

Mastiffs feature



Rocco the Neapolitan Mastiff

Introduction

by Ange McKenzie

There are many recognised Mastiff breeds and I would like to introduce you to them – the Bullmastiff, Dogue de Bordeaux, Italian Corso Dog, Mastiff, Neapolitan Mastiff and Tibetan Mastiff.

There are many breeds out there for people to choose from, but I don't think anyone could argue with the fact that Mastiff breeds have a presence about them and in some cases can part a crowd like Moses is said to have parted the waters.

Ask any owners of any of these breeds, and they will usually say it is not an easy task going for a leisurely walk with these impressive beasts, and no we are not talking about it being due to the fact they are pulling us around the place or trying to get everything in sight. Quite the contrary, what would take the average joe 30 minutes to walk can be a lot longer when you have a Mastiff breed on the end of your leash. That's because everyone just wants to say hello to them, grab a selfie, or just admire their sheer presence.

The majority of the Mastiff breeds were purpose bred many moons ago for guarding and protecting. However, this does not mean they are aggressive. In fact they were often seen adorning some rather stately manors and upper class properties, so understandably they can be a little aloof when it comes to strangers – it's hard to fight genetics as we all know.

One of the first things people might think of when they think of some of these breeds is a swimming pool of drool everywhere. While yes they can drool, it is not at all as bad as people perceive it to be and can be managed quite well with selectively positioned drool clothes and water bowls.

Inside this feature we aim to introduce you to the history and these amazing Mastiff breeds so you can maybe understand them a little better.

Bullmastiff

A brief explanation

by Sharon Mischefski

The Bullmastiff – 40% bulldog and 60% mastiff.

This dog was originally created to assist the Game Keeper in keeping poachers at bay on English Estates back in the day. The preferred colour was brindle to ensure they would blend into their surroundings by means of camouflage. Fawn was not desired because at night they could be easily seen.

The tail was to be carried out as an extension of the dog so as not to alert a poacher to their presence.

Forehead – top of skull – wrinkles – wrinkled when alert – so when the Game Keeper put their hand on the top of the head if they felt wrinkles in the pitch black, they knew their trusty dog had sensed a poacher(s).

Eyes wide set – It was believed if the poacher wacked the dog around the head with something and struck an eye, hopefully they would still have the other eye functioning to get that poacher!

Head – “the skull should be large and square, viewed from every angle”, a square is a square – not a rectangle. Head, cube on cube, a cube is square. A block of a head to hit and wind that poacher.

Nostrils – “widely spreading nostrils when viewed from the front” – so when they push the power button to bring down that poacher they can inhale without hindrance the air needed for sudden exertion.

The Bullmastiff was a dog that was created for a purpose.

The Bullmastiff today is mostly a companion dog, a show dog and a few take on the task of training them for therapy work, service dogs, obedience and agility.

Bigger is not always better in the case of the Bullmastiff. A fit, balanced, athletic looking dog would be more likely to be fit for purpose. They are meant to be a powerfully built dog, symmetrical dog, showing great strength, but not cumbersome.

They are meant to be alert and active, not a sack of spuds who can't really be bothered doing any thing. They were built to be able to walk for hours and be capable of short bursts of speed to capture a poacher. They had to be agile enough to be able to bring down a man.





The Bullmastiff is a very loyal, loving breed and generally laid back. They can be stubborn if they choose and some have mastered the art of selective hearing.

These dogs do well in other dog sports like obedience training and similar and in fact can have other owners in attendants astounded by what they can achieve for their size.

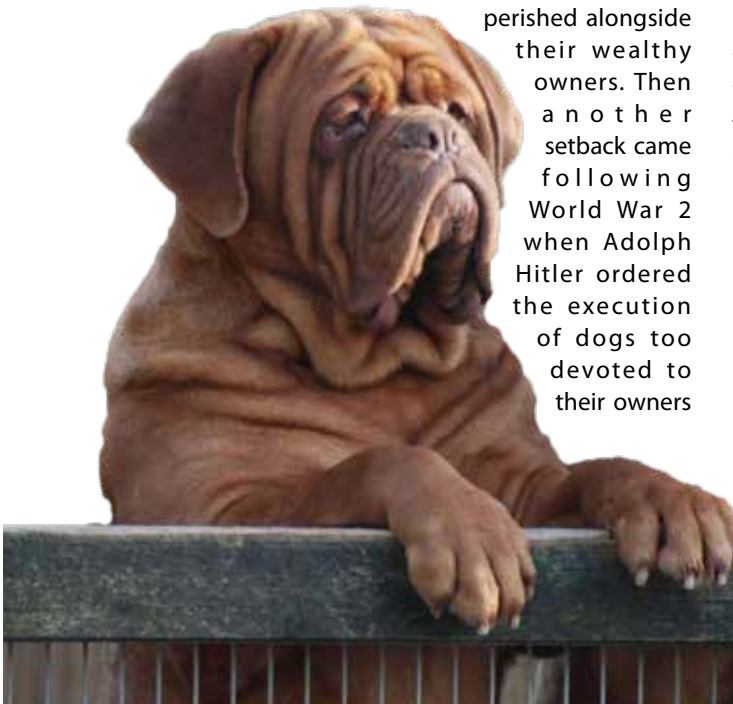


Dogue de Bordeaux

A challenging history

The Bordeaux has had a challenging past with being brought to the edge of extinction on two occasions – once in the French Revolution

when many of the dogs perished alongside their wealthy owners. Then another setback came following World War 2 when Adolph Hitler ordered the execution of dogs too devoted to their owners



who got in his soldiers way with the Bordeaux being one due to their extreme loyalty to their owners.

But thankfully during the 60s, a group of breeders in France, headed by Raymond Triquet, worked on the rebuilding of the foundation of the breed. In 1970 a new standard was written for the breed, with the most recent update being the FCI standard in 2009.

The Dogue de Bordeaux first arrived in New Zealand in 1991 and was brought in by Annie Wright of Barbarian Kennels, the first two coming from TNT Kennels in America who were the breeders of the dogs used in the filming of the Turner & Hooch movie for which the breed is most well known.

Would a Dogue de Bordeaux be right for you?

I guess that would depend on a few factors. For starters, are you extremely house proud? Are you able to give them the time and attention they require? They do best being part of the household on a daily basis. With them comes slobber and lots of it, especially from a well bred Bordeaux, particularly after drinking or if you have something they like the look of for



themselves. This can get in a few places particularly if a shake is to follow either activity, so drool clothes are also a must, strategically positioned around the house.

It is not as bad as portrayed in the Turner & Hooch movie featuring the breed. Thankfully that was just whipped egg whites for effect. If



you have something they really like you can get some nice long crystal looking shoestrings hanging from their jowls, which can be dangerous if a shake should follow and you have a drink in front of you.

They WILL take over the couch, and bed, if given half a chance and being a large breed that leaves you the smallest area left available for body positioning yourself around them because ask them to move and their selective hearing and stubbornness comes into play.

The frequency of visitors you get generally lessens, mainly due to the love, or slobber they like to share with anyone they let

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through the gate. Or it could be due to them happily popping themselves up on the couch beside said guest with their head in their lap. After all they will more than likely have a hand free for a good rub.

Do you have the money for a new vehicle because you won't be able to stop at just one DDB. They truly do get into your heart. I know people say that about all breeds, but these guys absolutely do, and they break your heart just as bad when they pass which on average is around six years of age.

Oh and kiss goodbye to your privacy when it comes to a shower or a toilet trip because you are more than likely going to have an audience. Should you manage to slip in and shut the door before being spotted you will likely hear the sniffing coming from under the door because they know you are in there.

However with all this being said it doesn't matter how bad a day you have had coming home to a Bordeaux will fill your heart with warmth and joy after that long day, even if there is a chance they could meet you at the door with one of your new shoes in their mouth.



Cane Corso

A brief history

by Renzo Carosio (excerpt)

The story of the Cane Corso, coincides extraordinarily with the history of the Italic peoples, in all the splendor and their misery.

The etymology of the name Corso is still uncertain. The most credible hypothesis are those which indicate Greek origins: KORTOS = wall and from the Latin: COHORS = guard of the courtyard. Until recently the oldest documentation citing the name of the Cane Corso, consisted of a few poems and some prose dating from 1500. In 1998 the A.I.C.C. or *Associazione Italiana Cane Corso* published a study on the race which brought to light the military use of the Cane Corso, in 1137 in Monopoli di Sabina (near Rome), the finding of kennels from the period and the close links between the race and Roman history.

The Cane Corso's temperament has been forged over centuries.

The Cane Corso's talents, forged by the Romans, were perfectly suited to the labors of farm life. This dog was unconquerable, tenacious, resistant to pain and eager to serve humans. A Corso's temperament was pliable, and the breed's physical capabilities considerable. This breed was versatile enough to confront a bull or wild boar, but respectful enough to not chase the chickens nor drink the goat milk. All these factored into the breed's salvation. Cane Corsos found homes with the massaro, or peasant farmer, of the meridone of southern Italy, where they shared in the everyday labour. The Cane Corso would not exist today if not for the proud and guarded people of the old south, who employed them and used them to their full potential.



The Temperamental Journey

by Michael Ertaskiran (excerpt)

When giving breed seminars, I have been asked many times, "What do you love about this breed? Why the Cane Corso?" My answer has always been the unconditional love this breed gives its owner. To a Corso, its people are the sun and the moon. He is particularly sensitive to their moods and emotions. Corsos are not like Rottweilers, who would be inclined to challenge you for alpha status. The Cane Corso recognizes his master as the pack leader and will never challenge that; like a high-ranking wolf, he will defend his pack with vigor and tenacity while remaining subordinate to his family and leader.

There is an inherent difference in the way a Cane Corso loves you, or at least that has been my experience. The breed has a profound attachment to humans, another one of its inherent gifts. A Corso suffers without the presence of his family, particularly the youngsters; he seems to know to change his tact when around them, instantly becoming gentler and calm. The Cane Corso is not a breed that can be just left out in the yard and forgotten about – that is the cruelest form of punishment.

"The Corso is a particularly pliable dog and it feels the relationship with its owner very much. Its close following of man in every movement is characteristic, and it is always ready near his legs and alert to his voice," wrote Dr. Paolo Breber, the man credited with starting the recovery of the Cane Corso. "Differently from other breeds, which accept to spend most of the day alone or with other dogs, content with only one or two hours of company, our dog suffers when it is separated from man; the conditions of a dog kennel are definitely adverse to it. This extraordinary harmony with its owner, together with its easy learning, combativeness and physical appearance, make it the ideal dog for whoever needs to defend himself and/or attack both men and dangerous animals."

The Cane Corso is not a typical Molosser in the sense that he is not exclusively defensive; while the 10-foot circumference around his humans is of paramount importance to him, he is also very environmental – in other words, he is also in tune with what is going on a hundred yards away on the horizon. Perhaps this behavior harkens back to his days of war with the wolf. He is not the finisher that a terrier can be; he will stop his attack if his adversary is beaten, content in taking just enough measure as needed to get the situation in hand.



The Cane Corso is not a banned breed

It has been asked many times on pedigree dog pages whether the Italian Corso dog or Cane Corso is a banned breed in New Zealand? Just to clarify they are not a banned breed and in fact are a recognised breed by Dogsnz so we believe the confusion comes from Dogsnz having the breed registered name as the Italian Corso Dog and not the Cane Corso which is the name the breed are most well known for here in New Zealand.



The Mastiff

The Original

by Jane Lee-Cooper (Zeland Mastiffs)



The Mastiff (also known as the English Mastiff) is the original Mastiff Breed, they date back to ancient times and are acknowledged as one of the oldest breeds on record. They have been used for many purposes down through the years. Research indicates that they originally served as war dogs, guardians of stock and as household dogs. They were also

used for bull and bear baiting during

the bloodthirsty Elizabethan times. The decline in these terrible sports at the end of 18th century resulted in the dramatic fall in the number of Mastiffs and their purity and type became much debated. However, purebred animals could still be found guarding the stately homes which was their most suited purpose.

They made a comeback in popularity in the late 1850s when dog shows began. In 1872 there were 82 Mastiff exhibits at the Crystal Palace show.

The World Wars were extremely hard on the breed almost completely wiping them out in England (there were only seven known Mastiffs remaining in Britain). Luckily some had been exported to America and so fresh blood was obtained by importing a small number back from North America, some of which were descendants of the original stock exported in the 1930s.

The Mastiff is a slow maturing dog, taking up to four years to fully develop. They are the biggest of the Mastiff breeds with an average mature male tipping the scales at around 100kg, the girls are slightly smaller but are still very big dogs.

Mastiffs are people dogs, they do not do well if left alone for long periods of time and they don't do well being kept as kennel dogs. They thrive in the family home and like to be with you wherever you go, unfortunately this includes the bathroom. People expect them to need a large property but in reality they will be right beside you, and can squeeze their bulk into the most unsuitable positions as long as they are touching their owners. They don't require a lot of exercise and are as happy to be curled up next to you on the couch on a rainy day as they would be out walking. They are probably the



laziest of the Mastiff breeds, and as youngsters they SHOULDN'T be exercised at all, and should be prevented from excessive bouncing as their growing bones are easily damaged.

Health wise they compare favourably with other giant breeds. They don't seem to suffer from heart or eye issues that the other mastiff breeds are prone to. But care should be taken to only buy a puppy from parents who have excellent hip and elbow scores, as even slight dysplasia in such a large dog can cause major problems later in life. Their sheer size also makes them prone to ligament injuries. As you can imagine vets bills like the dogs themselves can be huge.

They make excellent therapy dogs, their huge size and calm nature is a huge draw card to the young, elderly, and comforting for the sick.

Therapy Mastiffs

I have always been inspired by people who take their dogs into rest homes and hospitals. Mastiffs have the perfect temperament for the job. They just ooze a kind of healing calmness, unfortunately I don't. Hospitals, Doctors, anything slightly medical gives me the heebie jeebies.

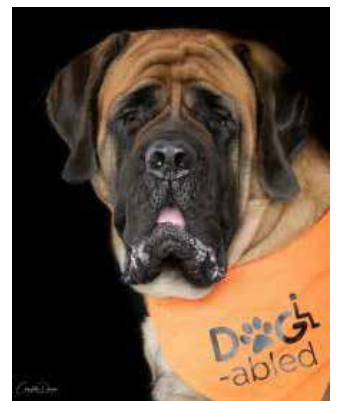
So when I found out about B.A.R.K NZ, through my good friend Victoria with her handsome Dogue De Bordeaux "Ragnar" it made me think that it was something I could do. Going into schools helping teach children the correct, safe way to approach a dog and to give the kids an enjoyable safe experience. So Andi and I got ourselves into training, we passed the necessary Canine Good Citizen testing and then joined the Volunteer BARK Team.

Andi absolutely thrived. She adores children and adores the undivided attention that they give her. She is a huge hit with the kids, everyone wants to meet Andi first. We even go into Early Learning Centres and Kindys to provide the younger children with a head start on safety around dogs. If we can prevent even one dog bite I feel it's well worth the effort. Andi's daughter Miley is now in training to also become a BARK Buddy. She has done a few supervised visits and will be sitting her Good Citizen test in the near future.

Andi and I have moved up into DogAbleD gang. It is run by the same fantastic group but focusses more on the children with learning difficulties as well as children with physical, emotional, behavioural, or intellectual challenges. We will be providing animal assisted learning.

We will still continue to support B.A.R.K NZ and visit lots of schools. If you would like to know more about BARK or DogAbleD check out their websites and see if you can spot the Therapy Mastiffs Andi, Ragnar, and Miley.

Check out more about what they do at www.bark.org.nz & www.dogabled.org.nz



Tibetan Mastiff

Tibetan Mastiffs are not suited for apartment life and require a medium sized yard. This breed should be brought indoors at night as it is a nocturnal barker, but will be quiet in the house. The Tibetan Mastiff is a digger and a climber and will try to escape, so requires a well fenced garden around its perimeter. Tibetan Mastiffs enjoy walks but are not suited for jogging. This breed's coat, whether long or short, needs weekly brushing, more so when shedding.



Tibetan Mastiff and Westminster Dog show , NYC 2009 photo courtesy of WikiMedia Commons by Kjunstorm



Photo by Kirstie Bain

Neapolitan Mastiff



Halo 59 days old

The Neapolitan Mastiff is an ancient dog dating to about 100 BC. This imposing breed originated in Italy as a guard, military, and fighting dog. The ancestry may extend back to the Molossus breed of Roman times. In 1946 steps were taken by painter Piero Scanziani to safeguard the breed's future. He established a kennel for the breed and did much to promote its survival.

No longer bred as a fighting dog, Neapolitan Mastiffs are gentle and kind to those they know but are wary of strangers and will ruthlessly guard the family and family home. Calm and quiet, this

serious breed is a heavy drooler and a hefty eater. The Neapolitan Mastiff requires a firm but calm and confident trainer. This breed does well with children.

The adult Neapolitan Mastiff needs daily moderate exercise, consisting of either a good walk or game. It does not enjoy hot weather. It can live outdoors in temperate or cool weather, but it does not do well in warm weather. It tends to drool. Coat care is minimal.



Nero shakes



Care of a Mastiff Breed Puppy

Like most large breeds, added precautions need to be taken when you have a large/giant breed puppy.

When it comes to feeding and environment, young Mastiff breeds can be rambunctious and romp around in a very uncoordinated way and falling over their own feet, so care does need to be taken.

Diet is important. Always feed what the breeder recommends you feed your puppy to start with as they know the breed best. Mastiff breeds do well on a raw food diet, but it must be well balanced to meet their growing requirements. You can also feed them a high quality dry food, preferably grain free – what you put in when young could save you a lot in the future.

When it comes to feeding some say a raised bowl is best, while others disagree. It is purely the owner's choice, but remember due to Mastiff breeds being deep chested, they are susceptible to bloat. Do not let them have more food until about an hour and a half either side of feeding and don't allow heavy water in take after eating or exercise as these are known triggers for this condition.

The other important thing to always bare in mind with a Mastiff breed puppy is to be very aware of their joints when young. They don't really require a lot of exercise, but caution does need to

be taken when it comes to allowing them up and down stairs, to jumping on and off couches, beds etc because too much impact on young joints can be heartbreaking in the future. Dysplasia can be an hereditary condition, but it can also be caused by environmental and nutrition factors in the large breeds. Remember the majority of Mastiff breeds have all their weight up front, so it is something to be aware of.

Socialisation is a MUST for the Mastiff breeds as the majority were guarding breeds. They need to be well socialised in all situations with other dogs, people and places.

Being the size these pups are, and with their fast growth rate, they also need a good amount of down time so they can rest their huge bodies.

Finally you must bare it mind that the majority of the Mastiff breeds will not reach full size until around 3– 4 years of age and force feeding them food to make them grow big will cause issues later with their joints. Always monitor their body condition and the bottom line is it is genetics that dictates the size a dog will be, but feeding a balanced quality diet will make sure you get the best out of your Mastiff when they reach maturity.

A lot of the above pertains more to the heavier set Mastiff breeds than the Cane Corso.

At the Movies



The Famous Ones

The Mastiff breeds have a dog stars amongst them.

Naturally we would have to kick off with the most memorable of the Mastiff breed stars, the most slobbery, dirty, junk yard dog everyone seems to remember Hooch (Beasley) from the 1989 movie release Turner & Hooch. This starred Tom Hanks as Scott Turner the highly studious and obsessive clean freak, orderly police investigator and his unruly and destructive Dogue de Bordeaux.



Beasley, who played many of the main roles as Hooch in the movie, was one of five Dogue de Bordeauxs used in the making of the movie with four being bred by Peter Curley of TNT Kennels in Merrimac in the USA and sold to Disney Studios and trained for the movie by Dog Trainer Clint Rowe

who made a brief appearance in the movie as one of the SPCA officers.

Movie Critic Gene Siskel joked that Beasley would probably take the Oscar due to Tom Hanks looking quite "wooden" in the movie.

Then we have Hercules, aka The Beast, probably the most misjudged dog star in history. Hercules was a cuddly Mastiff who started in the 1993 movie " The Sandlot" about the new kid on the block just trying to fit in by joining the local baseball team. Meanwhile however, behind a wall at the end of the sandlot is a backyard inhabited by "the Beast", a Mastiff so large and savage that he was so feared by the neighbourhood kids after the story started how his owner, Mr. Mertle, got him as a puppy when thieves were plaguing his junkyard.

The 2009 comedy " Hotel of Dogs" which featured a Bullmastiff along with the Brindle Mastiff called Lenny.



When it comes to the Tibetan Mastiff, who could possibly forget Max the genetically engineered dog who had the power and strength of a jaguar who goes on a bloody rampage after escaping a laboratory from the 1993 movie " Man's best Friend

When it comes to tv programmes I'm sure the " Game of Throne" and " Blacklist" fans out there will have seen the Cane Corso appearing in these series at one time or another.

Fang's Story

Back in 1999 Steve Cox's from England was contacted by Warner brothers Studio to see whether he'd be interested in letting them have three Neapolitan Mastiff dogs he owned on loan for 6 months to appear as Fang Hagrids dog in the Harry Potter movies they were producing.

The story and journey was exciting after they visited him at Rayvonley Kennels and met the three dogs who would all play Gang, they were all sons and a daughter of his male import Milan Vito. Hugo, Vito junior and Bella were all Rayvonley Kennel bred dogs.

Bella (Rayvonlet Crispina) was the dog who played the Fang role in the scene with the children in the mist and she would travel back to me to be shown when not needed on set and in fact took Best Bitch at Crufts during her time featuring in the movie.

Warner Brothers filmed three movies back to back , Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone being the first movie made followed by Chamber of Secrets.

The trainers and crew they were pleasantly surprised how these dogs, that seemed to look not so bright, were such quick learners and easily trained and a joy to have on the set.

Steve only allowed the dogs to be away for a certain length of time and in fact turned down a huge money offer that was offered to him in exchange for the use of his top winning dog Leo.