

# AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL LTD



## Extended Breed Standard of **THE GREAT DANE**

Produced by

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in collaboration with

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### **Those studying this Breed Standard Extension should note:**

Australian law prohibits the cropping of ears; this practice is also prohibited by Australian National Kennel Council Regulations. For these reasons all reference to cropped ears has been deleted from the text. Cropped eared illustrations have, however, been used in the Breed Standard Extension to demonstrate other characteristics of the breed.

## **HISTORY OF THE BREED**

By appearance and nature the Great Dane is one of the most elegant and distinguished varieties of giant-type dogs.

Some sources state that dogs similar to Great Danes were known in Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Various sources report that the Great Dane was developed from the medieval boarhound, and of the Mastiff and Irish Wolfhound lines. It is also reported that the Great Dane was developed from mastiff-like dogs taken to Germany by the Alans. The breed may be about 400 years old. The Bullenbeisser may be its direct ancestor, composing about 40% of its makeup.

According to Barbara Stein, "the breed originated in Germany, probably from a cross between the English Mastiff and the Irish Wolfhound", however, other sources maintain that the breed originated in Denmark, and still others report the question as controversial and unsettled. In 1749 Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, used the name "le Grand Danois," (translated by William Smellie (encyclopedist) as "Great Dane.") Up until that time the hound was referred to in England as "Danish dog"

According to Jacob Nicolay Wilse the Danes called the dog "large hound," a terminology continued well into the 20th Century. In Germany in 1780 the hound is referred to as "Grosse Dänische Jagd Hund" (English: *Large Danish Hunting Hound*). At the first dog exhibition in Germany, held in Hamburg 14-20 July 1863, eight dogs were called "Dänische Dogge" and seven "Ulmer Doggen."

Accurate canine history is limited to but little longer than the last half century. The first dog show was held as recently as 1859 in England, where the "dog game" was born. Before that time, there were occasional records of different sorts of dogs over a period of more than three thousand years; but the items are so few, incomplete, and inaccurate that a student of the dogs of antiquity can "prove" almost any.

The name of the breed (in the English language) is a translation of in old French designation, *grand Danois*, meaning "big Danish." This was only one of half a dozen

names, which had been used for centuries in France. Why the English adopted the name "Great Dane" from the French is a mystery. At the same time the French were also calling it *dogue allemand* or "German Mastiff." "Mastiff" in English, *dogge* in giant dog with heavy head for fighting or hunting purposes. It was one of the dozen varieties of dog recognised as distinctive enough.

There is no known reason for connecting Denmark with either the origin or the development of the breed. It was "made in Germany."

If the reader is susceptible to the charms of antiquity, he will be interested in Cassel's claim that on Egyptian monuments of about 3000 B.C. there are drawings of dogs much like the Great Dane. Also, the earliest written description of a dog resembling the breed may be found in Chinese literature of 1121 B.C. (an article by Dr. G. Ciaburri, Great Dane Club of Italy publication, 1929).

Eminent zoologists like Keller and Kraemer believe that the Mastiff breeds originated in Asia. They think the modern Tibetan Mastiff, occasionally shown in England, is the most direct descendant of the prototype.

The great naturalist Buffon (1707-1788) claimed the Irish Wolfhound as the principal ancestor of our Great Dane. The comparative Anatomist Curvier (1769 – 1832) found more evidence in favour of the old English Mastiff as the root from which it sprang. Both Irish and English breeds are known to have been carefully bred for 1300 years and more. Today most students favour the idea or *Deutsche Dogge*, resulted from a mixture of both these ancient types. This is not to say that the German Mastiff or Great Dane is a new breed. It is, indeed, a very old one that has been cultivated as a distinct type for probably 400 years, if not longer. Like all old varieties of dog, it was developed for a useful purpose. The Germans used the Great Dane as a boar hound. Europe's erstwhile boar was one of the most savage, swift, powerful and well armed of all big game on the Continent. To tackle the wild boar required a super dog, and that is precisely what the Germans developed. Those who fancy him speak of him as the king of dogs.

In common with all other breeds, the Great Dane's history of, and development to a modern standard type, began in the latter nineteenth century. In 1880 at Berlin, Dr. Bodinus called a meeting of Great Dane judges who declared that the breed should be known as *Deutsche dogge* and that all other designations, especially the term "Great Dane," should be abolished thereafter. So far as the German people are concerned this declaration has been observed, but English-speaking people have paid no heed. The Italians, who have a large Great Dane fancy, have also failed to give Germany credit for the name selected: Alano. This word means "a mastiff," consequently the name of their organization means "Mastiff Club of Italy." This, however, has not prevented close cooperation between fanciers of the two countries. The leading Italian breeders have based their operation on nothing but German imported stock or its descendants.

In 1891 the German breed club adopted a precise standard, or official description of the ideal specimen. In 1885 there was a Great Dane Club in England, and in 1889 at Chicago the German Mastiff or Great Dane Club of America was founded.

The Great Dane has developed steadily in popularity. He was never the rage outside of Germany in Bismarck's day; nevertheless, year after year all over the world he has slowly increased in numbers. The Germans have kept before them the stern business the boar bound must engage in. A merely "pretty" dog has not been enough. He must have size and weight, nobility and courage, speed and endurance. What more can one ask for in a dog?

A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament, and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function with soundness essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be mindful of features which could be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed.



*Fig. 1 General outline*

## **! GENERAL APPEARANCE**

***Very muscular, strongly though elegantly built, with look of dash and daring, of being ready to go anywhere and do anything. Head and neck carried high, tail in line with back, or slightly upwards, but never curled over hindquarters. Elegance of outline and grace of form most essential.***

Very muscular, strongly though elegantly built.

The Great Dane combines in its distinguished appearance dignity, strength and elegance with great size and a powerful, well formed, smoothly muscled body. This physical combination is the characteristic, which gives the Great Dane the majesty possessed by no other breed. The male should appear more massive throughout than the bitch, with larger frame and heavier bone.

A look of dash and daring, of being ready to go anywhere and do anything.

Alert, spirited, intelligent and courageous.

Elegance of outline and grace of form most essential.

The Great Dane is one of the giant breeds, but is unique in that its general conformation must be well balanced.



Fig. 2 Skeletal structure

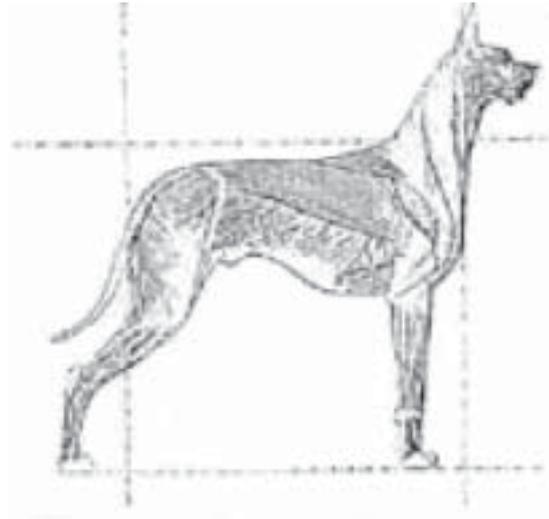


Fig. 3 Musculature

## ! CHARACTERISTICS

*Alert expression, powerful, majestic action displaying dignity.*

A Great Dane combines pride, strength and elegance in its noble appearance and big, strong, well-coupled body. It is the Apollo of all the breeds of dogs. The Great Dane strikes one by its very expressive head; it does not show any nervousness even in the greatest excitement and has the appearance of a noble statue.

## ! TEMPERAMENT

*Kindly without nervousness, friendly and outgoing.*

The Great Dane is friendly, loving and affectionate with his masters, especially with children, but cautious with strangers.

## ! HEAD AND SKULL

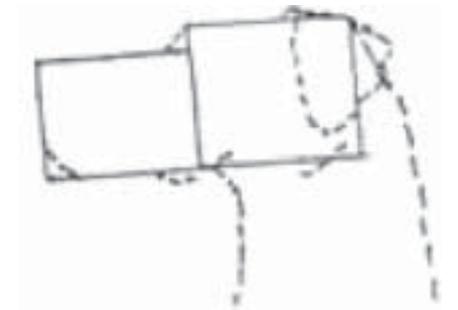
*Head, taken altogether, gives idea of great length and strength of jaw. Muzzle or foreface broad, skull proportionately narrow, so that whole head when viewed from above and in front, has appearance of equal breadth throughout. Length of head in proportion to height of dog. Length from nose to point between eyes about equal or preferably of greater length than from this point to back of occiput. Skull flat, slight indentation running up centre, occipital peak not prominent. Decided rise or brow over the eyes but not abrupt stop between them; face well-chiselled, well filled in below eyes with no appearance of being pinched. Foreface long, of equal depth throughout. Cheeks showing as little lumpiness as possible, compatible with strength. Underline of head, viewed in profile, runs almost in a straight line from corner of lip to corner of jawbone, allowing for fold of lip, but with no loose skin hanging down. Bridge of nose very wide, with slight ridge where cartilage joins bone (this is a characteristic of breed). Nostrils large, wide and open, giving blunt look to nose. Lips hang squarely in front, forming right-angle with upper line of foreface.*



*Fig. 4 Correct male head*



*Fig. 5 Correct female head*



*Fig. 6 Correct head shape side*



*Fig. 7 Front view*

***Head, taken altogether, gives idea of great length and strength of jaw:***

The head should be as long as possible, without the appearance of weakness, and as deep as possible, without losing the appearance of length.

***Muzzle or foreface broad, skull proportionately narrow, so that whole head when viewed from above and in front, has appearance of equal breadth throughout:***

The head, i.e. the skull and foreface, may be likened to two bricks of equal length and width, but with one having a greater depth than the other. Placed end to end on a flat surface, the difference in their depths produces the stop, and the similarity in their widths produces the appearance of equal width throughout.

***Length of head in proportion to height of dog:***

The head should be absolutely in proportion to the general appearance of the dog.

***Length from nose to point between eyes about equal or preferably of greater length than from this point to back of occiput.***

The measurement from the stop to the occiput should be almost exactly the same as that from the stop to the end of the nose. Preference is given to a slightly longer foreface. The measurement cannot be exactly defined, since it will vary in different specimens, in proportion to the size of the dog.

***Skull flat, slight indentation running up centre, occipital peak not prominent:***  
The skull should be angular when viewed from all sides, and should have definite flat planes with a slight indentation forward running up the centre to the only slightly developed occiput.

***Decided rise or brow over the eyes but not abrupt stop between them:***  
Viewed from the side, the skull should be sharply broken off from the foreface, with a decided rise of brow over the eyes, but with no abrupt stop in the areas between the eyes. The area between the eyes should appear as an indentation running up the centre to the only slightly developed occiput.

***Foreface long, of equal depth throughout:***  
Top of the foreface or muzzle must be level, neither "dish-faced" nor "down-faced".

***Cheeks showing as little lumpiness as possible, compatible with strength:***  
The muscles of the cheeks should be only visible, and never bunched or prominent. Obtrusive cheeks coarsen the appearance of the whole head, and destroy its classical contours.

***Underline of head, viewed in profile, runs almost in a straight line from corner of lip to corner of jawbone, allowing for fold of lip, but with no loose skin hanging down:***

The bottom line of the lip should be level with the bottom of the underjaw, and parallel to the top of the foreface, with allowances made for the actual fold of the lip. The skin covering the head should be tight enough so as not to allow any wrinkling or loose folds of skin.

***Bridge of nose very wide, with slight ridge where cartilage joins bone (this is a characteristic of breed):***

The bridge of the nose must be as broad as possible, as this sets the width for the entire foreface.

***Nostrils large, wide and open, giving a blunt look to nose:***  
Nostrils are large and wide to afford the dog sufficient breadth.

***Lips hang squarely in front, forming right-angle with upper line of foreface:***  
The muzzle should be blunt, the lips square, neither sagging and rounded (lippy), not too short and dry (snipey). The front of the lip should, as near as possible, form a right angle to both the top line of the foreface, and to the line of the bottom of the lip running back along the under jaw, always making allowance for the fold of the lip.

## **! EYES**

***Fairly deep set, not giving the appearance of being round, of medium size and preferably dark. Wall, or odd eyes permissible in harlequins.***



*Fig. 8 Correct eye shape*

They should be set moderately apart and likened to an almond shaped eye.

## ! EARS

*Triangular, medium size, set high on skull and folded forward, not pendulous.*

Size of the ear should be in proportion to size of dog, topline of ear about level with skull, not pendulous.



Fig. 9 Correct size and placement of eye.

## ! MOUTH

*Teeth level. Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.*

**Teeth level:** This is not to be interpreted as an even (or pincer) bite. **Jaws strong with a perfect, regular and complete scissor:** Jaws should be wide and deep to accommodate the large, well-developed teeth; full dentition should be present.



Fig. 10 Correct scissor bite

## ! NECK

*Neck long, well arched, quite clean and free from loose skin, held well up, well set in shoulders, junction of head and neck well defined.*

Always in proportion to the dog. The nape should be well-developed. The junction of head and neck should be clean, with no excess loose skin along the throat.



Fig. 11 Correct breast and front



Fig. 12 Correct neck

## ! FOREQUARTERS

**Shoulders muscular, not loaded, well-sloped back, with elbows well under body. Forelegs perfectly straight with big flat bone.**

**Shoulders muscular, not loaded, well sloped back:** The shoulders must be strong and sloping, and when viewed from the side, must form as nearly as possible a right-angle in its articulation with the humerus (upper arm) to give a long stride. A steep, straight open junction of the shoulder and upper arm has the practical disadvantage of making it impossible for the dog to open the shoulder and take long steps in a free, springy, graceful stride that should be so characteristic of the breed. Since all dogs lack a clavicle, the ligaments and muscles holding the shoulder blade to the rib cage must be well developed, firm and secure to prevent loose shoulders. Loaded or over-muscled shoulders, and similarly, loose, poorly muscled shoulders can cause the elbows to turn in or out and result in poor movement. **With elbows well under body:** A line from the upper tip of a correctly laid shoulder blade to the back of the elbow joint should be as nearly perpendicular as possible, demonstrating the elbows well under the body. **Forelegs perfectly straight:** From the side or front, the strong forelegs run absolutely straight to the pastern joint. From the front, the foreleg and pastern should form perpendicular lines to the ground. From the side, the pastern should slope only very slightly forward, thus providing the spring to save the dog from excessive fatigue. **With big flat bone:** The bone of the foreleg is wide when viewed from the side, and relatively narrower when viewed from the front of the dog. Not round bone, as in the Dalmatian.

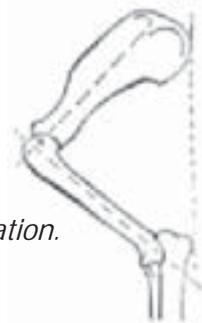


Fig. 13 Correct angulation.



Fig. 14 Muscular construction

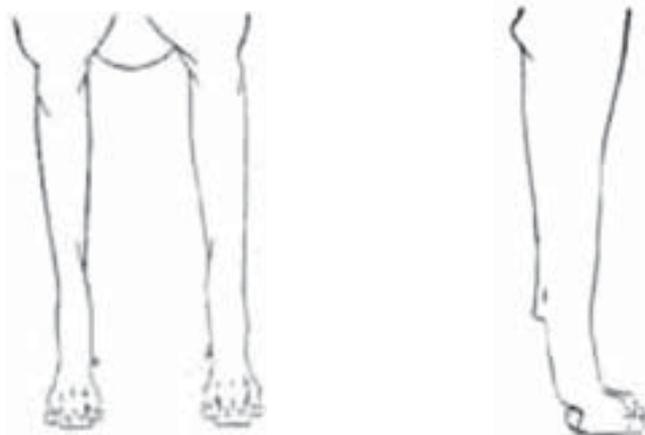


Fig. 15 Correct elbows forelegs and feet,

## ! BODY

**Very deep, brisket-reaching elbow, ribs well sprung, belly well drawn up. Back and loins strong, latter slightly arched.**

**Very deep, brisket reaching elbow:** At a point directly beneath the withers, the body, in the mature dog, is deep enough to reach the elbow. **Ribs well sprung:** The ribs are not "barrel", but broaden outwards from the spine to provide great capacity for the chest, after which they drop with only a slight convexity to the sternum, thus giving plenty of heart and lung room. The chest should extend forward and upwards from the elbows, filling the area between the upper arms and not having "a hole where the chest should be". **Belly well drawn up:** From the point of the elbow the underline of the body flows backward and upward to a well tucked up and well muscled belly. This tuck up should not be extreme, nor approach the outline of a Greyhound. **Back and loins strong, latter slightly arched:** The croup should be wide and strong. It should be long and sweeping, gradually dropping to the insertion of the tail. This croup must not be flat, nor should it fall away too steeply.

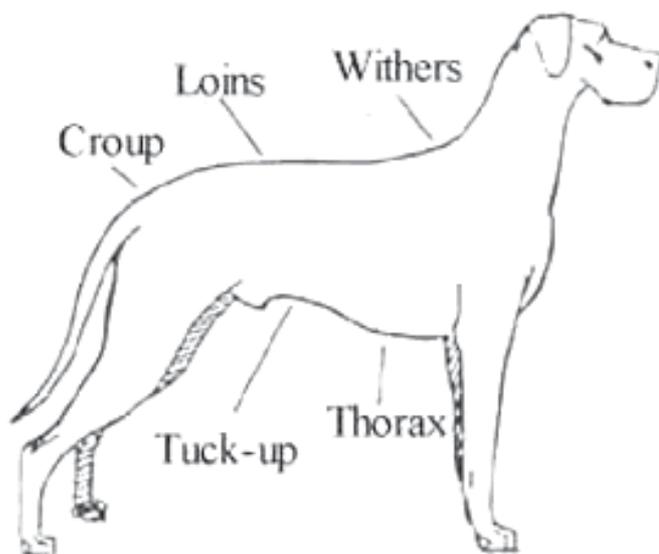


Fig. 16 Correct body type.

## ! HINDQUARTERS

***Extremely muscular, giving strength and galloping power. Second thigh long and well developed, good turn of stifle, hocks set low, turning neither in nor out.***

***Extremely muscular, giving strength and galloping power.*** The first thigh (from the hip joint to the stifle) is broad and muscular and should drop nearly vertically from its junction with the pelvis. ***Second thigh long and well developed, good turn of stifle, hocks set low, turning neither in nor out:*** The second thigh (from stifle to hock) is strong, long and muscular and should join the first thigh at an angle of approximately 120 degrees at the stifle joint, with the hocks well let down and extending vertically to the foot without angling forward. Viewed from the rear, the hocks should turn neither in nor out



Fig. 17 Correct rear angulation.

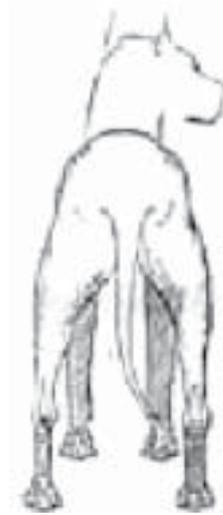


Figure 18 Correct rear view.

## ! FEET

***Cat-like, turning neither in nor out. Toes well arched and close, nails strong and curved. Nails preferably dark in all coat colours, except harlequins, where light are permissible.***

***Cat-like, turning neither in nor out:*** They are roundish, and turn neither in nor out when viewed from the front. ***Toes well arched and close, nails strong and curved.*** The toes must be deep, tightly knuckled and close together. They should have thick, horny pads to provide good cushioning to the foot during long hunts over hard and rough ground. ***Except harlequins, where light is permissible:*** Harlequins will always have white nails, unless they have black pigment on the feet.



Fig. 19 Well arched feet

## ! TAIL

***Thick at the root, tapering towards end, reaching to or just below hocks. Carried in straight line level with back, when dog is moving, slightly curved towards end, but never curling or carried over back.***

Only reaching to the hocks, should be broad at root, but tapering to a point, hanging down straight at rest, slightly curved (sabre-like) in excitement or in running.



Fig. 20 Correct tail at rest.



Fig. 21 Correct tail – Alert.

## ! GAIT/MOVEMENT

***Action lithe, springy and free, covering ground well. Hocks move freely with driving action, head carried high.***

***Action lithe, springy and free, covering ground well:*** Long, easy, springy stride with no tossing or rolling of the body. The back line should move smoothly, parallel to the ground, with minimum rise and fall. The natural and correct gait for the Dane is the trot, which the dog should be able to exhibit. ***Hocks move freely with driving action, head carried high:*** The gait of the Great Dane should denote strength and power, showing good driving action in the hindquarters and good reach in front. As speed increases there is a natural tendency for the legs to converge towards the centre line of balance beneath the body, but there should be no twisting in or out at the joints. The hind feet should not overlap the front feet. The head is carried high, but within reason. A dog with a well-angulated shoulder may not carry his head as high as one with a straight shoulder. The Standard calls for a well-angulated shoulder, so a dog that can run with his head and neck bolt upright, may not be as structurally correct as one with a lower, or more forward, head carriage.



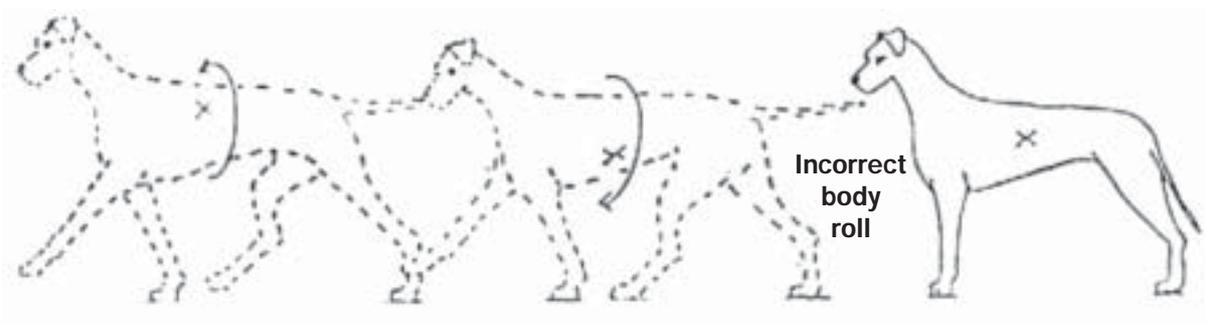
*Fig 22 Correct movement*



*Fig. 23 Correct front extension.*



*Fig. 24 Flexing of the hock.*



*Fig. 25 Showing body roll – Incorrect.*



Fig. 26 Movement front

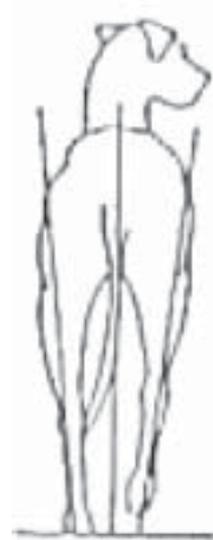


Fig. 27 Movement rear.

## ! COAT

***Short dense and sleek looking, never inclined to roughness.***

The correct Dane coat is short, hard, dense and crisp. It is free from all hint of lint or woolliness.

***COLOUR - Brindles - must be striped, ground colour from lightest buff to deepest orange, Fawns colour varies from lightest buff to deepest orange, dark shadings on head and ears acceptable, eyes and nails preferably dark. Blues - colour varies from light grey to deep slate; the nose and eyes may be blue. Blacks - black is black. In all above colours white is only permissible on chest and feet, but it is not desirable even there. Nose always black, except in blues and harlequins. Eyes and nails preferably dark. Harlequins - pure white underground with preferably all black patches or all blue patches, having appearance of being torn. Light nails permissible but not desirable. Mantle - Black and white with a solid, black blanket extending over the body. Ideally- black skull with white muzzle, white blaze optional, whole white collar preferred, a white chest, white on part or whole of the forelegs and hindlegs, white tipped black tail. Nose always black, eyes and nails preferably dark.***

In all above colours except Harlequin and Mantle, white is only permissible on chest and feet, but it is not desirable even there. Nose always black, except in blues and harlequins. Eyes and nails preferably dark.

***Blue:*** Colour varies from light grey to deep slate, without any tinge of yellow, black or mouse grey. Nose, pads, ear leather, eye rims and nails must be blue. Lighter eye is common, because blue is a dilution gene. White markings on chest and toes permitted but are not desirable.

***Harlequin:*** Base colour is pure white with all black or all blue torn patches distributed irregularly over the entire body. These patches should never be large enough to give the appearance of a blanket, nor so small as to give a stippled or dappled effect. (Permitted are a few small grey spots, which are a result of the merling gene).

Nails are usually white. Wall eyes, pink noses and butterfly noses (all outward expressions of the "clearing" gene which clears merle base coat colour to white) are permitted but not desirable. **Wall or odd eyes permissible in Harlequins:** In Harlequins, the gene series that clears the coat colour to white can also clear eye colour from brown to blue. The eye colour should preferably be dark, but wall (blue), odd, or parti-coloured eyes are permissible. This same "clearing" gene can also produce unpigmented third eyelids, which should not be confused with the true "haw" eye. Mantle- Black and white with a solid, black blanket extending over the body. Ideally- black skull with white muzzle, white blaze optional, whole white collar preferred, a white chest, white on part or whole of the forelegs and hind legs, white tipped black tail. Nose always black, eyes and nails preferably dark.

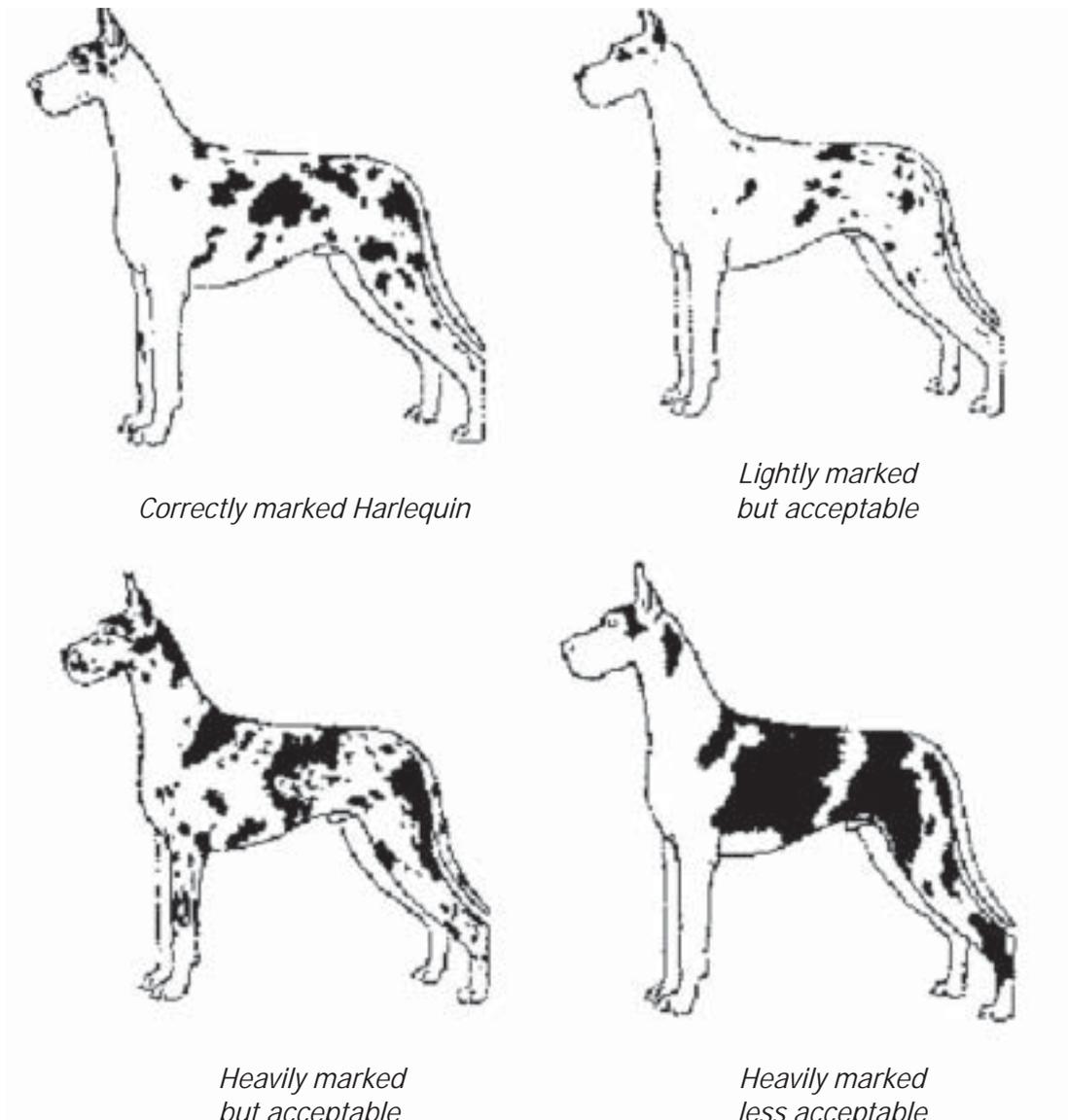
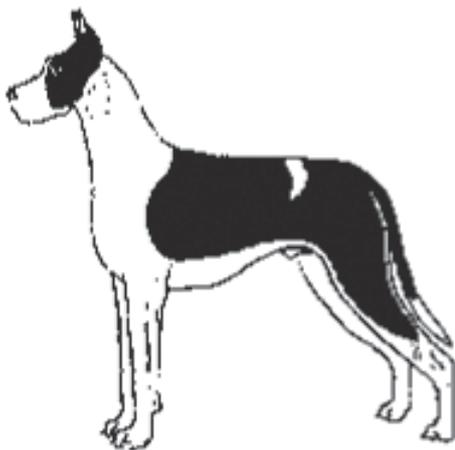


Fig. 28 – Illustrations of Harlequin markings

Ideally marked Mantle



Figures 2 and 3 incorrect, these show a broken blanket. Figures 4 and 5 are in the acceptable range of variations as defined in the standard for the Mantle Great Dane.



*Fig. 2*



*Fig. 3*



*Fig. 4*



*Fig. 5*

*Fig. 29 Illustrations of Mantle Markings.*

## **! SIZE**

**Height:**     **Adult Dogs:**     **76 cms (30 ins) over eighteen months**  
                  **Adult Bitches:** **71 cms (28 ins) over eighteen months**

**Weight:**     **Minimum Adult Dogs:** **54 kg (120 lbs) over eighteen months**  
                  **Adult Bitches:**             **46 kg (100 lbs) over eighteen months**

As it is stated, as a minimum height. However, both sexes tend to exceed these minimums, but not at the expense of soundness and balance. Mere height at the shoulder should not be the criterion of excellence.

## **! 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.***

## **! NOTE**

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

Note: The Standard is written with an adult Great Dane in mind; however, consideration should be given to the growing patterns of Great Dane puppies, during the 6 to 12 months period.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Great Dane Club of America Inc for the kind permission to use illustrations – Figures 28 and 29.

Great Dane Club of Victoria Inc for the kind permission to use all other illustrations