

## **Type – by Anna Burke Harris (BARKS Winter/Spring 1987-88)**

“type: Latin: “typus” image. Greek: “typos” ...impression, model. (b) having qualities of a higher category. (c) a specimen or series of specimens on which a taxonomic species or subspecies is actually based.” – Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary

Type (or lack of it) is a frequent term used to describe a dog and a word which appears in write-ups and conversations but is rarely defined. We talk about “terrier type” or “bull type” and, occasionally, “hound type” but find it difficult to say what we really mean by all round Bull Terrier type. In short, we almost expect others to understand “type” intuitively.

So, in search of a definition. I have been giving some long thinking on what on earth I really mean when I say “type”.

I have had to define type in other breeds as a process of applying for additional judging approvals. This has given me a great deal of insight on where breed type comes from and what it should be in the ring. In short, as a judge I must put up superior type seen in the animals in front of me at the time I judge, so I had better clearly understand what “type” is in the particular breed I am judging.

And this thing called “type” then goes back and often is most visibly defined in those notes preceding the Standard. In short, **type is the modern equivalent of the original purpose of a breed.**

The Bull Terrier was originally developed for fighting and as a companion for sporting gentlemen. He is essentially a gladiator of great strength, courage and agility, but he is never to seek or provoke a fight. And the notes accompanying the current AKC Standard emphasize this by saying “...a gladiator of perfect form.”

What does this “perfect form” look like in today’s dogs? In the all over impression of balance in structure a deep chest required for the heart and lungs of great stamina, a heavily muscled rear end, short back for agility and swift turning. Even the tail, properly set, thick and strong is both a physical means of balance as well as the “hand hold”, used by those pitting their dogs. Watch a short backed dog standing and you will usually see a slight spread of the rear legs and the flexing of muscle as he responds to what he sees and hears – he is preparing to shift his balance on a moment’s notice.

His wide chest and strong front, even the correct cat feet, are the outgrowth of the required strength and agility of the bad old days. Even the so called “tuck up” was a design to protect the genitals from the slashing teeth of the opponent.

On the move, he should be cocky and observant. Alas, the desired short backed heavily muscled dog often retains his balance by moving “close” in the rear, unlike the lighter terriers.

But remember, he was in the restricted area of the fighting pit, where he would not be striding out, but stalking, circling and springing. Note the movement of the “light weights” and dogs who are simply not fit, if short backed, and any long backed animal and it is far more likely you will see the “correct” terrier movement. However they move, Bull Terriers must “drive” in the rear to show outwardly their strength and ability to spring forward or sideways.

There is more than one breed whose ancestors were fighters.

The Bulldog, bred for stamina, has the eye set of a dog who approached their opponent straight on, moving low to the ground and prepared to spring. The modern Bulldog is incredibly agile, often able to jump very well, the eye set is directly in front of the head, the whole breathing structure designed for the type of fighting they did. The Bulldog Standard recognizes this by awarding more points to the nose than to any other single feature.

The Staffordshire and American Staffordshire both show in the eye set, balance and body shape their design for swift movement for the sports of ratting or dog fighting. The requirements for courage, stamina and good character are no different from those required of the Bull Terrier.

But look at the differing Standards of the Bulldog and the three terriers: The Bull Terrier, the Staffordshire and American Staffordshire. All are required to have a strong, well developed underjaw. The Bulldog must have immense strength in jaw to hang on to his opponents at all costs. The two Staffordshire’s must have well developed cheek muscles and enough length of muzzle to hang on to slash and tear-this was their style of fighting, reflected also in their eye set as they would attack their opponent straight on.

But note the differing cheek muscles and eye set of the Bull Terrier. They are simply a development of a different style of handling an opponent. Anyone who has ever watched a whirling, buzz saw of a Bull Terrier knows intuitively why side vision is important to him. And his long jaw gives him leverage to keep a good grip while also enabling him to slash like a terrier. Even the eye set is designed to protect his vision from a side ways attacking opponent, using his own spinning approach.

And the design of the bite:

1. The Bulldog **MUST** be strongly undershot. This is historical and contemporary in their Standard. This jaw and the “laid back” skull structure is a development to keep the dog breathing while hanging on.
2. The original British Standard of the Bull Terrier (“Dogs of the British Islands”, Stonehenge, 1882) states “teeth should meet exactly”, and, “The bullterrier is still judged by the fighting standard – that is to say, mental as well as bodily which are necessary to the fighting dog.” As the strictly level bite is very difficult to breed, some acceptability was given to just overshot or undershot mouths. The present mouth is presumably a compromise to keep the Bull Terrier within the “smooth terrier” family for purposes of group classifications.

3. The American Staffordshire was admitted to AKC registration in 1935. (He is not yet a recognized breed in England.) Coincidentally, the Staffordshire was recognized by the Kennel Club in England in 1935 and admitted to registration by the AKC in 1975. They came into the registry in each case with the so-called scissors bite.

All the above show that visible “type” in these breeds is a reflection of their fighting ancestry and even of the particular opponent and style of fighting.

So, what does this style look like in the show ring?

Balance, short coupled and tucked up. Fitness, meaning well muscled and well exercised and in hard condition. Power in the rear end, driving on the move straight and true in the front. Strong feet and pasterns, weight in bone, showing strength. Alert, observant and attentive in every fibre.

And in the head: Length and depth of skull, with a strong underjaw. Strong, even teeth. Bite that shows biting power, level or scissors, preferably neither under nor over too much.

Please note, there is difference usually found between the sexes. But even the most feminine of bitches will show their heritage and almost shout their courage and stamina. The ladies are not backwards in any of the points of type, they simply remind me they were bred by the same company that produced Boadicea, the greatest warrior queen in history.

So, what do we mean by type? A fighting machine, developed for particular skills. That we have brought him into the house and smoothed out his rough edges, made him our constant companion, our trusted friend, does not change what he was.

Remember always he was forged in iron and fire. It is his stamp. He is the model. This is his type.