

# Rhodesian Ridgeback

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## Illustrations of the Breed Standard as Elaborated



Presented by the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States,  
as approved by membership vote in July 2003.

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## DEVELOPMENT OF THESE ILLUSTRATIONS

The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States ("RRCUS") appointed five senior breeders to develop a set of illustrations of the Elaborated Standard of the Rhodesian Ridgeback. This five member Elaborations Illustrations Committee ("EIC") has completed its task, and the members have voted to approve the illustrations contained herein.

The EIC consists of five breeders, each with over thirty years of breeding, educating, judging and lecturing on the standards of Ridgebacks. The members are:

Diane Jacobsen (Chair)  
Calico Ridge Kennels— 1962, 40 years  
Barbara Sawyer-Brown  
Kwetu Kennels— 1966, 36 years  
Myrna Berger  
Rob Norm Kennels— 1965, 37 years  
Alicia Mohr-Hanna  
Kimani Kennels— 1963, 39 years  
Barbara Rupert (former Chair)  
Oakhurst Kennels— 1970, 32 years

The EIC members recognize other views exist; however, in their years of involvement with the breed they endorse and recommend these illustrations as the ones most demonstrative of the purposes for which our breed was developed and its appropriate structure.

The history of developing the Standard, the Elaboration of the Standard and the illustrations is as follows:

- Previous Standard was illustrated in 1986
- AKC required all breed standards to be uniformly formatted, to use SPIRA terms to include gait. The RRCUS standard was updated via membership vote in 1992.
- In 1994-5 an Elaboration made important clarifications to the Standard and was approved by a general membership vote.

The milestones achieved in producing these illustrations included:

- Appointing the EIC members, by Member vote, at the Colorado Specialty, August, 1999;
- Approving the artist contract at the Kentucky Specialty in August, 2000, by BOD vote, with some early drafts shown at that time;
- Presenting first drafts of all 23 illustrations at the Richland, Washington Specialty in September, 2001;
- Mailing drafts to Members and receiving back Member comments prior to the Lansing Specialty in May, 2002;
- Incorporating certain Member comments and producing final proposed illustrations into a booklet mailed in March, 2003 to Members to request their endorsement;
- Obtaining the final affirmative Member vote in July, 2003.

The EIC wishes to thank everyone who has participated in this process for their help in assisting us in finalizing one of the most important and long-awaited educational tools that RRCUS can develop. These illustrations will help bring our breed together on a common set of expectations and allow consistent messages to be sent about how the Rhodesian Ridgeback should be viewed.

Sincerely,  
The EIC, July, 2003

# The Rhodesian Ridgeback Standard as Elaborated



*Throughout the presentation,  
the standard language appears  
in plain print and the elaboration  
appears in italics.*

THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK is a dog of formidable power, dedication and courage. He claims an ancient heritage, yet is of relatively recent lineage in terms of standardization of the breed.

Today's Ridgeback is descended from a variety of breeds which were crossed by settlers of South Africa and Rhodesia with the native dogs of the Hottentot tribe. The ridge became his identifying mark.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback survived in various forms through the years because of his superb hunting ability. In addition to trailing and tracking large animals, he was also used to hold his quarry at bay. He was the protector of game wardens, farm families and hunters throughout South Central Africa, where the breed developed into its present form.

From its origin in Africa, the Ridgeback has lost none of his abilities as a hunter and guardian and he continues to be an excellent companion. The Ridgeback is a devoted family dog, totally loyal to his master. He is rather aloof and undemonstrative towards strangers.

This is the Rhodesian Ridgeback, a dog of incorruptible, independent character, who takes his responsibilities of companionship, protection and family dedication to heart. He never forgets love and understanding, nor does he lightly forgive harsh treatment. He is a dog of noble bearing, whose physical attributes should reflect his role as guardian, companion and hunter.

## GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Ridgeback represents a strong, muscular and active hound, symmetrical and balanced in outline. A mature Ridgeback is a handsome, upstanding and athletic dog, capable of great endurance with a fair (good) amount of speed. Of even dignified temperament, the Ridgeback is devoted and affectionate to his master, reserved with strangers. The peculiarity of this breed is the ridge on the back. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed.

***Elaboration:*** *A Ridgeback represents the perfect balance between power and elegance. The power should come from soundness and conditioning, not from excessive size. The elegance comes from style, presence and carriage. The Ridgeback should give a clean appearance with body lines blending smoothly. A male should be masculine, not coarse or cumbersome. A bitch should be feminine but strong, not weak or delicate.*

*The Ridgeback is an athletic dog, clean-muscled, upstanding, well balanced and smooth in outline, a dog intended to hold large and dangerous game at bay. He is agile, quick, light on his feet and intelligent enough to stay out of harm's way, brave enough to defend his master.*

## SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

A mature Ridgeback should be symmetrical in outline, slightly longer than tall but well balanced. Dogs, 25-27 inches in height; Bitches, 24-26 inches in height. Desirable weight: Dogs, 85 pounds; Bitches, 70 pounds.

***Elaboration:*** *Desirable weight should be a guideline. Appropriate weight should correspond with the height and bone structure of the dog/bitch. A heavier-boned animal may weigh more, a finer-boned animal less than the 85/70 pound ideal as described in the Standard. A mature Ridgeback should be slightly longer than tall. The back should be strong and firm. The length should be carried in the rib area, allowing for ample room for heart and lungs. The well-coupled loin is neither too long nor too short, but well balanced with the rest of the dog. A long loined dog may be*



*SIDE PROFILE (STANDING)*

*fast, but he lacks the ability to stop, turn and maneuver which is required by the Standard. Overall balance and symmetry is most important.*

## **NECK, TOPLINE, BODY**

The neck should be fairly long. It should be strong, free from throatiness and in balance with the dog. The chest should not be too wide, but very deep and capacious, ribs moderately well sprung, never rounded like barrel hoops (which would indicate want of speed). The back is powerful and firm with strong loins which are muscular and slightly arched. The tail should be strong at the insertion and generally tapering towards the end, free from coarseness. It should not be inserted too high or too low and should be carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled or gay.

**Elaboration: Neck, Chest and Body:** The neck should be fairly long and elegantly arched. Throatiness or a ewe neck should be penalized according to the severity. A chest that is too wide or too narrow is inefficient and hinders speed and diminishes endurance. The brisket on a mature dog should reach well to the elbow.

**Topline and Tail:** The topline flows smoothly from the top of the head down the neck and over the shoulders. The point above the shoulders is the highest point of the backline, never lower than the loin or hindquarters, standing or moving. The back is firm, standing or moving - neither swayed nor roached. The loins are strong. The arch of the loin should not be exaggerated. The croup is neither flat nor steep but blends smoothly and finishes out with the tail set neither too high nor too low. Standing, the tail may fall between the hocks or may be tucked towards the abdomen. A kink or dud joint is considered undesirable, as is a tight curl.

## HEAD

Should be of fair length, the skull flat and rather broad between the ears and should be free from wrinkles when in repose. The stop should be reasonably well defined.

**Eyes** - should be moderately well apart and should be round, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, their color harmonizing with the color of the dog.

**Ears** - should be set rather high, of medium size, rather wide at the base and tapering to a rounded point. They should be carried close to the head.

**Muzzle** - should be long, deep and powerful. The lips clean, closely fitting the jaws. Clear faced or masked dogs are equally correct and neither is preferred. A clear face with black or brown/liver pigmentation only on nose, lips, and around the eyes, or a masked face with black or brown/liver pigmentation is correct as long as the color is not continuing with a solid mask over the eyes. A darker ear often accompanies the darker masked dog.

**Nose** - should be black, brown or liver, in keeping with the color of the dog. No other colored nose is permissible. A black nose should be accompanied by dark eyes, a brown or liver nose with amber eyes. Bite - jaws level and strong with well developed teeth especially the canines or holders. Scissors bite preferred.



MALE PROFILE HEAD

*Laura Temple*



FEMALE PROFILE HEAD

*Laura Temple*



MALE 3/4 VIEW HEAD

*Laura Temple*



FEMALE 3/4 VIEW HEAD

*Laura Temple*



**Elaboration:** *The head must be in proportion with the rest of the body. The backskull is flat, never domed, free from wrinkles when in repose. When the ears are brought forward in an alert position, the skin is furrowed with expressive wrinkles on the backskull between the ears and above and between the eyes. The planes of the backskull and muzzle are parallel and equal in length. Cheeks are clean and flat, not rounded or bulging. The head should never give a wedge shaped impression.*

**Ears:** *When the ears are brought forward to attention, they are raised even with the top of the head. The ears should hang close to the head and cheek, flaring outward to frame the head.*

**Muzzle:** *The muzzle is long, deep and powerful and finishes up fairly full in width, strong in underjaw. Depth of muzzle should be in the muzzle itself, not in the leather of the lips alone.*

**Bite:** *Scissors bite is preferred, but a level bite will occasionally be found and is acceptable. Emphasis must be placed on the development and proper position of the canines.*

**Eyes:** *The eyes should be spaced moderately well apart, rounded, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, not small, recessed nor sunken. The color should harmonize with the pigmentation of the dog. Black-nosed (pigmented) dogs should have a brown to dark brown eye. Liver or brown-nosed dogs should have an amber-colored eye, with preference given to the darker shades of brown or amber. Yellow eyes on a black-nosed dog are undesirable.*

## **FOREQUARTERS**

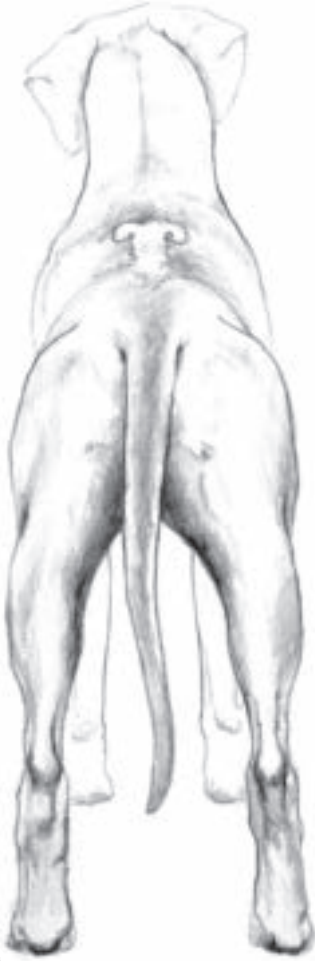
The shoulders should be sloping, clean and muscular, denoting speed. Elbows close to the body. The forelegs should be perfectly straight, strong and heavy in bone. The feet should be compact with well-arched toes, round, tough elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads. Dewclaws may be removed.



*FRONT (STANDING)*



*COMING (MOVING)*



*Leslie Thompson*

**REAR (STANDING)**



*Leslie Thompson*

**GOING (MOVING)**



*SIDEGAIT – LEFT EXTENDED (MALE)*



*SIDEGAIT – RIGHT EXTENDED (FEMALE)*

**Elaboration:** *Shoulders:* The shoulder blades should be long, well laid back and sloping; upper arm is of equal length and placed so that the elbow falls directly under the withers.

**Forelegs:** The bone of the front legs should have plenty of substance, more so when viewed from the side than from the front. The pasterns should be strong and slightly sloping.

**Feet:** The feet should be well knuckled up with thick pads. Flat, thin-padded and splayed feet are incorrect.

## HINDQUARTERS

In the hindlegs, the muscles should be clean, well defined and hocks well down. Feet as in front.

**Elaboration:** The strong, elastic muscles of the hind legs should carry well into the inner and lower thighs. The stifles are moderately well bent. Hocks should be well let down and straight from hock to pad. Rear angulation should balance and compliment the front. The muscling should be clean and well defined, denoting speed and agility.

## GAIT

At the trot, the back is held level and the stride is efficient, long, free and unrestricted. Reach and drive expressing a perfect balance between power and elegance. At the chase, the Ridgeback demonstrates great coursing ability and endurance.

**Elaboration:** The trot should be effortless and flowing, covering the maximum amount of ground with the least amount of effort. As speed increases, the legs angle inward toward a center line beneath the body. The head is carried slightly above the level of the back, the backline remains level and firm, never high in the rear or loin. The tail blends smoothly, carried slightly above the level of the back, never gay nor curled. At all speeds the gait is effortless, rhythmic and smooth, denoting efficiency, presence and style.

## RIDGE

The hallmark of this breed is the ridge on the back which is formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the rest of the coat. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed. The ridge should be clearly defined, tapering and symmetrical. It should start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to a

*DESIRABLE RIDGE*



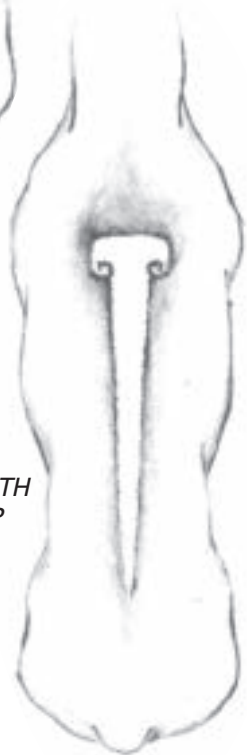
*DESIRABLE WITH  
NARROW RIDGE*



*DESIRABLE WITH  
FLATTENED TOP*



*DESIRABLE WITH  
BOX ON TOP*



*DESIRABLE WITH  
PARTING AT TOP*



*ACCEPTABLE RIDGES:  
ASYMMETRICAL FAN AND  
SLIGHTLY OFF SET CROWN*



*UNDESIRABLE RIDGE:  
TOO SHORT*



*SERIOUS FAULT RIDGES:  
SINGLE CROWN (WHORL)  
AND MORE THAN TWO  
CROWNS (WHORLS)*





point between the prominence of the hips and should contain two identical crowns (whorls) directly opposite each other. The lower edge of the crowns (whorls) should not extend further down the ridge than one-third of the ridge.

**DISQUALIFICATION:** Ridgelessness.

**SERIOUS FAULTS:** One crown (whorl) or more than two crowns (whorls).

***Elaboration:** The Standard is very precise regarding the ridge. The ridge is located on the dog's back. Any variation in length of ridge or placement of crowns (whorls) is incorrect and is to be considered a fault. The amount of variation and the severity of the fault is up to the individual assessing the dog. The width of the ridge is immaterial. Occasionally there will be a parting of hair at the top of the ridge. This is not to be considered a fault unless it contains a complete crown (whorl). Please note illustrations. A ridgeless dog is to be disqualified.*

## COAT

Should be short and dense, sleek and glossy in appearance but neither wooly nor silky.

***Elaboration:** Puppies usually have heavier coats than adults. More densely coated dogs may exhibit pellet - like molting patterns throughout the coat which should not be penalized.*

## COLOR

Light wheaten to red wheaten. A little white on the chest and toes is permissible but excessive white there, on the belly or above the toes is undesirable.

***Elaboration:** A Ridgeback hair is banded, lighter at the base, darker at the tip. The color may range from light wheaten (buff) through various shades of gold to red wheaten; all shades are acceptable. Lighter wheaten highlights are usually noted over the shoulder blades. (See Muzzle)*

*Clear-faced dogs or dogs with black on the muzzle, ear and around the eyes are equally acceptable. However, these black points should not continue as a solid mask over the eyes. Ridgebacks with black pigmentation may have black hair interspersed throughout the coat; dark brown hair may be seen on a liver/brown-nosed dog. If the amount of black or dark brown is excessive, it is undesirable.*

*Our standard does not condemn white. Some white is permissible and excessive white is not desirable. Small socks and white on the chest on an otherwise typey, sound dog should not eliminate him from consideration. The scale of points allows 3 points out of 100 to Coat and Color. Emphasis should be placed on the general conformation. To quote from Maj. T.C. Hawley's definitive work *The Rhodesian Ridgeback*, "We must, at all costs, avoid a fetish that white is taboo."*

## **TEMPERAMENT**

Dignified and even-tempered. Reserved with strangers.

***Elaboration:*** *Stable, fearless, intelligent, reserved with strangers, yet accepting of his master's judgment. In the show ring, a reserved attitude should not be confused with shyness. Unnecessary aggression is not to be tolerated.*

## **SCALE OF POINTS**

General appearance, size, symmetry and balance .....	15
Ridge .....	20
Head .....	15
Legs and feet .....	15
Neck and shoulders .....	10
Body, back, chest, and loin .....	10
Gait .....	10
Coat and color .....	3
Tail .....	2
TOTAL .....	100



*COLLECTION GALLOP*



*EXTENDED GALLOP*

*These are additional illustrations prepared  
by the artist for your appreciation.*

