

**The Art of Comparing Different Type Bull Terriers**  
**By Mr. Ernest Eberhard, Bull Terriers of Today, BTCA 1951.**

*Mr. Eberhard owned his first Bull Terrier in 1912 and has been active around the show ring for some twenty years. He has written frequently on Bull Terriers, on breeding to type, etc., and was one of the authorities invited to contribute articles to Davis "Dog Encyclopedia". He was recently asked to contribute a chapter to one of the new English books on the Bull Terrier.*

IN ANY breed the fundamentals are type, balance and soundness. Each is important when checking over the quality of any dog.

Type is the thing that makes a dog a Bull Terrier, a Staffordshire, a Boxer. A dog can be beautifully balanced, a gorgeous mover – and a grand Collie. So our first thought must ever be "type" – which is not as easy in Bull Terriers as it is in most other breeds because we are not entirely in agreement among ourselves even on definitions of such fundamentals as "downface", "station", etc.

Let's start with balance, which might be called harmony of proportion—that certain something which makes us say "That is a beautiful dog" rather than "What a lovely head", or "What tremendous bone", or "What a broad chest".

The principle of balance is exactly the same as if we were to compare the excellence of two artists. One does a flower grouping with roses beautifully handled, but the rest of the flowers are mediocre and of poor composition; the other handles all his flowers with equal excellence and his composition is such that it makes a pleasing whole. An observer would immediately comment on the roses in the one painting and might even prefer it because the roses seem so excellent by contrast, although the well composed painting of general excellence is obviously the work of the better artist.

That is exactly the case when a dog is preferred because it has a beautiful eye or a grand chest. But we are not comparing eyes against eyes, chests against chests—we are comparing the overall dog, "balance". Each part should be well proportioned to the other, each "flowing" into the other, with type virtues recognized rather than type faults. It is easier to pick out faults than to recognize virtues although virtues are the more important and the constant critic of top dogs can be classified as not knowing too much about the breed even though he may have been exposed to it for many years.

Soundness comes as the result of a properly put together skeleton. A mongrel can be sound. Some of the soundest big game dogs are cross-breeds. It is obvious that soundness alone does not make a good Bull Terrier even though some judging is done on the basis of movement without much regard to type. Of course a dog of major unsoundness has no place either in the show ring or in a breeding program. Minor unsound points may be temporary or be caused by handling. For example, a dog noted for a clean shoulder may be penalized for the appearance of a loaded shoulder caused by the placing of the feet. Any dog will at one time or another show almost every fault in the book.

To me, soundness includes not only physical excellence but mental qualities as well. A shy, cowardly dog is unsound mentally and lacks the greatest virtue of the Bull Terrier—courage.

Since type is what makes a dog a Bull Terrier and not a Staffordshire, let's analyze type and try to get on common ground.

First and quite confusing, Bull Terrier type has been changing so much during the past ten or fifteen years that some judges say we have practically a new breed. The older American favored brick-shaped head has gradually been giving way to the English favored egg-shaped head. Dogs are getting lower to the ground and broader. In fact, we seem to be in a transition stage where dogs of widely varying types often compete together and sometimes it is a case of picking the best of a poor lot, at least so far as type is concerned.

But there are certain "common denominators" of type that go to make up a good Bull Terrier regardless of the length of its legs or the shape of its head.

Let's see how the Standard sums up the appearance of the breed. It says, "General appearance is that of a symmetrical animal, an embodiment of agility, grace, strength and determination, and in whose formation there should be an entire absence of exaggeration of any kind". To put it another way, the Bull Terrier should be well balanced, look strong, move soundly and radiate courage.

Perhaps the most important detail of type is expression—that cruel, wicked look so typical of the breed and yet so foreign to its true disposition. The placing of the eye is the key to expression. The bottom of the eye should slant down towards the nose and that is more important than color, size or shape. For an eye can be dark, deep set, triangular and small but if it runs across the nose it is a bad Bull Terrier eye although it might be an excellent Airedale eye. It must slant down towards the nose.

Then there is fill—plenty of bone under and in front of the eye, with no suggestion of stop. And there should be no brow. The modern head in profile gives the appearance of an arc—or as the English put it, is egg-shaped. The big, black nose should come down in a Roman finish as the end of the arc.

And length of head is desirable, with more from eye to nose than from eye to ear, but it should be a strong head. As regards length, a trained eye is called for as the top line of the head, the amount of fill, and the width and depth of muzzle will create an optical illusion. A really good head will often look shorter than a poor one of the same length.

Then there is the underjaw, which should be strong with teeth meeting evenly. Loose, sloppy lips kill the clean lines a Bull Terrier head should have—there should be no suggestion of the Saint Bernard in a Bull Terrier's lips. A thin lip, close fitting and not too long is desired.

And finally we come to the ears, which should be thin, small and erect. They should be placed like those of a horse and not like those of a jackass.

All of the foregoing can be found in the newer egg-shaped head just as readily as in the older brick-shaped head. They are common denominators, characteristics of the breed, and are the fundamental marks of type. If we look

for them, we can compare heads and reach some sound judgment as to the relative closeness to true Bull Terrier type.

Now take the body. Some Bull Terriers are relatively narrow, set on long legs, very similar to a Dalmation, others are wide and short in leg, being more of the Bulldog type. And there are endless variations in between.

Let's look for the common denominator here, as we seldom get the extremes of type to compare. If we did, comparison would be easy.

The first thing to look for is balance, to see that the shape and length of body are in proportion to the length of legs and head. A clever handler may be able to shove the rear end of a dog up into its back teeth so that it looks like a fine, compact dog. But when that same dog walks on a loose lead and is looked at not only as it comes and goes, but also from the side, then the real story is told. Its body in motion should seem to be in constant balance. Essentially the Standard calls for the physical characteristics of a fighting dog—therefore the Bull Terrier should have the instinctive poise of the trained fighter, ready for instant action. Any appearance of clumsiness, awkwardness or timidity in movement is foreign to the essential character of the breed.

It is in movement that the true proportions of body are most easily seen, that defects of the skeleton show up. The Bull Terrier is essentially a happy mover, walking as if he had little springs in his feet that seem to lightly spurn the ground.

From now on, the common denominators fall readily into line—cat feet, good bone, good bend of stifle, short tail carried straight, white coat, color of eye, and so on.

With these common denominators fixed in mind, it becomes relatively easy to compare dogs of different types and to pick out those which have the largest number of essential Bull Terrier characteristics. It is these characteristics of type that we should learn to recognize and appreciate and to strive for in our breeding programs if we are ever to develop a more uniform type for the show ring.