

THE BULLMASTIFF



**BREED INFORMATION BOOKLET
MARCH 2008**

Why buy a pedigree purebred dog?

A Pedigree Pure Bred Dog has parentage that is known AND:

- Both parents are of the same breed.
- The breed is recognised by the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC) or one of its Affiliates.
- The dog's breeders are registered to breed puppies.
- The parents of any puppies are registered with the ANKC or one of its affiliates to be bred from and it has a pedigree showing at least 3 generations of parentage.

A Designer Dog is many things including:

- A puppy resulting from the deliberate mating of two unrelated breed types.
- A puppy resulting from an accidental mating of two different breed types (note these dogs used to be called mongrels or cross breeds).
- A puppy resulting from the mating of two cross bred (or designer bred) dogs.
- A puppy resulting from the mating of one pedigree or pure bred parent and one cross bred or designer bred dog.
- A designer dog has not been bred by a registered breeder.
- A designer dog is not pure bred or pedigree.

Pedigree Pure Bred VS Designer Dog

The Cost Factor

Many people believe that pedigree dogs will be out of their price range. You may be pleasantly surprised. Some pedigree breeds cost more than designer or cross bred dogs, some cost considerably less. The amount of money and work that goes into properly raising a litter of puppies does not vary. Most of the expenses that pedigree owners face, breeders of designer breeds don't. These include:

- Stud Fees
- Importing new blood lines (spending \$8,000 - \$10,000 to import a dog from the UK would be an average, some dogs cost a lot more).

- Importing frozen semen (average cost of \$5,000 from USA).
- Raising promising stock for showing and future breeding (note: some of these dogs will not measure up and will be placed into homes, it has cost time and money to get to that decision).
- Air freight to access stud dogs. To send a 13kg dog interstate and back can cost approx \$400 each way.
- Vet checks and assessments for inheritable diseases such as hip dysplasia, eye disorders, blood disease, heart defects etc. These tests are sometimes performed on parents before breeding or on the puppies.

Hybrid Vigour

A lot of the hype with Designer dogs is due to the mistaken belief that they are healthier than the pedigree pure bred dog due to so-called 'Hybrid Vigour'.

Hybrid vigour can only occur when both parents are clear from genetic problems. Their breed does not matter. It is the genetic make up of the parents that counts! The only way to be sure is to ask the breeder if they have tested for known problems.

It is easy for you to research these problems on the internet these days, not all information is accurate with some one-off cases often being attributed to an entire breed but it gives you a guide.

When looking at Designer Dogs (cross breeds), you need to consider two breeds, not one. First look at the problems that are common to those two breeds. For example, does hip dysplasia show up for both breeds? If it does, then that lovely designer breed could be a real problem. Check if the parents were tested and ask what the results were. Second, look at the unique problems for each breed and then do more research. Some genetic problems only need one parent to have the disorder, just the same as in humans. Once again ask if any testing has been done.

Today Tonight (an Australian television current affairs show) ran a story in 2003 regarding the misconception that the public has about the health of designer dogs. After the story aired, the station was inundated with other owners of designer dogs who also advised of similar health problems with their dogs so they ran a follow-up story the next night.

As a dog is a living creature, there is no guarantee, with either a pure bred or a designer dog, that the dog will be disease free for its entire life. Buying a pedigree pure bred dog from a registered breeder who tests for hereditary diseases, is however your best chance of getting a healthy dog. Breeders of designer dogs will generally just take 2 dogs and breed them without any thought of testing first.

The Known VS the Unknown

The pedigree dog is infinitely more predictable as to size, characteristics, temperament and coat than its crossbred relatives.

The designer dog (or crossbred dog) is a gamble as to how it will turn out. As many of the designer dogs are first crosses, no-one can really say what its coat will be like, how big it will grow etc. Just ask many professional groomers of the coat problems with designer dogs.

Breeders of Designer Dogs may tell you by crossing 'x' and 'y' breed that they are taking the best from both breeds. They however have no control over which attributes from the parents will be used. The puppy could quite possibly get the worst attributes of both parents.

Wally Conron (the man who first bred the Labradoodle for the Royal Guide Dogs Association in Victoria, Australia) once said

"I have opened a Pandora's Box. I'd be the first to come out and admit that. It's a pity, really...we had gone to great lengths to ensure the poodles we used did not have any problems," notes Conron, who feels the same cannot be said of many of today's breeders.

"I think it is a recipe for disaster because they are breeding with dogs that have hereditary problems".

"Another concern is that people are being misled into believing that labradoodles as well as other poodle crosses all have allergy friendly coats and do not shed. This is not the case and their coats and saliva have to be specially tested," Conron says. "At the Royal Guide Dogs, for instance, we had one litter where there were ten puppies and out of those only two were non allergenic."

Final word

Adding a dog to the family is a big step (a 10 to 15 year commitment) and the final choice of a pedigree dog or a designer dog is up to you.

Most people undertake a lot of research into the type of dog they want with consideration being given to looks, size, coat, temperament, health, longevity etc. The safest way of getting what you want or need is to consider a Pedigree Pure Bred dog. There is over 180 pedigree breeds recognized by the Australian National Kennel Association so there is one to suit everybody's situation.

If you still want a cross breed after reading this (and we have no problem with that), then please do the right thing and visit your nearest dog shelter and help save one of the thousands of homeless dogs that are put down each year. They will give you the same amount of love and enjoyment and cost a fraction of the money that you would pay for a designer dog from a pet shop. Buying from a pet shop could also inadvertently support puppy farms and possible serious neglect of dogs.

With thanks to Dogzonline.com.au who provided the content for the above article.

SO YOU'RE INTERESTED IN A BULLMASTIFF

Owning a Bullmastiff is the beginning of a wonderful relationship that will last years and years. It is also be the beginning of a huge responsibility for which you may not be ready. Bullmastiffs are large powerful animals. They are loving, protective, loyal, and very co-dependant on their humans for companionship. THEY SLOBBER. Are you prepared to keep a slobber rag handy in each room of your home? These giants can reach anywhere from 90 - 130 pounds. Once their growth stage is completed, they eat an average of 3-5 cups of high quality food per day. They are very sensitive, and usually a stern voice is all that's needed for discipline.

There are several issues that you must consider before you determine to become a Bullmastiff owner. Think about this, and be honest with yourself. Your family, yourself, and your Bullmastiff are counting on you to make as informed a decision as possible to ensure a quality of life that can be counted among one of the best experiences you will have.

DO I REALLY WANT A BULLMASTIFF?

WHY DO I WANT A BULLMASTIFF?

Bullmastiffs are wonderful companions. They are not dogs to be left outside all day with minimal human contact. Bullmastiffs cannot tolerate very warm weather due to their short noses and they are cold sensitive due to their short coats. They also need to be socialised within the human environment. They need at least basic obedience training. The last thing you want is a rambunctious 130-lb. cruise missile running through your house. Is your home large enough for this size of dog? You need room; your Bullmastiff needs room. A backyard, with good shade, and a well-constructed fence line is a must for Bullmastiff owners. Some people have maintained their Bullmastiffs in apartment settings, but with this environment comes the added responsibility of extra exercise and walks on a daily basis. If your home is too small for a 130-lb. dog, and you are not willing to take the responsibility of ownership, then this is not the right breed for you. We have found that behavioural problems exist when the Bullmastiff was not an active member of the household, but rather was relegated to the backyard with only minimal human contact.

Did I mention that Bullmastiff's slobber? You bet they do! Some Bullmastiffs will drool more than others, but all Bullmastiffs do to some extent. Especially after eating, drinking, or hard exercise. Are you willing to do the cleaning every time your Bullmastiff shakes its head and the slobber paints the walls and ceilings? Slobber rags are an integral part of ownership, and we suggest keeping one in each room of your home. Also hand them out to guests as they arrive in your home, after all, it's the polite thing to do!

THE BULLMASTIFF



ORIGINS OF THE BREED

Their history dates back to the 1860's when the breed was developed in England to serve as a companion and estate guard dog. Their purpose was to discourage the common practice of poaching on the numerous large English estates. Their strength and apparent ferocity proved very successful in combating the poacher problem. Referred to as "the gamekeeper's night dog", the Bullmastiff would intercept poachers and their very strength and weight would hold the intruder down on the ground until their master arrived on the scene. This is an important point for fanciers to remember. Do remember that the breed standard calls for "a symmetrical

animal, showing great strength, powerfully built, but active. The dog is fearless yet docile, has endurance and alertness".

Bullmastiffs are a man-made breed comprising of 60% Mastiff and 40% Bulldog. The original colour of the Bullmastiff was brindle so as to blend with its background at night therefore making it undetectable to the poachers.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Bullmastiff typically has a powerful build, symmetrical, showing great strength, sound and active. A well socialised animal will be high spirited, alert and faithful. They will however, be wary and cautious of strangers or strange situations.

A hallmark of the Breed is its head. The skull is large and square. It should have a definite stop between its eyes its muzzle should be short and broad. They should always have what is known as 'a mask'. This is a black muzzle, with further black markings around the eyes. Ear colour ranges from black to darker than its coat colour.

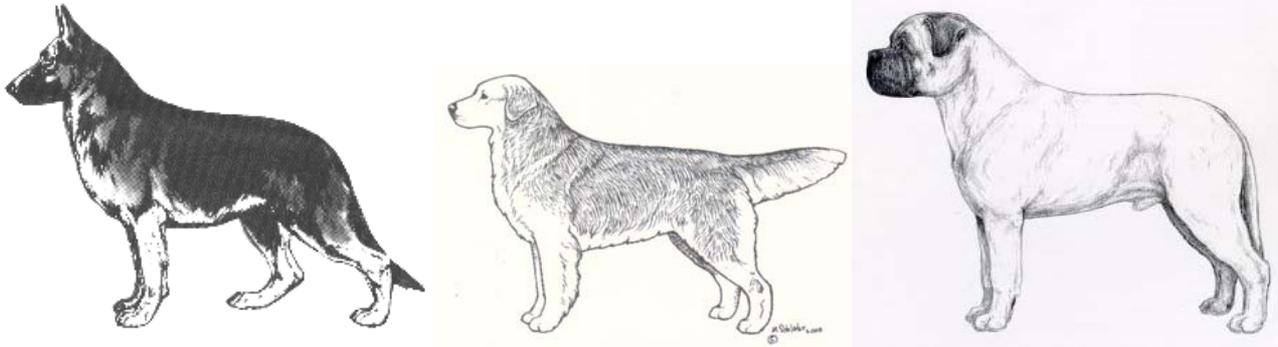
The breed comes in 'Three Colours Only', which comprise of any shade of brindle, red & fawn. A small white mark on the chest may be evident but no other white should appear on them. The coat should be short not wavy, curly or long.



The Bullmastiff bitch is smaller than its male counterpart. The Bullmastiff can measure between 24 – 27 inches (60 – 68cm) to the shoulder and commonly weigh in between 110 – 150lbs (50 – 70kgs).

All Bullmastiffs should have long tails, however there are some that may have been born with a genetic defect and possess what is known as a 'crank' tail, which can appear to be a bend or twist in the tail, not unlike a British Bulldog tail. It may also be significantly shorter in length.

Size comparison between the German Shepherd Dog, the Golden Retriever and the Bullmastiff



A Height comparison between an adult male Bullmastiff and his owner.



The height of the Bullmastiff varies between dog and bitch. Here is a large male Bullmastiff next to his female owner. The owner is 157.5 cm (5'2") tall the dog measured 66cm (26") to the top of the shoulder and he weighed in at 70kgs.

An Example Of A Diet / Information Sheet Provided By A Registered Breeder.

(This information is NOT meant to replace the specific diet instructions provided by YOUR puppies breeder it is a only a guide.)

Pups are fed 3 small meals a day up until 12 weeks of age where they are then fed 2 times daily until 12 months.

Pups are fed on a commercial premium dry food such as:

Eagle Pack large breed puppy, Pro plan large breed puppy, Science diet large breed puppy or Eukanuba large breed puppy.

They have mixed through the dry food at the recommended feeding dose according to the manufacturer (on the back of the bag) chicken NECK mince for 1 meal & beef or lamb mince for the others.

Please make sure all meat has been frozen & then thawed prior to use, you can give a couple of tablespoons per day of natural yogurt on top of one of the meals.

You can give a multi vitamin tablet per day use there are a number of dog multi vitamins available ask your veterinarian which one they recommend.

NEVER feed any bones cooked or otherwise with the exception of a raw beef marrow bone split in half, do not leave these bones with dog unattended they are a choking hazard & no matter how good natured you think your dog is he may get possessive over the bone.

Never give calcium or other mineral supplements with out a confirming blood test that proves they are deficient in the mineral.

Table scraps (meat veg) are ok as treats not meal replacements. Some foods are a definite no as dogs can get very sick or even allergic to some human foods e.g. chocolate.

Pups are not covered fully by the 6 weeks vaccination as it is a temporary one.

Two weeks after the second vaccinations given at 12 weeks (approx) they are fully covered.....this mean puppy stays in your yard until this time!!

Speak to your vet about heart worm & intestinal worming at this vet check.

We use Alloveen for sensitive skin shampoo for washing our dogs in, it is available from your vet.

Bullmastiffs are a dominant breed so you need to understand that what is cute at 8 weeks is dangerous at 2 years. Here are some common sense rules to bring your pup up with.

As for children you must be consistent.

All humans must be understood by the dog to be higher in the pack than they are this is achieved in various ways.....

Do take your pup to obedience, make him learn what sit and stay mean and get him to do this with all members of the household.

Never let him up on the furniture no dog should ever have their eye level higher than yours.

Do not let the pup rush in front of people to get in the door first make him sit & wait.

Never hand feed the pup unless he has been made to sit first & never feed him from where you are eating always after you have finished.

NO jumping up on any person or child.

Dogs like humans do require their own space it is essential that they have this provided in the way of a pen & kennel or similar area (definitely not a chain!!!) that they can be put for their own safe area that is off limits to anyone except those in charge of the dog, this way kids can run screaming SAFELY around your back yard.

Do not leave them unattended in a car even on a 20 degree day with the windows slightly down as they will over heat.

Get a pet crate or puppy pen (cheap as chips the warehouse sell them) big enough so they have their own secure area that they can be left with a bowl of water and news paper/bedding

Most accidents happen when you encroach on a dogs space suddenly or the dog thinks someone is a threat to its own people, situations like this are easily avoided with a secured area for the dog to be.

Be aware that large breed pups grow awkwardly and are at risk of joint damage from over exercise, impacts like jumping up & down from a car or stairs .

Please keep in mind that in these days of anti dog sentiment that you need to do your part to make sure your dog is a good canine citizen, it is not wise to have dogs off lead dogs in public areas they can be a dog aggressive breed & most problems start when other smaller dogs show aggression you need to be always aware that the larger dog will get the blame so keep them on a lead & under control at all times.

SOME SENSIBLE TRAINING ADVICE FOR YOUR PUPPY.

The awe inspiring size of these big dogs presents their human companions with a long list of training and management challenges not encountered by keepers of small dogs. Some are simple logistical challenges. Exactly how big a vehicle do you need to accommodate a couple of Bullmastiffs? Not to mention the extra space in you master bedroom if you plan to crate a few in your personal den. And imagine the ease with which a tail can clear a coffee table or swipe expensive porcelain from its display shelf.

Everything about prevention through management and training goes triple for big dogs. Teaching good manners when your wee one is a mere 8 - 10 kg gives a huge advantage over those who wait till 12 months, by which time the out of control 60kg Bullmastiff may already be gearing up to maul an innocent neighbour. These dogs forbidding size demands an early course in juvenile good manners. Whilst your visiting aunt may be willing to tolerate the petite paw prints of a poodle on her pantsuit, she is likely to frown on plate sized mud covered feet on the front of her cashmere sweater.

Socialisation is another critically vital part of a dog's educational experience. Many giant breeds have strongly defined guarding instincts. A poorly socialised, poorly trained large dog is a significant risk to the community.

A well socialised and trained dog will be able to turn on his protective behaviours if needed, but no matter his size will be safe to have around your friends and family.



TALL TRAINING TIPS

There are a number of good manners behaviours that are particularly important to teach your large dog while he is still small.

Polite Greeting: as mentioned above, jumping up to greet humans is rude behaviour for any canine and especially intolerable for a large dog. Start when your puppy is small by avoiding the temptation to pick up and cuddle him (Cuddling teaches that "up" is a wonderful place to be). Instead designate a spot on the floor as "Cuddle Space" and get down on his level to do cuddle time. Teach "sit" as a greeting behaviour by consistently and generously rewarding your puppy for sitting and turning away and stepping away anytime he jumps up. Insist that family and friends only greet him when he is sitting

Loose Lead Walking: If you begin teaching loose lead walking to your young pup you will never find yourself skiing down the street as your dog takes off after a skateboard rider. The keys to reaching good loose lead walking are:

1. A high rate of reinforcement
2. Very high value treats. You want to make sure that it's more rewarding for your dog to pay attention to you than his surroundings

Say Please: A say please program teaches your dog to ask for all good things in life by offering a sit in order to get what he wants. This prevents him from learning that he can push people around by virtue of his sheer weight and size. You can initially train and ask for the sit behaviour but your ultimate goal is for the dog to offer sit without being told. If he is allowed on the furniture, he sits and waits to be invited rather than helping himself to the empty space next to a visitor. Want to go outside? Sit makes the door open. Ready for dinner? Sit makes the dinner bowl descend to the floor.

Off/Leave it: It stands to reason that giant breed dogs have easier access to food bearing surfaces such as tables and kitchen counters. One chance encounter with a roast beef sandwich can turn a dog into a dedicated counter surfer. In addition to managing your big dog so he never has the opportunity to learn to counter surf, a well installed "Off" or "leave it" cue which tells the dog to back away from whatever he is looking at can avert disaster when he has that "Mine!" gleam in his eyes and is closer to the Christmas turkey than you are.

Sharing with Others: Like so many other things, resource guarding by a large dog can be infinitely more disastrous than the same problem presented by a smaller breed. When your pup is small teach her that having humans approach her when she is eating or otherwise occupied with a high value possession makes more good stuff happen. When he is eating, occasionally approach and drop a few exquisite goodies into it. Before long he will want people to be around when he is eating.

Give: The last thing you want to do is get into an argument with a big dog over something he has in his mouth. Take time to teach your dog "give" by trading for treats.

Most people make the mistake of only taking "forbidden" objects from a dog, which can teach the dog to object, since he learns that he'll never get it back. If you practice "Give" with a legal

toy you can return the toy after the dog gives it up for a treat. This way the dog learns that he gets two rewards, the first for giving up the toy, the second when he gets it back.

SOME TIPS FOR A SAFE AND REWARDING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR BULLMASTIFF & YOUR CHILDREN.

Happy Families - Dogs and Children

A few generations ago, our forebears were fond of depicting dogs and children together in art and often showed them in an obviously trusting and loving relationship. This relationship has also been honoured in children's literature, ranging from Lassie to Peter Pan, and today generations have grown up not only having experienced wonderful times with childhood pets, but wishing their own children to have the same experience and, with a few simple considerations, they will.

A dog needs to be a part of his "human family". Left to his own devices in the backyard, lonely, bored, uneducated in simple canine good manners and unused to being handled, he is often eventually discarded as being "unsuitable for the children".

Puppies must be taught not to use their mouth on humans, even in play. They must be taught to tolerate having their ears, mouth, feet and tail handled and to allow food to be taken from their mouth. All these experiences will help ensure that the puppy is tolerant of any children who perform these actions. Teaching the puppy to sit before being patted will ensure that the dog does not jump for attention and knock children down.

Puppy pre-schools and obedience classes are excellent for the first time dog owner to learn how to get the dog responding to his wishes.

Young children's lives are a continuous learning experience - not to play with power points, not to run across a road, not to hit a sibling etc, and learning how to play with the family dog is as important, yet simple, as learning these other lessons.

Although many dogs will tolerate almost any behaviour from children, they should not be required to do so. Children who are not taught that it is very wrong to hit, kick, pinch or torment their own dog may one day meet a dog who is not so tolerant.

Children should be seated before picking up a puppy, as a squirming puppy will usually be dropped. A "safe" area should be provided where the puppy can go for rest and children should be told that they must not disturb him. Over-tired children and dogs both get cranky!

Many families with older dogs face the situation of introducing a new baby to the family dog. Parents are usually well aware of how to prevent an older child from becoming jealous of a new baby and, with very little modification, these same principles can be applied to introducing a new baby into a dog's routine.

It is part of good parenting to supervise all activities of babies and small children, and their time with the family dog should be no exception until parents are confident that both the child and dog are of an age where they can understand how to play gently and reliably together.

A few basic things for parents to instil in their children are:

Children should be taught not to run up to strange dogs but to ask the owners permission to pat the dog. They should be taught not to hug strange dogs, or to reach over the dog's head to pat it on top of the head.

If a dog is uneasy or tired of playing with children and tries to get away from them, they must not follow it.

Dog owners should observe the following guidelines with visiting children:

Dogs which are unused to children may be uneasy with their movements and sounds. If a dog is uneasy with visiting children he is better secured in a favourite area where the children cannot go to him.

Don't try and force your dog to allow a child to pat or play with it.

The best relationship between dogs and children, whether active or quiet children, is between a good natured, kindly child and a good natured, good mannered and trusting dog who will listen to their woes, watch television with them, play ball, love them unconditionally and remain in their memories for the rest of their lives.



DISEASES AFFECTING THE BULLMASTIFF

The following list is meant to serve as a guide for understanding common health problems in the Bullmastiff. It is by no means all encompassing. The list is organized alphabetically and includes a synopsis on the given condition with focus on definition, symptoms, diagnosis, treatments, and prognosis. Owners may use it as a screening tool to help identify a health problem. It can also be used as a beginning point for discussion with veterinarians and breeders on health issues. Breeders may include this list in puppy packets to help new owners identify problems that might arise and to encourage an exchange of information.

Allergies

Allergies are an immune mediated response by the animal towards a given antigen. Allergies can be caused by many things, including food, fleas, and the environment (i.e., grass or pollen). Symptoms often include red, itchy skin on the feet or groin, dry, flaky skin, excessive hair loss, reddened ears with a foul-smelling discharge, and weepy, watery eyes or a runny nose. The animals will often scratch or clean themselves excessively. Veterinarians have several techniques available to identify allergens including intradermal skin testing and blood tests. A simple process of elimination will sometimes suffice. Treatment may be as simple as eliminating a cause (such as a change to a natural diet). In cases where avoidance and environmental changes don't help, antihistamines are sometimes used. More severe cases are often treated with short-term steroids. Immunotherapy ("allergy shots") can be very effective. However, allergy shots are not without risks. Due to the fact the animal is receiving injections of very small doses of what they are allergic to, there is the possibility for a systemic or anaphylactic reaction.

Bloat (Gastric Dilation And Volvulus Or GDV)

Bloat is a condition in which the stomach fills with air (dilation) and twists on its long axis (volvulus), thereby causing obstruction and cutting off the blood flow to vital organs. This potentially and often fatal condition can occur in any dog but is especially prevalent in large, deep-chested breeds. The exact cause is unknown. Bloat often occurs within a few hours of eating followed by excessive exercise, but it can also occur under normal, daily routine. Symptoms include abdominal distension, restlessness, pacing, unsuccessful attempts to vomit or pass stool, and lethargy. Diagnosis is confirmed by x-ray. Treatment can involve "decompression" (passing a tube through the mouth to the stomach to release the gas), but surgery is indicated in severe cases. Even in those cases where decompression is successful, surgery to prevent reoccurrence should be considered. Bullmastiff owners should be familiar with the signs and symptoms of bloat and establish a plan for immediate treatment. Early detection and immediate medical intervention is essential if the dog is to survive.

Cancer

Cancer is an immunologic condition brought about by a prolific response of a given abnormal cell type within the body. It is present in all breeds and the exact causes are unknown. In Bullmastiffs, the most common cancers are:

- Hemangiosarcoma. This is a particularly aggressive form of cancer originating in the endothelial cells. It can appear anywhere in or on the body, but most commonly occurs in the spleen or other internal organs, and death can occur with little or no warning. A large mass may be felt in the abdomen; symptoms of sudden blood loss such as weakness or collapse may occur if the tumour ruptures. However, there may be no outward symptoms at all. Complete surgical excision of tumours in the skin (that have not invaded other tissues) can sometimes result in a good prognosis. When tumours are discovered elsewhere, the prognosis is poor.
- Lymphoma/Lymphosarcoma. This is another aggressive form of cancer which involves the lymphatic system and sometimes the liver and spleen. Symptoms vary depending on which part of the body is affected, though the disease is most often detected due to enlarged lymph nodes on the neck. Chemotherapy can be an effective treatment, but prognosis is usually guarded.
- Mast Cell Tumours. These are tumours that form when mast cells, a blood cell typically associated with the body's response to allergens or inflammation, turn cancerous. They most often appear in the skin or subcutaneous tissues, but can metastasize to other areas of the body, especially the spleen, liver, bone marrow, and lymph nodes. Their "benign" appearance belies their unpredictable behaviour. Prompt surgical excision and biopsy of any skin tumour is the best defence. Removal of the tumours generally results in a good prognosis.
- Osteosarcoma. This is an aggressive form of bone cancer that primarily affects large and giant breeds. The first sign is usually lameness and/or swelling, most often in a front leg, and diagnosis is confirmed by x-ray. Unfortunately, by the time symptoms appear, it may well have metastasized to internal organs. Treatment involves surgery and chemotherapy, but the prognosis is usually poor.

Cardiac

The most common heart problems in Bullmastiffs are valvular disorders, sub-aortic stenosis (SAS), and cardiomyopathy. Owners are encouraged to report to their breeders if any heart problems are diagnosed.

- Heart murmurs. These abnormal heart sounds are usually caused by an abnormal heart valve. Heart murmurs can be congenital or acquired. While many congenital murmurs will never cause a problem during the dog's lifetime, some can cause problems later on, and some may be early signs of more serious heart problems. Some heart murmurs are caused by a viral assault. Cardiomyopathy may be caused by such viral infection. If it appears that the dog is developing normally and there are no other clinical signs of heart disease, the murmur may be considered "innocent".

- Sub Aortic Stenosis (SAS) is characterized by a narrowing of the outflow track from the left ventricle of the heart to the aorta. Thankfully, SAS is a relatively uncommon cause of a heart murmur. However, it can be life threatening and does show up from time to time. SAS is known to be hereditary. It is usually diagnosed with an echocardiogram and can be treated with medications.

- Cardiomyopathy. This is, literally, "sick heart muscle".

While weakness, lethargy, stunted growth, exercise intolerance, fainting, or abnormal heartbeats (arrhythmias) may be present, both of these heart conditions (SAS and cardiomyopathy) can also progress undetected until they result in sudden death. Listening to the heart with a stethoscope is the first step in assessing a dog's cardiac condition, but it is not always adequate, especially in a short-nosed breed such as the Bullmastiff. Further tests involving EKGs and cardiac ultrasound may be indicated. A consultation with a canine cardiologist is recommended when abnormalities are detected. Some treatments to manage cardiac disease are available through your veterinarian.

Eyes

- Entropion. This is perhaps the most common eye problem in all heavily wrinkled breeds, including the Bullmastiff. It is a condition where the eyelid inverts, or rolls inward, causing eyelashes and hair to rub against the cornea. It can be hereditary as well as an acquired condition (i.e., as the result of an eye injury). Any dog with recurrent or chronic eye discharge, watering, or irritation should see a veterinarian. Left untreated, this condition can result in some serious problems including infections. Surgical correction is the most effective treatment. Once again, owners are encouraged to report this diagnosis to the breeder.

- Distichia is an eyelash that arises from an abnormal spot on the eyelid of a dog. Distichia usually exit from the duct of the Meibomian gland at the eyelid margin. They are usually multiple and sometimes more than one arises from a duct. They can affect either the upper or lower eyelid and are usually bilateral. The lower eyelids of dogs usually have no eyelashes.

Distichia usually cause no symptoms because the lashes are soft, but they can irritate the eye and cause tearing, squinting, inflammation, and corneal ulcers and scarring.

Treatment options include manual removal, electrolysis, electrocautery, cryotherapy, and surgery.

Hypothyroidism

This condition results when insufficient thyroid hormones (usually T3 or T4) are produced. It is characterized by a wide variety of symptoms including: obesity, lethargy, hair loss (mostly in patches on the sides or tail areas), infertility, abnormal heats, skin and coat problems, interdigital cysts, and the onset of sudden aggression. Diagnosis is confirmed through blood tests. Treatment with synthetic thyroid supplementation is very effective.

Kidney And Urinary

Chronic kidney failure is one of the most common canine conditions, and it afflicts all breeds. In many instances, it is a result of old age; the kidneys begin to wear out after a lifetime of filtering wastes from the bloodstream. Chronic kidney failure can also be attributed to renal diseases such as:

- **Glomerulonephritis:** a disease in which the internal structures of the kidney become inflamed.
- **Renal Amyloidosis:** an accumulation of abnormal proteins in the kidneys. While chronic kidney failure is not a curable disease, it can be a manageable one if detected early enough.
- **Cystinuria** is a hereditary disease in which painful kidney and bladder stones form, and it is more likely to cause serious problems in males.

Be alert for any symptoms that might indicate these as well as other kidney/urinary disease: frequent drinking, frequent urinating, difficulty passing urine, blood in the urine, decreased force of stream, vomiting, and/or bad breath. Routine blood work is also useful in early detection of kidney problems. Such diseases are often medically or surgically treatable, though not curable.

Orthopaedics/Joint Disease

- **Hip and elbow dysplasia** plagues all dog breeds. The disease is characterized by abnormally formed joints and, quite often, accompanying degenerative osteoarthritis. In most but not all cases, the affected dogs will be quite lame. While dysplasia can be inherited, the exact mode of inheritance has not yet been established. Environmental and nutritional factors may also play a role in its development. Symptoms include lameness, pain upon walking or running, difficulty rising, problems negotiating stairs, and a decreased range of motion. Diagnosis includes a physical exam and x-rays and evaluations by registries such as PennHip or OFA. Treatment includes surgery, and nutritional and environmental management. A diagnosis of dysplasia should be reported to the breeder.
- **Cruciate ligament injuries, tears and ruptures** in the knee, are common in the breed. Symptoms include rear leg lameness; a severe tear will prevent the affected hind leg from bearing any weight. The knee area may feel "thick" and may "crunch" when a range of motion test is performed. Strained ligaments can be rested through crating, leashed walks, and restricted exercise for several weeks. Torn or severed ligaments require surgery. Obesity is a major risk factor for cruciate ligament injuries. Trauma and prolonged inflammation of the joint, due to conditions such as patellar luxation have been implicated in these injuries.

There are several developmental bone diseases that primarily affect puppies of rapidly growing, large breeds, and males in particular. They are:

- **Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy (HOD).** This condition is characterized by severe pain, swelling, and lameness, usually in multiple limbs, sometimes accompanied by fever. The

cause is unknown, diagnosis is made by x-ray, and treatment is supportive (i.e., pain management, antibiotics, rest). Prognosis is good.

- Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD). This is a disease in which the cartilage is damaged and/or grows abnormally, resulting in severe joint pain. Symptoms include limping, especially in the shoulders, elbows, and hocks. Suspected causes are trauma, heredity, and nutritional imbalance. Confinement, a modified diet, and pain management are the recommended treatments. Surgical removal of the damaged cartilage is indicated only in the most severe cases. Complete or partial recovery is likely.

- Panosteitis (Pano). This is a condition characterized by acute, sudden, "wandering" lameness brought on by rapid growth in the limbs. Symptoms may come and go over a period of weeks or months, and may also include fever and anorexia. Diagnosis can be made by x-ray, but in mild cases, an x-ray may not reveal the problem, so Pano is often considered a "diagnosis of last resort or exclusion" when all else has been ruled out. It is self-limiting and disappears spontaneously; the cause is unknown. Treatment includes rest, pain management, and exercise restriction. Lack of treatment may result in arthritic conditions later in life. The prognosis for complete recovery is excellent.



The following references have been used to produce this booklet.

With thanks:

The Bullmastiff Club of NSW Breed Information handout.
Kim Rogers
(Extracts from The Bullmastiff Fancier's Manual by Bill Walkey)
Bullmighty Kennels Puppy buyers information pack.
Dogzone.com.au
Positive Perspectives 2: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog
Author - Pat Miller, CPDT. CDBC
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