The height is made up of depth of chest and not length of leg.** ”

skull, muzzle, eyes, ears, and mask. When there is any deviation, type is compromised.  
The head when viewed from any point should be square. The skull is

broad between the ears, which are small, wide apart and set on high. The muzzle is short, broad under the eyes, and nearly parallel in width to the end of nose. It is truncated, blunt and cut off squarely with a well-defined stop.  
There should be great depth from point of nose to underjaw. The nose is black with wide nostrils. A square within a square.  
The eyes should be dark, of moderate size, (read small), full of expression and set wide apart. The face and ears are black.  
The Mastiff is a giant breed and although not tall in stature his size should impress. Powerfully built, large boned with substance.  
The Mastiff is a long dog, a trait that distinguishes from the other mastiff breeds. The body is broad, deep through with ribs carried well back. The chest is deep and well let down. The height is made up of depth of chest and not length of leg.  
Despite its love of the couch, or your bed, the Mastiff is a large, powerful dog and it is imperative that his nature is calm and friendly. Often indifferent with strangers he is not always the showman in the ring.  
Strong and powerful movement. Think Clydesdale, not Thoroughbred.



**A.4.** The standard has been around a long time, drawn up in 1883 and over the years there has been a couple of minor amendments and some rearrangement. We think the standard is clear as to what is required.  
**A.5.** Having monitored the health of the breed for some forty years it would be our opinion that issues most likely to have an impact are cruciate rupture, bloat and obese unfit dogs. Hip dysplasia and osteochondritis are seen in the Mastiff and Australian breeders have a long history of scoring the hips and elbows of Mastiffs with excellent result.  
In recent years cystinuria has been found in the breed and a simple cheek swap can be sent to the USA to determine, clear, affected or carrier status.  
**A.6.** Firstly, you need to be sure that

the breed is for you. Visit breeders or at least attend a show where you will see a large gathering of Mastiffs as you must meet the breed face to face. The Mastiff Club of Victoria holds a show usually in April and the Association of All Mastiff Breeds in September.  
The Mastiff is a giant breed that takes up a lot of room in the house. It slobbers, think Turner and Hooch. It is not a yard dog; it thrives on being part of the family. Research the breed and ask lots of questions.  
Once you have decided that the breed is for you buy from a reputable breeder. When a litter becomes available you should expect to be able see the dam of the puppies and if the breeder owns him, the sire. See as many relatives of the puppies that you can as well as their health results.  
You can never have enough information. The puppies should be plush looking, well covered but not fat. No discharge from eyes or nose. Alert, inquisitive and able to move freely. The sire and dam must be hip and elbow scored as a minimum and we recommend that both are tested for PRA, CMR1 and cystinuria.

**Janet Brownlee  
Darkling Kennels  
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One of the world's oldest active Mastiff kennels.  
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# Darkling

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# BREED FEATURE THE MASTIFF



## The Breed Standard

### GENERAL APPEARANCE:

Head, in general outline, giving a square appearance when viewed from any point. Breadth desired and in ratio to length of whole head and face as 2:3. Body broad, deep, long, powerfully built, on legs wide apart, and symmetrically set. Muscles sharply defined. Size is desirable, but only if combined with quality and if absolute soundness is maintained. Height and substance important if both points are proportionally combined.

**CHARACTERISTICS:** Large, powerful, well-knit frame. A combination of grandeur and courage.

**TEMPERAMENT:** Calm, affectionate to owners, but capable of guarding. Usually indifferent with strangers; timidity is unacceptable.

**HEAD AND SKULL:** Skull broad between ears, forehead flat, but wrinkled when attention is excited. Brows (superciliary ridges) slightly raised. Muscles of temples and cheeks (temporal and masseter) well developed. Arch across skull of a flattened curve, with depression up centre of forehead from median line between eyes, to halfway up sagittal suture. Muzzle short, broad under eyes, and keeping nearly parallel in width to end of nose, truncated (i.e. blunt and cut off squarely), thus forming a right angle with upper line of face, of great depth from point of nose to under-jaw. Under-jaw broad to end. Nose broad; with widely spreading nostrils when viewed from front, flat (not pointed or turned up) in profile. Lips diverging at obtuse angles with septum, and slightly pendulous so as to show a square profile. Length of muzzle to whole head and face as 1:3. Circumference of muzzle (measured mid-way between eyes and nose) to that of head (measured before the ears) as 3:5. Whilst in repose, any exaggeration or wrinkle of excess of loose skin is unacceptable in mature adults.

**EYES:** Moderate size, wide apart. Stop between eyes well marked but not too abrupt. Colour hazel brown, darker the better, showing no haw. Loose eyelids highly undesirable. Free from obvious eye problems.

**EARS:** Small, thin to touch, wide apart, set on at highest points of sides of skull, so as to continue outline across summit, and lying flat and close to cheeks when in repose.

**MOUTH:** Canine teeth healthy; powerful and wide apart; incisors level, or lower projecting beyond upper but never so much as to become visible when mouth is closed.

**NECK:** Slightly arched, moderately long, very muscular, and measuring in circumference about 2.5 - 5 cms (1 - 2 ins) less than skull before ears.

**FOREQUARTERS:** Shoulder and arm slightly sloping, heavy and muscular. Legs straight, strong and set wide apart; bones being large. Elbows square. Pasterns upright. Balanced and in harmony with hindquarters.

**BODY:** Chest wide, deep and well let down between forelegs. Ribs arched and well rounded. False ribs deep and well set back to hips. Back and loins wide and muscular; flat and very wide in bitch, slightly arched in dog. Great depth of flanks. Topline level and maintained whilst on the move. Length of body taken from point of shoulder to point of buttock greater than height at withers.

**HINDQUARTERS:** Broad, wide and muscular, with well developed second thighs, hocks bent, wide apart, and quite squarely set when standing or walking. Strength in hindquarters is of paramount importance, cow hocks in mature adults unacceptable.

**FEET:** Large, round and tight. Toes well arched. Nails black.

**TAIL:** Set on high, and reaching to hocks, or a little below them, wide at its root and tapering to end, hanging straight in repose, but forming a curve with end pointing upwards, but not over back, when dog is excited.

**GAIT/MOVEMENT:** Powerful, easy extension, driven from the rear, fluent, sound, with ground covering strides. Tendency to pace is undesirable. Absolute soundness essential.

**COAT:** Short and close lying but coarser over neck and shoulders.

**COLOUR:** Apricot, fawn or brindle. In any case, muzzle, ears and nose should be black with black around eye rims, and extending upwards between them. Excessive white on body, chest or feet is unacceptable.

**SIZES:** Not specified.

**FAULTS:** Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

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