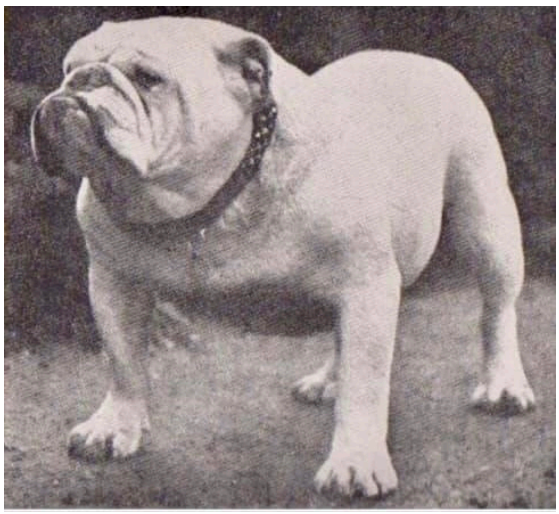


Bulldog Standard Clarifications

A Question and Answer Guide

Understanding And Applying the Intended Language of the Official BCA Standard



Getting Started

To get a better understanding about the most common questions relating to the Bulldog standard, we reached out to a range of voices within the fancy, including judges, BCA mentors and breeders.

While this list is by no means exhaustive, these questions consistently rose to the top. We hope the answers offered here help bring greater clarity and shared understanding.

Q-What is meant by “due allowance should be made in favor of the bitches?

A- It refers to the natural sexual dimorphism present in the breed

From the Official Standard;
Influence of Sex -- In comparison of specimens of different sex, due allowance should be made in favor of the bitches, which do not bear the characteristics of the breed to the same degree of perfection and grandeur as do the dogs.





Discussion:

The standard makes clear that dogs will generally exhibit a greater degree of “perfection and grandeur” than bitches. As such, females are not expected to equal males in size, substance, or overall power.

“Due allowance” requires that bitches be judged within the context of their sex. In an intersex comparison, a male should not prevail solely because he displays characteristics typical of his sex—such as bigger head, greater mass or any other feature—to a higher degree. Conversely, a bitch should not win purely because she is feminine.

Judgment must be based on how well each exhibit represents the ideal, not on a direct comparison of traits that are inherently unequal.

IMPORTANT;
Femininity is a virtue in the bitch, but not a concession. While she will show less mass and other “refinements” than the dog, she must still meet the same requirements for structure, balance, and breed type. Femininity should never be mistaken for weakness, nor used to excuse faults.

A comparison can be made with peacocks. We would not consider a peahen a lesser quality specimen because she lacks the colorful male plumage.

🦚 It does not mean the male should always defeat the female

🦚 It does not mean the female should always defeat the male.

True femininity does not diminish type.

Judge quality accordingly.

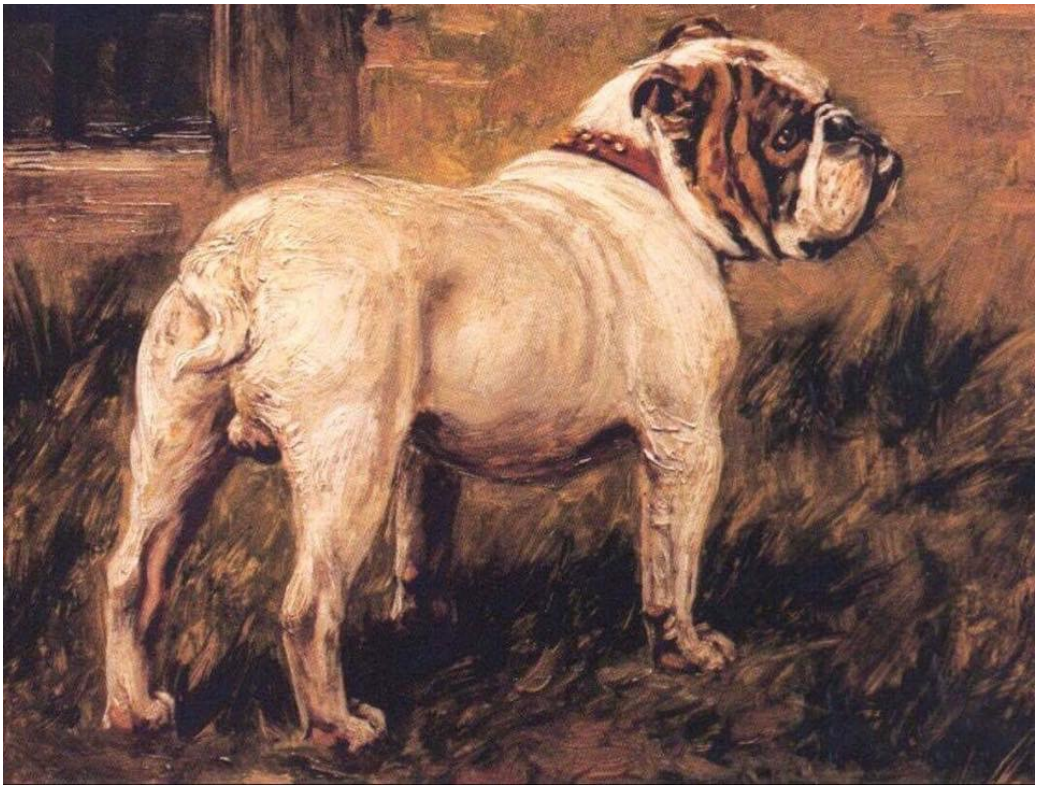


Q-Are Bulldogs supposed to have tails?
A-YES

From the Official Standard;

Tail -- The tail may be either straight or "screwed" (but never curved or curly), and in any case must be short, hung low, with decided downward carriage, thick root and fine tip. If straight, the tail should be cylindrical and of uniform taper. If "screwed," the bends or kinks should be well defined, and they may be abrupt and even knotty, but no portion of the member should be elevated above the base or root.

4



Discussion:

Yes. Bulldogs do have tails, and the breed standard provides a very clear description of their correct form. The tail may be either straight or “screwed,” but it must always be short, set low, carried downward, with a thick root and a fine tip. Importantly, the Standard specifies that the tail must never be curved or curly.

In this context, a “screwed” tail refers to defined bends or kinks. These may be abrupt or even knotty, but they remain within the framework of a tail that is low-set and directed downward. At no point should any portion of the tail rise above its base.

In modern usage, however, the term “screw tail” is often used to describe a tight, inward-turning spiral. This type of formation does not align with the Standard’s description. Instead, it represents a misapplication of the term—where the word has been adopted, but its original meaning has been lost.

Much like the confusion surrounding the “roach back,” *screw tail* has, over time, come to describe a condition rather than the structure intended by the standard.

Understanding this distinction is essential to correctly interpreting and preserving the breed as described.

A related question often concerns the length of tail.

The only directive in the BCA standard is that the tail “must be short, hung low, with decided downward carriage.”

Across historical standards and writings on the breed, no specific measurement has ever been established. Unlike many breeds, the hock has never been used as a reference point for tail length.
Both straight and screw tails may vary in length; however, set and carriage must always be given proper consideration.

While length may vary, correct set and downward carriage are essential and should not be overlooked.
A longer straight tail is not virtuous if it is set too high or carried any other way than downward.

Pictured are varying lengths of both straight and screw tails.
You will see some that are longer and some that are shorter.








Q- What is the difference between a Roach back and a Wheel Back

A- Nothing.

As far as the Bulldog Standard is and has ever been concerned, they are the same thing.

From the Official Standard;

Topline *-- There should be a slight fall in the back, close behind the shoulders (its lowest part), whence the spine should rise to the loins (the top of which should be higher than the top of the shoulders), thence curving again more suddenly to the tail, forming an arch (a very distinctive feature of the breed), termed "roach back" or, more correctly, “wheel-back.”*

Legs *-- The hind legs should be strong and muscular and longer than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins above the shoulders.*

Note; The LOIN is confined to the lumbar spine between the last rib and the pelvis. The high point is not over the rib or the croup/hip.

Discussion:

It is not logical to assume that the standard would describe in detail the characteristics of a “roach back,” only to then imply that a different, undefined “wheel back” is somehow more correct.

Historically, both terms appeared side by side in early Bulldog descriptions dating back to at least the mid 1800s. Over time, however, “wheel back” was removed temporarily from the Incorporated standard in 1888, while “roach back” remained. The Standard of Type as adopted by the British Bulldog Club in the early 1900’s used the term “wheel back” in the general description, then used both “roach” and “wheel” in the detailed portion. Early authorities—such as Robert Fulton in the first book devoted to the breed, “The Bulldog” (1889)—preferred alternative language like “greyhound back.” Modern British/FCI standards now use neither term.

This evolution in terminology highlights an important point: the words often interchange, but the structure they describe do not.



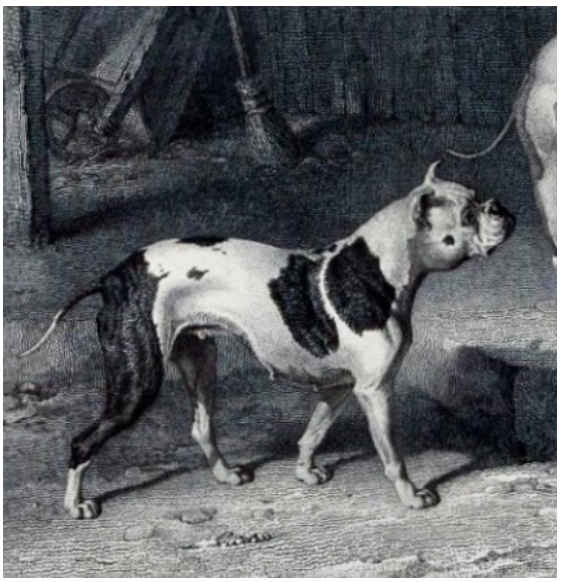
Historical Notes

One of the oldest and most important references to correct Bulldog topline appears in the Philo-Kuon Society standard of 1864. This standard points directly to Abraham Cooper's portrait "Crib and Rosa" as the ideal visual example of proper Bulldog "roach back":

"The back should be short and arched in the loins, termed roach-back; wide across the shoulders and narrow across the loins. The roach-back is shown in perfection in the print of 'Crib and Rosa.' Rosa's shape is perfect."

When the reference to Rosa was removed from the Incorporated's 1888 revision, some fanciers expressed concern that, without a clear visual benchmark, the breed's historic topline would eventually become misunderstood or lost through changing interpretation.

The Bulldog topline has always been regarded as a distinctive characteristic of the breed and an essential component of correct breed type.



What the Standard Actually Describes

The Official Bulldog Standard describes a very specific topline structure. It calls for a slight fall close behind the shoulders, followed by a gradual rise to the top of the loin, and then a descent to the low-set tail, completing the arch.

Both descriptive words—slight and close—are important. The Standard does not describe a deep dip, hollow, or abrupt break behind the shoulders. Rather, this slight fall is a subtle anatomical transition located generally in the region of the anticlinal vertebra.

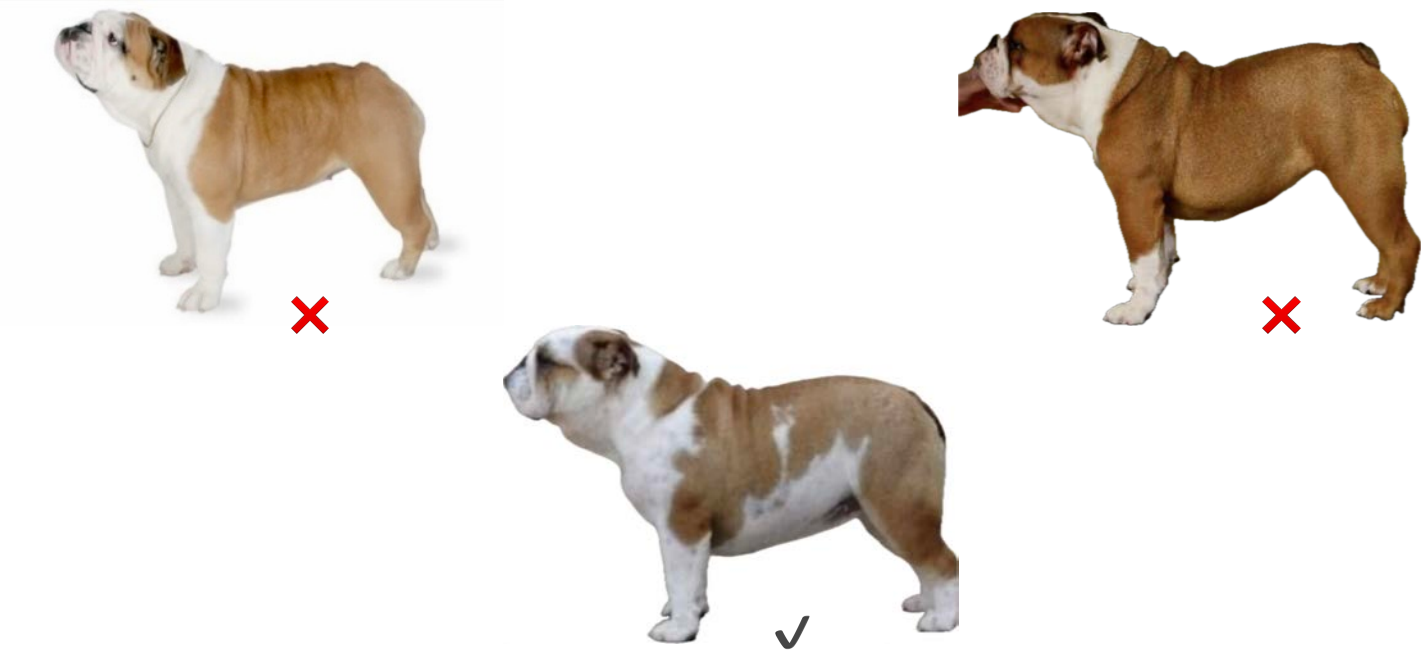
From this point, the topline rises gradually to the top of the loin. Importantly, the rise does not originate directly at the shoulder itself. A small but distinct transition remains between the shoulder and the beginning of the rise.



The Standard further explains that the hind legs are longer than the forelegs, elevating the loin above the shoulders. This elevation is therefore created primarily by correct proportion and rear structure—not by an exaggerated or malformed spinal curve. The loin need only be higher than the shoulders; the Standard does not specify a degree of elevation.

Likewise, the front legs cannot be so short that they create the illusion of excessive body length.

When correctly constructed, the Bulldog topline forms a smooth, natural arch that rises and falls in balance, rather than appearing abrupt, exaggerated, or deformed.

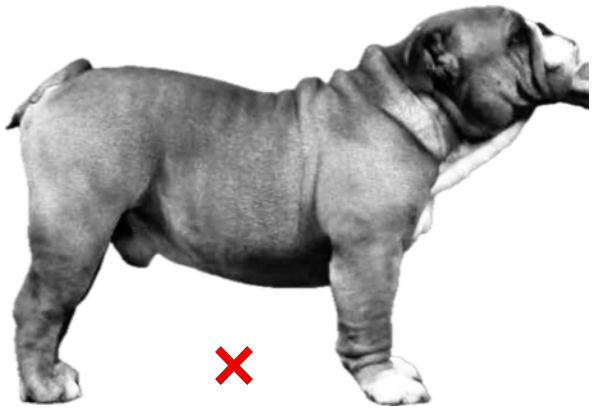


Modern Misinterpretation of “Roach Back”

One of the greatest sources of confusion surrounding Bulldog topline is the modern interpretation of the terms roach back and wheel back. Over time, these older terms have drifted significantly from their original meaning and are now frequently associated with exaggerations, deformities, or pathological spinal conditions.

This is not what the Bulldog Standard intends.





For this reason, the Official Bulldog Standard itself should always remain the primary reference when evaluating correct Bulldog topline structure.

Too often, disproportionate emphasis is placed on the terms “roach back” and “wheel back”, while the actual descriptive language of the Standard is overlooked. In its original usage, “roach” simply meant “arch.” The Standard describes a historic and functional breed characteristic—not a spinal defect.

Understanding the Bulldog topline therefore requires focusing on the structure and proportions described by the Standard itself, rather than relying solely on terminology whose meaning has shifted over time.



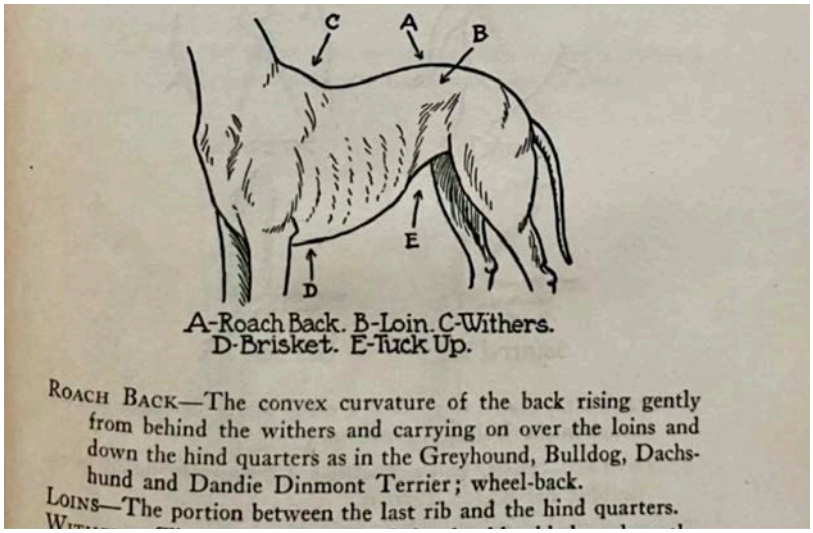


Important note:
The American Kennel Club (AKC) glossary definitions for roach back and wheel back have not remained entirely consistent over time. In current usage, the AKC defines:

Roach back — a convex curvature of the back involving both the thoracic and lumbar regions.
Wheel back — a marked arch of the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae.

These definitions do not align with the language or intent of the Official Bulldog Standard. For historical comparison, this 1946 edition of the AKC Complete Dog Book (image below) presents terminology and illustrative interpretation that differ from current glossary usage. It has roach back and wheel back meaning the same thing.

For clarity and consistency, reference should always be made to the Official Bulldog Standard when evaluating topline structure in the Bulldog.



A-Roach Back. B-Loin. C-Withers.
D-Brisket. E-Tuck Up.

ROACH BACK—The convex curvature of the back rising gently from behind the withers and carrying on over the loins and down the hind quarters as in the Greyhound, Bulldog, Dachshund and Dandie Dinmont Terrier; wheel-back.
LOINS—The portion between the last rib and the hind quarters.

It is important to remain grounded in the following governing principle of the Standard:

“The points should be well distributed and bear good relation one to the other, no feature being in such prominence from either excess or lack of quality that the animal appears deformed or ill-proportioned.”

When this principle is respected, interpretation naturally avoids extremes and remains within the intended balance of the Standard.



This



Not This



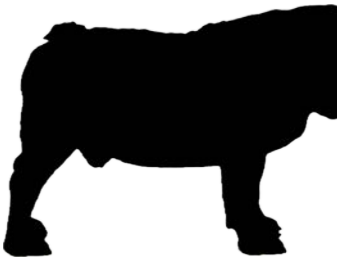




Not This



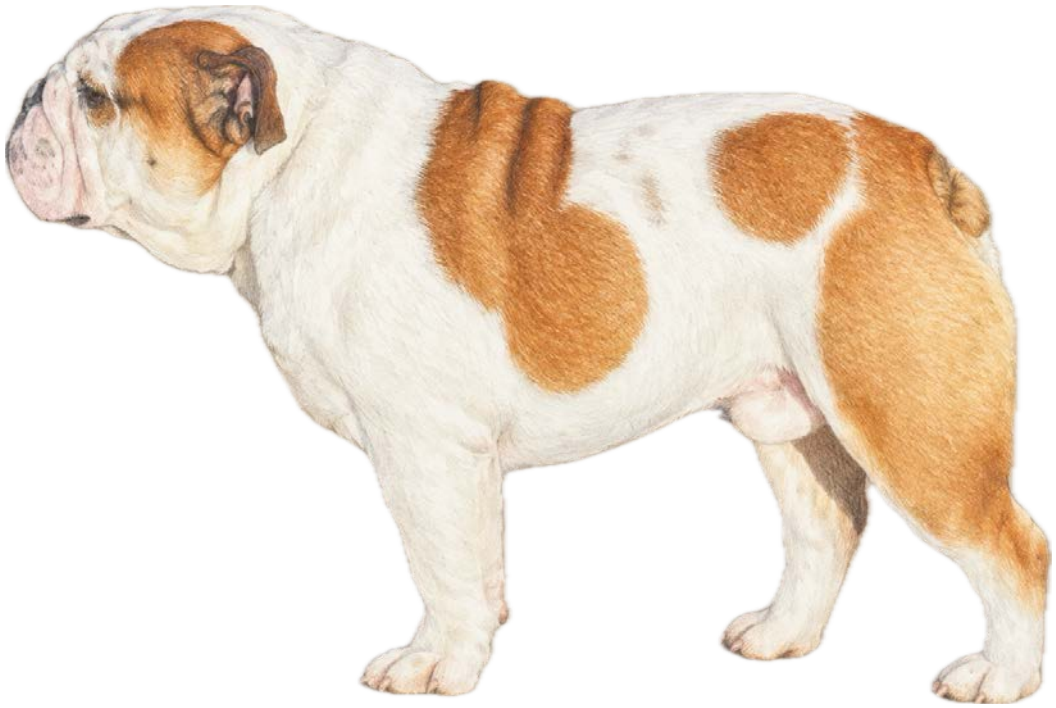




Don’t forget the underline. It is a critical component to the silhouette.

From the Official Standard;

“The body should be well ribbed up behind with the belly tucked up and not rotund.



Q- Why are “elbows standing loose from the body” not the same as “out at the elbow?”

A- The elbow placement in a Bulldog is a direct consequence of shoulder construction, not a structural defect as seen in a dog that is “out at the elbow.” Bulldogs may still exhibit this defect, but it should never be mistaken for correct type.

From the Official Standard (elbows and shoulders)

Shoulders *-- The shoulders should be muscular, very heavy, widespread and slanting outward, giving stability and great power.*

Elbows *-- The elbows should be low and stand well out and loose from the body.*



Discussion:

When the standard states that the shoulders should be “muscular, very heavy, widespread and slanting outward, giving stability and great power,” it is describing a broad, open forequarter assembly. “Stability and Great Power” cannot be achieved with an elbow deformity.

From this construction, the elbows are necessarily set lower and away from the body. This is not a fault, but a direct and functional consequence of the breed’s shoulder structure.

By contrast, a dog that is “out at the elbow” exhibits incorrect alignment of the forelimb, where the elbow joint is not properly seated or tracking, regardless of the width of the front.

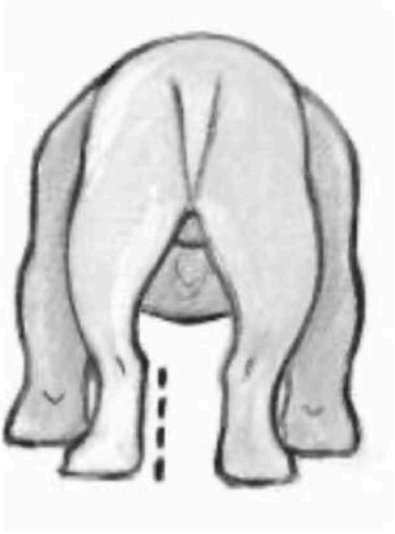


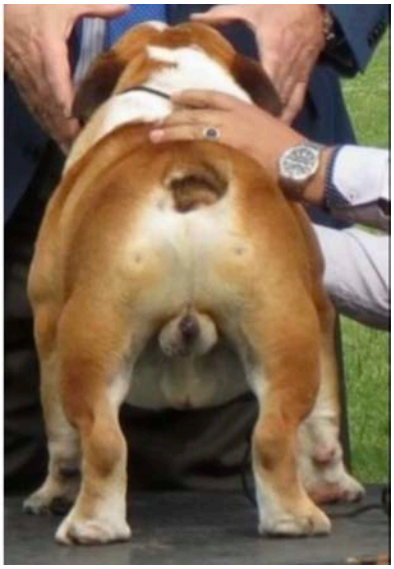
Q-Are Bulldogs supposed to be Cow Hocked?

A-No.

From the Official Standard;

Legs *-- The hind legs should be strong and muscular and longer than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins above the shoulders.*
Hocks should be slightly bent and well let down, so as to give length and strength from the loins to hock. The lower leg should be short, straight and strong, with the stifles turned slightly outward and away from the body. The hocks are thereby made to approach each other, and the hind feet to turn outward.



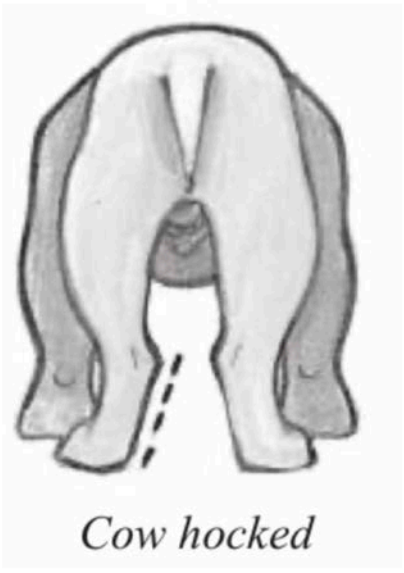


Discussion:

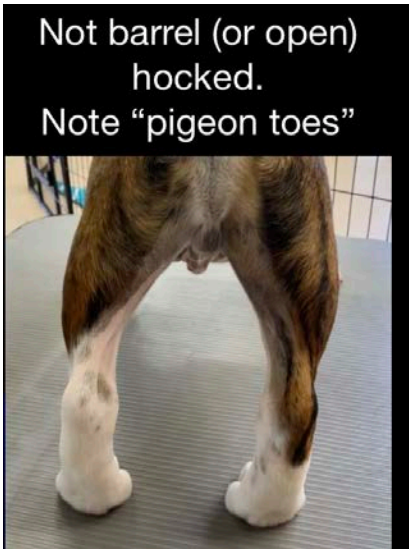
The Bulldog's hindquarter construction produces hocks that approach each other, but this should not be confused with true cow-hocked structure.
In the Bulldog, the effect is created by the outward turn of a well-developed, properly rounded stifle, while the metatarsals remain roughly parallel. The result is a stable, weight-bearing rear—very different from the weakness and inward deviation seen in a genuinely cow-hocked dog.

Note; Occasionally you will see a truly cow-hocked Bulldog, where the hindquarters look more like the drawing below.

✗. ✓. ✗







Historical notes

We have a glimpse into the purpose of this hind end construction (in addition to the hind legs elevating the loins) through the words of Sydenham Edwards in his book “Cynographia Britannica” (1800) and then repeated in the Philo Kuōn Standard of 1864 (the first standard produced by a formal Bulldog club).

The hind legs should be slightly longer in proportion than the forelegs, so as to elevate the loins. The hocks should approach each other, which involves the stifles being turned outwards, and well rounded, which seems to obstruct the dog's speed in running, but is admirably adapted to progressive motion when combatting on his belly.

This paragraph was taken directly from Edward’s book and then used in the 1864 Philo Kuōn, taking it further and explaining the why the hocks approach each other - “The hocks should approach each other, which involves the stifles being turned outwards, and well rounded”

The historic British standards always mentioned the rounded stifles, an unfortunate omission from the AKC/ BCA version and now omitted from the current British standard.

Q-How to determine if wrinkles are enough or too much?

A- While wrinkle quantity involves some degree of interpretation, there are practical guidelines.

From the Official Standard;

Wrinkles and Dewlap -- *The head and face should be covered with heavy wrinkles, and at the throat, from jaw to chest, there should be two loose pendulous folds, forming the dewlap.*



Discussion:

The standard offers this in its opening statement on Symmetry:

“The points should be well distributed and bear good relation one to the other, no feature being in such prominence from either excess or lack of quality that the animal appears deformed or ill-proportioned.”

This principle also applies to several features where questions of degree or balance arise.

Wrinkle should be evaluated in context with the entire head. Sufficient wrinkle contributes to correct expression and breed type; excessive wrinkle begins to interfere with the visibility, shape, and balance of important facial features.



Historical notes

The Bulldog Club of America standard is unique in its use of the term “heavy” in reference to wrinkle. Earlier and alternative standards more commonly describe the head as “wrinkled,” “well wrinkled,” or specify that the skin should be “deeply and closely wrinkled,” often emphasizing that such wrinkle should be “fine” rather than “coarse”.

It is often suggested that heavy wrinkles served to channel blood away from the eyes when the Bulldog was engaged with a bull. However, there is little visual evidence in historical depictions of early Bulldogs to support the presence of excessive or heavy wrinkling for this purpose.

The structural features that more plausibly served this function are the deep stop, furrow, and the natural channels beneath the eyes, which are consistently described and evident in early representations of the breed.



Is a solid nose wrinkle preferred to a split nose wrinkle?

A: No. Both are acceptable. The wrinkle itself is not a point of preference; the underlying head structure is. Judges should evaluate the layback, muzzle, jaw, width, and overall balance of the head rather than the configuration of the wrinkle. A nose wrinkle should enhance the Bulldog's expression, not obscure or distort it.
The foundation is the underlying anatomy.

A larger nose wrinkle may be disguising an undesirable nose placement.

A correct head does not become incorrect because of the arrangement of its wrinkles, nor does an incorrect head become correct because of them."

As with all wrinkles, the nose wrinkle should enhance the Bulldog's characteristic expression rather than alter or obscure it. Judges should not reward or penalize a dog simply because it possesses a solid or split wrinkle. Instead, attention should remain focused on the correctness of the head's skeletal structure and the breed-defining features that lie beneath the wrinkle itself


The over-nose wrinkle may be
split or solid; neither is preferred.

Q- How do you use the point scale when judging.

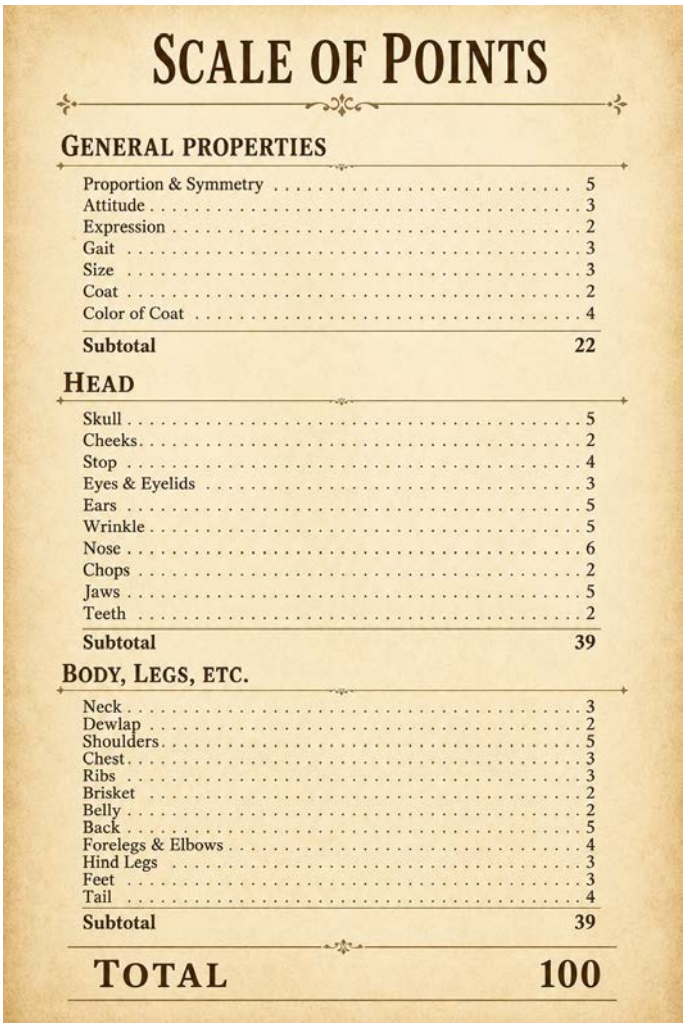
A- Typically we don't.

This is a question that will generate a variety of answers, most of them are probably not wrong.

It is a part of the standard, however and it should be as familiar as the points in the written standard.

It could theoretically be utilized, as one example, as a way to decide a tight comparison in the ring by a judge.

From the Official Standard;



SCALE OF POINTS

GENERAL PROPERTIES

Proportion & Symmetry	5
Attitude	3
Expression	2
Gait	3
Size	3
Coat	2
Color of Coat	4
Subtotal	**22**

HEAD

Skull	5
Cheeks	2
Stop	4
Eyes & Eyelids	3
Ears	5
Wrinkle	5
Nose	6
Chops	2
Jaws	5
Teeth	2
Subtotal	**39**

BODY, LEGS, ETC.

Neck	3
Dewlap	2
Shoulders	5
Chest	3
Ribs	3
Brisket	2
Belly	2
Back	5
Forelegs & Elbows	4
Hind Legs	3
Feet	3
Tail	4
Subtotal	**39**
TOTAL	**100**

Discussion

Point scales, in one form or another, have existed alongside written Bulldog breed standards for as long as those standards have been recorded. However, their historical use has been inconsistent. Some scales totaled 50 points, while others assigned equal values—such as five points—to each feature. The distribution of points varied widely, reflecting differing opinions rather than a unified system of evaluation.

Notably, the point scale associated with the 1875 Bulldog Club Incorporated Standard was published six months after the written standard itself, and not without controversy.

The British Bulldog Club, which maintained its own standard for many years, addressed the issue directly under its point scale, stating:

"*Although the British Bulldog Club does not recommend judging by points, it is nevertheless convenient, for the purpose of instruction and reference, that the value of the numerous properties to be considered in forming a judgment on any Bulldog should be appraised in numbers, with the object of deciding the relative value which perfection in one property has to perfection in another.*"

This perspective remains as sound an answer as any to the original question: point scales may serve as useful educational tools, but they are not, and historically have not been, the primary method of judging.



The Language Behind The Look

Accepted Terms Derived From The Standard



These terms,—Pear Shape, Layback and Brick-shaped head—are essential components of Bulldog vernacular and reflect key structural outcomes described in the Official Standard.

This section addresses a small group of terms that are widely used in the Bulldog community, yet do not appear verbatim in the modern written Standard: pear shape, layback, and brick-shaped head. While absent in wording, they are not absent in meaning. Each is simply a concise way of expressing the cumulative effect of multiple points described throughout the Standard.

These terms should not be understood as additional requirements or separate virtues. Rather, they function as shorthand—practical language developed over time to describe how correct structure and proportion come together in the finished dog. When the individual components called for in the standard are present and in balance, these characteristics emerge naturally.

They are therefore best used as interpretive tools, not as stand-alone criteria. Used correctly, they clarify the picture the Standard describes; used incorrectly, they risk replacing that picture with oversimplification. The Standard remains the authority—these terms only serve to illuminate it, not redefine it.

They are conclusions drawn from the Standard—not substitutes for it.

Q-A term that does not appear in the Official Bulldog Standard is “layback”. What is it referring to?

A-In Bulldog terminology, “layback” is an informal descriptive term used to refer to the rearward-set appearance of the head in profile, created by the combined structure of the skull, stop/furrow, nose, muzzle, underjaw and facial placement.



From the Official Standard (edited to highlight relevant points)

Eyes and Eyelids -- The eyes, seen from the front, should be situated low down in the skull, as far from the ears as possible,

Ears -- The ears should be set high in the head, the front inner edge of each ear joining the outline of the skull at the top back corner of skull, so as to place them as wide apart, and as high, and as far from the eyes as possible.

Skull -- Viewed at the side, the head should appear very high, and very short from the point of the nose to occiput. The forehead should be flat (not rounded or domed), neither too prominent nor overhanging the face.

Stop -- The temples or frontal bones should be very well defined, broad, square and high, causing a hollow or groove between the eyes. This indentation, or stop, should be both broad and deep and extend up the middle of the forehead, dividing the head vertically, being traceable to the top of the skull.

Face and Muzzle -- The face, measured from the front of the cheekbone to the tip of the nose, should be extremely short, the muzzle being very short, broad, turned upward and very deep from the corner of the eye to the corner of the mouth.

Nose -- The nose should be large, broad and black, its tip set back deeply between the eyes. The distance from bottom of stop, between the eyes, to the tip of nose should be as short as possible and not exceed the length from the tip of nose to the edge of underlip.

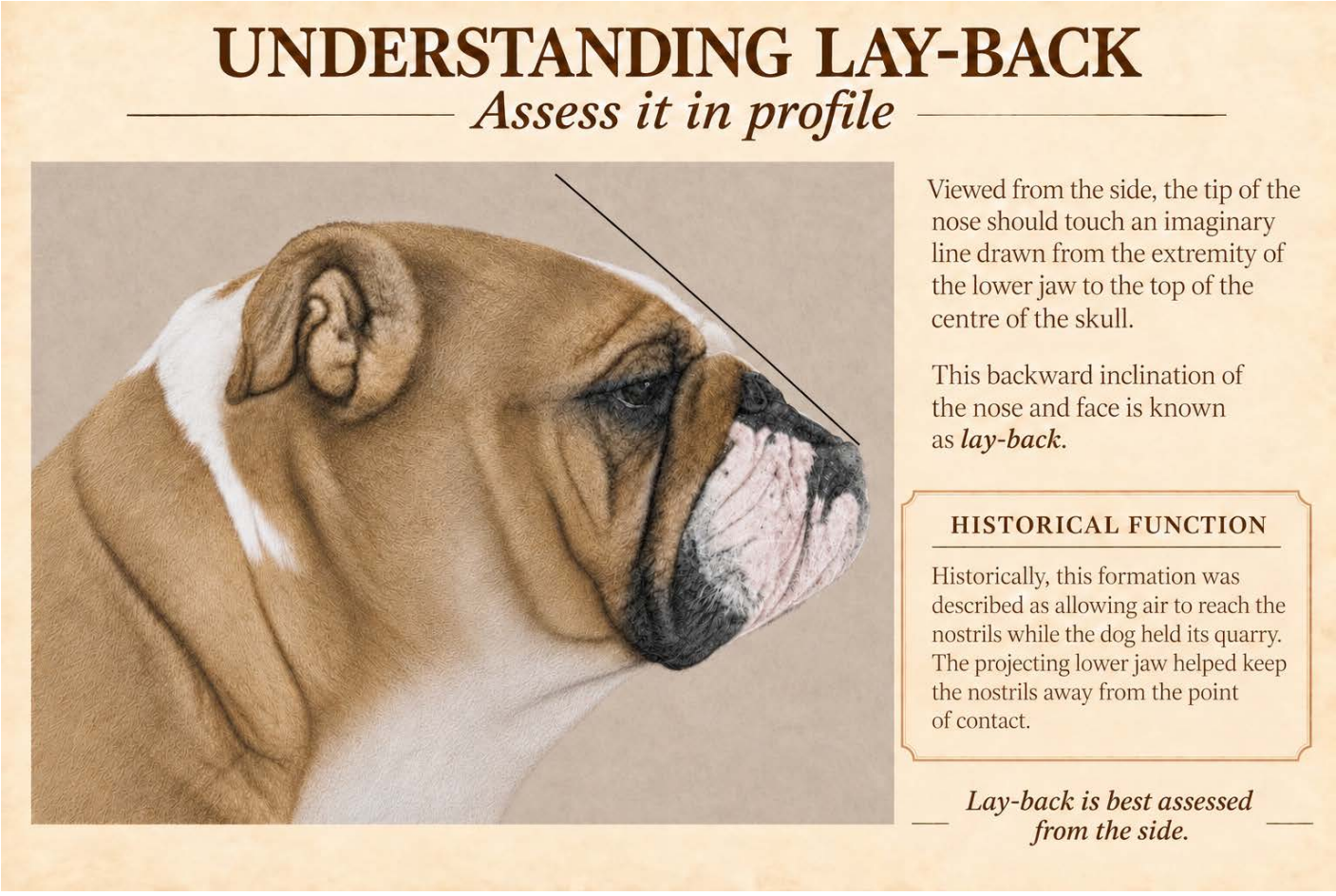
Lips —They join the underlip in front and almost or quite cover the teeth, which should be scarcely noticeable when the mouth is closed.

Bite -- Jaws -- The jaws should be massive, very broad, square and "undershot," the lower jaw projecting considerably in front of the upper jaw and turning up.

Discussion;

In modern American Kennel Club conformation terminology, “layback” most commonly refers to the rearward angle of the shoulder blade (scapula) as viewed in profile.

In general English usage, “lay back” simply means positioned or inclined rearward. In dog conformation, this descriptive term has been applied primarily to the shoulder assembly, but is also used informally by breeders when discussing facial angles in the Bulldog.



The long-standing “rule of thumb” for Bulldogs suggests that when a straight edge is placed along the head in the stop/furrow, it should contact the top of the skull where the furrow ends, the tip of the nose, and the tip of the lower lip, forming an overall profile that approximates a 45-degree angle.
Importantly, the nose tilts back to follow this angle and does not sit perpendicular. This feature has historic value.

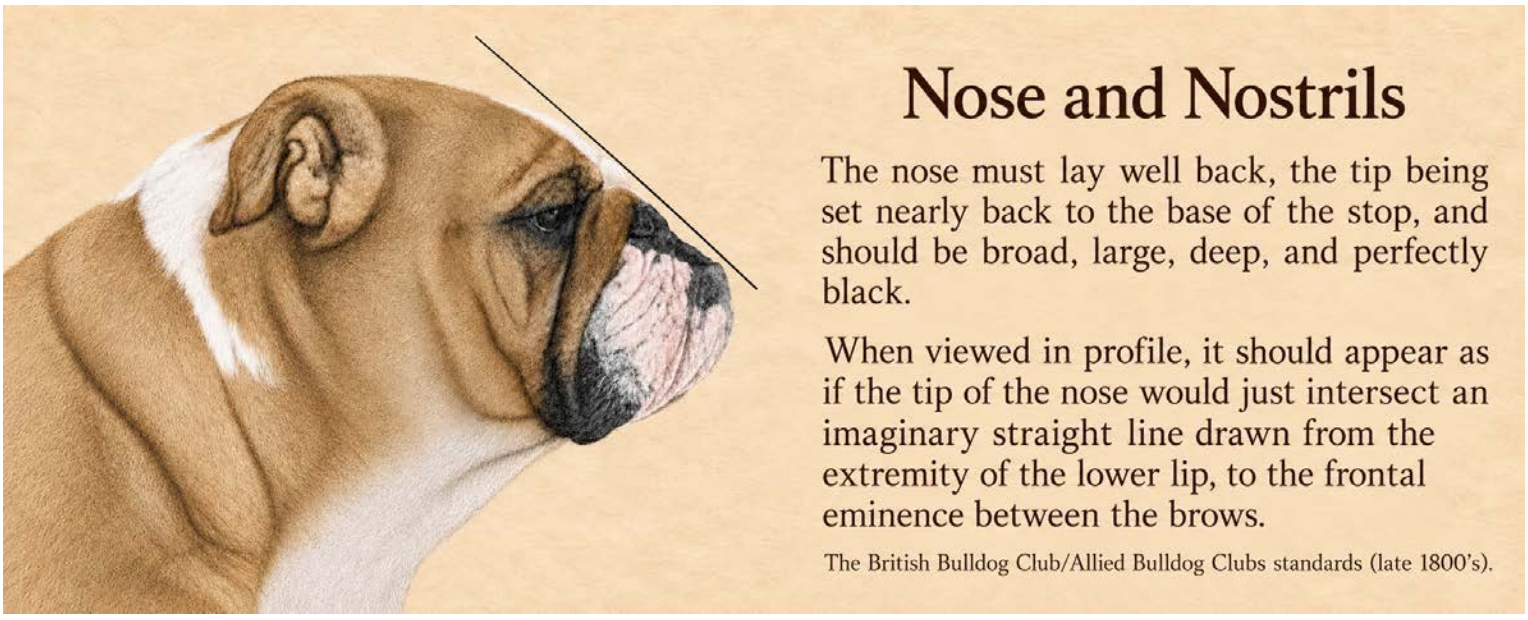
✓ ✗



Nose

The nose must lay well back, the tip being set nearly back to the base of the stop, and should be broad, large, deep, and perfectly black.
When viewed in profile, it should appear as if the tip of the nose would just intersect an imaginary straight line drawn from the extremity of the lower lip, to the frontal eminence between the brows.

The British Bulldog Club/Allied Bulldog Clubs standards (late 1800's)



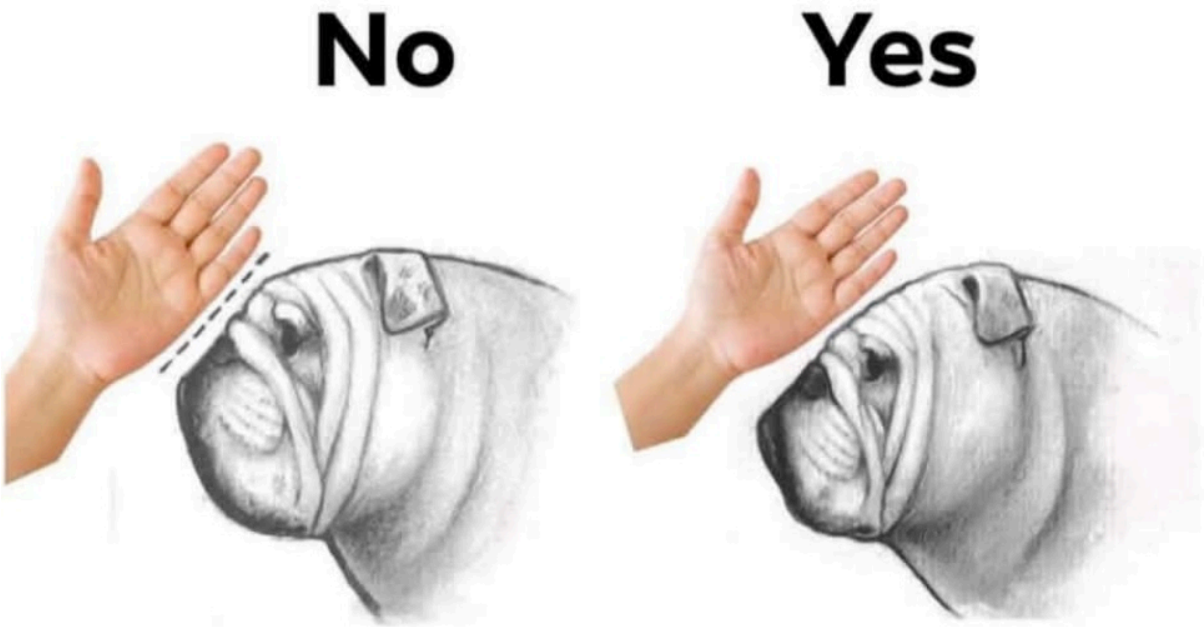
This image is added here to simply demonstrate the concept.

Certainly you wouldn’t do this during an in-ring exam, you should easily see this with your eye.

Any auxiliary use of hands to “confirm” layback is not recommended.

The ears being alert vs. relaxed will often influence the look of this angle.

From a historical point of view, this inclination helped the dog maintain the ability to see and to breath while holding on to the flesh of the bulls.



Q: What is meant by a “pear-shaped” body? This term is not found in the AKC standard.

A: While “pear shape” is not a term found in the Standard, it has long been used as a descriptive shorthand. As with any such term, its value lies in understanding the structure behind it, not simply recognizing the shape.

From the Official Standard:

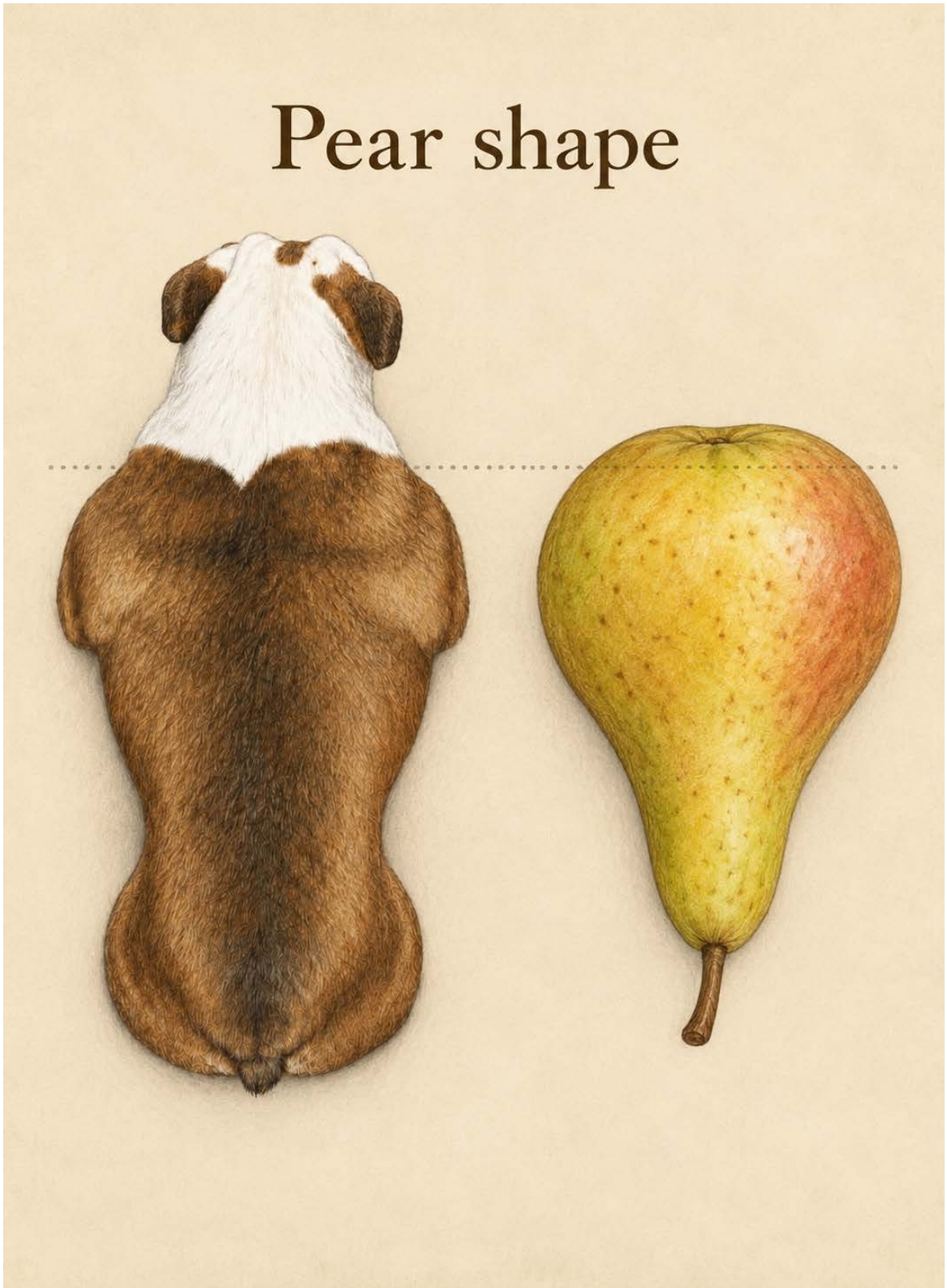
Body -- The brisket and body should be very capacious, with full sides, well-rounded ribs and very deep from the shoulders down to its lowest part, where it joins the chest. It should be well let down between the shoulders and forelegs, giving the dog a broad, low, short-legged appearance.

Chest -- The chest should be very broad, deep and full.

Underline -- The body should be well ribbed up behind with the belly tucked up and not rotund.

*Back and Loin -- **The back should be short and strong, very broad at the shoulders and comparatively narrow at the loins.***




Pear shape

Discussion

The term “pear-shaped” as a formal description first appeared in the British/Allied Standards of the early 1900s, although it was likely used colloquially prior to that. It was described as a body of great breadth and depth, gradually tapering in width and depth, with the prosternum well in view in front of the shoulders—this form being considered most desirable.

This produces an outline of greatest width in front with a defined narrowing toward the rear. Interpretations may vary as to whether this applies strictly to the body or to the overall outline, but the underlying structure remains the same.

It is important, however, that this outline not be created artificially. A broad shoulder and narrow rear can visually suggest the desired shape while masking a rib cage that is narrow or tubular, or short with no narrowing at the loin, which is inconsistent with the standard’s requirement for fullness and capacity. Likewise, the narrowing toward the rear must not come at the expense of strong, muscular hind legs.

The desired outline is therefore a result of correct proportion and structure throughout, not the exaggeration or reduction of any single part.



PEAR SHAPE

The back is short and strong, very broad at the shoulders and comparatively narrow at the loins.



The rear legs should be visible through the front legs, standing and moving.

Note: In a properly constructed Bulldog, the hind legs should be visible between the front legs both standing and moving. The hindquarters should never present as the same width as, or narrower than, the front assembly

Judge assessing “pear shapes”



While the “pear shape” is most commonly described when viewing the dog from above, an alternative interpretation considers the outline from a three-quarter view. In this perspective, the breadth and prominence of the chest, the fullness of the rib cage, and the tuck-up into the loin can combine to suggest a similar pear-shaped form.

This approach is less commonly used today, but may still be occasionally encountered in traditional teaching from those of the “old school” and should be understood as another way of visualizing the same underlying structure.



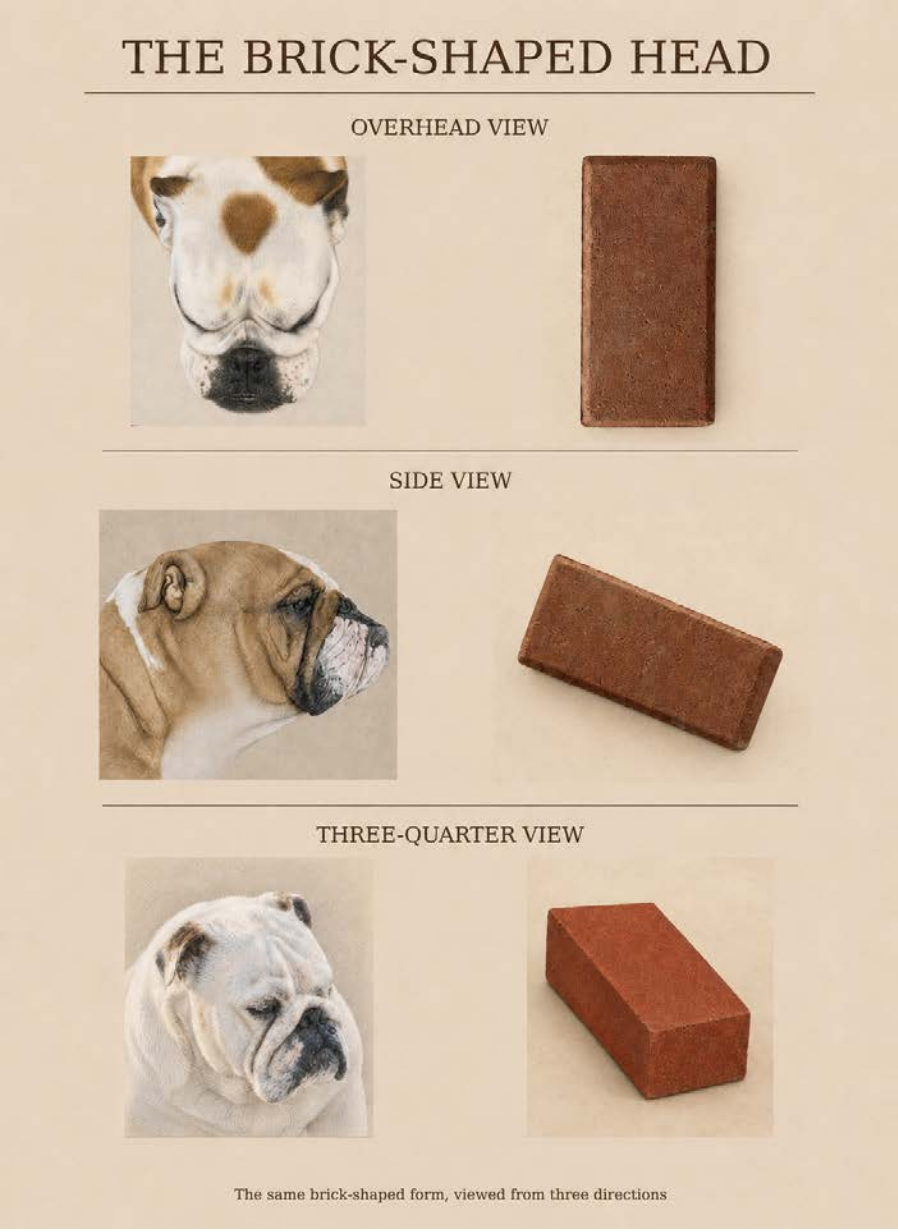
Brick-Shaped Head

Although *brick-shaped* is not a term used in the current Standard, it provides useful three-dimensional shorthand for the form created when the Standard's individual requirements come together correctly. Earlier standard descriptions specifically cautioned against a wedge-shaped head—a form whose planes progressively converge and lose substance. By contrast, a brick carries its breadth and depth throughout its length.

The Bulldog's head should be square when viewed from the front, as the Standard expressly requires. Viewed from above, in profile and at a three-quarter angle, that same breadth, depth and substance should remain evident rather than tapering into a wedge. When the broad, square skull, deep stop and furrow, broad and deep muzzle, wide jaw, filled foreface and correct layback are all present in proper relationship, the brick-like form materializes naturally.

Brick-Shaped Head

“Brick versus wedge” is not merely a comparison of outlines. It is a comparison of volume and substance carried through the entire head.



One of the earliest print references to the word “brick” in relation to the head comes in 1911.

The Canadian Kennel Gazette, **Vol. XIV, No. 6, June 1911**, **printed page 105**, carries an item titled “**New Bulldogs**” It describes the imported Bulldog Mersey Bryn Admiral, formerly Bryn Admiral, and quotes Bulldog judge **Mr. Jemmet Brown**:

“The skull is first class, being **brick shaped**, wide between the ears and excellent length from eyes to ears…”

It is plausible to assume this term was already fully in use colloquially.



Brick Shaped Head

An article by Betty Davey

Bulldogger #75 February 1996



“Brick-shaped head” is a term heard so often in bulldog circles that its meaning is often assumed rather than explained. Despite not appearing in the Standard, it has earned a rightful place in the breed’s working vocabulary. This 1996 article offers an effective explanation of what the term truly conveys.

There are few phrases which generate as much disparity of opinion among members of our breed that the highly-contentious “brick-shaped head.”

While some Bulldoggers support the analogy between the brick-shape and the Bulldog head, others dispute it. Some dislike it. Many don’t understand it. Some feel that the comparison pertains to an old English paving block.

Others insist that it refers to the skull rather than the head and even among supporters there is a variation of interpretation.

Controversial it is, confusing it is. And it is exactly this controversy and confusion that prompted one old-time breeder judge to comment “throw the damn brick out the window and stick to the wording of the Standard.”

Even it’s history is vague. It is not mentioned in any Standard, past or present, and, although the term has been bandied about for half a century, perhaps even longer, nobody seems to know exactly when or where it originated or who the perpetrator of all this confusion and controversy was.

And, if memory and information serve me correctly, sometime in the late 50s or early 60s the term “brick shaped” was such a popular part of Bulldog vernacular that a BCA- endorsed committee to study the possibility of rewording or clarifying the Standard seriously entertained its inclusion in a revised version.
Obviously, this never came to fruition.

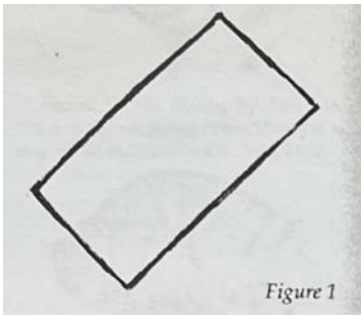
Despite the controversy and confusion, however, much like our breed itself, the term has remarkable tenacity. It's popularity continues to this day. Offhand I can think of six, possibly seven references to the brick- shaped head which appeared in articles or letters in national dog magazines within the past two or three years. Such persistence and repetition warrant further discussion, and for the benefit of newcomers, explanation.

This series will present the brick-shaped head from a novel perspective, graphically interpreted to demonstrate how the long rectangular type head (perhaps a more accurate description), not only meets all of the criterion of our Standard, but also how it relates to heads of outstanding champions from the earliest days of our breed who were particularly noted for their excellence in this specific area. In addition it will show how correct length of head contributes to overall balance.



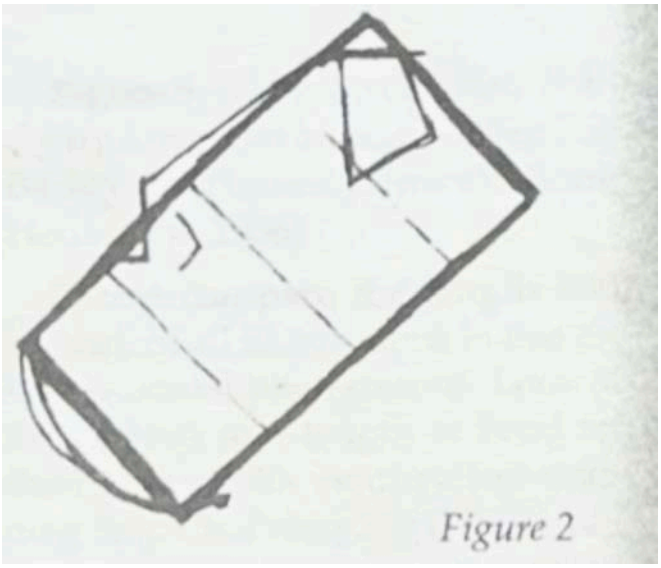
Brick-shaped head proponents are pretty much in agreement that the term was never meant to suggest that the actual dimensions of a Bulldog had related to the exact proportions of a brick.
The analogy primarily suggest FLATNESS and LENGTH in a rectangular-type head. My own feeling is that it refers mainly to the Bulldog head profile, since it is from the side view position that FLATNESS and LENGTH can be best evaluated

Who but the artist among you would believe that the colored profile sketch at the beginning of this article began with a simple rectangle in EXACTLY the same proportion as Figure 1.


Figure 1

This long rectangular shape approximately twice as long as it is deep, was used as a guideline to draw the Bulldog profile in the same manner as an artist uses an egg-shape as a guideline when drawing in the human head. It was placed at an angle to simulate lay back. I vaguely recall, reading quite some time ago that a Bulldog head in profile resembles a “brick on its side.”
When considering Figure 1, the correlation becomes plausible.

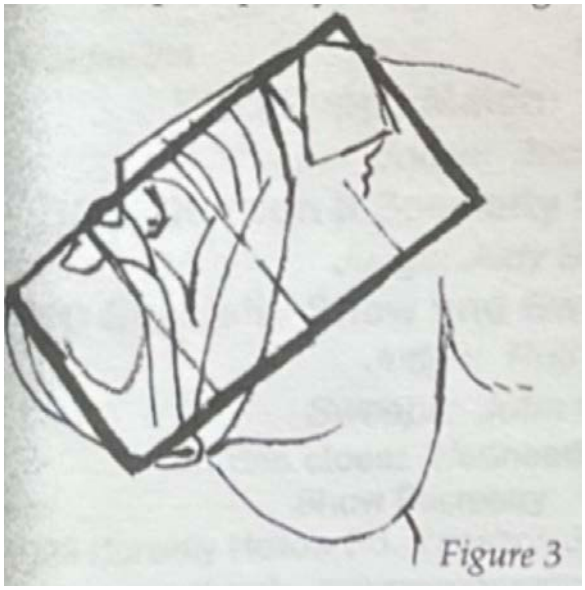
Figure 2 shows how the rectangle has been divided into quarters as an additional guideline for adding features. The tip of the nose is placed at the first quarter mark, directly opposite at the corner of the eye.



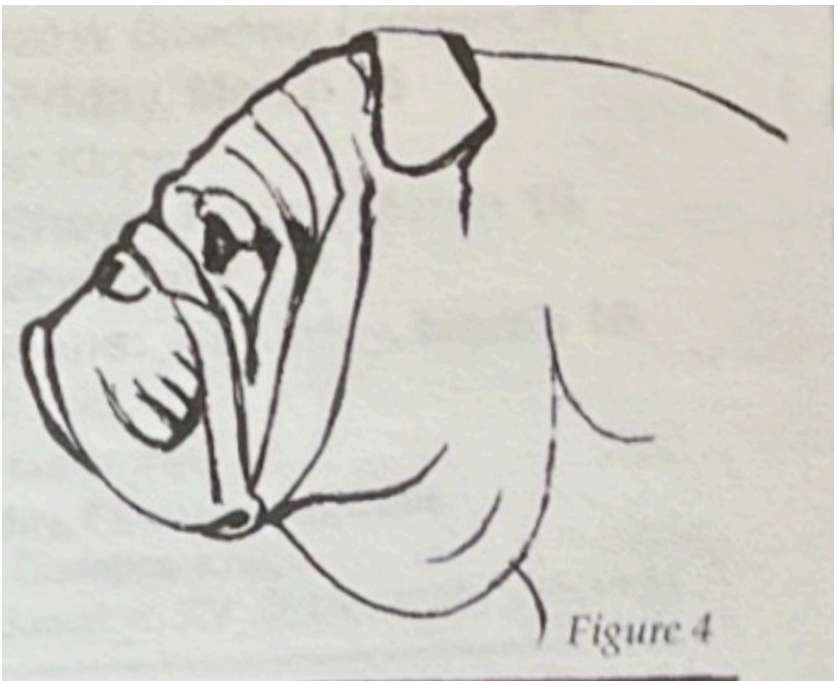
The flew is drawn in front with a corner of the mouth ending directly under the corner of the eye. The jaw is added. The top tip of the rectangle is leveled off, indicating the area of the apex, ear set, and approximate location of the tip of the occiput, the top back center point of the skull.

A vertical frontal bone is indicated in front of the eye, raising slightly above the top line of the rectangle, and the top of this frontal bone is connected in a straight line, indicating the forehead, to the area of the apex. Notice that the frontal bone, which the Standard states “should be very well defined, broad, square and high,” elevates the forehead ever so slightly, placing it at an almost imperceptibly different angle from the foreface.

In Figure 3 the progression continues with the addition of wrinkles, dewlap, neck, etc. The layback remains the original top line of the rectangle.
If it were a ruler, it would touch the tip of the lower jaw, tip of the nose, pass through the frontal bones, continue up through the furrow in the forehead, and just about reach the top of the head.
When the drawing is advanced to this stage, the four lines of the original rectangle are erased, and the remaining sketch is further refined.


Figure 3

The results is Figure 4... the same head outline used in the color drawing at the beginning of a sketch this article.



The graphic exercise which you just observed, demonstrating the analogy between the brick-shape and the bulldog head in profile, was described in an excellent article entitled “The Brick Head” by J. Patrick Hartle in The Bulldogger (BCA, Winter 1974, reprinted in The Bulldogger Digest). Pat wrote: 'Looking at the head in profile we can visualize the top of the brick within the outlines of the layback from the tip of the jaw to the apex of the skull. Adding to that the hard upfaced turn of jaw with correct depth of muzzle, both of which are the result of the jaw bone that has a continual arch from hinge to point of jaw, you will find a general brick outline in this total bone formation.”

The following illustrations show similar layback and length. The dates demonstrate continuity of interpretation from the earliest days of our breed.

Figure 5-Charles G. Hopton, early BCA Secretary and breeder of the first American-bred champion, Ch. L'Ambassadeur, used his sketch of Rodney Dreadnought for his own explanation of the Standard which appeared in a chapter entitled "The Bulldog" in The Dog, published in 1908.

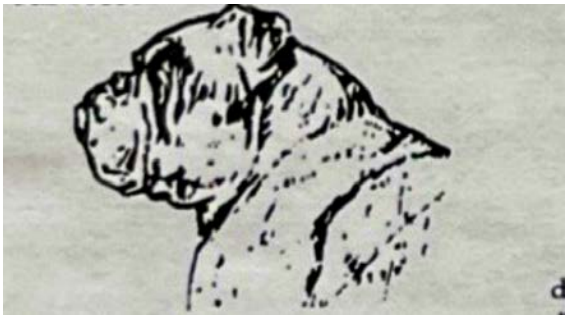


Figure 6 The Perfect Bulldog in Word and Picture by British artist-writer, J. Hay Hutchison, originally published in 1908, reprinted by The Bulldog Club (Incorporated) in 1977.



Figure 7 The Bulldog an American artist, sculptor, judge Enno Meyer (Orange Judd Publishing Co., Inc., 1948)



Figure 8 From a series of Bulldog drawings illustrating the Standard by American artist, Robert Lockett. Probably from the early 50s.



Figure 9 The New Complete Bulldog by American breeder/ judge Col. Bailey C. Hanes (Howell Book House, Inc. 1956).



Please compare the length and layback of all illustrations in the article to actual photographs. Look at the layback and length of head on the famous 19th century top-winning Eng.Ch. Pressgang (Figure 10).



Look at the similar layback in length of head on his American counterpart of many generations later, Champion Lord Timothy Scott (Figure 11).
There is my fellow Bulldoggers... on both of them... long rectangular-type head. It is the head described in our Standard. It is the head celebrated by early fanciers in our breed. It is the head to which today's knowledgeable breeders aspire. It is the head which our breed must never lose.



And it is the head which some of us still call beautiful "The BEAUTIFUL, brick- shaped head."

