



## Boxer Breed Standard

Recognized by the AMA in 2024

**Background:** The Boxer's historical background begins in feudal Germany. Here, a small, courageous hunting dog with mastiff-type head and undershot bite was used to secure a tenacious hold on bull, boar, or bear -- pending the hunter's arrival. He became a utility dog for peasants and shop owners. His easy trainability even found him performing in the circus. In the 1880s, descendants of this type of dog were bred to a taller, more elegant English import, and the era of the modern Boxer had begun. Imported to America after the first World War, his popularity really began in the late 1930s.

**General Appearance:** The ideal Boxer is a medium-sized, square-built dog of good substance with short back, strong limbs, and short, tight-fitting coat. His well-developed muscles are clean, hard, and appear smooth under taut skin. His movements denote energy. The gait is firm yet elastic, the stride free and ground-covering, the carriage proud. Developed to serve as guard, working, and companion dog, he combines strength and agility with elegance and style. His expression is alert and his temperament steadfast and tractable. The chiseled head imparts to the Boxer a unique individual stamp. It must be in correct proportion to the body. The broad, blunt muzzle is the distinctive feature, and great value is placed upon its being of proper form and balance with the skull. In judging the Boxer first consideration is given to general appearance and overall balance. Special attention is then devoted to the head, after which the individual body components are examined for their correct construction, and the gait evaluated for efficiency.

**Disposition:** These are of paramount importance in the Boxer. Instinctively a hearing guard dog, his bearing is alert, dignified, and self-assured. In the show ring his behavior should exhibit constrained animation. With family and friends, his temperament is fundamentally playful, yet patient and stoical with children. Deliberate and wary with strangers, he will exhibit curiosity, but, most importantly, fearless courage if threatened. However, he responds promptly to friendly overtures honestly rendered. His intelligence, loyal affection, and tractability to discipline make him a highly desirable companion. Any evidence of shyness, or lack of dignity or alertness, should be severely penalized.

**Size:** Adult males 23 to 25 inches; females 21½ to 23½ inches at the withers. Proper balance and quality in the individual should be of primary importance since there is no size disqualification.

**Head:** The beauty of the head depends upon the harmonious proportion of muzzle to skull. The blunt muzzle is 1/3 the length of the head from the occiput to the tip of the nose, and 2/3rds the width of the skull. The head should be clean, not showing deep wrinkles (wet). Wrinkles typically appear upon the forehead when ears are erect, and are always present from the lower edge of the stop running downward on both sides of the muzzle.

**Eyes:** Dark brown in color, frontally placed, generous, not too small, too protruding, or too deep-set. Their mood-mirroring character, combined with the wrinkling of the forehead, gives the Boxer head its unique quality of expressiveness. Third eyelids preferably have pigmented rims.

**Muzzle/Bite:** The muzzle, proportionately developed in length, width, and depth, has a shape influenced first through the formation of both jawbones, second through the placement of the teeth, and third through the texture of the lips. The top of the muzzle should not slant down (downfaced), nor should it be concave (dishfaced); however, the tip of the nose should lie slightly higher than the root of the muzzle. The nose should be broad and black.

**Nose:** The nose should be broad and black.

**Ears:** Set at the highest points of the sides of the skull, the ears are customarily cropped, cut rather long and tapering, and raised when alert. If uncropped, the ears should be of moderate size, thin, lying flat and close to the cheeks in repose, but falling forward with a definite crease when alert.

**Neck:** Round, of ample length, muscular and clean without excessive hanging skin (dewlap). The neck should have a distinctly arched and elegant nape blending smoothly into the withers.

**Forequarters:** The shoulders are long and sloping, close-lying, and not excessively covered with muscle (loaded). The upper arm is long, approaching a right angle to the shoulder blade. The elbows should not press too closely to the chest wall nor stand off visibly from it. The forelegs are long, straight, and firmly muscled, and, when viewed from the front, stand parallel to each other. The pastern is strong and distinct, slightly slanting, but standing almost perpendicular to the ground.

**Chest, Back, Loin, and Body:** The chest is of fair width, and the forechest well-defined and visible from the side. The brisket is deep, reaching down to the elbows; the depth of the body at the lowest point of the brisket equals half the height of the dog at the withers. The ribs, extending far to the rear, are well-arched but not barrel-shaped. The loins are short and muscular. The lower stomach line is slightly tucked up, blending into a graceful curve to the rear. The croup is slightly sloped, flat and broad. The pelvis is long, and in females especially broad.

**Hindquarters:** The hindquarters are strongly muscled, with angulation in balance with that of the forequarters.

**Feet:** Feet should be compact, turning neither in nor out, with well-arched toes.

**Tail:** The tail is set high, docked preferred, and carried upward.

**Coat:** Short, shiny, lying smooth and tight to the body.

**Color:** The colors are fawn and brindle. Fawn shades vary from light tan to mahogany. The brindle ranges from sparse but clearly defined black stripes on a fawn background. White markings, if present, should be of such distribution as to enhance the dog's appearance, but may not exceed one-third of the entire coat.

**Movement:** The gait is smooth efficient, level-backed, ground covering stride with a powerful drive emanating from a freely operating rear. Although the front legs do not contribute impelling power, adequate reach should be evident to prevent interference, overlap, or sidewinding (crabbing). The carriage is proud and noble.

**Disqualifications:**

- Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchidism
- Viciousness or extreme shyness
- Eyes that are two different colors
- Crossed eyes
- Divergent strabismus (wall-eyed)
- Wry mouth
- Unilateral or bilateral deafness
- Any color other than fawn or brindle
- White markings exceeding one-third of the entire coat

**Fault Degrees:**

A cosmetic fault is one of a minor nature. In a show or other evaluation, the dog is to be penalized in direct proportion to the degree of the fault. Any fault, which is extreme, should be considered a serious fault and should be penalized appropriately.