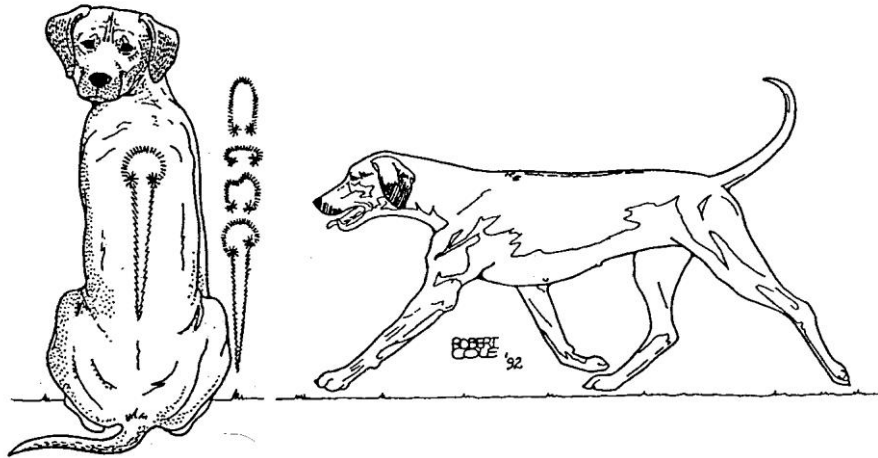


YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, August 1992

THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

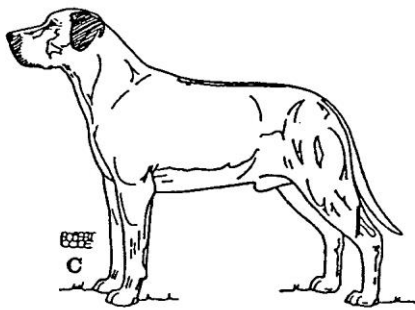
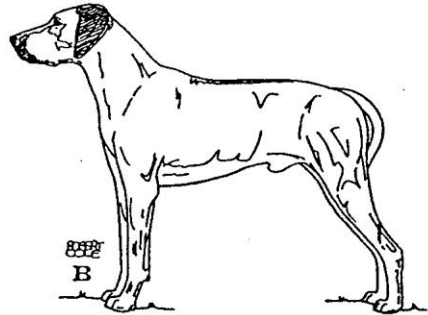
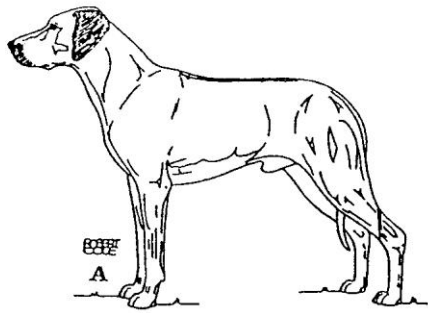


One of these three stacked Rhodesian Ridgebacks represent typical, one lacks a degree of type, and one lacks a degree of soundness. Combined, they provide an interesting Open Male class. During the process of awarding them first, second and third place, you are invited to base your decisions on Ridgeback priorities but not on the unique ridge. The characteristic ridge of hair is a high priority but, since you cannot see their ridges from this angle, the ridge will only be discussed.

THE RIDGE

As its name implies, the peculiarity of this breed is the ridge on its back, formed by hair growing in the opposite direction to the remainder of the coat, a characteristic regarded as the escutcheon of the breed. This ridge should be clearly defined, tapering and symmetrical, starting immediately behind the shoulders and continuing to haunch, and containing two identical crowns only, opposite each other, the lower edges of crowns not extending further down the ridge than one-third of its length. Up to five centimeters (two inches) is a good average width of ridge. My rear-view example illustrates five different ridges considered correct in *An Elaboration on the AKC Standard*, Alison Fraser, illustrations by Marilyn Marschat-Rhodes, 1985.

Under the point system, 20 out of a possible 100 points were allotted to the correct ridge. Departures from these five correct ridges are penalized in direct proportion to the degree of departure. Departures take the form of faulty narrow ridges, short ridges, ridges with more than two crowns, ridges that are ill defined, and ridges with asymmetrical crown placement. How heavily you penalize faulty ridges is your decision; however, Thomas Hawley, one of the foremost authorities in the breed, stated flatly in 1982 that there was absolutely no reason or excuse to show or breed a Ridgeback with a faulty ridge.



FUNCTION

The Rhodesian Ridgeback originated in Southern Africa, where early European settlers mated their imported sporting and hunting breeds with small ridge-backed hunting dogs owned by the Hottentot to produce an active dog ideally suited to local conditions. Used as a functional all-purpose guard and hunting dog it was found that they functioned better than other breeds when hunting lions.

This original function should play a part in your selection for first place. You should take into consideration that the Ridgeback's excellence as a lion hunter comes from his speed, endurance, agility, weight and soundness – not from excessive size and bone. It was not intended that the Ridgeback should actually kill the lion, but rather keep it at bay until the hunter could bring it down.

The sound bitch of correct bone and weight illustrated moving in profile in the show ring at the normal trot puts into motion the requirement for great endurance with a fair amount of speed. Frozen in action, she illustrates how, when everything comes together – body length, height, loe length, weight and soundness – Ridgeback function takes on special meaning.

TYPICAL

The Ridgeback male representing typical is slightly longer in body measured from breastbone to buttocks than height at the withers. His length of leg from elbow to ground

(the elbow level with deep brisket) is equal to depth of body, half the height of the dog. His length of neck is "fairly long". In front, his shoulders are well laid back; in rear, he has a good turn of stifle. His back is powerful, his ribs are moderately well sprung, his loin is strong, muscular and slightly arched, his tuck-up is moderate, and his compact feet have well-arched toes.

His head, in my opinion, has three equal dimensions: from the occiput to the stop, from the stop to the end of the nose, and across the skull from ear to ear. His nose is black or brown in keeping with his coat colour – if his nose is black, his round, intelligent eyes are dark; if brown, his eyes are amber. His medium sized ears are set rather high, are wide at base and taper to a point. His lips are clean and close fitting. He has a scissor bite, and the teeth are well developed, especially the canines.

His short, dense coat is sleek and glossy. Colour may be light wheaten to red wheaten. The little bit of white on his chest is permissible. He stands 66 centimeters (26 inches). How much he weighs is debatable. I would say around 34 kilograms (75 pounds), the desirable weight in the Canadian standard.

FIRST PLACE

Dog A represents my graphic interpretation of typical. Photographs of Canadian, British and American champions combined to convince me that this was the correct height-to-body-length ratio for the Ridgeback. Having decided on typical length of body, I then used length as a base and gave the same body length to the other two Ridgebacks, simplifying comparison.

SECOND PLACE

Dog B has the most type and Dog C is the sounder of the two. I selected Dog B for second place. He has many of the best dog's virtues, such as head, depth of body and tuck-up. He also has correct length of leg from elbow to ground, but, because his upper arm and shoulder blade are steeper and the body has been forced up above his elbow, his foreleg appears longer than moderate.

This forequarter steepness has forced Dog B's front assembly slightly forward on his body, covering a degree of forechest. He is also steeper in rear than the best dog in this class, and his tail is set higher. I am aware of his faults and forgive them, in this instance, in favour of type.

THIRD PLACE

Dog C is physically sound but lacks Rhodesian Ridgeback type. To begin with he is too heavy for a Ridgeback. Fellow Canadian David Helgeson writes in his 1990 Welling, New Zealand, Rhodesian Ridgeback specialty critique: "Substance is the product of height and weight. Many of your dogs are too heavy for their height." I find the same situation in England, Australia, the United States and Canada. Dog C illustrates my concern for too much substance.

His heavy muzzle is short and his lips are loose. His stop is too pronounced and his skull is not flat (face on his skull is too broad). His ears are short and rounded.

His legs are too heavy and short – only 2.5 centimeters (one inch) short – but sufficient with his heavier body to affect balance. His neck is short and thick. His ribcage is more barrel than oval.

ELABORATION

- * Some Ridgebacks have a tendency to fold back their ears when in the show ring and/or on the move – this cannot be considered a fault.
- * Loose skin under neck is undesirable.
- * Breeders are adamant – no paw, no dog.
- * Dark muzzle and ears permissible but not a mask, and dark does not mean black – on muzzle, ears or body.
- * A little white on the chest and toes is permissible but excessive white hairs here, on belly or above paws is undesirable.

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

From *Dogs in Canada*, October 1995

THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

Rhodesian Ridgeback 2 (based on the AKC Revised 1992 Breed Standard)

PLACE THREE IN ORDER

Place this class of three Rhodesian Ridgebacks in order of merit, including the quality of their individual ridges. Take into consideration that the American Kennel Club has now granted sighthound status to this South African hound.

TYPICAL

The typical Ridgeback is slightly longer in body, measured from breastbone to buttocks, than he is tall at the withers. His length of leg from elbow to ground – elbow level with deep brisket – is slightly greater than his depth of body (this is my opinion; foreleg length does not receive mention in any Ridgeback standard). His neck is fairly long (its length is not mentioned in the AKC standard). His shoulders are well laid back and in rear he has a good turn of stifle and angulation at the hock. His back is powerful; his ribs are moderately well spring; his loin is strong, muscular and slightly arched; he has a good tuck-up (not mentioned in any Ridgeback standard); and his compact feet have well-arched toes.

His head measures approximately the same from the occiput to the stop as from the stop to the end of the nose. His nose is black or brown (also liver in the U.S.A.) in keeping with his coat colour. If his nose is black, his round eyes are dark; if brown (or liver in the U.S.A.) his eyes are amber. His medium sized ears are set rather high, are wide at the base and taper to a rounded point. His lips are clean and close fitting. He has a complete scissors bite and the teeth are well developed, especially the canines.

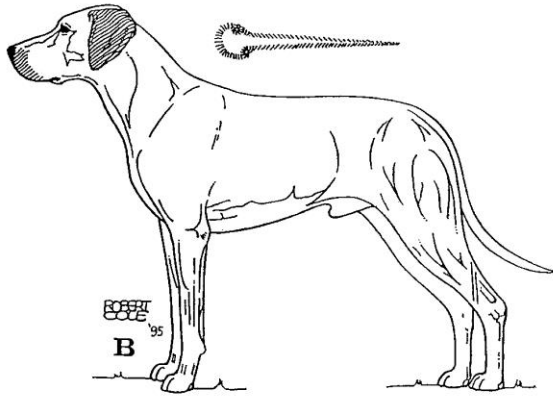
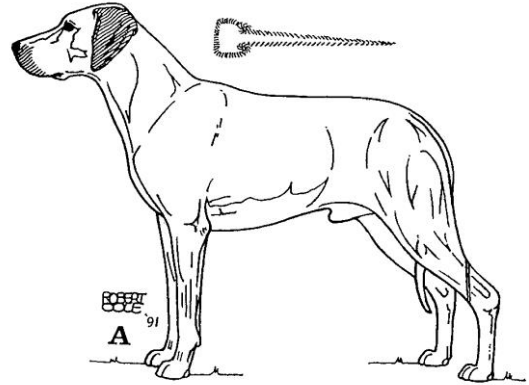
His short, dense coat is sleek and glossy. Colour may be light wheaten to red wheaten. A little bit of white on the chest and toes is permissible, but excessive white on chest, belly or above the toes is undesirable. He stands the maximum 67 centimeters (27 inches) at withers.

THE RIDGE

As its name implies, the peculiarity of this breed is the ridge on its back. This characteristic, regarded as the trademark of the breed, is formed by hair growing in the opposite direction to the remainder of the coat. This ridge should be clearly defined, tapering and symmetrical, and should start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to the haunch. Containing two identical crowns only, opposite each other; the lower edges of crowns should not extend further down the ridge than one third of its length. Up to five centimeters (two inches) is a good average for width of ridge. The AKC now requires that a ridgeless dog be disqualified, and that one crown or more than two crowns are serious faults. In the scale of points, a perfect ridge is given 20 points out of a possible 100.

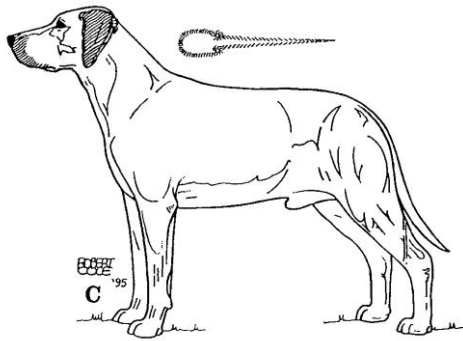
DOGS A, B, C

This second treatise is based on the AKC revised 1992 standard. Dog A was the class winner in the original 1991 treatise. Dog B is Dog A with 12 changes (listed below). Dog C resembles Dog A but possesses more substance. Before becoming embroiled in ridges and how they affect your placement of these three dogs, study the differences between 1991 Dog A and 1995 Dog B and then decide which Ridgeback you prefer, less the ridge.



12 CHANGES

To produce Dog B, 12 changes were made to Dog A. I have: 1) shortened his ears 1.25 centimeters (one half inch); 2) added the thickness of a pen line to the arch of his neck; 3) smoothed the transition of his neck into his withers; 4) rearranged his upper arm slightly; 5) slimmed down the weight (thickness) of his foreleg; 6) lengthened his front pasterns; 7) raised the set on of his tail; 8) lengthened his upper thigh; 9) shortened his lower thigh; 10) raised his tuck-up about 2.5 centimeters (1 inch); 11) brought his tail out from between his legs (for esthetic reasons); and 12) lengthened his body to correspond to his longer legs. A number of these changes will complement speed at the gallop.



IBIZAN SIGHTHOUND

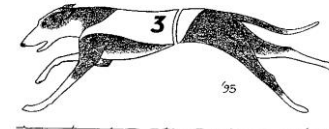
The 1992 revised wording added the word 'good' to the amount of speed the RR was capable of and, in addition, after describing the trot, included: "At the chase (which infers at the gallop), the Ridgeback demonstrates great coursing ability and endurance." This addition goes hand in hand with the AKC granting the Ridgeback official status as a sighthound (the breed can compete in sighthound field trials) the same year.

To compete at the fast gallop, the RR should be capable of two periods of suspension. This proven field champion Ibizan excels at the fast sighthound double suspension gallop. She demonstrates the two phases the Ridgeback should be capable of at this speed. All breeds of dogs are capable of the first period of suspension, where this Ibizan's legs fold up under the body, but not to this degree.

It is the second suspension phase – where the front legs reach forward and the hind legs extend rearward, all four feet off the ground – that separates fast gallopers from gallopers. Unless,

like this Ibizan, they are built for speed, dogs at this point always have one foot in contact with the ground.

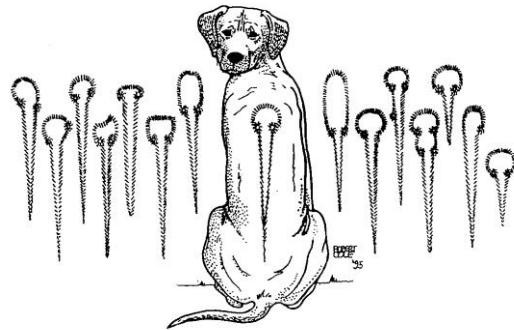
I have used this Ibizan Hound rather than a Ridgeback because none of the Ridgebacks I have filmed in slow motion fold their legs under their body to this degree in the first period, or have all four feet off the ground for as long a duration in the second period as this proven sighthound does. Granted, my movie footage of the Ridgeback at the gallop is limited, but the point this Ibizan makes is that there is more to “great coursing ability” than sighting a lure and possessing a desire to chase.



RIDGE INFLUENCE

All RRs should carry only perfect ridges, but this is very difficult in the real world. I am indebted to Alison Fraser’s *An Elaboration on the 1955 AKC Rhodesian Ridgeback Standard*, illustrated by Marilyn Marschat-Rhodes, for a number of drawings of correct and incorrect ridges. I have added to this number and spread them out to the left and right of the dog whose ridge is correct (he needn’t look so worried). The closest three to his left could be considered correct; all the rest are incorrect to varying degrees. That leaves 11 incorrect, and there must be many more that I am not familiar with, including detached crowns located some distance from the ridge.

Dog C has the most correct ridge, followed by 1991 Dog A and then by 1995 Dog B. If this happens to be your order of merit, you have no problem. If it is not, then you must decide to what degree you are willing to forgive less than perfect ridges in favour of perceived virtues and faults. To confine attention to body virtues and faults, all three heads and heights are identical.



In my opinion, Dog B is the best of the three and happens to be the fastest at the gallop. The second place award goes to Dog A and third place to Dog C.

If Dog C were the only male entered, I would still award him first and winner. If he were the only Ridgeback entered, I would still award him BB but, at the group level, in my opinion, his heaviness (in terms of speed at the gallop) would cost him.

STUDY GROUPS

Are there any of the 12 changes to produce Dog B that you disagree with? Do you have a conflict with “forelegs heavy in bone” required by all Ridgeback standards? Given a perfect ridge, how would you rate Dog B on a scale of 1 to 10, a 10 being ideal? Why would you suppose that instead of replacing “fair amount of speed,” the AKC just added “(good)”? If you found a crown on the neck near the occiput, would you penalize ridge quality?