
The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club Of The United States, Inc.



AKC Licensed Member Club since 1971

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A THUMBNAIL SKETCH OF THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

(Written to hopefully answer some of the many questions people have about this wonderful, versatile animal.)

As puppies, Rhodesian Ridgebacks are fun loving, exuberant, inquisitive, and somewhat rambunctious. A six-month old Ridgeback puppy can unmeaningly knock over a toddler. A toddler can unmeaningly heap arbitrary punishment upon a young and impressionable puppy. Therefore, parents should exercise a great amount of supervision so that neither puppy nor baby inflicts abuse upon one another. This holds true throughout the preschool age period of a child and for the first 18 to 24 months of a Ridgeback's life. Mature Ridgebacks and school age children are best buddies and friends for life.

The Ridgeback is not a trouble-maker; however, once attacked or threatened by another dog, the Ridgeback will stand its ground and fight if it has to. Most of the time a Ridgeback is only looking for a doggy pal to play with and does not normally view other dogs as a threat. However, multiple, intact males around unspayed females can create some problems. A Ridgeback is very good with cats, but should be exposed to them when it (the Ridgeback) is young.

As guard dogs, Ridgebacks use great discretion. They are not frantic barkers and they are not looking to attack anyone. Usually, they will give a couple of loud bellows to get your attention and let you know someone is on the property. They do not bark indiscriminately. When Ridgebacks bark, they have a good reason to do so but will usually stop when you tell them -- unless they are certain you are not aware of what they are trying to tell you. It is always wise to investigate when Ridgebacks bark. Until you tell them everything is okay, they will continue to act alert and wary around strangers.

A Ridgeback should not be trusted to stay within unfenced property boundaries. They are hounds and have a good nose and excellent vision. Because of this they will take off, completely forgetting imaginary boundary lines, if they see something that captures their interest. Fencing is a must -- a minimum of 5 feet. Young Ridgebacks get bored easily and they can dig some good-sized holes. If you are going to have to keep your puppy or young dog alone for hours on end, day after day, construct a good-sized indoor/outdoor run to keep him out of boredom mischief.

Because of his short coat and very little shedding, the Ridgeback stays clean and odor free. Once a week currycombing, occasional baths, ear cleaning, and nail trimming are all that is needed to keep him well groomed and fit to live in your house. Ridgebacks are ``people" dogs. They like to be where you are, and if

you allow it, they'll crawl into your bed, onto your sofa or favorite chair and your lap. You have to decide what is acceptable behavior and train them accordingly at a very early age. They are very easy to housebreak if the owner is diligent and exercises common sense in the training period. It is best to limit a young dog to certain areas of your house where you can keep an eye on him. As older dogs they usually can have full roam of the house with no problems.

Train them early to ride in the car. A crate is strongly recommended as it acts as their seat belt and allows you to open car windows widely in warm weather. Never leave a dog in the car in hot weather -- even for a short period of time.

It is rare that a Ridgeback is found to be a fussy eater. If a Ridgeback suddenly refuses to eat, it is most likely sick and a veterinarian should be consulted. Their appetites are large, and no matter how much food you give them, they will try to convince you that it is not enough. Free feeding is not recommended for a Ridgeback. The biggest problem with first-time Ridgeback owners is that they allow their dogs to get too fat. It is best to follow your breeder's advice to the letter concerning type and quantity of food to feed. Ridgebacks are inherently adept at stealing food off of table tops -- so stand warned.

A Ridgeback, especially a young one, should have a safe place to exercise. This does not have to be several times a day or even every day. A couple of times a week to run and stretch muscles and get rid of young-dog exuberance is usually all that is needed. A brisk walk a few times a day in combination with periodic high energy runs are all that is needed for those who do not have the benefit of fenced property or who live in the city or an apartment.

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THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

Historical Information

In November 1955 the American Kennel Club admitted the Rhodesian Ridgeback to its Stud Book as the 112th breed to be accorded AKC registration facilities. The Rhodesian Ridgeback is shown in the Hound Group (Group 2). Since this recognition of the Rhodesian Ridgeback by the American Kennel Club, intense and greater interest has developed in the breed in this country.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is a native of South Africa. The breed's long history dates back to early in the 16th century when the first European men explored the interior on the Cape of Good Hope and found with the Hottentot tribes a domesticated dog with the hair on his spine being turned forward. This is the condition which we now refer to as the "ridge." The only other known dog which has the peculiarity of such a ridge is found on the island of Phu Quoc in the Gulf of Siam. It has never been definitely determined whether the peculiarity of this ridge originated in South Africa or on the island of Phu Quoc, but the evidence available seems to indicate that it originated in South Africa and that specimens of dogs with ridges were transported from South Africa to the island of Phu Quoc.

It is not known where the Hottentots first obtained these dogs. It is common knowledge that the Hottentot had pronounced Asiatic features and that his ancestors probably hailed from the East. If this is so, it may be assumed that the ridgebacked dog accompanied him on his peregrination until he finally reached Africa.

HUNTER, GUARD and COMPANION

The foundation stock of the Rhodesian Ridgeback was developed by the first European settlers in South Africa to fill their specific needs for a serviceable hunting dog in the wilds. The Dutch, Germans and Huguenots who migrated to South Africa in the 16th and 17th centuries brought with them Danes, Mastiffs, Greyhounds, Salukis, Bloodhounds and other breeds. However, for more than 100 years from 1707, European immigration was closed; consequently, the importation of additional dogs of these or other breeds was not possible. Good hunting dogs, therefore, became hard to come by and their value was high. The settlers needed a dog that could flush a few partridge, pull down a wounded stag, or guard the farm from marauding animals and prowlers at night. They also needed a dog that could withstand the rigors of the African bush, hold up under drastic changes in temperature, from the heat of the day to nights below freezing, and go a full 24 hours or more without water if need be. They required a short-haired dog that would not be eaten alive by ticks. In addition, the settler needed a companion that would stay by him

while he slept in the bush and that would be devoted to his wife and children. Out of necessity, therefore, these settlers developed, by selective breeding between dogs which they had brought with them from home countries and the half-wild ridged dog of the Hottentot tribes, a distinct breed of the African veldt, which has come to be known as the Rhodesian Ridgeback. The Hottentot dogs played the most important part in the development and ultimate characteristics of the new breed. Throughout all of the interbreeding and crossbreeding between these native dogs and those of the settlers, the ridge of the Hottentot dog was respected and retained. In due course, the Hottentot dog established the foundation stock of our present day Rhodesian Ridgeback.

There is no doubt the Rhodesians (now people of the country known as Zimbabwe) have developed the breed as we know it today from the original stock. In the year 1875, the intrepid missionary, Rev. Charles Helm, undertook a journey from his home in Swellendam in the Cape Province of South Africa to Rhodesia. He was accompanied by two of these dogs. While the Rev. Helm was in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) Cornelis von Rooyen, the big-game hunter and early authority on the South African wildlife, borrowed the two dogs to take along on a hunt. Von Rooyen soon concluded that they possessed excellent instinctive hunting qualities and thereupon pioneered the breeding of a pack of the species as hunters of big game for his own use. They have since been bred on an extensive scale in Rhodesia and were given the name of that country.

In 1922 the first Ridgeback Club was founded at a show in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, and a standard of points for the breed was set, which differs little from the prevailing standard today. In 1924 the Ridgeback was also recognized by the South African Kennel Union as a distinct breed and the organization recognized its first registered dog. Only two dogs were registered with the SAKU in that year, followed by four in 1925, and not less than eleven in 1926. Today, the Rhodesian Ridgeback is one of the most popular dogs in South Africa.

BREED RECOGNIZED BY AKC

It is not known definitely when the Rhodesian Ridgeback was first brought into the United States. A few were imported prior to 1940, possibly as early as 1912. However, after World War II (between 1946 and 1955 -- when the breed was recognized by AKC), quite a large number of Rhodesian Ridgebacks were imported, not only into the United States, but also into England and Canada.

Their hunting characteristics have also proved to be useful in hunting native game in other parts of the world. Intelligent and ever alert, their heads are held high with pride and, with a set of feet that will carry them over any sort of country, they are the only breed of dog in the world that can keep a lion at bay for the hunter to kill....and live! The Rhodesian Ridgeback has also been used very successfully for hunting bobcat, mountain lion, bear, coyote, deer, wild boar and raccoon in the United States, Canada and Mexico. There have also been reports of Rhodesian Ridgebacks having been trained to point upland game and retrieve game and fowl.

BREED CHARACTERISTICS

The Rhodesian Ridgeback has the advantage of having keen sight, and a good nose for scent. Due to the wide-open terrain of the southern African veldt, coupled with the habits of the game to be hunted and the techniques required to hunt such game in that terrain, the Ridgeback was developed as a silent trailer, characteristic of its sighthound ancestry. When the terrain becomes more varied, where baying is desirable to keep track of the hunting pack (such as in areas of the United States where these dogs have been used), supplementation with baying hounds (more typical of scent hounds) has been done.

Possessing many of the characteristics generally associated with hounds, the Ridgeback has a quiet, gentle temperament, rarely barking. While able to enjoy lazing around in a patch of sun, or in front of a winter fireplace, a Ridgeback can be instantly alert if a stranger should appear or he is in pursuit of legitimate prey. Where he gave the impression of a big, lazy, slow-moving animal, the Ridgeback can be a threatening presence as a watchdog. Developed not only to hunt, but also as a family protector, his affectionate disposition makes him a trustworthy companion for a small child. He is easily trained, being, more than many hounds, of above-average tractability. However, because of this intelligence, an untrained Ridgeback can become a terrible nuisance! Trained, he is a pleasure as a companion, a hunting partner, or as a show dog or obedience competitor. Because of his innate abilities to protect his family, a Ridgeback should not be trained as a guard dog but rather the natural protective qualities should be supplemented with elementary obedience training for control.

U. S. CLUBS FORMED

In 1948 a group of enthusiastic Rhodesian Ridgeback owners in the United States organized the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of America, for the primary purpose of accumulating the data and preparing the documents and pedigrees of dogs in the United States as required to obtain recognition of the breed by the American Kennel Club. Their activities were rewarded in 1955 when AKC conferred official recognition upon the breed.

After this recognition, which made possible the showing of Rhodesian Ridgebacks in shows for championship points, there was organized by owners and breeders throughout the U.S., the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States, for the purpose of sponsoring AKC-sanctioned matches and licensed shows. Both of these organizations were actively engaged in promoting the breed through national advertising.

Many Rhodesian Ridgeback owners and breeders were members of and supported both of these clubs. In order to combine the activities of the two clubs, they were, on March 6, 1959, combined into one organization under the name of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States. The program of the combined clubs incorporated the promotion of the breed with publicizing and popularizing of the breed in the U.S., and forming a close association with the breed clubs in South Africa, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), England and Canada. On April 10, 1968, the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States was incorporated in the state of Texas. Finally, on March 9, 1971, the American Kennel Club formally admitted the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States, Inc. as a member club.

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OFFICIAL STANDARD FOR THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Ridgeback represents a strong, muscular and active dog, symmetrical and balanced in outline. A mature Ridgeback is a handsome, upstanding and athletic dog, capable of great endurance with a fair (good) amount of speed. Of even, dignified temperament, the Ridgeback is devoted and affectionate to his master, reserved with strangers. The peculiarity of this breed is the ridge on the back. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

A mature Ridgeback should be symmetrical in outline, slightly longer than tall but well balanced. Dogs - 25 to 27 inches in height; Bitches - 24 to 26 inches in height. Desirable weight: Dogs - 85 pounds; Bitches - 70 pounds.

HEAD

Should be of fair length, the skull flat and rather broad between the ears and should be free from wrinkles when in repose. The stop should be reasonably well defined. Eyes-should be moderately well apart and should be round, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, their color harmonizing with the color of the dog. Ears-should be set rather high, of medium size, rather wide at the base and tapering to a rounded point. They should be carried close to the head. Muzzle-should be long, deep and powerful. The lips clean, closely fitting the jaws. Nose-should be black, brown or liver, in keeping with the color of the dog. No other colored nose is permissible. A black nose should be accompanied by dark eyes, a brown or liver nose with amber eyes. Bite-jaws level and strong with well-developed teeth, especially the canines or holders. Scissors bite preferred.

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

The neck should be fairly strong and free from throatiness. The chest should not be too wide, but very deep and capacious, ribs moderately well sprung, never rounded like barrel hoops (which would indicate want of speed). The back is powerful and firm with strong loins which are muscular and slightly arched. The tail should be strong at the insertion and generally tapering towards the end, free from coarseness. It should not be inserted too high or too low and should be carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled or gay.

FOREQUARTERS

The shoulders should be sloping, clean and muscular, denoting speed. Elbows close to the body. The forelegs should be perfectly straight, strong, and heavy in bone. The feet should be compact

with well-arched toes, round, tough, elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads. Dewclaws may be removed.

HINDQUARTERS

In the hind legs, the muscles should be clean, well defined and hocks well down. Feet as in front.

COAT

Should be short and dense, sleek and glossy in appearance but neither wooly nor silky.

COLOR

Light wheaten to red wheaten. A little white on the chest and toes permissible but excessive white there, on the belly or above the toes is undesirable.

RIDGE

The hallmark of this breed is the ridge on the back which is formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the rest of the coat. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed. The ridge should be clearly defined, tapering and symmetrical. It should start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to a point between the prominence of the hips and should contain two identical crowns (whorls) directly opposite each other. The lower edge of the crowns (whorls) should not extend further down the ridge than one third of the ridge.

Disqualification: Ridgelessness. Serious Fault: One crown (whorl) or more than two crowns (whorls).

GAIT

At the trot, the back is held level and the stride is efficient, long, free and unrestricted. Reach and drive expressing a perfect balance between power and elegance. At the chase, the Ridgeback demonstrates great coursing ability and endurance.

TEMPERAMENT

Dignified and even tempered. Reserved with strangers.

SCALE OF POINTS

General appearance, size, symmetry and balance	20
Ridge	20
Head	15
Legs and feet	15
Neck and shoulders	10
Body, back, chest, and loin	10
Coat and color	5
Tail	5
TOTAL	100

DISQUALIFICATION: Ridgelessness

Approved by The American Kennel Club and effective September 30, 1992

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THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

Standard and Elaboration

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is a dog of formidable power, dedication and courage. He claims an ancient heritage, yet is of relatively recent lineage in terms of standardization of the breed.

Today's Ridgeback is descended from a variety of breeds which were crossed by settlers of South Africa and Rhodesia with the native dogs of the Hottentot tribe. The ridge became his identifying mark.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback survived in various forms through the years because of his superb hunting ability. In addition to trailing and tracking large animals, he was also used to hold his quarry at bay. He was the protector of game wardens, farm families and hunters throughout South Central Africa, where the breed developed into its present form.

From its origin in Africa, the Ridgeback has lost none of his abilities as a hunter and guardian and he continues to be an excellent companion. The Ridgeback is a devoted family dog, totally loyal to his master. He is rather aloof and undemonstrative towards strangers.

This is the Rhodesian Ridgeback, a dog of incorruptible, independent character, who takes his responsibilities of companionship, protection and family dedication to heart. He never forgets love and understanding, nor does he lightly forgive harsh treatment. He is a dog of noble bearing, whose physical attributes should reflect his role as guardian, companion and hunter.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Ridgeback represents a strong, muscular and active dog, symmetrical and balanced in outline. A mature Ridgeback is a handsome, upstanding and athletic dog, capable of great endurance with a fair (good) amount of speed. Of even dignified temperament, the Ridgeback is devoted and affectionate to his master, reserved with strangers. The peculiarity of this breed is the ridge on the back. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed.

Elaboration: A Ridgeback represents the perfect balance between power and elegance. The power should come from soundness and conditioning, not from excessive size. The elegance comes from style, presence and carriage. The Ridgeback should give a clean appearance with body lines blending smoothly. A male should be masculine, not coarse or cumbersome. A bitch should be feminine but strong, not weak or delicate.

The Ridgeback is an athletic dog, clean-muscled, upstanding, well balanced and smooth in outline, a dog intended to hold large and dangerous game at bay. He is agile, quick, light on his feet and intelligent enough to stay out of harm's way, brave enough to defend his master.

SIZE, PROPORTION, SUBSTANCE

A mature Ridgeback should be symmetrical in outline, slightly longer than tall but well balanced. Dogs, 25-27 inches in height; Bitches, 24-26 inches in height. Desirable weight: Dogs, 85 pounds; Bitches, 70 pounds.

Elaboration: Desirable weight should be a guideline. Appropriate weight should correspond with the height and bone structure of the dog/bitch. A heavier-boned animal may weigh more, a finer-boned animal less than the 85/70 pound ideal as described in the Standard. A mature

Ridgeback should be slightly longer than tall. The back should be strong and firm. The length should be carried in the rib area, allowing for ample room for heart and lungs. The well-coupled loin is neither too long nor too short, but well balanced with the rest of the dog. A long loined dog may be fast, but he lacks the ability to stop, turn and maneuver which is required by the Standard. Overall balance and symmetry is most important.

HEAD

Should be of fair length, the skull flat and rather broad between the ears and should be free from wrinkles when in repose. The stop should be reasonably well defined. Eyes - should be moderately well apart and should be round, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, their color harmonizing with the color of the dog. Ears - should be set rather high, of medium size, rather wide at the base and tapering to a rounded point. They should be carried close to the head. Muzzle - should be long, deep and powerful. The lips clean, closely fitting the jaws. Nose - should be black, brown or liver, in keeping with the color of the dog. no other colored nose is permissible. A black nose should be accompanied by dark eyes, a brown or liver nose with amber eyes. Bite - jaws level and strong with well developed teeth especially the canines or holders. Scissors bite preferred.

Elaboration: The head must be in proportion with the rest of the body. The backskull is flat, never domed, free from wrinkles when in repose. When the ears are brought forward in an alert position, the skin is furrowed with expressive wrinkles on the backskull between the ears and above and between the eyes. The planes of the backskull and muzzle are parallel and equal in length. Cheeks are clean and flat, not rounded or bulging. The head should never give a wedge shaped impression.

Eyes: The eyes should be spaced moderately well apart, rounded, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, not small, recessed nor sunken. The color should harmonize with the pigmentation of the dog. Black-nosed (pigmented) dogs should have a brown to dark brown eye. Liver or brown-nosed dogs should have an amber-colored eye, with preference given to the darker shades of brown or amber. Yellow eyes on a black-nosed dog are undesirable.

Ears: When the ears are brought forward to attention, they are raised even with the top of the head. The ears should hang close to the head and cheek, flaring outward to frame the head.

Muzzle: The muzzle is long, deep and powerful and finishes up fairly full in width, strong in underjaw. Depth of muzzle should be in the muzzle itself, not in the leather of the lips alone.

Bite: Scissors bite is preferred, but a level bite will occasionally be found and is acceptable. Emphasis must be placed on the development and proper position of the canines.

NECK, TOPLINE, BODY

The neck should be fairly strong and free from throatiness. The chest should not be too wide, but very deep and capacious, ribs moderately well sprung, never rounded like barrel hoops (which would indicate want of speed). The back is powerful and firm with strong loins which are muscular and slightly arched. The tail should be strong at the insertion and generally tapering towards the end, free from coarseness. It should not be inserted too high or too low and should be carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled or gay.

Elaboration: Neck, Chest and Body: The neck should be fairly long and elegantly arched.

Throatiness or a ewe neck should be penalized accordingly to the severity. A chest that is too wide or too narrow is inefficient and hinders speed and diminishes endurance. The brisket on a mature dog should reach well to the elbow.

Topline and Tail: The topline flows smoothly from the top of the head down the neck and over the shoulders. The point above the shoulders is the highest point of the backline, never lower than the loin or hindquarters, standing or moving. The back is firm, standing or moving- neither swayed nor roached. The loins are strong. The arch of the loin should not be exaggerated. The croup is neither flat nor steep but blends smoothly and finishes out with the tail set neither too high nor too low. Standing, the tail may fall between the hocks or may be tucked towards the abdomen. A kink or dud joint is considered undesirable, as is a tight curl.

FOREQUARTERS

The shoulders should be sloping, clean and muscular, denoting speed. Elbows close to the body. The forelegs should be perfectly straight, strong and heavy in bone. The feet should be compact with well-arched toes, round, tough elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads. Dewclaws may be removed.

Elaboration: Shoulders: The shoulder blades should be long, well laid back and sloping: upper arm is of equal length and placed so that the elbow falls directly under the withers.

Forelegs: The bone of the front legs should have plenty of substance, more so when viewed from the side than from the front. The pasterns should be strong and slightly sloping.

Feet: The feet should be well knuckled up with thick pads. Flat, thin-padded and splayed feet are incorrect.

HINDQUARTERS

In the hindlegs, the muscles should be clean, well defined and hocks well down. Feet as in front.

Elaboration: The strong, elastic muscles of the hind legs should be carry well into the inner and lower thighs. The stifles are moderately well bent. Hocks should be well let down and straight from hock to pad. Rear angulation should balance and compliment the front. The muscling should be clean and well defined, denoting speed and agility.

COAT

Should be short and dense, sleek and glossy in appearance but neither wooly nor silky.

Elaboration: Puppies usually have heavier coats than adults. More densely coated dogs may exhibit pellet- like molting patterns throughout the coat which should not be penalized.

COLOR

Light wheaten to red wheaten. A little white on the chest and toes permissible but excessive white there, on the belly or above the toes is undesirable.

Elaboration: A Ridgeback hair is banded, lighter at the base, darker at the tip. The color may

range from light wheaten (buff) through various shades of gold to red wheaten; all shades are acceptable. Lighter wheaten highlights are usually noted over the shoulder blades.

Clear-faced dogs or dogs with black on the muzzle, ear and around the eyes are equally acceptable. However, these black points should not continue as a solid mask over the eyes. Ridgebacks with black pigmentation may have black hair interspersed throughout the coat; dark brown hair may be seen on a liver/brown-nosed dog. If the amount of black or dark brown is excessive, it is undesirable.

Our standard does not condemn white. Some white is permissible and excessive white is not desirable. Small socks and white on the chest on an otherwise typey, sound dog should not eliminate him from consideration. The scale of points allows 5 points out of 100 to Coat and Color. Emphasis should be placed on the general conformation. To quote from Maj.T.C.Hawley's definitive work *The Rhodesian Ridgeback*, "We must, at all costs, avoid a fetish that white is taboo."

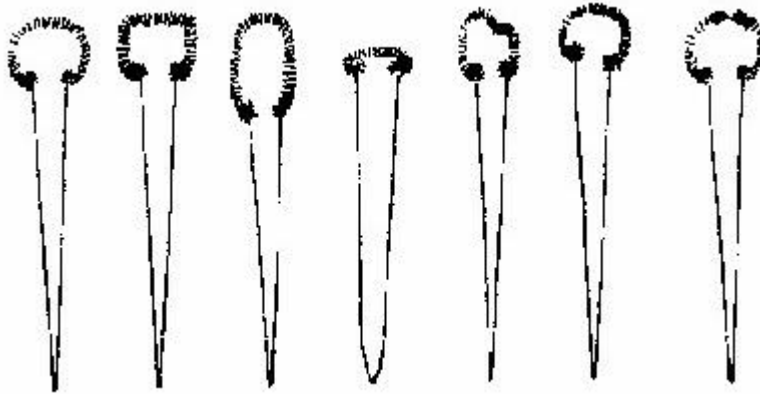
RIDGE

The hallmark of this breed is the ridge on the back which is formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the rest of the coat. The ridge must be regarded as the characteristic feature of the breed. The ridge should start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to a point between the prominence of the hips and should contain two identical crowns (whorls) directly opposite each other. The lower edge of the crowns (whorls) should not extend further down the ridge than one-third of the ridge.

Disqualification: ridgelessness. Serious Fault: one crown (whorl) or more than two crowns (whorls).

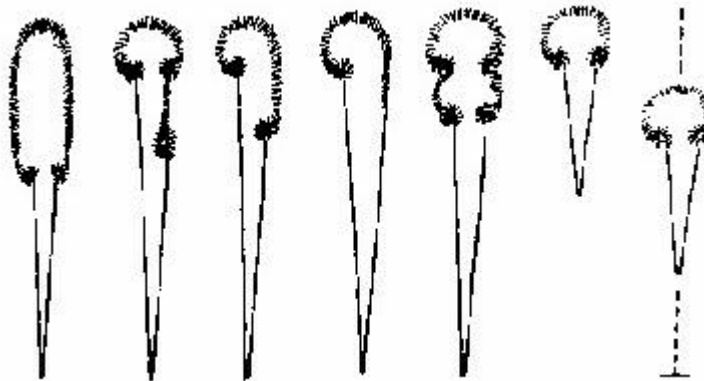
Elaboration: The Standard is very precise regarding the ridge. The ridge is located on the dog's back. Any variation in length of ridge or placement of crowns (whorls) is incorrect and is to be considered a fault. The amount of variation and the severity of the fault is up to the individual assessing the dog. The width of the ridge is immaterial. Occasionally there will be a parting of hair at the top of the ridge. This is not to be considered a fault unless it contains a complete crown (whorl). Please note illustrations. A ridgeless dog is to be disqualified.

These ridges may be commonly seen in the ring and are acceptable:



*The width of the ridge is immaterial.

Faulty, undesirable ridges:



*Disqualification - Ridgelessness.

*Serious faults - One crown (whorl) or more than two crowns (whorls).

GAIT

At the trot, the back is held level and the stride is efficient, long, free and unrestricted. Reach and drive expressing a perfect balance between power and elegance. At the chase, the Ridgeback demonstrates great coursing ability and endurance.

Elaboration: The trot should be effortless and flowing, covering the maximum amount of ground with the least amount of effort. As speed increases, the legs angle inward toward a center line beneath the body. The head is carried slightly above the level of the back, the backline remains level and firm, never high in the rear or loin. The tail blends smoothly, carried slightly above the level of the back, never gay nor curled. At all speeds the gait is effortless, rhythmic and smooth, denoting efficiency, presence and style.

TEMPERAMENT

Dignified and even-tempered. Reserved with strangers.

Elaboration: Stable, fearless, intelligent, reserved with strangers, yet accepting of his master's judgment. In the show ring, a reserved attitude should not be confused with shyness.

Unnecessary aggression is not to be tolerated.

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Is a Ridgeback the Right Dog For Your Family?

Many times people see a breed of dog and fall in love with it's looks, never considering that that breed may be totally unsuitable for their lifestyle, their facilities or their ability to train and control it. All they know is they've got to have one! Buying a dog on impulse is always a bad idea! As with buying anything, YOU must educate yourself first: find out what the breed is truly like, visit in the home of several people who have that breed and find out what problems they have encountered. Learn to ask the correct questions, not only about the positive aspects of a breed but the negative, too. And learn what questions to ask of the litter owners...think of it as finding out what the "warranty" covers and the "features" of the item.

Ridgebacks are not Labradors or Golden Retrievers in short coats. They are hunting dogs and have a high prey drive. Translation: They are quite independent -- they don't fawn over your every word, they can be oblivious to being called and require a lot of positive motivation to train them in traditional obedience. Many people are just not prepared for the stubbornness and hard-headedness in this breed.

Any dog ownership requires responsibility. Dogs are not something to decorate your home or yard, they are living, feeling creatures who should be treated as members of your family. This is especially true of Ridgebacks. They must be made to feel as part of your "pack", *i.e.*, your family, or they will strike out on their own. You should think of them as a new addition to your family and plan for them as you would a new child.

Planning for Your Ridgeback is Essential

Dogs, especially puppies, will make a big demand on your time. It takes time to properly feed, train and play with a new puppy. Just like babies, young puppies are not able to make it through the night and you will have to get up and take them out. If you work, a new pup might require that you come home at lunchtime to let them out or hire a noon time helper to assist you.

Ridgebacks need plenty of exercise to stay happy and healthy. You'll need to set aside playtime and time for training. Young puppies need a lot of socialization to be good companions. A weekly obedience training class and daily practice is a must for your Ridgeback to become a welcome member of the community!

If this seems like too much for you and your family's schedule, then perhaps this is not the right time to get a Ridgeback.

Your Ridgeback Will Need Protection

Ridgebacks naturally want to hunt and have no sense of cars or yard when they go after a squirrel, rabbit or cat. A fenced yard is important for your dog's safety. Once a Ridgeback starts after a squirrel or rabbit, nothing short of a six foot wall or fence may stop them. Dogs allowed to roam are in danger from becoming lost, of being hit by a car or being poisoned. Your certainly don't want your dog to run away or get lost or killed. It's also good idea to have your Ridgeback wear an identification tag or, better yet, to have your dog permanently identified with a tattoo or microchip just in case he manages to get loose despite your efforts. And, of course, when he leaves the yard he'll need a leash.

Your Ridgeback must have adequate shelter if he is outdoors while you are away. Shelters must be cool in the summer and warm in the winter.

Ridgebacks Grow to be BIG Dogs

Puppies don't stay little for long! When looking for any breed you need to consider one that suits your environment and lifestyle. Take the time to research a breed you are interested in....visit in the homes of breeders or individuals who own that breed. Ridgebacks may be appealing to you in a physical sense, but they may not have the temperament suitable to your lifestyle. For example: Ridgebacks at play are very energetic - they need lots of space, can knock down children and adults when they are roughhousing. If you live in the city, you will need to first locate a dog park or area where your Ridgeback can safely run and exercise..... a tired puppy is a good puppy!

It's those people who buy on impulse who most often find they can't live with Ridgeback and decide the dog has to go...this is not fair to the dog! Often it's these irresponsible owners who further burden rescue with having to take in the dog and rehabilitate it.

Again, take the time to read up on the Ridgeback, talk with several knowledgeable owners, check the Internet and try to visit in the home of several breeders. Try to go to some shows and talk with exhibitors, but most of all observe, observe, observe!

Money Concerns

The initial price of a dog is of concern to some, but it's the lifelong cost that they sometimes forget. In some communities, dogs need a license. Failure to comply with local laws may result in fines or penalties and may endanger your right to keep your dog!

In addition to the purchase price of your dog, you must plan for food, grooming, collars, a leash and some toys and a special bed. Add in vet care and those training lessons!

All dogs need annual vaccination, heartworm medication, and ...just like humans...regular checkups. Sometimes, dogs require flea and tick treatments or expensive treatments for unexpected ailments or illnesses. Ask yourself if you can afford a dog.

Ridgebacks Need Companionship

Friendship is a two-way street. Your dog deserves plenty of attention so he'll be less inclined to bark or chew your belongings or run away from home by climbing out, if he gets your love and devotion. Dogs are emotional beings and to neglect them by banishing them to a lonely life in the yard, on a chain or in a run is cruel and abusive. Just like children, you have to love and instruct them on proper behavior to have a well adjusted Ridgeback that is a pleasure to be around.

Ridgebacks Need All of the Above For Their Lifetime

The average life span of most Ridgebacks is ten to twelve years, but some have lived for sixteen years! So, your dog will depend on you for love and care for a long time. Being a responsible dog owner is an important job and requires your serious commitment.

1. What are the GOOD points of Ridgebacks?
2. Ridgebacks have a short coat, don't shed much and are practically odor free -- great for hot climates.
3. They are quite discriminating in who or what they bark at...you should ALWAYS go check it out.
4. They are not fussy eaters and have virtually "cast-iron" digestive systems.
5. They love living with people and are generally quiet in the house.
6. Ridgebacks are intelligent and want to please their owner.
7. Ridgebacks are easily house-trained.
8. And, of course, they are the most handsome of dogs!

The Drawbacks:

1. As puppies they have surgical -- knife sharp teeth and the jaw power of a Doberman Pinscher...they should never be allowed to play roughly with humans of any age. They can do major damage to coffee tables, shoes and anything else they can find to chomp on. Crate training is a must to protect home furnishings while you are not at home. As juveniles, if left unattended, they can cause your house to self-destruct...at least, it may appear that way! If left in the yard, they will find things to chew on that you may not even know you own until it ceases working. A bored Ridgeback is a major disaster waiting to happen.
2. They are capable of digging ranch-sized holes, biting the limbs off shrubs and ripping up small trees People who love to garden must contend with the fact that their backyards will belong to the dog!
3. They are not fussy eaters and have cast-iron stomachs - and you thought this was a good thing -- NOT! It also means they will attempt to eat anything that doesn't eat them first. They are master counter-surfers...nothing is spared and they are fast. Ridgeback owners have a tendency to overfeed their dogs, causing gas - not the most pleasant aspect of dog ownership. Remember, a Ridgeback always thinks it's hungry! You have to feed on schedule and stick to your plan.
4. Ridgebacks are "people" dogs, which means they should be treated as family and not made to live solely alone in the yard, otherwise, you wind up with a big, powerful, pushy creature of your making! An adult RIDGEBACK can clear a five foot fence if they want to. A bored dog is going to look for something to do, even if that means outside your yard. No one wants to live next door to someone who lets their dog out to eliminate on the neighbors' yard, whose dog gets out and kills cats or scares the walkers, joggers and bike riders.
5. Ridgebacks grow to be big dogs and must attend obedience classes with you so he won't become a "bad apple" and make an ugly impression of the breed on anyone. Learning to walk on a loose lead at an early age is essential -- nobody should be drug around by a big dog.
6. Ridgebacks are intelligent...this too, has been said -- what it means is they are fully capable of training you before you can train them. They are quite clever and can be willfully disobedient. The earlier the obedience classes the better. We can't say this enough - A bored Ridgeback can be quite destructive and may develop bad habits of chewing, escaping crate and fencing, barking out of boredom and generally making a pest of themselves. It is essential that you have the time to put in with them, which can be as simple as having them in the house with you when you are home or spending time making sure they get a good amount of exercise...whether outside hiking, training, running or walking with them in safe areas.
7. Ridgebacks must be introduced to cats and even so, may be aggressive towards strange felines.

Before you get a Ridgeback, please consider the adult size of a Ridgeback and whether you and your family members will be able to properly keep the dog and to train the dog to be a great companion and a good canine citizen.

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Things to Know Before You Buy a Rhodesian Ridgeback

Although Rhodesian Ridgebacks are still a relatively rare breed (about 2,000 AKC registrations per year, compared to >50,000 for breeds such as Rottweiler, Doberman, Labrador Retriever), there are quite a few reputable breeders who are members of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of the United States (RRCUS), and subscribe to the RRCUS [Code of Ethics](#).

The Code includes several important provisions that are intended to assure the continued improvement of the Rhodesian Ridgeback breed, and also to protect puppy buyers. These provisions include the following:

An ethical breeder does not engage in the overbreeding of stock for profit without regard for quality and health of the dogs.

An ethical breeder studies and weighs the faults and attributes of a stud and bitch, becoming well informed of those considered genetic (inheritable). An ethical breeder is sincere in the intent of not breeding dogs with defects that are likely to cause impairment of the health of the dogs or offspring.

An ethical breeder informs his/her buyers about the dermoid sinus and how to detect it.

An ethical breeder is always available to buyers for consultation even after completion of a sale.

An ethical breeder will x-ray the hips of all potential breeding stock and will use only dogs certified clear of hip dysplasia for breeding.

An ethical breeder will obtain an OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certification of clear hips, or an OFA preliminary x-ray and will provide a copy of this certificate to a puppy buyer, on request.

Avoid buying puppies from pet shops. These dogs are typically produced wholesale by `puppy farms' where the sole purpose is producing a salable product. Although pet shop puppies usually have AKC registration papers, you should know that this registration implies absolutely no guarantee. Puppy farms are in the business of wholesale production and typically pay no attention to possible inheritable problems like the dermoid sinus, hip dysplasia, and temperament.

Often you will see Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy ads in the newspaper. Sometimes these ads are placed by reputable breeders. However, often these ads are placed by `backyard breeders.' These are people who have acquired a dog and one or more bitches and crank out litters of puppies for the sole purpose of profit. You can spot one of these backyard breeders in several ways:

If the seller has trouble remembering details of the pedigree of the puppies for sale, beware. Breeders who are breeding with the goal of improving the breed will be very familiar with the pedigree of their puppies, and will be able to tell you the AKC names of sire and dam, grandparents, and usually even great-grandparents. People who are just in the business of selling puppies for a profit will often `not remember' these important facts.

If the seller does not know what a dermoid sinus is, beware. This is a common genetic problem in the breed. The condition is present at birth and considerable experience is required to detect it. A dermoid sinus can be removed surgically, but the operation is rather major and costly. It is a genetic condition and is likely to pop up in any litter.

If the seller tells you that `hip dysplasia is not a problem in Ridgebacks' or that it `is not a problem in my

line,' beware. Although the incidence of hip dysplasia in Ridgebacks is much lower than in many other breeds, it is still about 3%, meaning that the chance of a given puppy developing the condition is one in thirty! The probability of a puppy having hip dysplasia is much reduced if both parents and all four grandparents have been x-rayed and certified clear of the condition by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals.

If the seller is not willing to provide a written health guarantee, beware. Most ethical breeders do provide written guarantees that cover genetic conditions like the dermoid sinus, hip dysplasia, etc. There are enough reputable breeders that you can certainly find a guaranteed puppy, so there is no need to take one with no strings attached and then find in a year that you have a \$300 vet bill to remove a dermoid.

If the seller tells you that the puppy 'doesn't have a ridge yet, but it will come in later,' beware. A certain number of Ridgebacks are born without ridges. This is due to a genetic fault and reputable breeders are trying to eliminate this characteristic from the breed gene pool. You should know that the ridge is fully visible, in its complete form, at birth. A puppy that does not have a ridge will never have a ridge.

If the seller tells you that he/she 'doesn't make a distinction between show-quality and pet-quality puppies,' beware. The purpose of dog shows is to obtain independent judgement from a number of qualified judges that a dog is a good representative of the breed, as measured by the written [breed standard](#). Breeders who are sincerely trying to improve the Rhodesian Ridgeback breed want to have their very best puppies exhibited in dog shows, and hope that their best animals will achieve American Kennel Club championships. Back yard breeders often tell potential customers that 'show dogs' are inbred and have genetic problems that will result in poor health. The truth is exactly the opposite. When you buy a dog whose sire and dam are AKC champions (as evidenced by 'Ch' before the name on their names on the registration application), you know that at least three different judges (and usually many more) have measured these animals against the breed standard and awarded championship credit.

Most reputable breeders make a distinction between 'show-quality' and 'pet-quality' and price the dogs appropriately (show-quality dogs are usually 30-50% more expensive than pet-quality dogs). Show-quality means that the dog has no obvious faults that would make it difficult or impossible for the dog to achieve a championship. With Ridgebacks, the most common faults are a defective ridge (too short, less than or more than two crowns) and excessive white. Other faults that might be present are kinked tail or imperfect bite. Faults of this sort are usually cosmetic rather than functional and do not effect the health of the dog. Remember that the breeder is making a decision that a puppy is 'show quality' at a very young age (usually seven or eight weeks of age). It takes a fair amount of experience to make these kinds of predictions with any confidence, which is a compelling reason to buy from a breeder who either has considerable experience in the breed, or who has a network of friends who can serve as consultants.

Written by Clayton Heathcock, a RRCUS member. Permission is hereby extended to anyone who wishes to copy and distribute this essay.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club Of The United States, Inc.



AKC Licensed Member Club since 1971

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LIVING HAPPILY AND COMFORTABLY WITH YOUR RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

There are two areas that a great many dog owners forget about when attempting to teach their dogs good manners and good behavior. They are:

1. Mistaking the canine brain for the human brain, and
2. Failing to be consistent.

As the Rhodesian Ridgeback is a profusion of a number of breeds, it cannot be trained in the same way as a Rottweiler or a German Shepherd. Training for those animals is intense, repetitious, and boring. Ridgebacks have been blessed with attributes of the many breeds that have gone into their making and by observing the above two rules, you can successfully train your Ridgeback and you can both have some fun in the bargain.

Decide early in your puppy's life what it is you want him to do and not to do. Under six months of age you are going to expect to get him fully housebroken, walk nicely on a leash, not jump up on people, and perhaps stay off of the furniture. If you accomplish all of that prior to six months of age, give yourself a gold star. If you expect to accomplish more, well, maybe you might just be pushing yourself and your dog too hard.

For novice owners, a beginner obedience class is highly recommended. Find out who the trainer is, what his/her principles are, training methods used, etc. Ask around to other people who have gone to obedience classes with their dogs and learn where they go, what they are taught, their observations and opinions of their particular trainers, etc. Usually, the best place is an all-breed kennel club or obedience club. The key word here is ALL-BREED. Stay away from places specializing in guard-, working-, Schutzhund-, attack-dog training.

Ridgebacks are not stubborn; they are not dumb. Rather, they are independent, and whip smart. The one thing that they have that you should nurture is their desire to please.

When training to do anything, always get your dog's attention first, even if it takes several minutes to get him calmed down. Once you have his attention, then you begin with whatever it is you want him to do or not do. Don't ever act out of anger. Always act, never react. Screaming and hitting and chasing will turn your dog into a psychotic and only make you more frustrated. Stern words are usually all that is necessary

to get your point across. It is best not to hit your dog either with your hand or an object, especially anywhere near the face or head. This seldom accomplishes anything but to provide an outlet for your own frustration. The damage done, however, can be irreparable.

As dogs are creatures of habit, you must always keep that in mind. Good habits are learned and so are bad habits. Detect the bad habits early before they become ingrained and work on perfecting the good habits.

The reward system is a very good way to train a puppy. The puppy goes outside and relieves himself. You praise him lavishly. I know it seems silly to gush all over a puppy just because he went "potty" outside instead of inside, but it works!

The use of a crate is strongly recommended while training your dog. Here is where you do not equate the dog's needs with human needs. A dog is a denning animal. Dogs seek out a private and safe spot. That is why they sleep under tables, beds, etc. A dog crate is your Ridgeback's safe haven. Get him used to it early in life. After all, babies are placed into playpens -- that's a lot crueller than allowing a puppy to develop his natural denning instinct.

When in doubt about a phase in training your Ridgeback, or any other problem, call your breeder. Also, there are a number of books available, hundreds in fact. Below are listed a few, any of which will give you the proper insight into the correct way of training your Ridgeback for a happy and comfortable life with his humans.

- The New Knowledge of Dog Behavior; Pfaffenberger; Howell.
- Handling Your Dog; Thorne; Doubleday.
- How to be Your Dog's Best Friend; Monks of New Skete; Little Brown.
- Good Dog, Bad Dog; Siegal and Margolis; Holt, Rinehard and Winston.
- How to Raise a Puppy You Can Live With; Rutherford and Neil; Alpine Publications. (This book must be ordered directly from the publisher: Alpine Publications, 2456 E 9th, Loveland CO 80537, Phone: 303-667-2017. Write or call for price.)

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