

BOSTON TERRIER

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance including the correct colour of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure. However, if a dog possesses a feature, characteristic or colour described as unacceptable, it must not be rewarded in the show ring.

Most recent changes to this Standard have an effective date of 01/01/2026

ORIGIN

United States of America.

UTILISATION

Companion dog.

BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY

[ed. for interest – from Wikipedia: The Boston Terrier]:

The Boston Terrier originated around 1875, when Robert Hooper, of Boston, purchased a dog named “Judge” (known later as “Hooper’s Judge”), which was of a Bull and Terrier-type lineage. This type originally weighed up to 44lbs (20 kg) and was essentially a fighting dog. From this foundation of the breed, subsequent breeders refined the breed into its modern-day presentation.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) cites “Hooper’s Judge” as the ancestor of all true modern Boston Terriers. In the early years, the colour and markings were not very important to the breed's standard. By the 20th century, the breed's distinctive markings and colour were written into the standard, becoming an essential feature. The Boston Terrier has lost most of its aggressive nature, preferring the company of humans, although some males will still challenge other dogs if they feel their territory is being invaded.



Illustration courtesy of NKU Picture Library

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Boston Terrier is a lively, highly intelligent, smooth coated, short-headed, compactly built, short-tailed, well balanced dog, brindle, seal or black in colour and evenly marked with white. The head is in proportion to the size of the dog and the expression indicates a high degree of intelligence. The body is rather short and well knit, the limbs strong and neatly turned, the tail is short and no feature is so prominent that the dog appears badly proportioned. The dog conveys an impression of determination, strength and activity, with style of a high order; carriage easy and graceful. A proportionate combination of “Colour and White Markings” is a particularly distinctive feature of a representative specimen. “Balance, Expression, Colour and White Markings” should be given particular consideration in determining the relative value of general appearance to other points. The clean-cut short backed body of the Boston Terrier coupled with the unique characteristics of his square head and jaw, and his striking markings have resulted in a most dapper and charming American original: The Boston Terrier. In a comparison of specimens of each sex, the only evident difference is a slight refinement in the bitch’s conformation.

IMPORTANT PROPORTIONS

The length of leg must balance with the length of body to give the Boston Terrier its striking square appearance. The Boston Terrier is a sturdy dog and must not appear to be either spindly or coarse. The bone and muscle must be in proportion as well as an enhancement to the dog’s weight and structure.

BEHAVIOUR / TEMPERAMENT

The Boston Terrier is a friendly and lively dog. The breed has an excellent disposition and a high degree of intelligence, which makes the Boston Terrier an incomparable companion.

HEAD

Cranial Region:

Skull: Square, flat on top, free from wrinkles; brow abrupt.

Stop: Well defined.

Facial Region:

Nose: In Black and wide, with a well defined line between the nostrils. Well opened nostrils.

Muzzle: Short, square, wide and deep and in proportion to the skull. It is free from wrinkles, shorter in length than in width or depth; not exceeding in length approximately one-third of the length of the skull. The muzzle from stop to end of the nose is parallel to the top of the skull.

Lips: The chops are of good depth, but not pendulous, completely covering the teeth when the mouth is closed.

Jaws/Teeth: Jaws broad and square with short, regular teeth. The bite is even or sufficiently undershot to square the muzzle.

Cheeks: Flat.

Eyes:

Wide apart, large, round and dark in colour. Set square in the skull and the outside corners are on a line with the cheeks as viewed from the front.

Expression: Alert and kind, indicating a high degree of intelligence. This is a most important characteristic of the breed.

Ears:

Small, carried erect, either natural or cropped to conform to the shape of the head and situated as near to the corners of the skull as possible.

[*refer note below]

NECK

The length of the neck must display an image of balance to the total dog. It is slightly arched, carrying the head gracefully and setting neatly into the shoulders.

BODY

The body should appear short.

Topline: Level.

Back: Just short enough to square the body.

Croup: Curves slightly to the set-on of the tail.

Chest: Deep with good width; ribs well sprung and carried well back to the loins.

TAIL

Set-on low, short, fine and tapering, straight or screw and must not be carried above the horizontal. (Note: The preferred tail does not exceed in length more than one quarter the distance from set-on to hock).

LIMBS

Forequarters:

General appearance: Forelegs set moderately wide apart and on a line with the upper tip of the shoulder-blades; straight in bone.

Shoulder: Sloping and well laid back, which allows for the Boston Terrier's stylish movement.

Elbow: Stand neither in nor out.

Metacarpus (Pastern): Short, strong. The dewclaws may be removed.

Hindquarters:

Thighs: Strong, well muscled, and set true.

Stifle (Knee): Well bent.

Hock: Short to the feet, turning neither in nor out, with a well defined hock joint.

FEET

Small, round and compact, turned neither in nor out, with well arched toes and short nails. Hind feet: Small and compact with short nails.

GAIT / MOVEMENT

The gait of the Boston Terrier is that of a sure footed, straight gaited dog, forelegs and hind legs moving straight ahead in line with perfect rhythm, each step indicating grace and power.

COAT

Hair:

Short, smooth, bright and fine in texture.

Colour:

- Brindle, seal or black with white markings. Brindle is preferred only if all other qualities are equal.
(Note: Seal defined: Seal appears black except it has a red cast when viewed in the sun or bright light).
- * **Required markings:** White muzzle band, white blaze between the eyes, white forechest.

* **Desired markings:** White muzzle band, even white blaze between the eyes and over the head, white collar, white forechest, white on part or whole of forelegs and hind legs below the hocks.

(Note: a representative specimen should not be penalized for not possessing "Desired Markings".)

* A dog with a preponderance of white on the head or body must possess sufficient merit otherwise to counteract its deficiencies.

SIZE

Weight

Weight is divided by classes as follows:

- under 15 pounds (6,8 kg),
- 15 pounds and under 20 pounds (6,8 to 9 kg),
- 20 pounds and not to exceed 25 pounds (9 to 11,35 kg).

N.B. Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum. Only functionally and clinically healthy dogs, with breed typical conformation should be used for breeding.

Note: Cropped ears – KUSA Schedule 2 Regulation 7:

"Any dog with cropped ears born within the jurisdiction of the KUSA, imported into it and cropped within it, shall not be registered or recorded by the Kennel Union, and if any such dog is registered or recorded in contravention of this Regulation, upon discovery, its registration or recording shall be cancelled.

7.1. Any dog with ears cropped before importation into the KUSA area of jurisdiction is not eligible for competition at any Kennel Union event."

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog, and on the dog's ability to perform its traditional work.

- Blocky or chunky in appearance.
- Pinched nostrils.
- Eyes showing too much white or haw.
- Size of ears out of proportion to size of head.
- Gaily carried tail.
- Legs lacking in substance.
- Straight in stifle.
- Splay feet.
- Gait rolling, paddling or weaving; hackney gait.

Severe faults:

- Wry mouth.
- Any showing of the tongue or teeth when the mouth is closed.
- Roach back or sway back.
- Ribcage slab-sided.
- Gait: Any crossing movement, either front or rear.

Disqualifying faults:

- Aggressive or overly shy dogs.
- Any dog clearly showing physical or behavioural abnormalities.
- Dudley nose.
- Eyes blue in colour or any trace of blue.
- Docked tail.
- Solid black, solid brindle, or solid seal without required white markings.
- Grey or liver colours.

SCALE OF POINTS

| | |
|---|----|
| • General Appearance | 10 |
| • Expression | 10 |
| • Head: Muzzle, Jaw, Bite, Skull & Stop | 15 |
| • Eyes | 5 |
| • Ears | 5 |
| • Neck, Topline, Body & Tail | 15 |
| • Forequarters | 10 |

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| • Hindquarters | 10 |
| • Feet | 5 |
| • Colour, Coat & Markings | 5 |
| • Gait | 10 |

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FCI Standard No. 140: BOSTON TERRIER:

FCI Classification: Group 9 – Companion and Toy Dogs.

Section 11.3. Small Molossian-type dogs
Without working trial.