



def·i·ni·tion of a show dog

By Steve Wolfson

New puppy or adult owners of competition/show Rottweilers are sometimes sold on their dog's "show - ability." They thought they purchased a quality dog. But after months - perhaps years - of money spent and disappointment, it fell short and did not make the grade. If they had a definition of a show dog as a metric, they could avoid a letdown and better evaluate the prospect before paying bucks-deluxe.

The dilemma lies in the semantics; opinions vary significantly. What one breeder labels a show dog may not be the same for another. A show dog must meet seven requirements to fulfill its job.

1. No disqualifying faults per the standard.
2. Possesses breed type.
3. Possesses - at most - minor faults.
4. At a minimum, has satisfactory free flowing gait.
5. Possesses a show attitude.
6. Has balance.
7. Can place in the ribbons at any show, under any judge, at least four out of seven times.

An explanation of the criteria is necessary. Number one needs no discussion. Having a disqualifying fault eliminates the dog from competition.

2. Possesses breed type

Type is the first attribute to look for when selecting a pup or adult show dog. It is a prerequisite.

A dog cannot be competitive if it lacks general breed type. A pup or adult must possess correct Rottweiler head type, dark eyes, correct dentition, dark gums, proper bone strength, correct 9x10 body ratio, good color of markings, correct Rottweiler gait, and a general balance. Without these essential traits, a pup or adult may win ribbons, even earn a championship under some judges, but will not climb to the top.



3. Possesses - at most - minor faults

In structure, the prospective show pup or adult may possess - at most - minor problems.

Minor structural faults

- Slightly soft pasterns
- Moderate sloping croup
- Slight softness in topline
- Slightly turned out at the feet
- Moderate angulation
- Barrel-chest
- Elbows positioned somewhat away from the chest

Major structural problems that would render it non-competitive.

- East-West feet
- Out at the elbows
- Fiddle front
- Weak, actively bouncing topline
- Hockey
- Sickie hocks
- Steep sloping croup
- Splay feet
- Inadequate angulation and roach back
- Level bite, misalignment of the teeth

Two other flaws requiring mention are cosmetic and type faults. The Standard does not specify cosmetic defects. That word implies that a trait can be removed or wiped away. It cannot. It is a rationale - an excuse. The second - type fault - diminishes the general appearance.

Samples of faults labeled cosmetic

- Light eyes
- Straw markings
- Wavy coat
- Sooty markings
- Pink gums

Type faults, which significantly weaken breed type and should be avoided

- Narrow heads
- Long muzzles
- Light eyes
- Long backs
- Pink gums

- Narrow snipey muzzle
- Spindly bones
- Lack of pronunciation in the zygomatic arch

4. At a minimum, has satisfactory free flowing gait



All show exhibits are required to gait. It demonstrates how sound or not, the dog's structural parts work together. It cannot gait correctly with structural faults or incongruities. These problems compromise its locomotion. A show exhibit - even a puppy - should gait with free-flowing harmonious movement satisfactorily.

5. Show attitude, a willingness to perform under the pressure of the show ring

Every show dog must have an "up and ready" attitude - a willingness to perform. Despite being flawless in type and structure, picture an exhibit entering the show ring with ears down and no expression! How unexciting it would be. Without this crucial ingredient, why bother? Shows are a competition. Attitude and posture are a factor in its adjudication.

6. Has balance

Balance is a general **harmonious symmetry** that a dog should exhibit. When all the parts are considered, they relate correctly producing balance.

Dr. Alvin Grossman in his book, **the Standard Book of Dog Breeding (Doral Publishing)** makes an interesting point saying,

"Far too many breeders seem overly concerned with the individual parts of the dog. Many breeders subconsciously feel that when they know, to their own satisfaction, what a good head is, what a good front is, what constitutes good neck and shoulders, what a well-angulated rear looks like, etc., that there is nothing more for them to learn. The concept of relating the various parts of the dog to each other and viewing this relationship as a whole, rather than as a series of particular good or bad traits, is the key that so many breeders never grasp."



7. Can place in the ribbons in any show, under any judge, at least four out of seven times

The best dog will not win every show or place under every judge. Even the great racehorse Secretariat lost a race. Placing is vital to the definition because it spells out the dog's function, its purpose. This criterion is there, so the seller or breeder of the dog is held accountable. Making the breeder define the competitiveness of their show dog or pup requires them to be definitive. Why buy a show dog if it cannot fulfill its job in the show ring? If their label is "show dog," it should at

the very least, place in the ribbons four out of seven times.

Using Definition of a Show Dog as a template will manage your selection process objectively. It eliminates subjectivity and dramatically diminishes mistakes made by emotion and sales pitch.

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