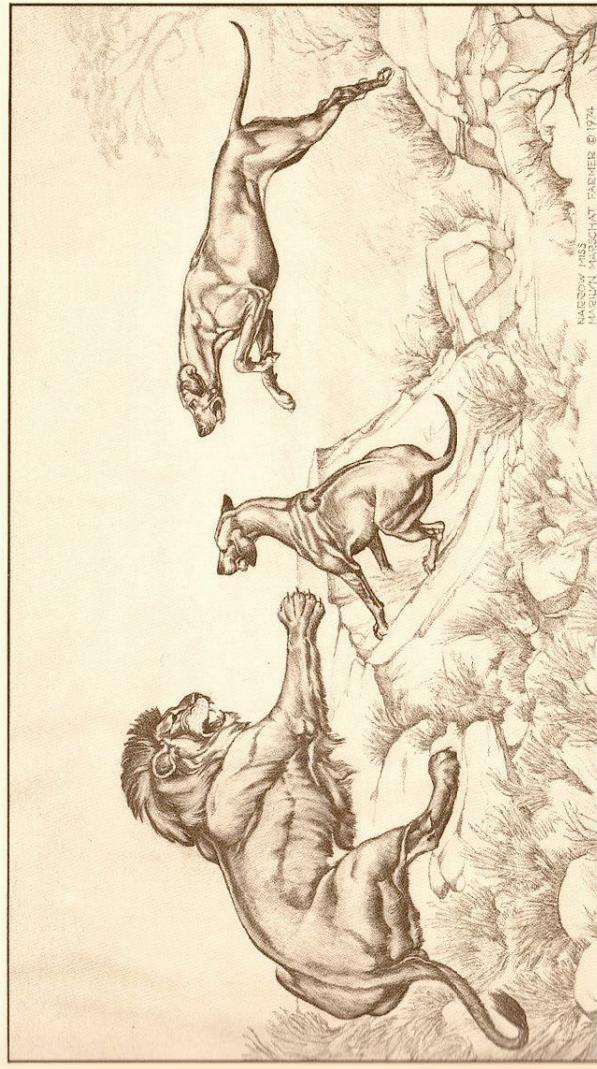


*the*  
**RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK**

THE NATIONAL DOG OF SOUTH AFRICA

# “Ridgebacks hunt lion” they say... { No they didn’t ! }



*'Narrow Miss' by Marilyn Farmer Rhodes.*



*'Ridgebacks Holding Lion at Bay' by Marilyn Farmer Rhodes.*

Hunting mainly in groups of two or three, the original function of the Rhodesian Ridgeback, or Lion Dog, was to **track game**, especially lion, and with great agility, **keep it at bay until the arrival of the hunter**.

# History



Ancstors can be traced to the semi-domesticated dogs accompanying the indigenous people, the Khoi-San, who lived near the southern tip of Africa.

# History

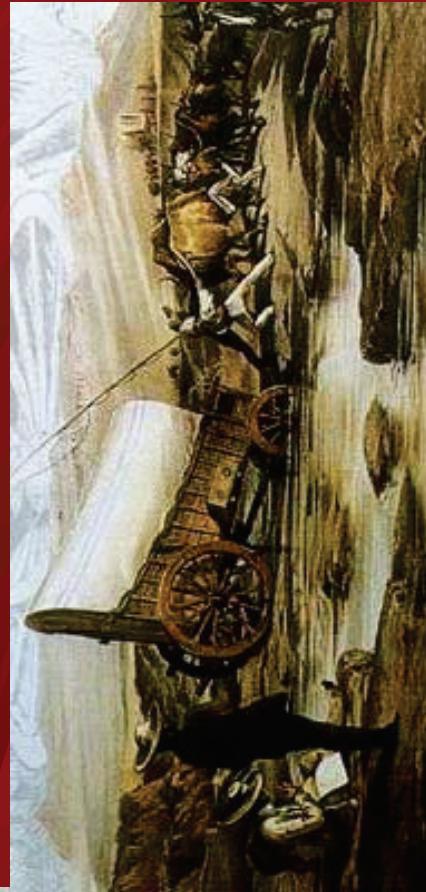
The Rhodesian Ridgeback is one of only two registered breeds indigenous to Southern Africa, the other being the Boerboel.



When the Portuguese discovered the Cape in 1487, and the area was later colonised by Dutch Settlers, these dogs were bred to early pioneers' dogs and used for hunting and guarding.

# History

From around 1830, when the British colonised the Cape, the Dutch Settlers, fed up with this new governance, began the great migration – “die Groot Trek” into the hinterland, discovering new areas eastwards and northwards as far as the later-named, Rhodesia. These “Voortrekkers” (travelling pioneers) took their dogs with them, which became popular for their hunting capacity.

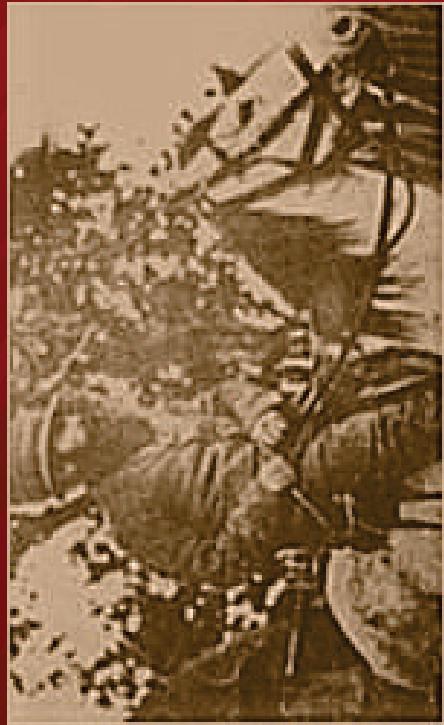


# History

In 1879 **Rev. Charles Daniel Helm** brought two dogs from Kimberley (a small diamond-mining town in central South Africa) to his mission near Bulawayo in Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe. These two bitches are regarded as the origin of what is known today as the Rhodesian Ridgeback.



A hunter, by the name of **Cornelius van Rooyen**, who operated mainly in Matebeleland (now Botswana), mated these two rough coated, grey-black dogs to his pack and the famous ridge emerged.



# History

Van Rooyen crossed several breeds to create his African Lion Hound because of its ability to keep lion at bay while awaiting its master to make the kill:

- Bloodhound and Pointer – for good scenting
- Bulldog and Bull Terrier – for courage and tenacity
- Airedale and Irish Terrier – for dash and spirit
- Deerhound – for stamina
- Smooth Collie – for herding skills
- Greyhound – for speed



The brown-nosed variety is related to the Pointers that were used and the problem of a kinked tail goes back to the Bulldog ancestry. The dog's usefulness far outweighed its looks or adherence to any particular type, but the ridge continued to manifest itself in most of the litters.

# History

In 1922, a veterinarian, **Francis Richard Barnes** gave recognition to the Rhodesian Ridgeback as a breed. Barnes asked owners to bring their dogs to a meeting to be held at a Bulawayo Kennel Club Show to endeavor to formulate a breed standard with the object of later recognition by the, then, South African Kennel Union.

A large number of owners attended the meeting and well over 20 dogs were paraded. They were of all types and sizes, and several different colours; reds and brindles predominating. The dog owners were keen to form a club, but reluctant to agree too readily on a breed standard.



# History

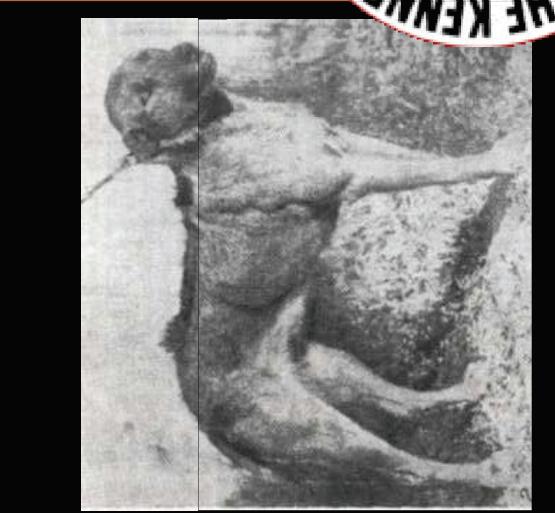
Finally, **Mr. B.W. Durham** – the only All-breeds Judge in South Africa at the time, and possessing some knowledge of the breed, took a dog and suggested that its size and conformation be adopted; then chose another specimen for its head and neck; a third for legs and feet; and, making use of some five different dogs, they built up their aims based heavily on the Dalmatian standard.



**Francis Barnes** then set down the breed standard and it was adopted by the Kennel Union. This, with some later amendments and alterations is the standard in use today.

# History

In 1924, the first two Rhodesian Ridgebacks were registered with the newly renamed Kennel Union of Southern Africa (KUSA). By the end of 1928, there were already 13 registered breeders with kennel names.



Eskdale Leo & Eskdale Connie (F.R. Barnes)

During World War II, the Rhodesian Ridgeback declined in popularity and almost ceased to exist.



## Utilisation today

The Hound that is both Sighthound and Scenthound, has found favour in most countries around the world as companion/house dogs, family pets, and watchdogs.

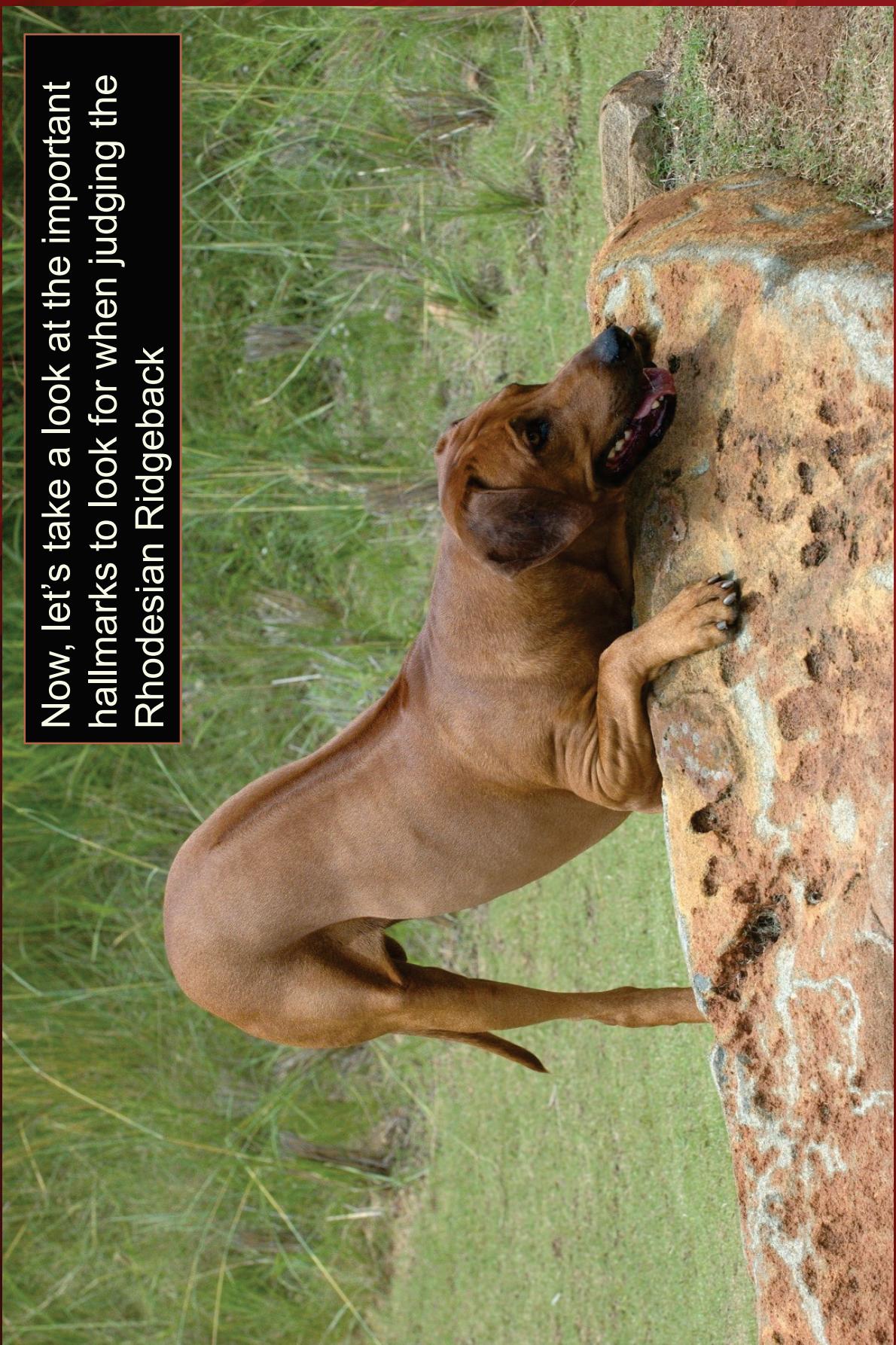


# Utilisation today

Today there are only a few lion left in the wild, and hunting is no longer practised the way it was. In a few game parks, Rhodesian Ridgebacks serve a useful tracking purpose in conservation programmes.



Now, let's take a look at the important hallmarks to look for when judging the Rhodesian Ridgeback



# What to look for when judging



## first impression

First, gain a general impression of the whole dog, look for balance

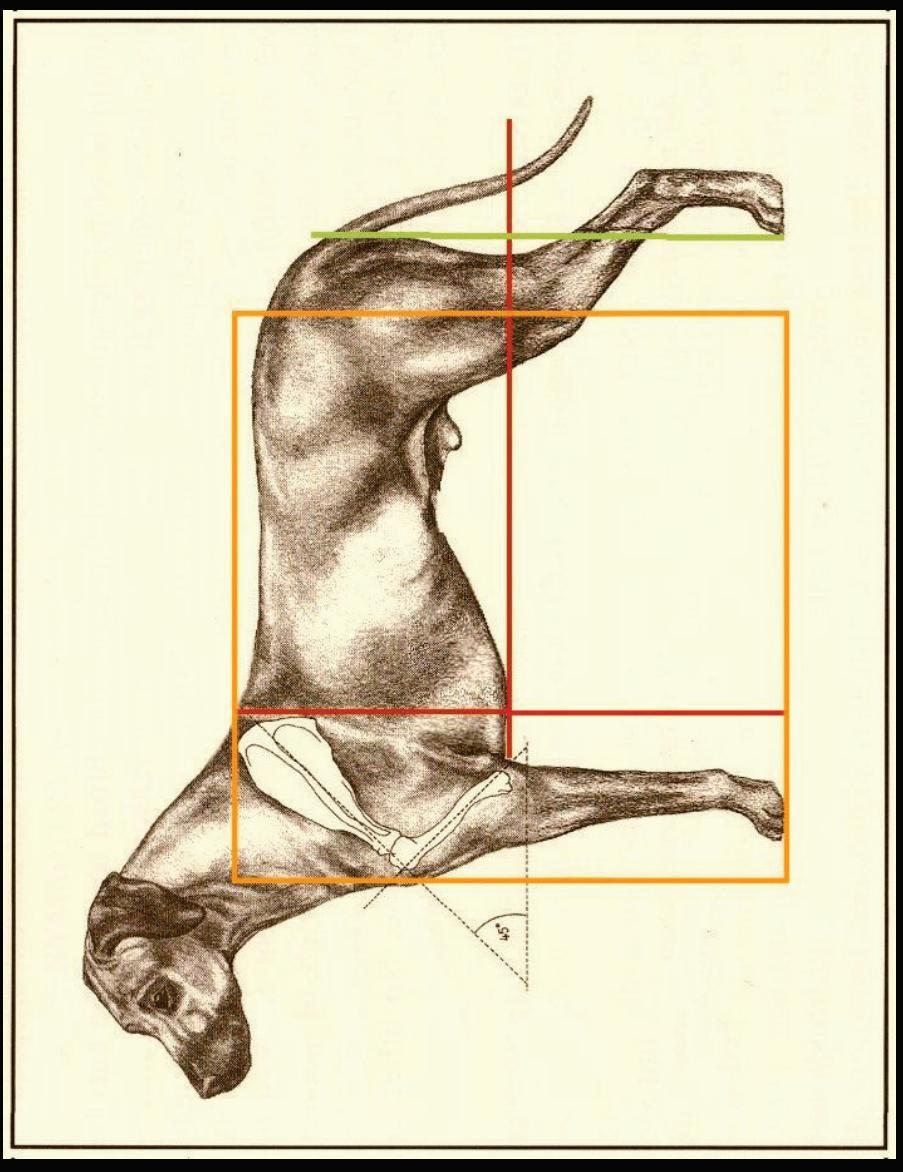
- eye catching, elegant, yet showing substance
- ***neither too racy nor too heavy in bone***
- must look athletic, able to run all day and find speed when necessary

*by the way...*

- slightly longer than tall (10:9)
- brisket at half the height at withers
- toes in line with buttocks line
- sloping shoulders well laid back

- level topline (not sloping)  
with slight rise over loin
- balanced proportions

“symmetrical in outline”



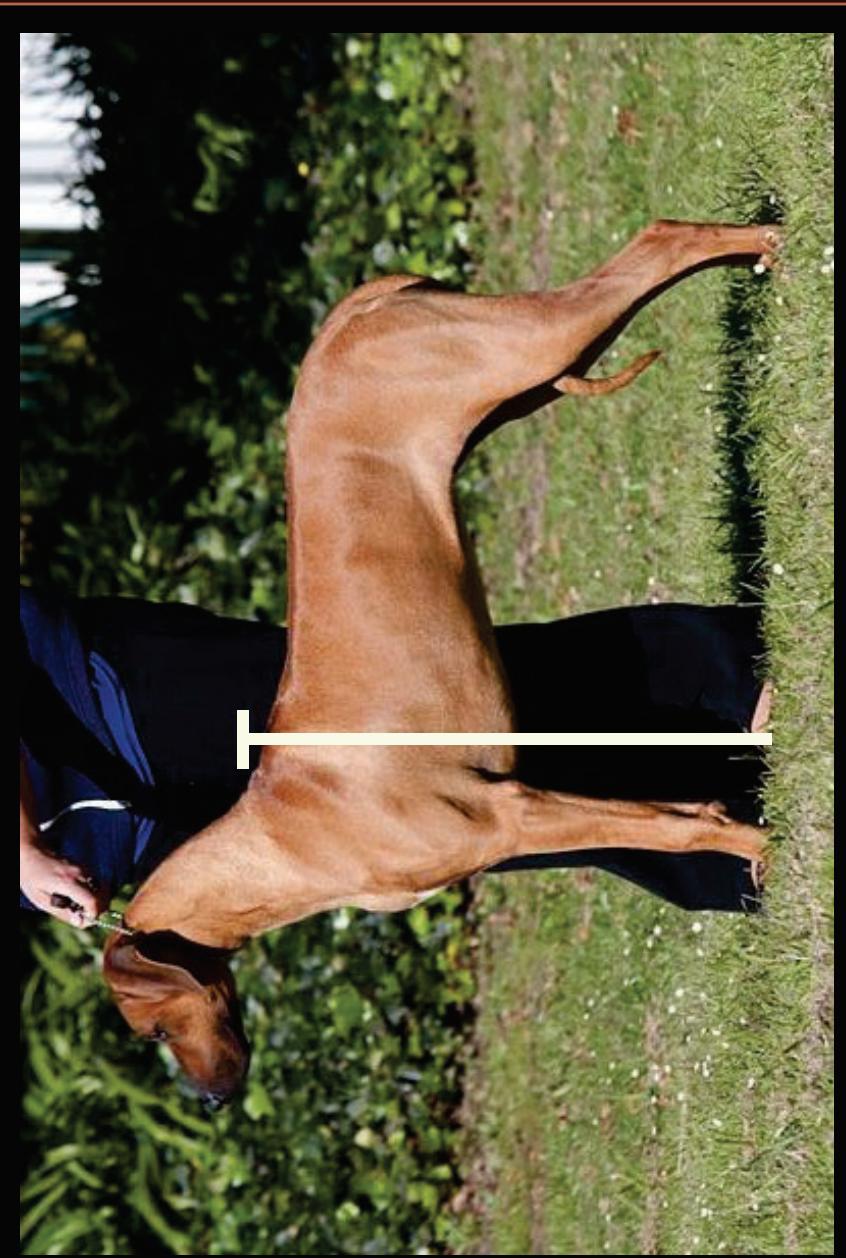
*by the way...*

**Height:**

- dogs : 63cm (25") to 69cm (27")
- bitches : 61cm (24") to 66cm (26")

**Weight:**

- dogs : 36.5kg (80lbs)
- bitches : 32 kg (70lbs)



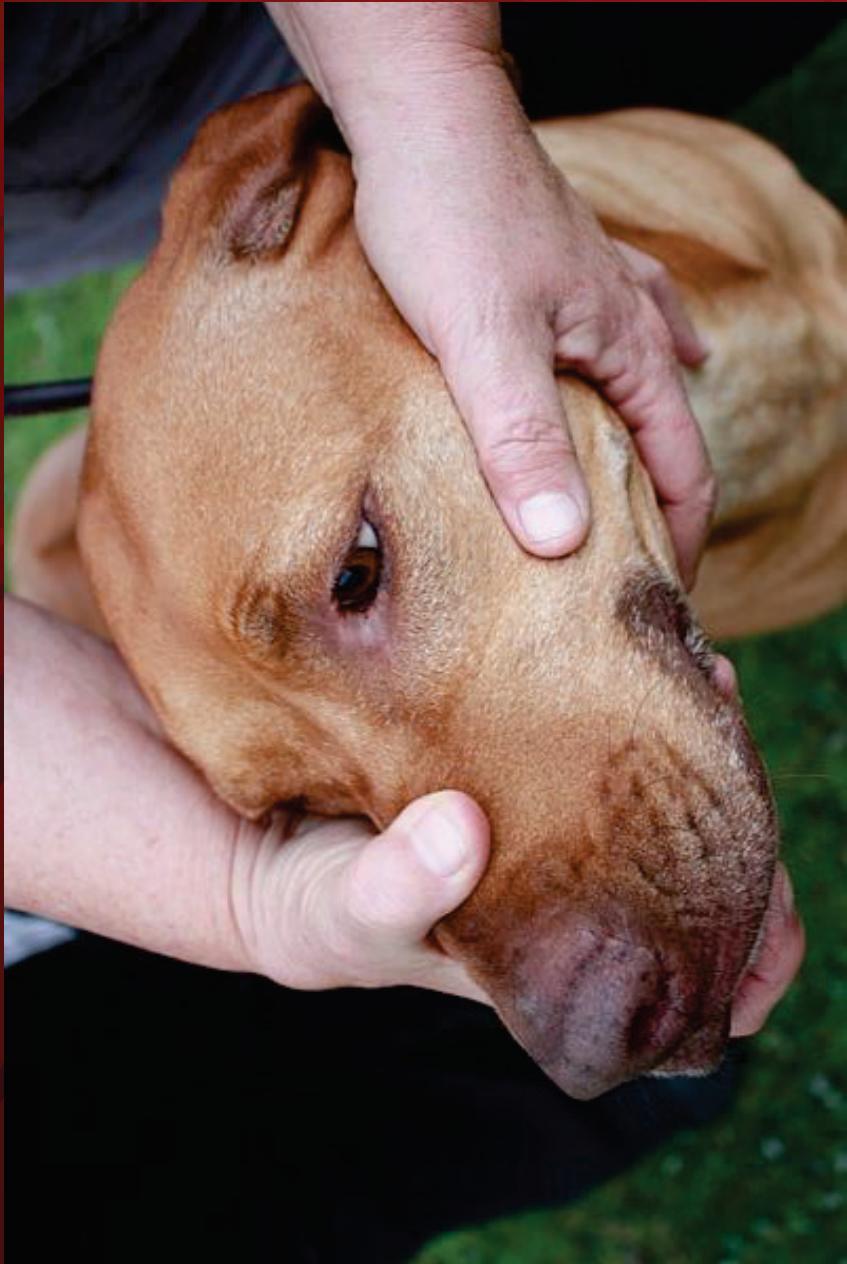
# What to look for when judging



parallel planes

- head is of fair length, in balance with rest of body - parallel planes
- clean, 'dry' appearance - **no wrinkles on skull**, except when alert
- foreface is a blunt wedge, neither too sharp nor too blocky

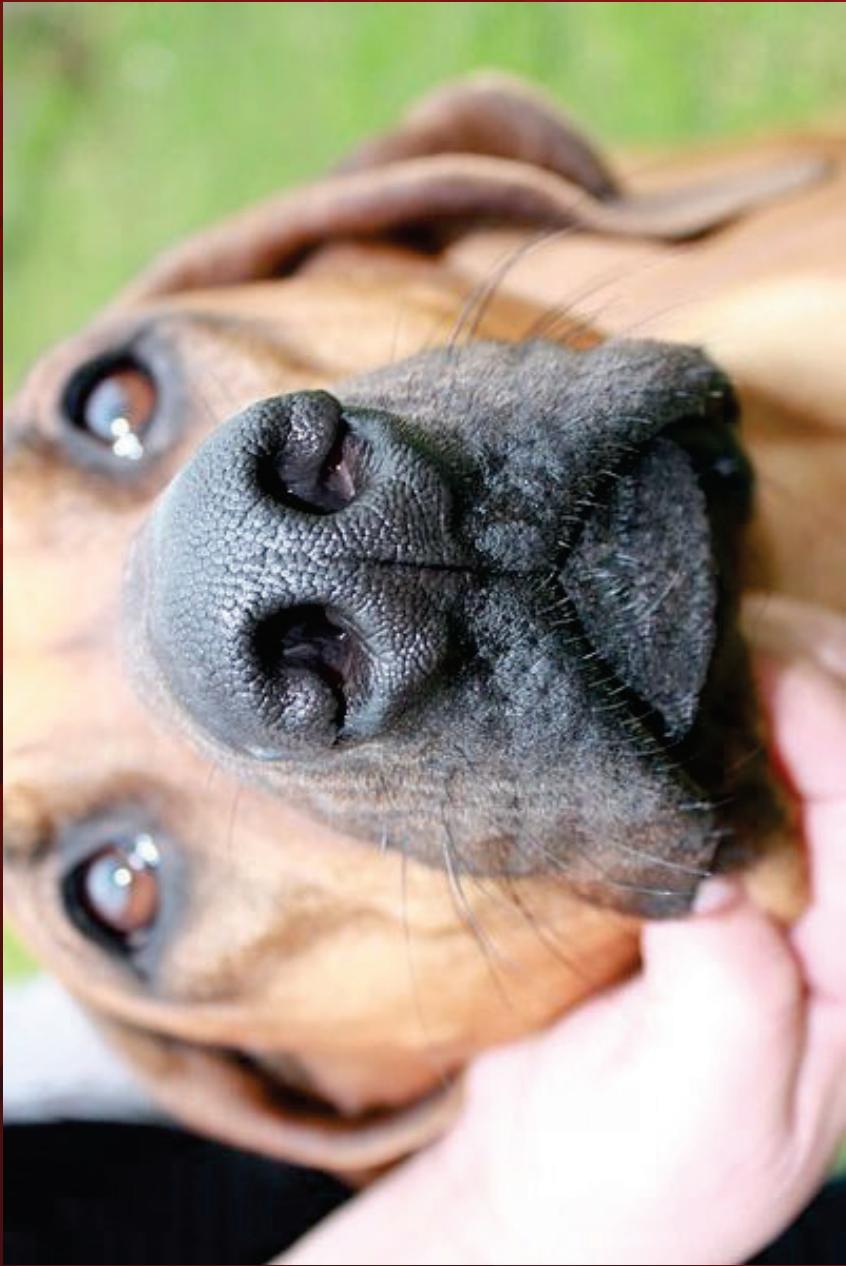
# What to look for when judging



cheeks

- cheeks clean, flat or slightly rounded – *never prominent*
- sufficient fill under the eye – *no fall-away*

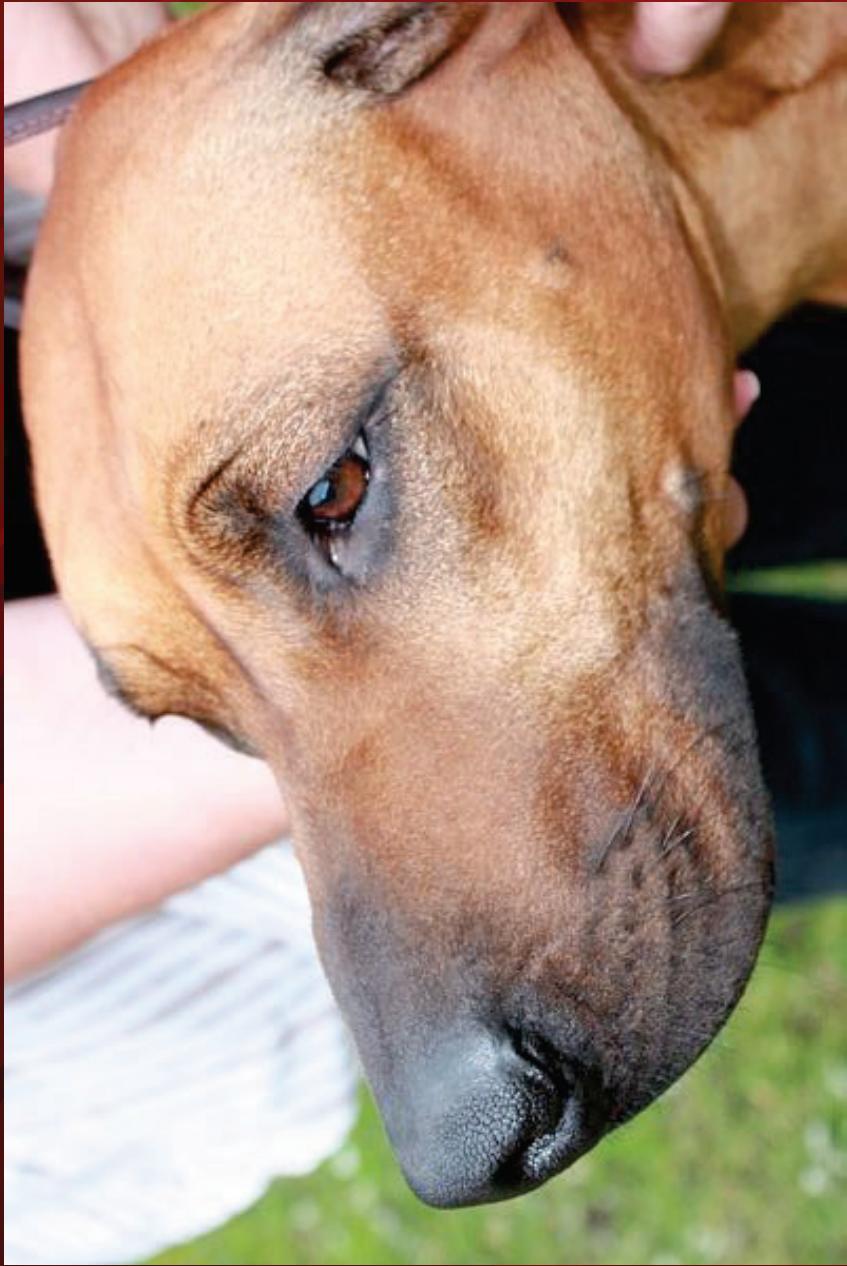
# What to look for when judging



## nose & chin

- black or brown - neither colour should take preference over the other
- black-nosed dogs may have a darker muzzle and darker ear tips
- ample, well-expanded nostrils – **definitely not pinched**
- sufficient chin

# What to look for when judging



stop

- reasonably well defined, not too deep
- creates a neat step up to the forehead – *never too shallow*
- muzzle plane is flat - *never concave (dished) or convex (Roman)*

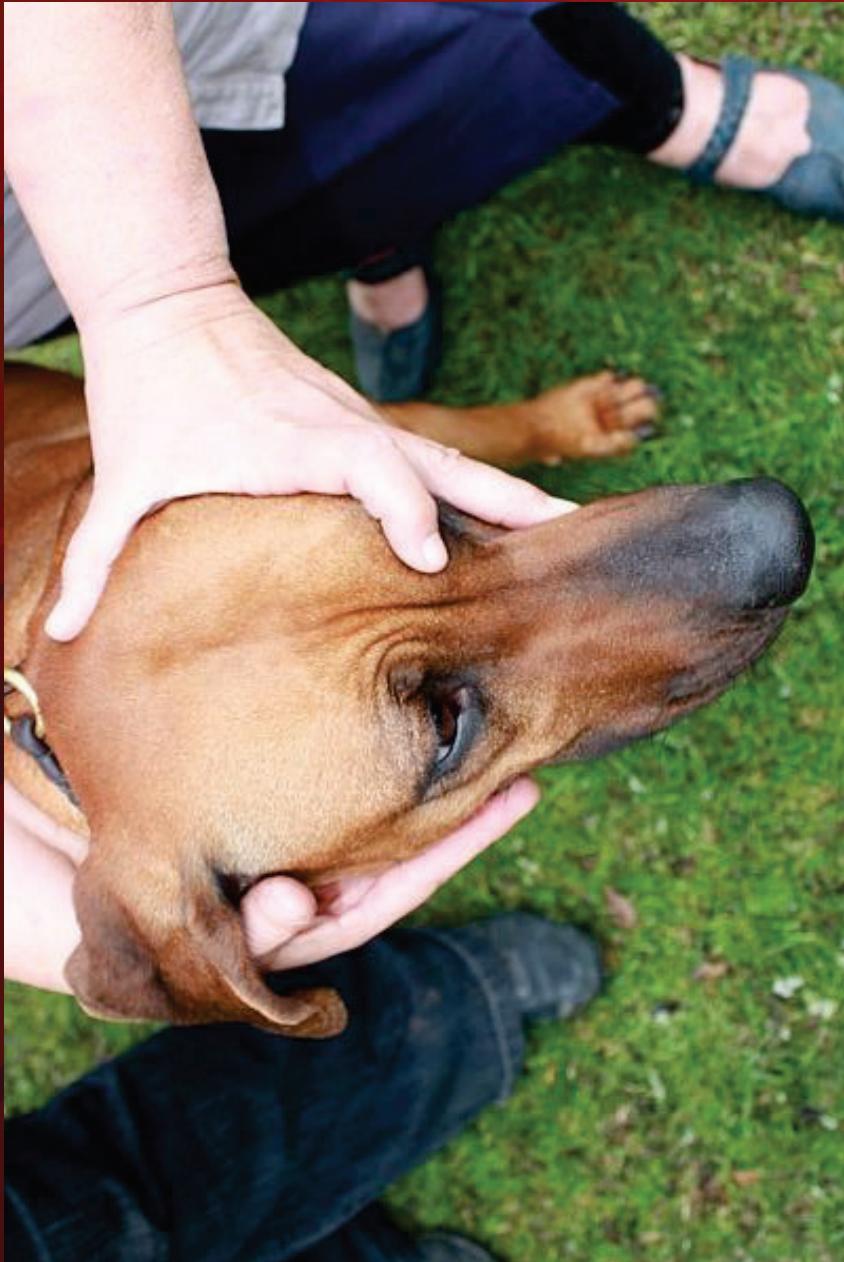
# What to look for when judging



## length of muzzle

- muzzle same length as the skull – *neither snipey nor coarse*

# What to look for when judging



## length of skull

- skull is flat, free from wrinkle unless the dog is alert

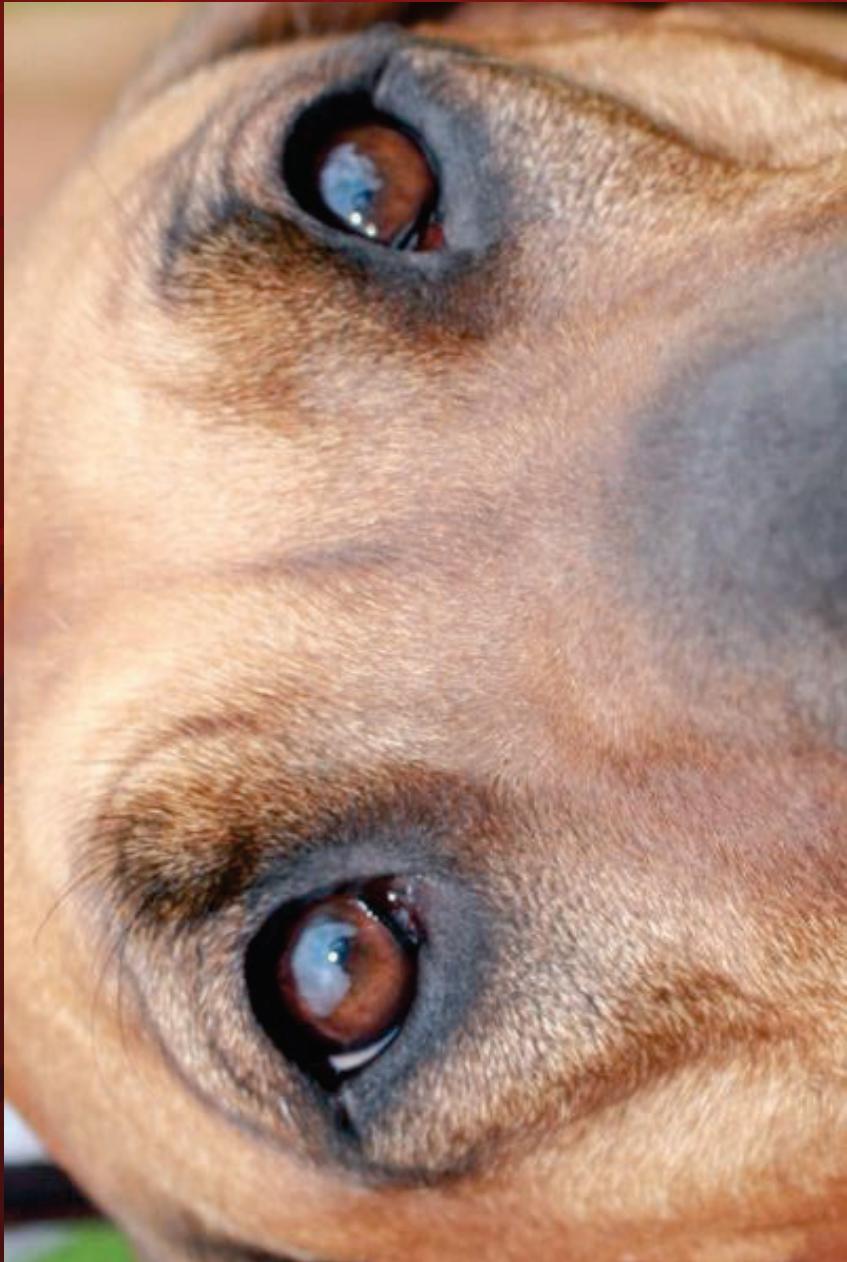
# What to look for when judging



**squareness**

- width of skull between the ears is equal the length of the skull from stop to occiput and length of muzzle from stop to tip of nose – thus, roughly a square

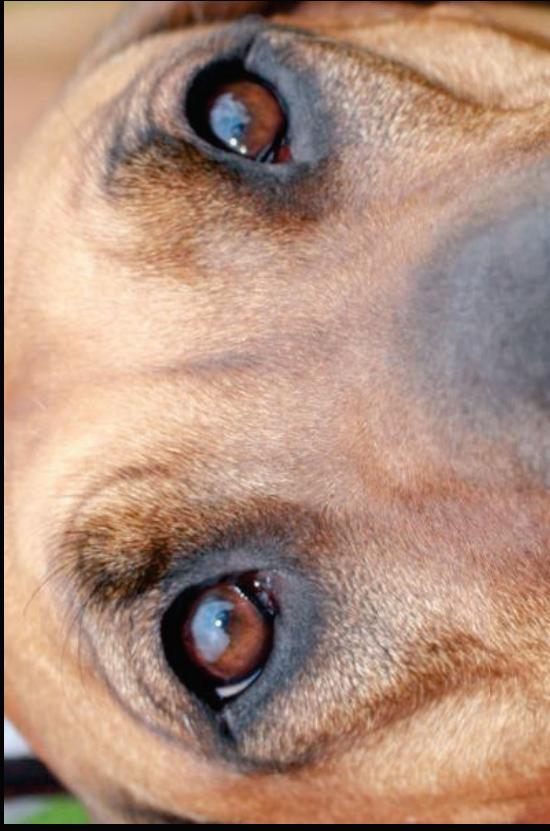
# What to look for when judging



eyes

- round eyes – *neither protruding nor sunken*
- expression reflects temperament – confident, stable, dignified, intelligent
- eyelids close-fitting – *no haw showing*

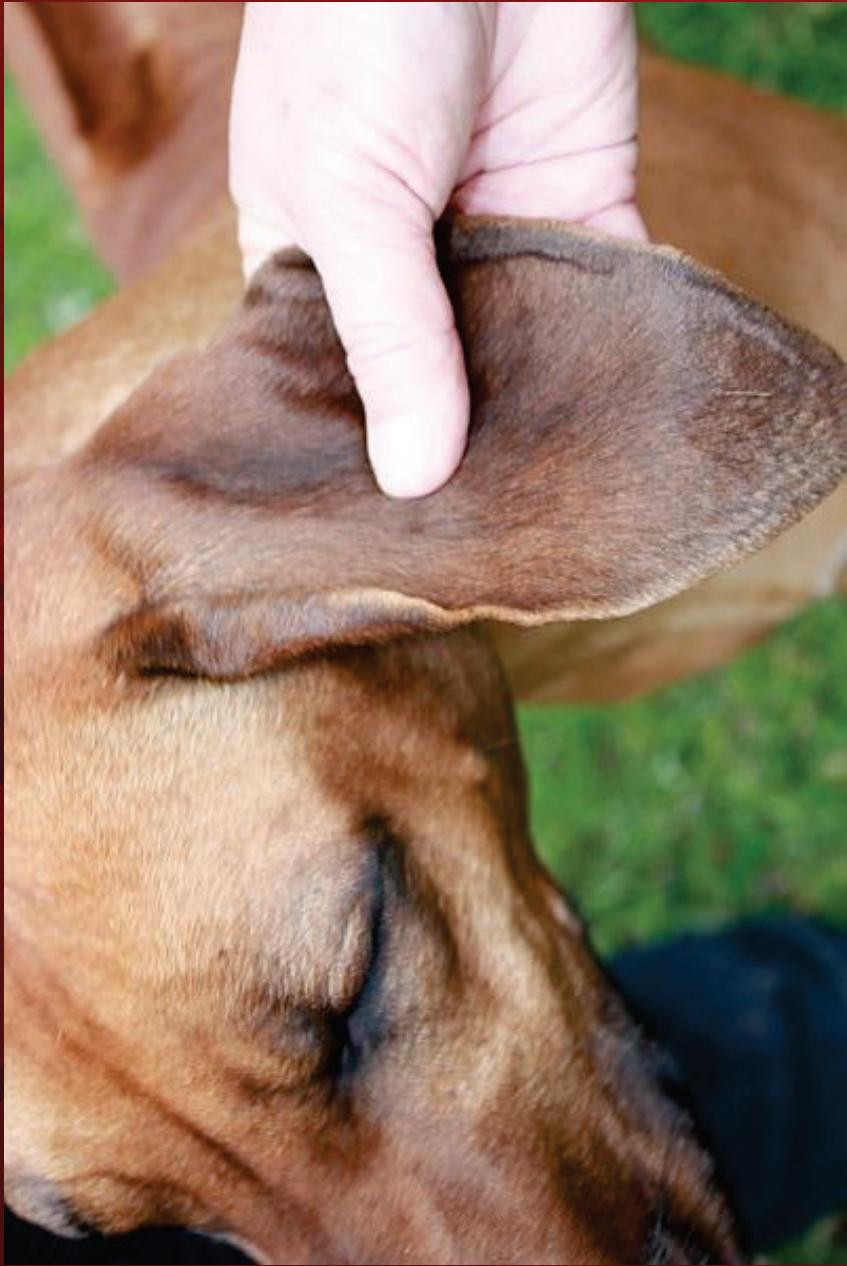
*by the way...*



- dark eyes and rims on a black-nosed dog
- amber eyes with lighter eye rims on a brown-nosed dog
- *light eyes undesirable*



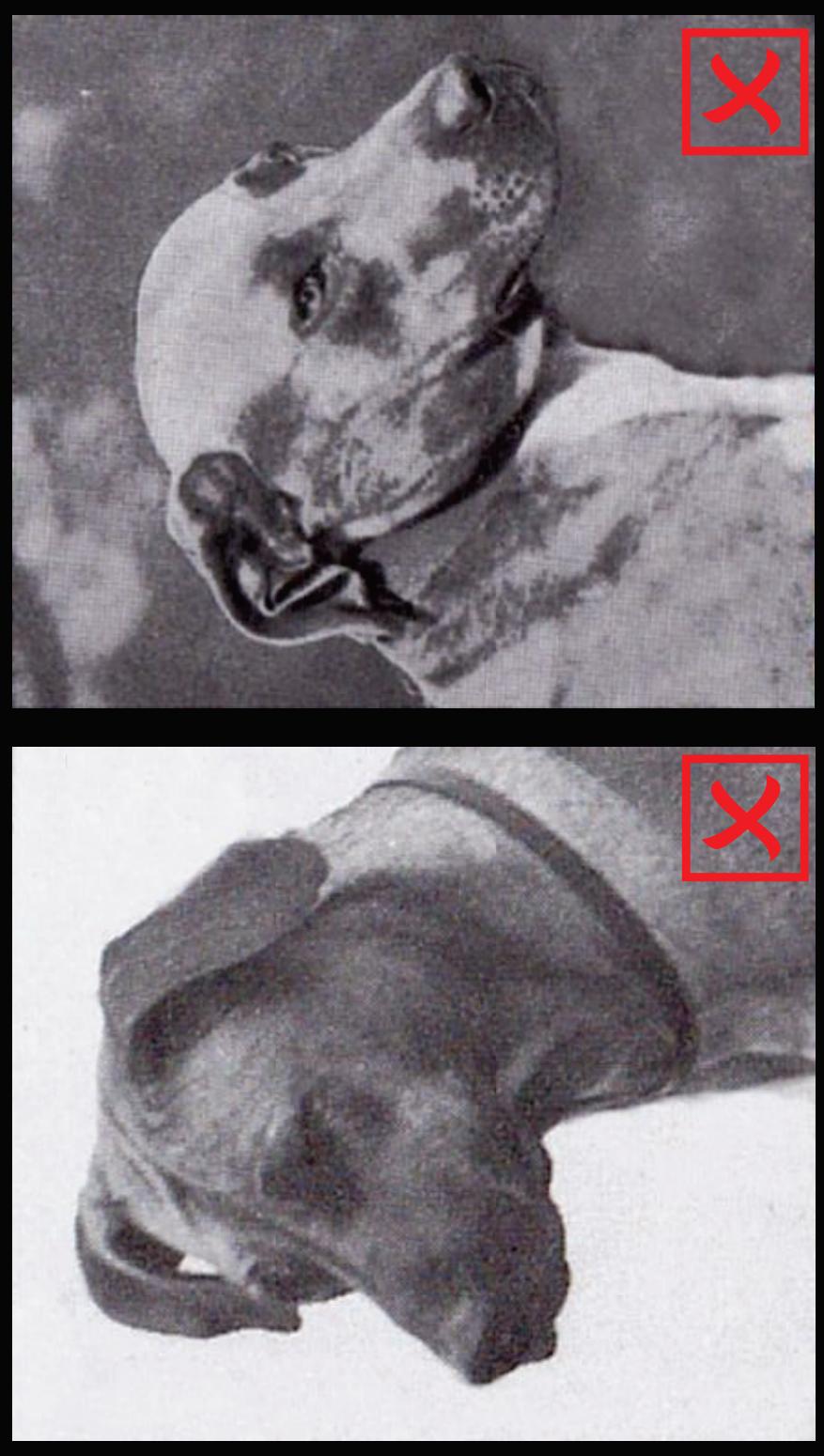
# What to look for when judging



ears

- medium-sized drop ear, set fairly well back and rather high
- carried flat, close to the head in repose, but very mobile

*by the way...*



- *rose or fly-away ear unacceptable*
- *fold of ear not to be above the top of the skull*

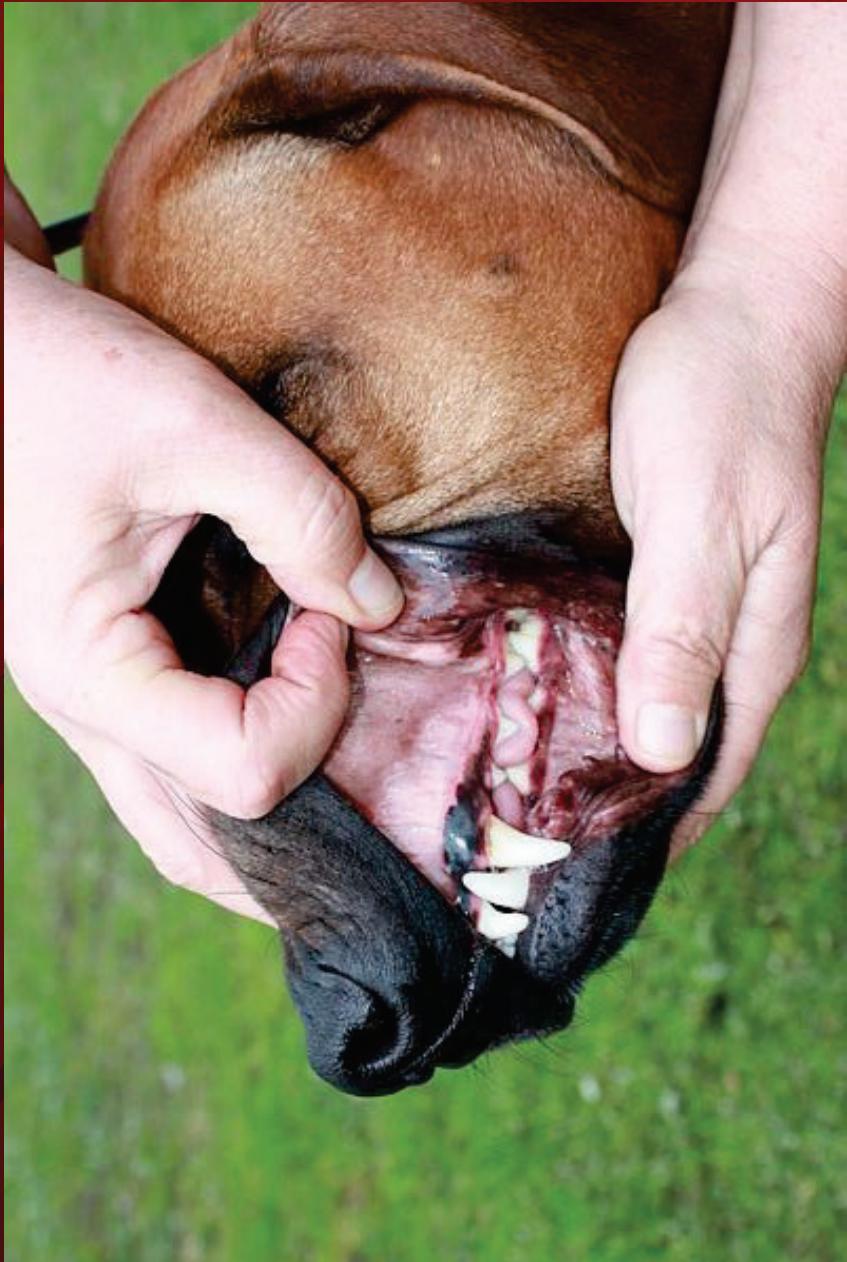
# What to look for when judging



bite

- strong scissor bite - the upper teeth closely overlap the lower teeth and are set square to the jaw

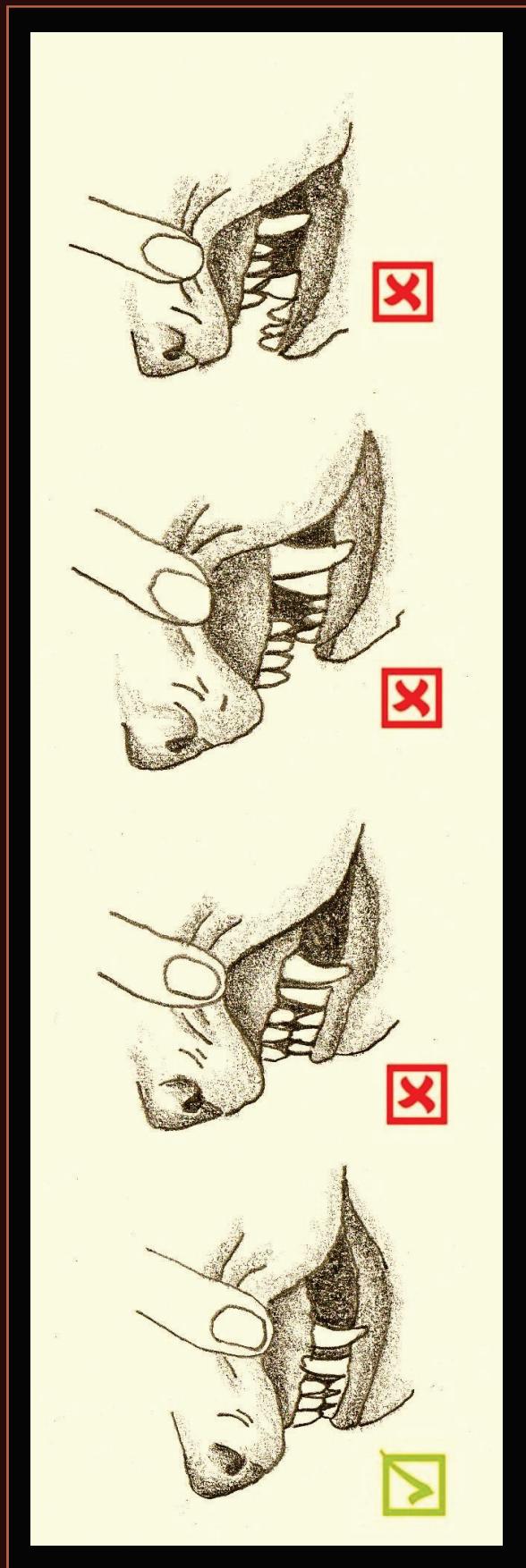
# What to look for when judging



**dentition**

- teeth well developed, especially the canines – *no missing teeth*

*by the way...*



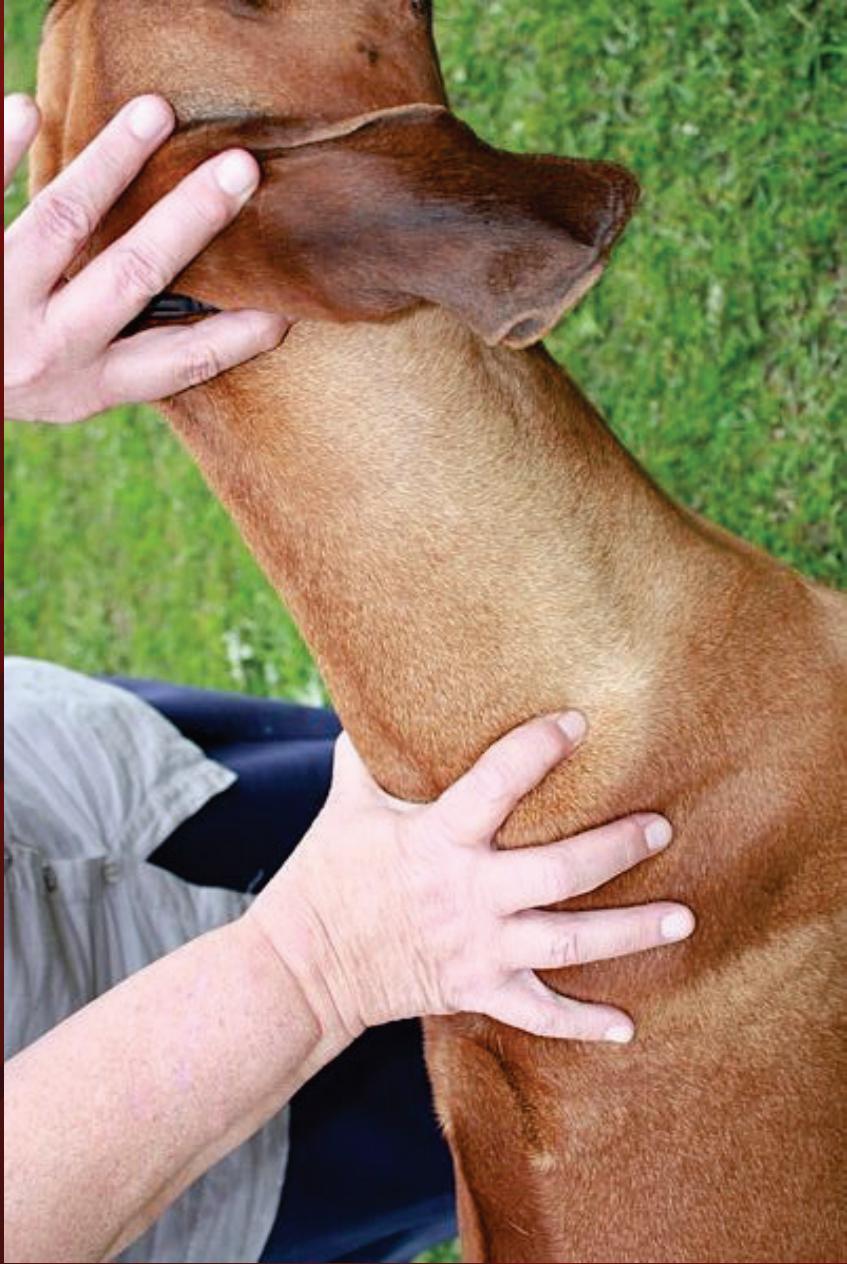
scissor bite

level bite

overshot bite

undershot bite

# What to look for when judging



neck

- fairly long, elegant neck – **short neck usually indicates straight shoulder**
- good (but **not too much**) thickness, clean – **free from throatiness**
- must allow agility of the shoulder and carriage of head for the dog to use his senses

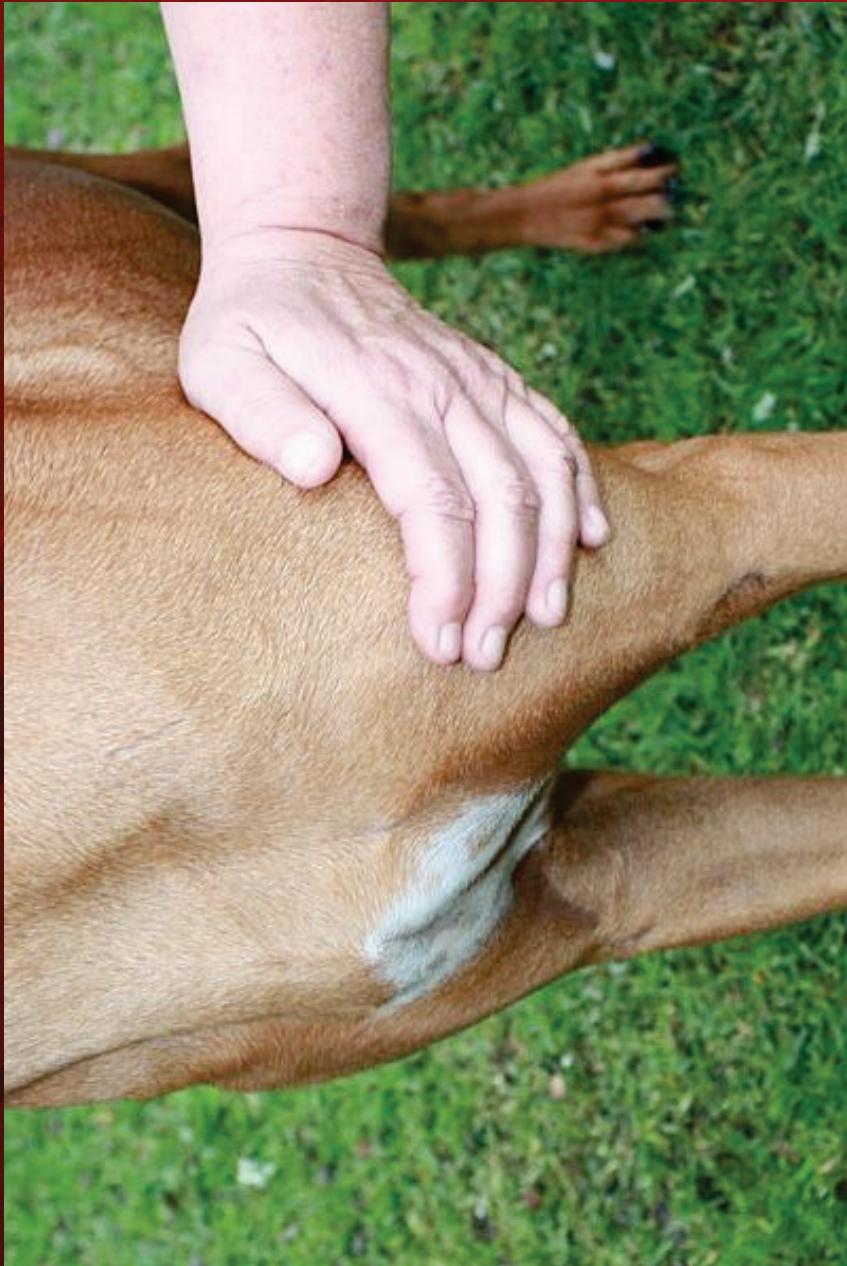
# What to look for when judging



withers

- neck should blend smoothly into well-laid shoulders
- **bumpiness at the wither indicates a problematic shoulder assembly**

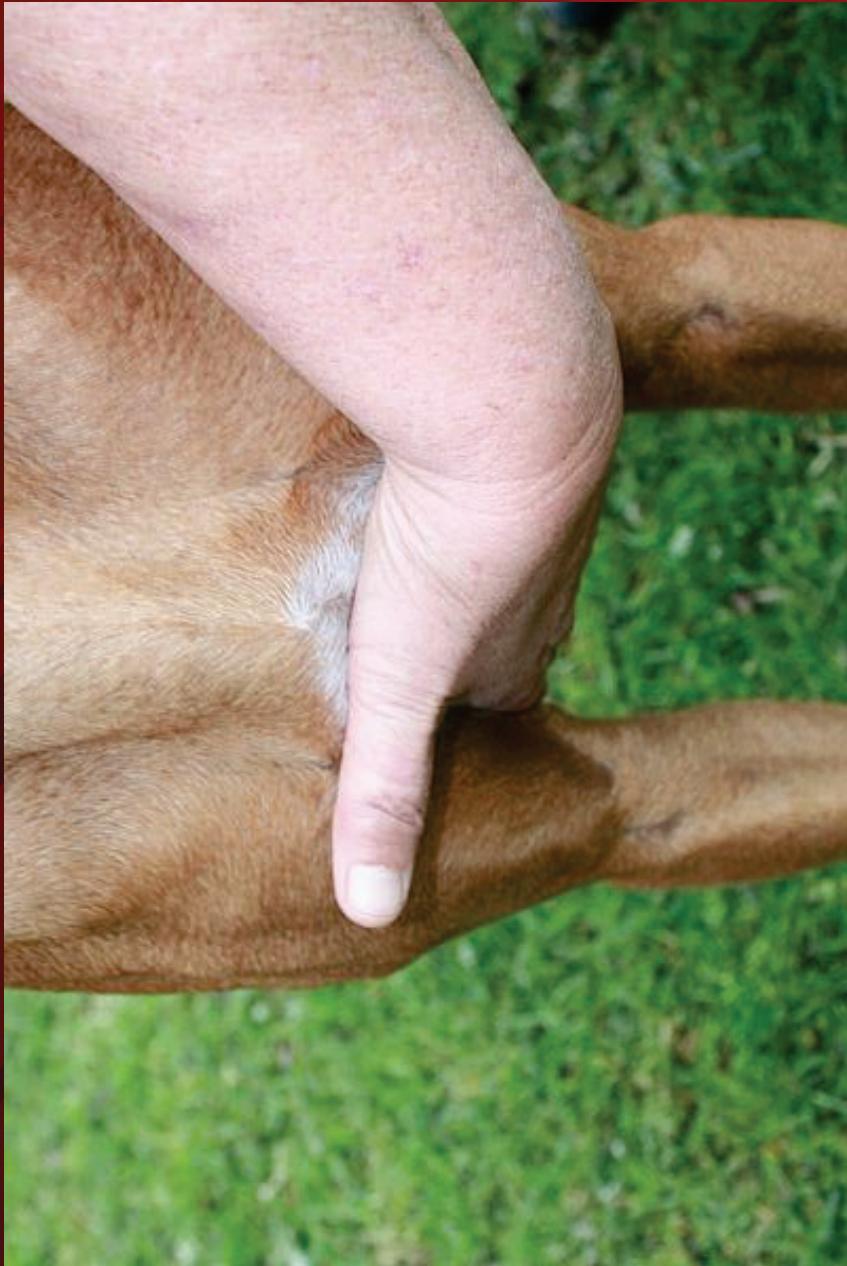
# What to look for when judging



upper arm

- sufficient (but *not excessive*) muscling over the upper arm
- *look out for short, straight upper arms – an indication of poor balance*

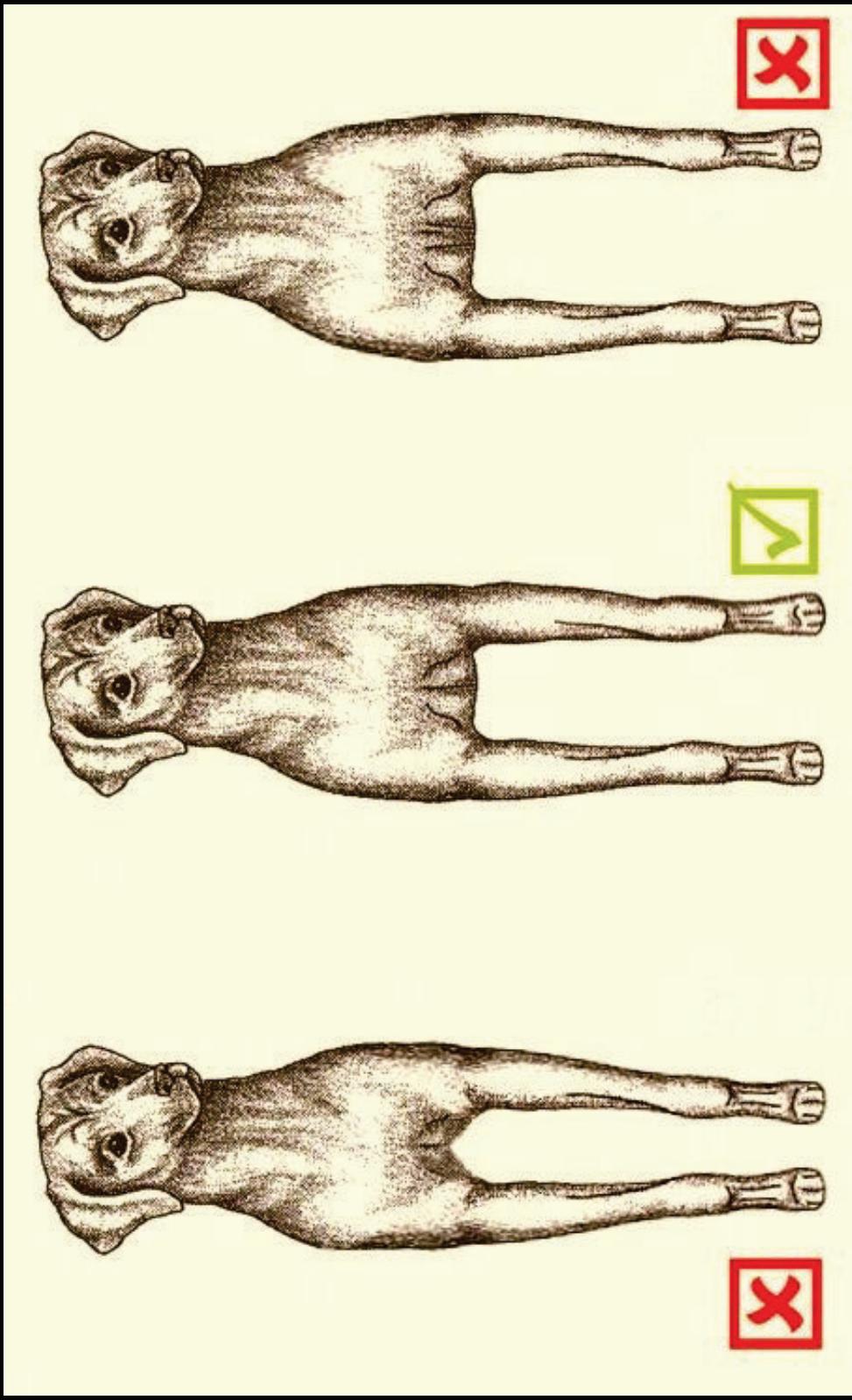
# What to look for when judging



**width of chest**

- distance between forelegs – *neither too wide nor too narrow*
- floor of the chest should be visible from the front
- ‘Cathedral peak’ (*inverted V*) indicates faulty shoulder assembly

*by the way...*



cathedral peak front  
too narrow

correct

too wide

# What to look for when judging



**forechest**

- reasonable forechest protruding in front of the front legs, as viewed in profile