

The Great Dane

Contributed by Admin
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THE GREAT DANE

The origin of the Great Dane, like that of many other varieties of dogs, is so obscure that all researches have only resulted in speculative theories, but the undoubted antiquity of this dog is proved by the fact that representatives of a breed sufficiently similar to be considered his ancestors are found on some of the oldest Egyptian monuments.

A few years ago a controversy arose on the breed's proper designation, when the Germans claimed for it the title "Deutsche Dogge." Germany had several varieties of big dogs, such as the Hatzrude, Saufanger, Ulmer Dogge, and Rottweiler Metzgerhund; but contemporaneously with these there existed, as in other countries in Europe, another very big breed, but much nobler and more thoroughbred, known as the Great Dane. When after the war of 1870 national feeling was pulsating very strongly in the veins of reunited Germany, the German cynologists were on the lookout for a national dog, and for that purpose the Great Dane was re-christened "Deutsche Dogge," and elected as the champion of German Dogdom. For a long time all these breeds had, no doubt, been indiscriminately crossed.

The Great Dane was introduced into this country spasmodically some thirty-five years ago, when he was commonly referred to as the Boarhound, or the German Mastiff, and for a time the breed had to undergo a probationary period in the "Foreign Class" at dog shows, but it soon gained in public favour, and in the early 'eighties a Great Dane Club was formed, and the breed has since become one of

the most popular of the larger dogs.

The Kennel Club has classed the Great Dane amongst the Non-Sporting dogs, probably because with us he cannot find a quarry worthy of his mettle; but, for all that, he has the instincts and qualifications of a sporting dog, and he has proved himself particularly valuable for hunting big game in hot climates, which he stands very well.

Respecting the temperament of the Great Dane and his suitability as a companion writers have gone to extremes in praise and condemnation. In his favour it must be said that in natural intelligence he is surpassed by very few other dogs. He has a most imposing figure, and does not, like some other big breeds, slobber from his mouth, which is a particularly unpleasant peculiarity when a dog is kept in the house. On the other hand, it must be admitted that with almost the strength of a tiger he combines the excitability of a terrier, and no doubt a badly trained Great Dane is a very dangerous animal. It is not sufficient to teach him in the haphazard way which might be successful in getting a small dog under control, but even as a companion he ought to be trained systematically, and, considering his marked intelligence, this is not difficult of accomplishment.

The Great Dane attains his full development in about a year and a half to two years, and, considering that puppies have to build up in that time a very big skeleton and straight limbs, special attention must be given to the rearing of them. The dam whelps frequently eight puppies, and sometimes even a few more. Mr. Larke's Princess Thor had a litter of seventeen, but even eight is too great a number for a bitch to suckle in a breed where great size is a desideratum. Not more than four, or at the outside five, should be left with the bitch; the others should be put to a foster mother, or if they are weaklings or foul-marked, it is best to destroy them. After the puppies are weaned, their food should be of bone-making quality, and they require

ample space for exercise and play. Nothing is worse than to take the youngsters for forced marches before their bones have become firm.

Before giving the description and standard which have been adopted by the Great Dane Clubs, a few remarks on some of the leading points will be useful. The general characteristic of the Great Dane is a combination of grace and power, and therefore the lightness of the Greyhound, as well as the heaviness of the Mastiff, must be avoided.

The head should be powerful, but at the same time show quality by its nice modelling.

The eyes should be intelligent and vivacious, but not have the hard expression of the terrier. The distance between the eyes is of great importance; if too wide apart they give the dog a stupid appearance, and if too close he has a treacherous look.

Another very important point is the graceful carriage of the tail. When it is curled over the back it makes an otherwise handsome dog look mean, and a tail that curls at the end like a corkscrew is also very ugly. In former times "faking" was not infrequently resorted to to correct a faulty tail carriage, but it is easily detected. Great Danes sometimes injure the end of the tail by hitting it against a hard substance, and those with a good carriage of tail are most liable to this because in excitement they slash it about, whereas the faulty position of the tail, curled over the back, insures immunity from harm.

Until recently British Great Dane breeders and exhibitors have paid very little attention to colour, on the principle that, like a good horse, a good Great Dane cannot be a bad colour. The English clubs, however, have now in this particular also adopted the German standard.

The orthodox colours are brindle, fawn, blue, black, and harlequin.

In the brindle dogs the ground colour should be any shade from light yellow to dark red-yellow on which the brindle appears in darker stripes. The harlequins have on a pure white ground fairly large black patches, which must be of irregular shape, broken up as if they had been torn, and not have rounded outlines. When brindle Great Danes are continuously bred together, it has been found that they get darker, and that the peculiar "striping" disappears, and in that case the introduction of a good fawn into the strain is advisable. The constant mating of harlequins has the tendency to make the black patches disappear, and the union with a good black Great Dane will prevent the loss of colour.

The following is the official description issued by the Great Dane Club:--

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GENERAL APPEARANCE--The Great Dane is not so heavy or massive as the Mastiff, nor should he too nearly approach the Greyhound type.

Remarkable in size and very muscular, strongly though elegantly built; the head and neck should be carried high, and the tail in line with the back, or slightly upwards, but not curled over the hind-quarters.

Elegance of outline and grace of form are most essential to a Dane; size is absolutely necessary; but there must be that alertness of expression and briskness of movement without which the Dane character

is lost. He should have a look of dash and daring, of being ready to go anywhere and do anything. TEMPERAMENT--The Great Dane is

good-tempered, affectionate, and faithful to his master, not demonstrative with strangers; intelligent, courageous, and always alert. His value as a guard is unrivalled. He is easily controlled

when well trained, but he may grow savage if confined too much, kept on chain, or ill treated. HEIGHT--The minimum height of an adult dog

should be 30 ins.; that of a bitch, 28 ins. **WEIGHT**--The minimum weight of an adult dog should be 120 lbs.; that of a bitch, 100 lbs. The greater height and weight to be preferred, provided that quality and proportion are also combined. **HEAD**--Taken altogether, the head should give the idea of great length and strength of jaw. The muzzle, or foreface, is broad, and the skull proportionately narrow, so that the whole head, when viewed from above and in front, has the appearance of equal breadth throughout. **LENGTH OF HEAD**--The entire length of head varies with the height of the dog, 13 ins. from the tip of the nose to the back of the occiput is a good measurement for a dog of 32 ins. at the shoulder. The length from the end of the nose to the point between the eyes should be about equal, or preferably of greater length than from this point to the back of the occiput. **SKULL**--The skull should be flat rather than domed, and have a slight indentation running up the centre, the occipital peak not prominent. There should be a decided rise or brow over the eyes, but no abrupt stop between them. **FACE**--The face should be chiselled well and foreface long, of equal depth throughout, and well filled in below the eyes with no appearance of being pinched. **MUSCLES OF THE CHEEK**--The muscles of the cheeks should be quite flat, with no lumpiness or cheek bumps, the angle of the jaw-bone well defined. **LIPS**--The lips should hang quite square in front, forming a right angle with the upper line of foreface. **UNDERLINE**--The underline of the head, viewed in profile, runs almost in a straight line from the corner of the lip to the corner of the jawbone, allowing for the fold of the lip, but with no loose skin to hang down. **JAW**--The lower jaw should be about level, or at any rate not project more than the sixteenth of an inch. **NOSE AND NOSTRILS**--The bridge of the nose should be very wide, with a slight ridge where the cartilage joins the bone. (This is quite a characteristic of the breed.) The nostrils should be large, wide, and open, giving a blunt look to the nose. A butterfly or flesh-coloured nose is not objected to in harlequins. **EARS**--The

ears should be small, set high on the skull, and carried slightly erect, with the tips falling forward. **NECK**--Next to the head, the neck is one of the chief characteristics. It should be long, well arched, and quite clean and free from loose skin, held well up, snakelike in carriage, well set in the shoulders, and the junction of head and neck well defined. **SHOULDERS**--The shoulders should be muscular but not loaded, and well sloped back, with the elbows well under the body, so that, when viewed in front, the dog does not stand too wide. **FORE-LEGS AND FEET**--The fore-legs should be perfectly straight, with big flat bone. The feet large and round, the toes well arched and close, the nails strong and curved. **BODY**--The body is very deep, with ribs well sprung and belly well drawn up. **BACK AND LOINS**--The back and loins are strong, the latter slightly arched, as in the Greyhound. **HIND-QUARTERS**--The hind-quarters and thighs are extremely muscular, giving the idea of great strength and galloping power. The second thigh is long and well developed as in a Greyhound, and the hocks set low, turning neither out nor in. **TAIL**--The tail is strong at the root and ends in a fine point, reaching to or just below the hocks. It should be carried, when the dog is in action, in a straight line level with the back, slightly curved towards the end, but should not curl over the back. **COAT**--The hair is short and dense, and sleek-looking, and in no case should it incline to coarseness. **GAIT OR ACTION**--The gait should be lithe, springy, and free, the action high. The hocks should move very freely, and the head should be held well up. **COLOUR**--The colours are brindle, fawn, blue, black, and harlequin. The harlequin should have jet black patches and spots on a pure white ground; grey patches are admissible but not desired; but fawn or brindle shades are objectionable.