

# Nuances of the Cane Corso by Renzo Carosio

Following the golden rule of dogdom “form follows function” the Cane Corso was required to be a large, sturdy and substantial dog with heavy bone. When I say large I don't mean like the Great Dane or English Mastiff. He is large and compact at the same time; he must be agile and skeletally sturdy. I liken the Cane Corso to the Lioness, not the Lion (that would be his cousin, the Neapolitan Mastiff) the Lioness must be fast and agile enough to catch a Gazelle but also strong enough to confront a Zebra or Water Buffalo. When evaluating taller subjects, it is important to note if the dog has grown in proportion. Meaning; does he have sufficient bone, volume of skull and width of chest? As these areas can be lacking in taller subjects. The extremely large (mastiff-fy) type dogs tend to lose their athleticism and agility and have too much loose skin. The smaller dogs tend to lack bone and substance. While the smaller subjects may move better that does not necessarily make them the best Cane Corso.

The important angles and proportions of the Cane Corso dictate that your first impression be; the volume of his head is disproportionally large in comparison to the rest of the dog. He tends toward Brachimorph. The head to muzzle ratio is 2/3 to 1/3 with the length of the head be equal to the length of the neck. Another “essential characteristic” in type in the Cane Corso is the angles of his skull. The Cane Corso is slightly convergent, like a boxer or Bull Mastiff. He is not parallel like the Great Dane or Neapolitan Mastiff and never divergent like the Bull Terrier or Borzoi. You should be able to draw a slightly convergent/descending imaginary line from the occiput meeting at the tip of the nose (with the muzzle on a level plane) The Muzzle should be wide and deeper than it is long. It should not be so wide that the subject looks like a marine mammal rather than a dog. The bite of the Cane Corso should be undershot, but not more than a quarter inch, that means up to a ¼ inch! His incisors should be in a relatively straight line with the canines angled away from each other (divergent). This creates an immovable serrated bite. The teeth are supposed to be big and white with no more than 2 missing. Level and scissors bite are acceptable provided all parameters of the skull are correct. More important than what is inside the dog's mouth is whether he has correct angles, proportions and type. A dog that has good type and a scissors bite is much more desirable than a dog that has a head like a Doberman Pincher and a undershot bite.

The breed is longer than it is tall, but not as long as the midtown express train. He has a slight drop (15 degrees) at his croup this is to accommodate drive. The Cane Corso has MODERATE angulation. He is somewhere in between a Bull mastiff and a Boxer. It is important that he be balanced; the rear and shoulder angulation should be in harmony with each other. A dog that has no rear or front angulation would be balanced, but not correct. He has a well developed thorax; the width of his chest should be 35% of the height at the withers, with substantial bone.

The Cane Corso comes in 4 base colors black, fawn/red, gray/blue and brindles. The Black dogs can have brindling (as with all colors in this breed) he should have a dark eye. A black brindle can have a little lighter eye as the eye color matches the brindle in this breed. Fawn/red In actuality the dilute fawn is more common than red. Red/fawn Cane Corso's will have a black mask. The mask must never exceed the eyes. Again, the eye color matches the coat. One of the more interesting color patterns that the Cane Corso occurs in would be blue fawn, in Italy this color pattern is referred to as Formentino (slang for the color of fermented wheat) This is essentially a washed out or carbon colored fawn that will have a blue nose and mask. Gray/Blue- This color comes in different shades that range from plumb, slate to light gray. They also have self coloring eyes, in some cases the eye is as dark as brown. As a dilute color, blue dogs will have a blue nose and toe nails. Just as common if not more so would be blue brindle. Again the eyes are self coloring, as with all brindle dogs the eye will match the color of the brindle. Brindles- Brindle dogs generally have a mask that is the color of the darkest part of the brindle. The eye, again, is self coloring matching the brindle. The Cane Corso unlike the Rottweiler does NOT come with an eye color chart, the eyes are self coloring, they match the coat.

To say the Cane Corso is a “head” breed would in truth only be telling half the story. The breeds head is certainly an “essential Characteristic of type” but so is its movement. His movement is the

vehicle in which he delivers the business end of the Cane Corso (his jaws) to its appointed task. The breed has powerful reach and drive, part of his noble expression is demonstrated in his movement. The Cane Corso should move effortlessly and appear surprisingly light on his feet for such a robust dog. He near single tracks, his movement is that of an elongated trotter. The tail is held as an extension of the top line. It never stands straight up like a candle stick.

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