

# Olde Cape Mastiff Breed standard

## PREAMBLE

Historically the **Olde Cape Mastiff (OCM)** was a general farm dog for the pioneers who settled in Southern Africa since the seventeenth century. These dogs often were the first line of defence against predators and were valuable in tracking and holding down wounded game. Old farmers told many a tale of the strength, agility and courage of their dogs. The dangers and harsh conditions of southern Africa allowed only the fittest to survive.

The protective character of the **Olde Cape Mastiff** of today is still evident and is much sought after, as is the calm, stable and confident composure of the breed. It remains the guarding breed of choice amongst current day farmers and is very popular for the same reason in the urban communities.

The origin and purpose of the **Olde Cape Mastiff** should be understood to preserve the unique identity and qualities of the breed as a Southern African developed mastiff.

Type, conformation, functional efficiency and mentality are equally important in the evaluation of the **Olde Cape Mastiff** as a whole.

The aim with the Breed Standard is to provide clear guidelines for breeders and judges to promote a singular vision of the ideal **Olde Cape Mastiff**.

## BREED STANDARD

### 1. GENERAL APPEARANCE

The **Olde Cape Mastiff**:

- Is large, with a strong-boned structure and a well-developed musculature.
- Has an impressive demeanour created by the combination of conformation, carriage, confidence and stable temperament
- Has powerful, buoyant and unencumbered movement, notwithstanding its size
- Is symmetrical and perfectly balanced within the desired proportions for the breed
- Has a distinct sexual dimorphism, with the bitch less prominently developed

### 2. TEMPERAMENT AND CHARACTER

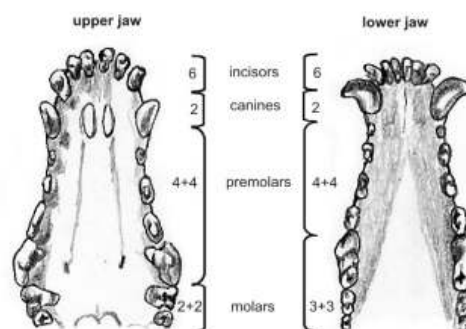
The **Olde Cape Mastiff**:

- Is intelligent, trainable, manageable and stable
- Has a strong protective instinct and is loyal to members of the family
- Is steadfast and calm, with a balanced and confident nature when approached
- Is fearless and shows courage when threatened
- A good family dog and good with children

### 3. HEAD

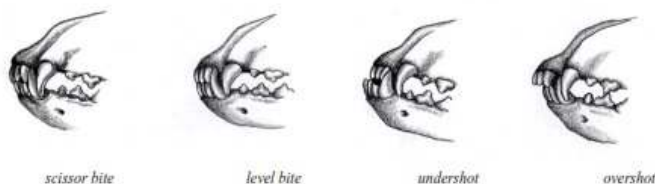
- **The head** is impressive and a distinctive feature of the **Olde Cape Mastiff**:

1. It is blocky, broad, deep, and in proportion to the body
  2. It is muscular with well-filled flattish cheeks
  3. The roof of the cranium (skull) is square, flat and muscular
  4. The zygomatic arch (cheekbone) is well-muscled, but not too prominent
- The circumference of the **head** should be equal to the height of the dog.
  - The circumference of the **muzzle**, measured just below the eyes, should be equal to two-thirds of the circumference of the **head**.
  - The **stop** is definite, but not prominent, gradually sloping and well filled between the eyes. It should not be steep, neither a straight line between the nose and the occiput.
  - The **muzzle** is broad, deep, well attached, filled below the eyes and narrows slightly towards the nose. The top line is straight and almost on a parallel plane with the cranial roof.
  - The **muzzle** should not be too short; the breed needs a muzzle to breathe and cool down in the hot African weather.
  - The **muzzle** measures close to two-thirds of the length of the skull.
  - The **nostrils** are large and widely spaced.
  - The **nostrils** holes are wide and open, without any piece of skin obstructing airflow.
  - The **jaws** are strong, deep and wide, and taper slightly to the front.
  - The **teeth** are white, strong, correctly spaced with complete dentition and a scissors bite (limited undershot discriminated against (1cm); overshot unacceptable).
  - The **teeth** are set square at the front (see illustration), with no less than six incisors.
  - The **upper lip** is loose and fleshy. It just covers the lower lip and teeth in the front but should not hide the underline of the lower jaw on the sides.
  - The **lower lip** should be tight without excessive jowls.
  - The **eyes** are medium-sized, round, forward-facing and widely spaced, with an intelligent expression. It is well protected against the environment by the firm and black-pigmented eyelids, showing no structural weaknesses.
  - The **eyes** must be as dark as possible.
  - The **ears** are set wide and high and are carried close to the head. They are V-shaped with a broad base tapering to the point that reaches almost down to a line extending from the mouth. When the dog is attentive, the top of the ears and the skull, in between, should form a straight line.
  - The **facial expression** should be intelligent, attentive and confident (**not** evasive, shy or threatening).



Typical dentition faults usually include **missing teeth** and **malocclusions**. Missing teeth can obviously not do the work they were intended to do, and this is a very important fault in some breeds, especially the working breeds. In other breeds, however, the degree of fault varies, so judges can show reasonable tolerance. A missing P1 (the first premolar) – one of the smallest teeth – is less of a problem, for example, than a missing carnassial (the fourth premolar in the upper jaw).

Malocclusions most generally manifest in **undershot** and **overshot** bites, **crooked teeth**, or **wry mouth**. An undershot bite occurs when the lower jaw extends beyond the upper. This may happen because the lower jaw has grown too long or the upper jaw is too short. In an overshot bite, the upper jaw is longer than the lower. In both instances, the teeth will not mesh properly. Sometimes a slightly overshot or slightly undershot bite can be forgiven, but if the distance between the teeth is considerable – a limit of which is often mentioned in some breed standards – the occlusion is seriously affected and the fault must be considered serious. Crooked teeth may be due to crowding in a too-small or too-narrow jaw or the result of damage to the mouth. In a wry mouth, one side of the lower jaw has grown longer than the other, causing the jaw to skew to one side so that the incisors and canines cannot align properly. Given the many possibilities of malocclusions, consideration must be given to the cause of such problems, which generally begin with poor jaw development, strength, width, length and depth – the root of the problem often being more serious than the actual manifestation of poor occlusion.



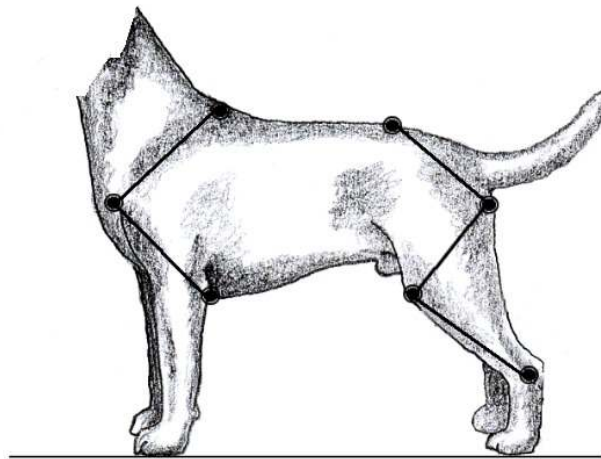
#### 4. THE NECK

- The neck is powerful, of medium length, strong muscled and with a pronounced crest. (In the female the muscles are less accentuated but should remain in balance with the head and body).
- It is set medium-high, flows smoothly into the sloping withers and forms a unit with the head and shoulders.
- The dewlap is noticeable but disappears towards the sternum.

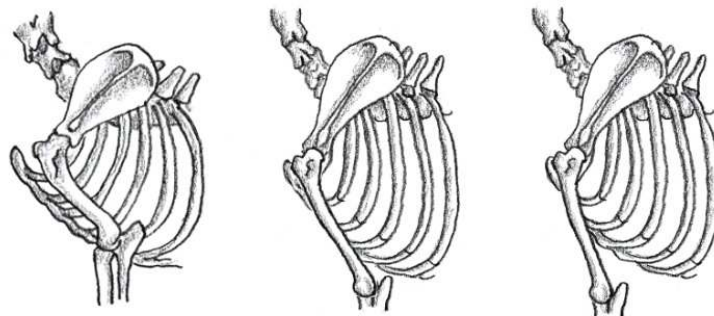
#### 5. THE BODY

- The body is approximately 15% longer than the height and is measured horizontally, from the point of the shoulder to a vertical line at the rear of the rump (b). (The length of the chest, loin and rump is approximately proportioned 2:1:1)
- It is muscular, solid and has good depth and width
- The thorax is longer than the abdomen.
- The back is broad and straight, with pronounced muscles that form an imperceptible arch in the top line over the lumbar region.

- The brisket reaches down to the point of the elbow, which is approximately half the total height at the withers.
- The transitions between the chest, loin, and rump are well filled and flowing.
- Front **angulation** should be between 90 degrees and 100 degrees. Rear **angulation** should match the front.



*A well-constructed dog shows balance in its angulation – where the front and rear angulation is similar.*



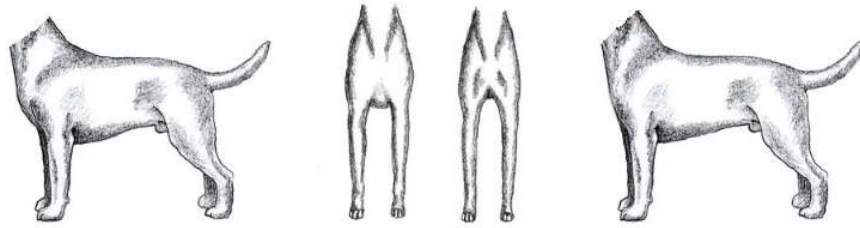
*approx 90°*

*approx 110°*

*approx 130°*

## 6. CHEST

- The chest is long, broad and deep, with well-sprung ribs and strong developed pectoral muscles.
- The point of the sternum is level with the point of the shoulder.
- The shoulder blades should be well-attached (not loose).



*correctly-positioned shoulder & correct front fill*

*poor front fill because front assembly too far forward*

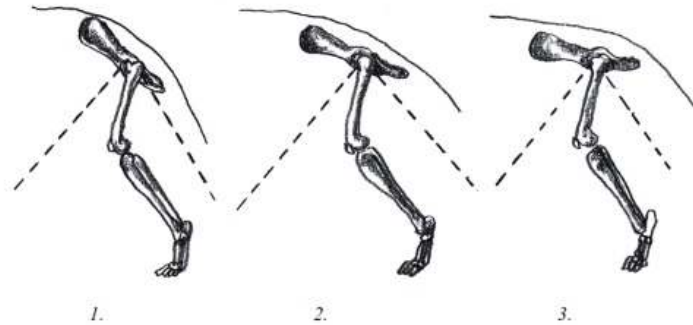
## 7. THE LUMBER REGION, LOIN

- It is short, straight and muscular, and slightly narrower than the chest and rump
- The flanks are well filled, only moderately tucked up and the depth is somewhat less than the length of the loin.

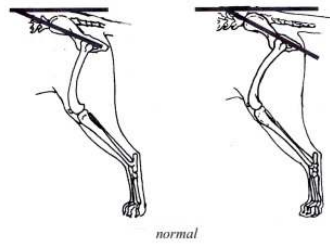
## 8. THE RUMP, CROUP

- The rump is broad, robust, muscular and in proportion to the rest of the dog.
- **Its height should not exceed the height at the withers.** The top line drops slightly towards the tail.
- The croup is broad and flat to provide a fulcrum (axel) towards the powerful reach of the hind legs
- The croup should curve slightly down towards the tail, and the angle should be between 25 degrees and 30 degrees.
- The **tail** is thick and set relatively high. It should be well covered with hair and without kink.
- Tails are traditionally half docked, but undocked tails are acceptable.
- A natural **tail** should reach approximately to the hocks when the dog is standing.

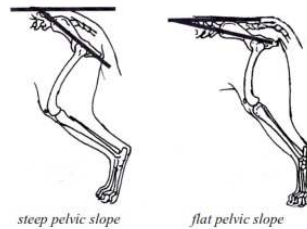
The pelvic angle influences rear drive in action.



1. **too steep:** the thrust moves upwards instead of forwards, causing the back to rise during movement; rear extension is also restricted
2. **good slope:** there is good swing forwards and backwards, which allows powerful drive
3. **too flat:** insufficient thrust forwards so there is more rear extension than forward thrust, so drive is restricted



Desired angle is between 27 and 30 degrees



## 9. LEGS AND FEET

- Weak and malformed limbs jeopardise the physical functionality that is required of the **Olde Cape Mastiff** and should be discriminated against.
- Pasterns and hocks should be strong and well-formed, should be straight seen from behind and front.
- Pasterns are slightly sloping 20 and 25 degrees.
- Dewclaws are acceptable but undesirable.

### Stifle joint

The angle formed by the femur and the tibia and fibula forms the **stifle joint** (also called the **knee joint**). The angles vary according to breeds, but poor construction will negatively affect stifle angle.



*normal, well-angulated stifle*



*very steep pelvic slope and over angulated stifle with sickle hocks*



*flattish pelvic slope and under angulated stifle*

### Hock joint

Completing the structure of the hind assembly is the joint formed with the connection of the tibia and fibula (second thigh) and the tarsals (rear pastern). Ideally, the rear pastern should be set perpendicular to the ground.



Straight hock joint, often accompanied by straight stifle.



Sickle hock, where the joint is over-angulated, often accompanied by long second thigh and/or long rear pasterns.



## 10. THE FORELIMBS

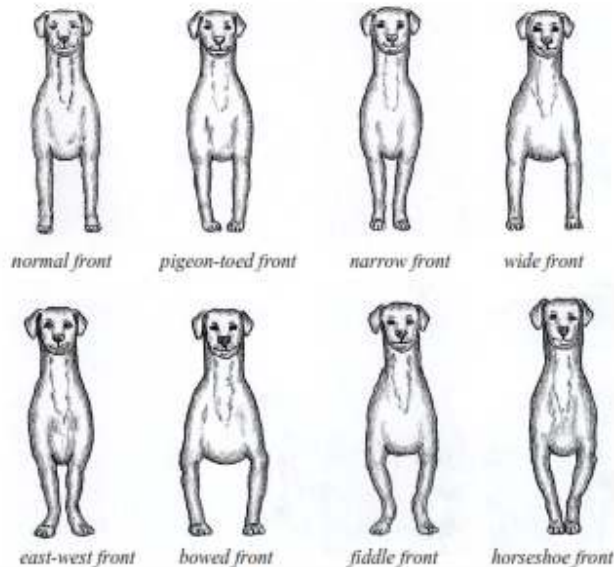
- Are strong boned, with well-defined muscles and sturdy joints.
- Should be correctly angulated from the well-sloped shoulder blade, which is well laid back, down to the metacarpus (pastern).
- The length of the shoulder blade should equal the length of the upper arm.
- Should form a vertical line from the point of the shoulder down to the paws, with the elbows held close and parallel to the chest when viewed from the front.
- Seen from the side the forearm should be vertical from the elbow to the carpus. The metacarpus is short, thick and robust and angles very slightly forward.

- The forepaws point straight forward, are large, round, strongly boned and compact. The toes are well arched, with curved black toenails and protected by hair in between. The pads are thick, tough and black.

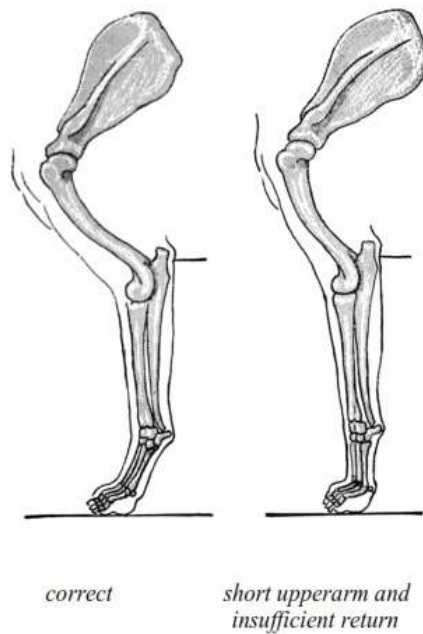
### Variations of front structures

Depending on the specific breed standard, there are several types of fronts, some of which are desired, others are described as faults:

- **bowed front:** when viewed from the front, the forearms curve outwards from the elbows, then close inwards towards the pasterns – sometimes caused by genetic influence, sometimes caused by nutritional deficiencies or disease. This presentation is generally considered faulty, but is required in the Pekingese.
- **crooked front:** the forearms incline symmetrically inwards and may be slightly bowed from the elbows to the wrists so as to create a cradle-like support for the chest. It is present in some achondroplastic breeds such as the Basset Hound and Dachshund, where it is called the ‘crook’.
- **east-west front (French front):** when the pasterns are incorrectly positioned, they may turn the feet outwards. This is very often a fault associated with a narrow front. Not to be confused with certain breeds where the feet are required to turn outwards slightly, eg. Saluki, Staffordshire Bull Terrier.
- **fiddle front (Chippendale front, cabriole front):** a front that resembles a fiddle shape – elbows rather wide, forearms sloping inwards, and pasterns and feet turning out.
- **horseshoe front:** where the forearms are further apart at the elbows than at the pasterns, which are perpendicular to the ground. While this may be a fault in most breeds, it is a requirement of the Bedlington Terrier.
- **narrow front (pinched front):** one in which the forearms are presented closer to each other than desirable. Usually a fault, especially in working breeds, but a requirement in some, such as the Borzoi and Saluki, which call for a moderately narrow front.
- **normal front (gun barrel front, straight front):** a true and straight front where the forearms, pasterns and feet are positioned vertically and parallel to each other.
- **pigeon-toed front (toeing in):** the pasterns and feet turn inwards towards the centre line. The opposite of an east-west front.
- **wide front:** the front assembly is built wider than normal, often associated with a barrel chest. Usually a fault, but a requirement in, for example, the Bulldog.







## 11. THE HINDLIMBS

- Are strong boned, sturdy and muscular
- The length of the upper thigh should equal the size of the lower thigh.
- The joints should be sound, healthy and correctly angulated, matching the front angulation to support the powerful propulsion from the hindquarters during movement
- The upper thighs are broad, deep and muscular as seen from the side and the rear
- The lower thighs have well-defined muscles and show substance down to the hocks
- The metatarsus is broad, relatively short and perfectly upright. The front is in a vertical line with the rear of the rump.
- From the rear, the profile of the hindquarters should form an inverted U, with the stifles pointing straight forward and the hocks straight backwards.
- The hind paws point straight forward, are slightly smaller than the forepaws but have the same quality.

**Stifle joint**

The angle formed by the femur and the tibia and fibula forms the **stifle joint** (also called the **knee joint**). The angles vary according to breeds, but poor construction will negatively affect stifle angle.



*normal, well-angulated stifle*



*very steep pelvic slope and over angulated stifle with sickle hocks*



*flattish pelvic slope and under angulated stifle*

**Hock joint**

Completing the structure of the hind assembly is the joint formed with the connection of the tibia and fibula (second thigh) and the tarsals (rear pastern). Ideally, the rear pastern should be set perpendicular to the ground.



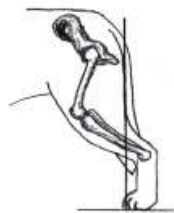
Straight hock joint, often accompanied by straight stifle.



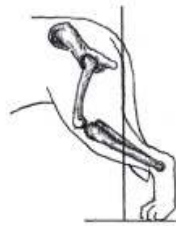
Sickle hock, where the joint is over-angulated, often accompanied by long second thigh and/or long rear pasterns.



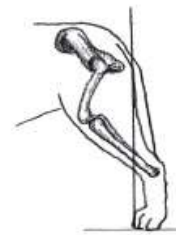
**A few examples of hind assemblies**



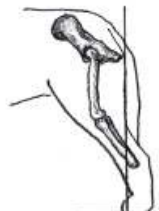
*correct*



*second thigh too long*



*straight stifle & short upper thigh*



*straight stifle & short second thigh*



*over-angulated stifle, long second thigh, sickle hocks*



*long rear pastern*

## 12. MOVEMENT

- The movement is strong, purposeful, buoyant and fluent, with sound, comfortable reach in front and drive from the rear.
- The legs and body should move in line front to rear. The feet move closer to a centre line as speed increases, forming a V shape in the observer's mind.
- Whilst converging towards the centre line of travel, the legs should never cross.
- At all gaits, the top line is firm and robust, without swaying or dipping in the middle, and without excess body roll.
- Free and active, elbows fitting closely to sides, forelegs moving well forward without too much lift, in unison with decisive thrusting hind action.
- Weak, unsound or plodding movement should not be tolerated.



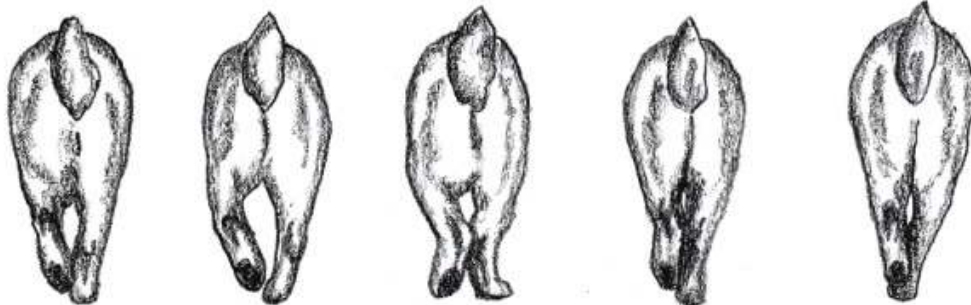
*correct*

*elbowing out*

*moving close*

*tied in at elbow*

*paddling*



*normal convergence*

*bowed hocks*

*cow hocks*

*moving close*

*weaving*

## 13. THE SKIN

- The skin is thick and loose but fits smoothly.
- A small dewlap is permissible and moderate wrinkles over the forehead when the dog shows interest.

## 14. PIGMENTATION

- The **Olde Cape Mastiff** is well pigmented, especially on the lips, palate, the skin and hair around the eyes, nose bulb, paw pads, toenails, the anus and the skin and hair around the genitals.
- Only dogs with black melanin pigmentation are acceptable.

## 15. THE COAT AND COLOUR

- The coat is short, dense, smooth and shiny.
- The recognised colours/colour patterns are (with or without a mask):
  - All shades of red, brown and fawn
  - Brindle, a colour pattern with irregular vertical lines of only black hair on red, brown or fawn base
  - Black
  - Dilutes and liver nose is accepted, but undesirable.
  - **White markings on the chest, acceptable but no more than the width of an average hand**

All these colours and colour patterns should be accompanied by good pigmentation.

**No other colours or colour patterns, and tan markings are acceptable.**

## 16. SIZE

- The **Olde Cape Mastiff** is a dog bred to cover ground and be mobile.
- There should be no exaggeration of bone, skin, and size, as it would impair what the dog was bred for.
- Is determined by the ideal height at the withers and desirable ratios between the height and the measurements of the various parts of the external anatomy.
- The ideal height for a dog is 70cm (lower than 60 cm is unacceptable).
- The ideal height of a bitch is 65cm (lower than 55 cm is unacceptable).

## 17. GENITALS

- Male animals should have two normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

## FAULTS

Any departure from the preceding points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in direct proportion to its degree.

## DISQUALIFICATIONS

1. A dog that is too small (Smaller than the minimum heights stipulated in the Breed Standard).
2. A dog that is too big and out of balance. The breed has to cover ground and be effective in doing so.
3. An overly aggressive dog.
4. A too small and untypical head.
5. A lack of pigmentation.
6. Excessively undershot bite, more than 1cm.
7. Overshot bite.
8. Pricked ears.
9. A white dog.
10. A black and tan dog.

11. Harlequin coat.
12. Merle.
13. Bad pigmentation.
14. Long coat.
15. Too long a tongue.
16. Plodding, weak or unsound movement.
17. Any dog clearly showing any physical or behavioural abnormalities.
18. Any dog showing signs of other breeds.