

# ‘Type’ in the Bull Terrier

By W. E. Mackay-Smith





For the Judge's Forum at the 2006 Silverwood, I was asked to do a presentation on "Breed Type". My first thought was... We can do the difficult right away... the impossible takes a little longer! With the help of our friend and fellow bull terrier enthusiast, Matthew Klein, we have put together a presentation which will, I hope, make it easier to see "type".

The largest problem is that "type is something which the eye recognizes. It is a visual rendition of the description in the Standard.

Our breed is at a crossroad at the present. By breeding for size, scope and more gliding movement, we have departed from the basics in our breed standard. As breeders and judges we have to make an effort to move back toward the Standard.

First, we have to be able to recognize a "typy" bull terrier when we see one.

Secondly, if you are fortunate enough to have a "typy" animal in your kennel or in your entry, it should receive extra consideration for its adherence to the Standard.

In my years of breeding and judging I have always given a "bonus" to those animals which were "typy".... and in doing this I have had to forgive some obvious faults. To me, breed type is the ultimate virtue. The bull terrier on our title page is Ch. Abraxas Athenia.. an oldie but goodie!



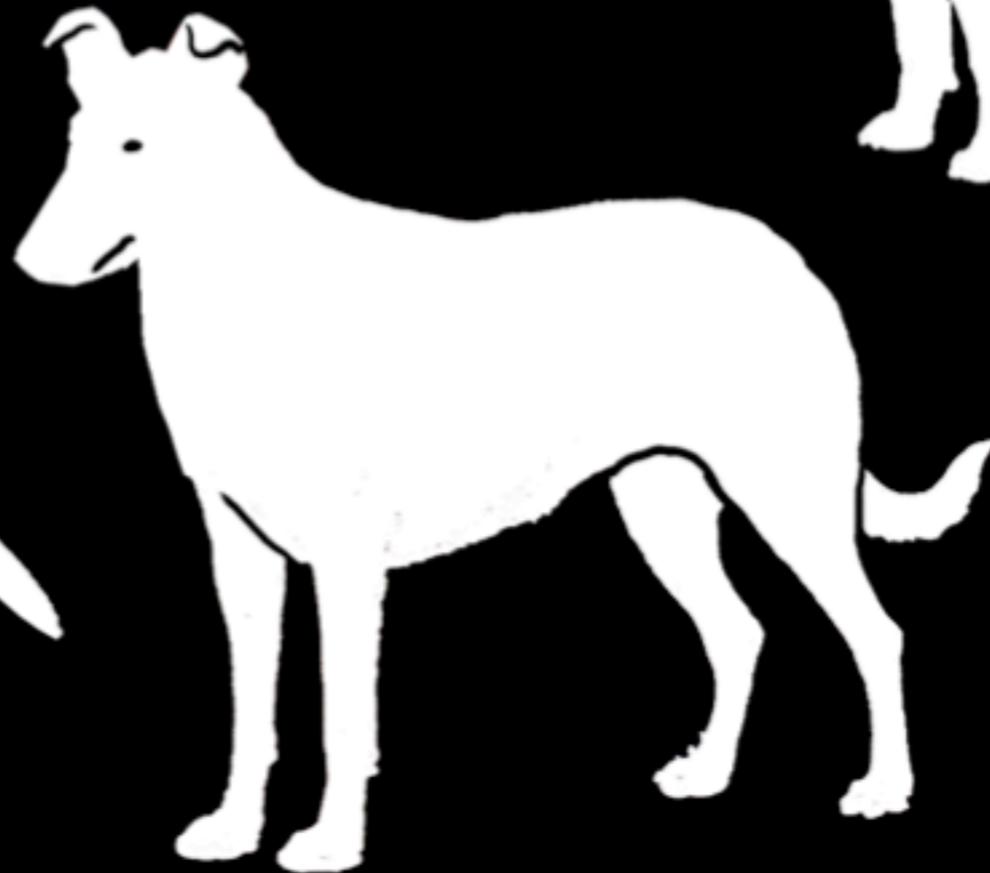
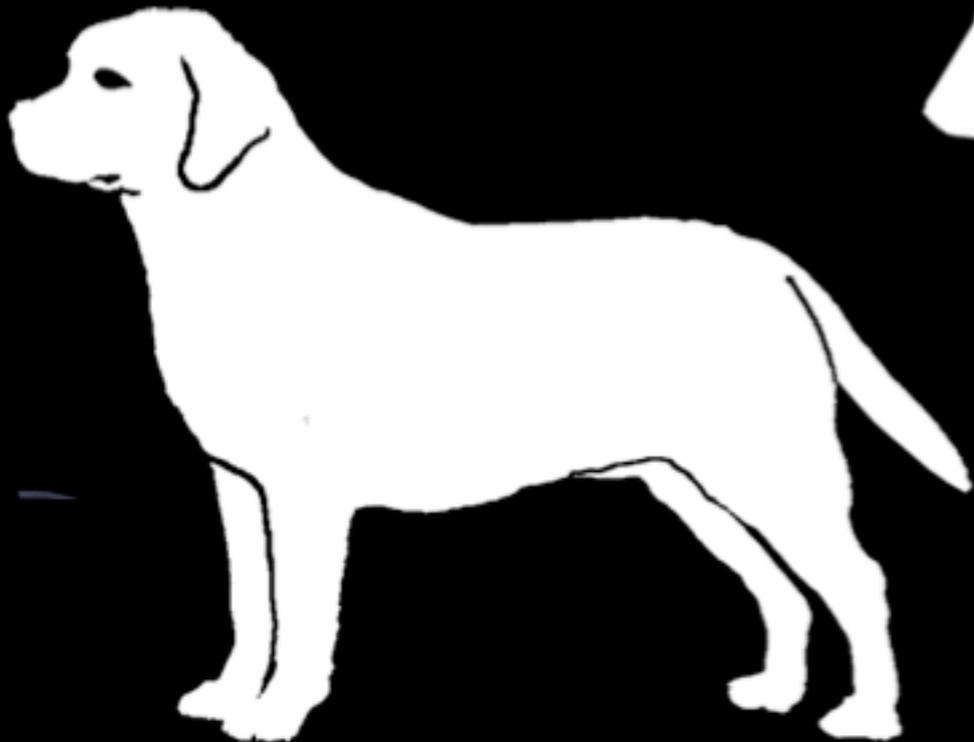
In simple terms: Breed type is a combination of a particular body type, and a uniquely shaped head with a “varminty” expression. The head is somewhat large in proportion to the body. I will add here that there should be a distinctive outlook and attitude which is most tellingly displayed in stance and gait.

We can start with a mostly “for fun” display which should lead us to the heart of the matter.

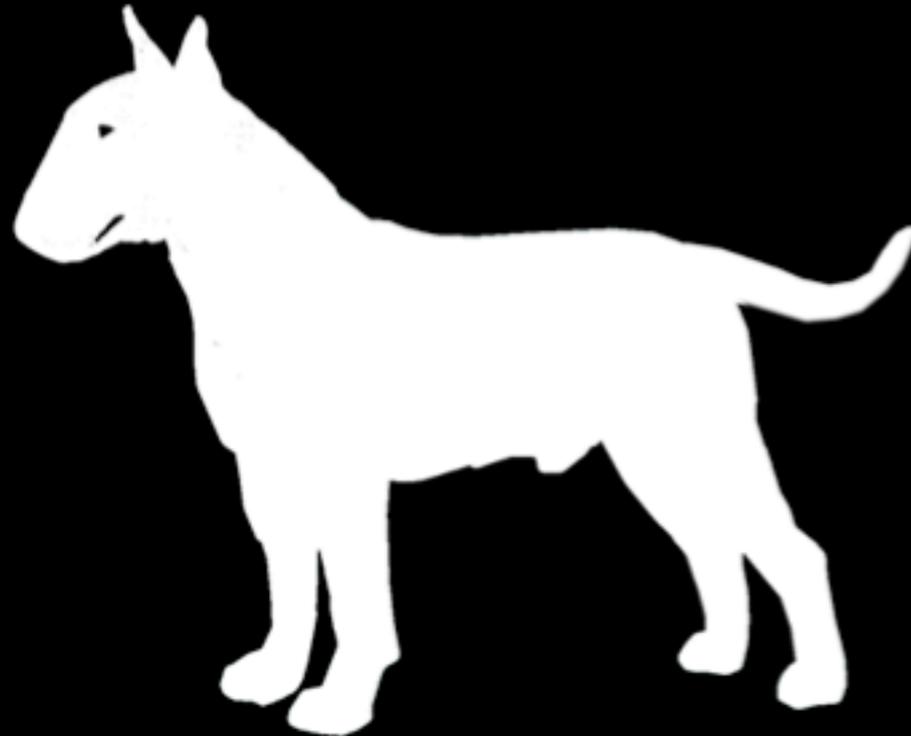
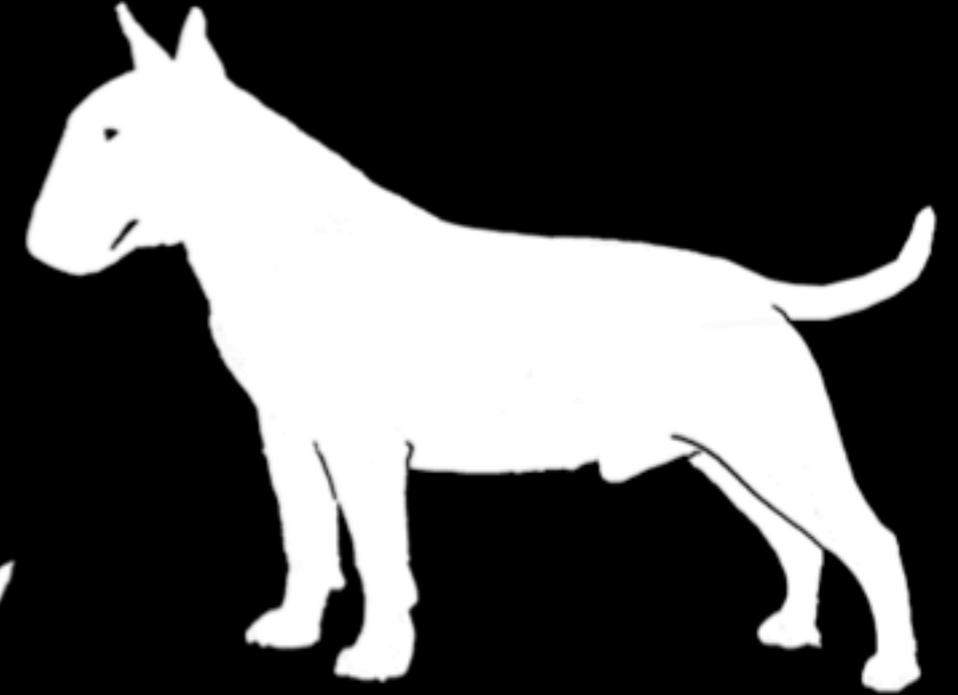
Here we have a  
ridiculously simple  
graphic. It is a “no  
brainer” to find the bull  
terrier in this group!

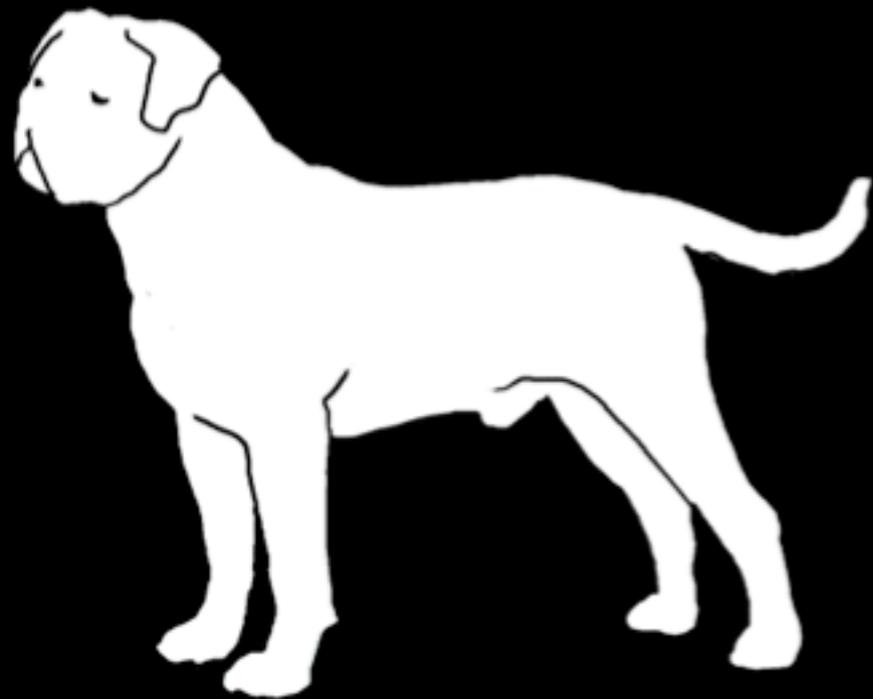
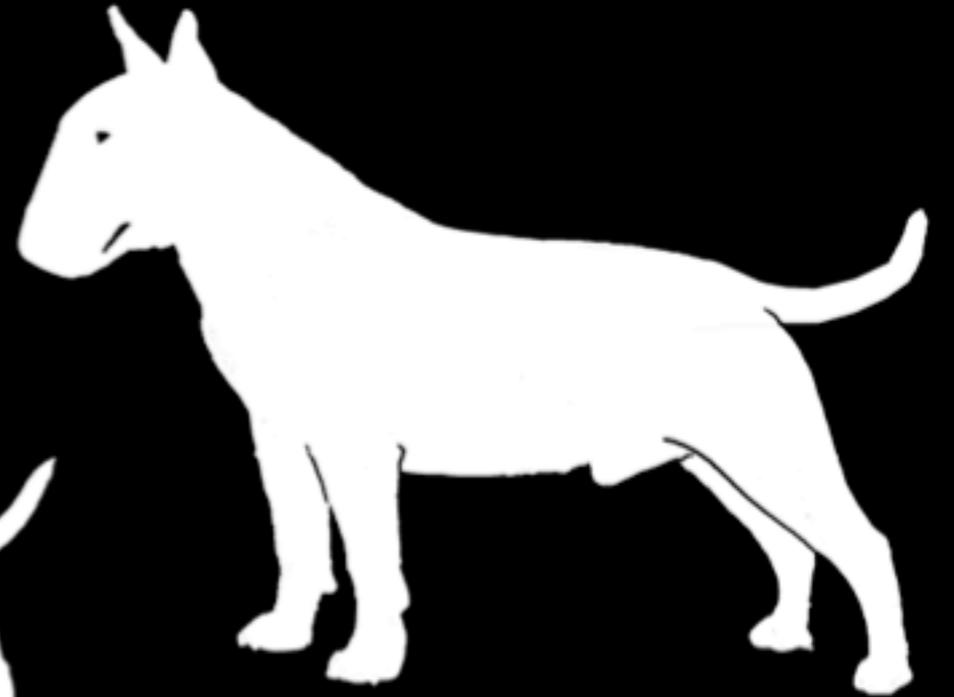


Here again there is very little problem in finding our bull terrier. The tip-off is, of course, the head, but the body style is just as unique, and recognizable as “typy”.

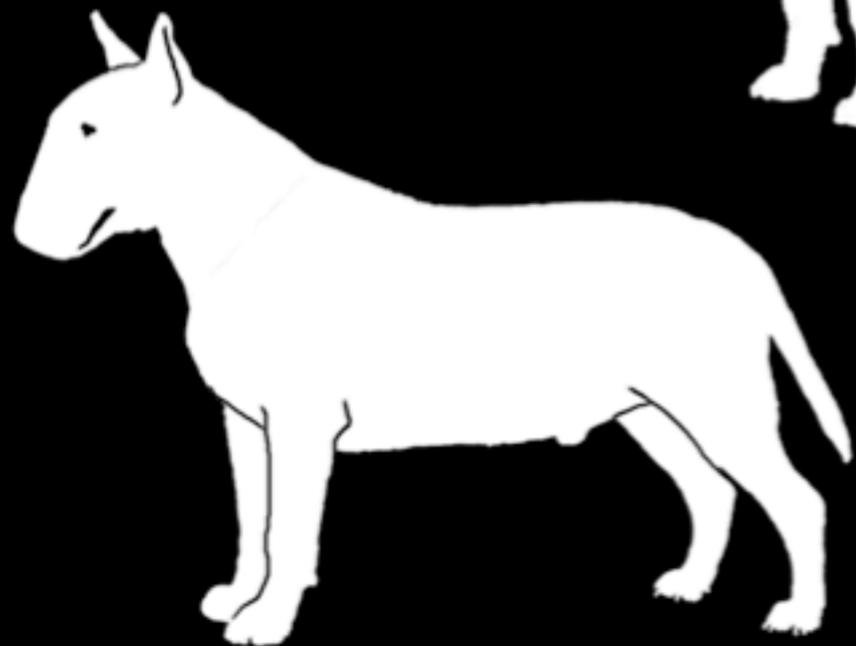
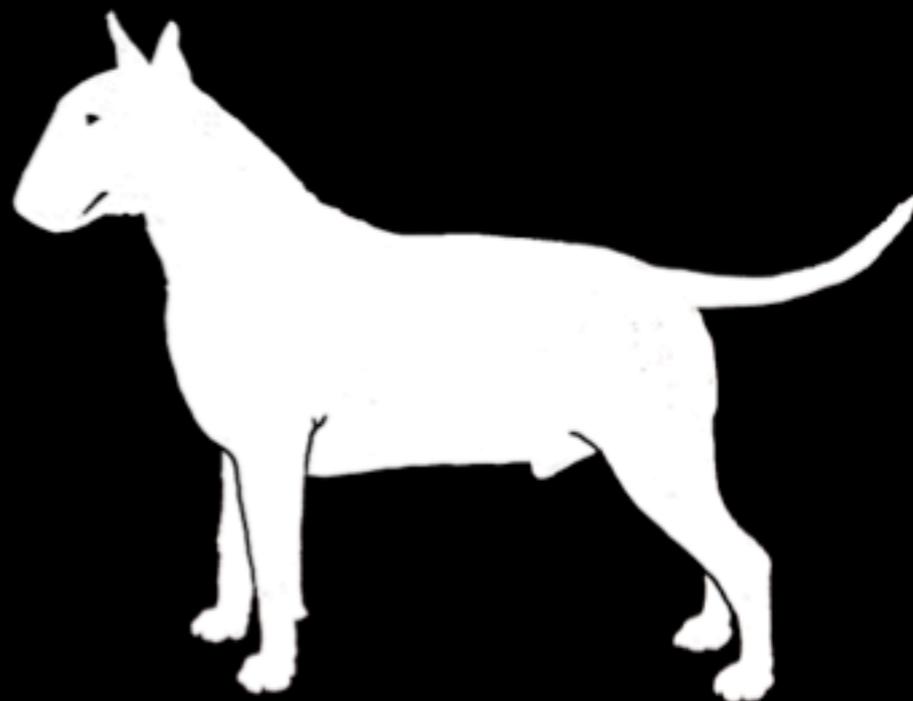
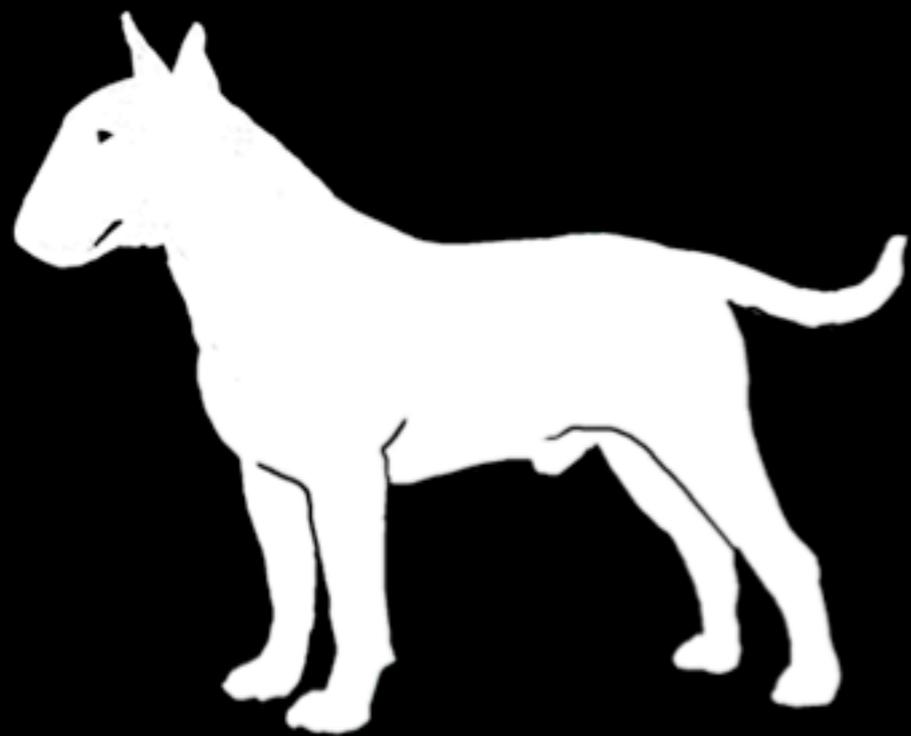


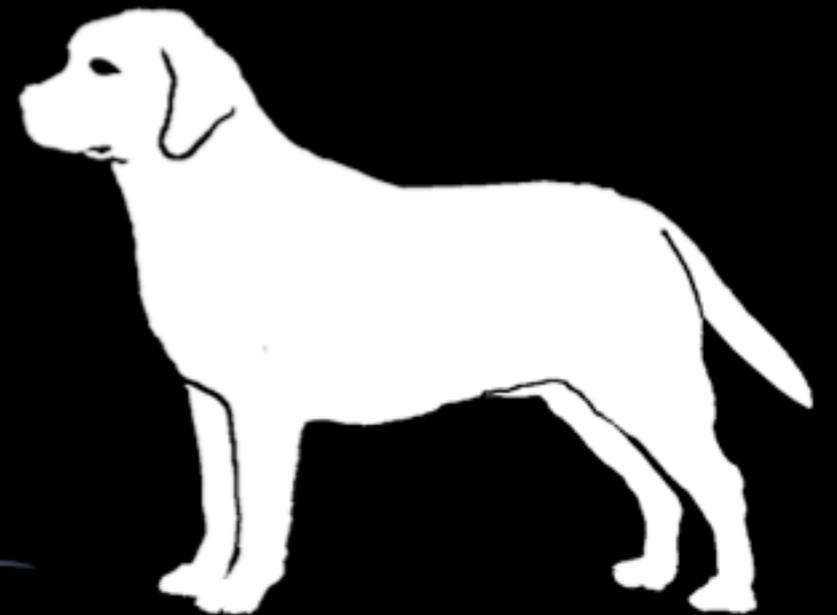
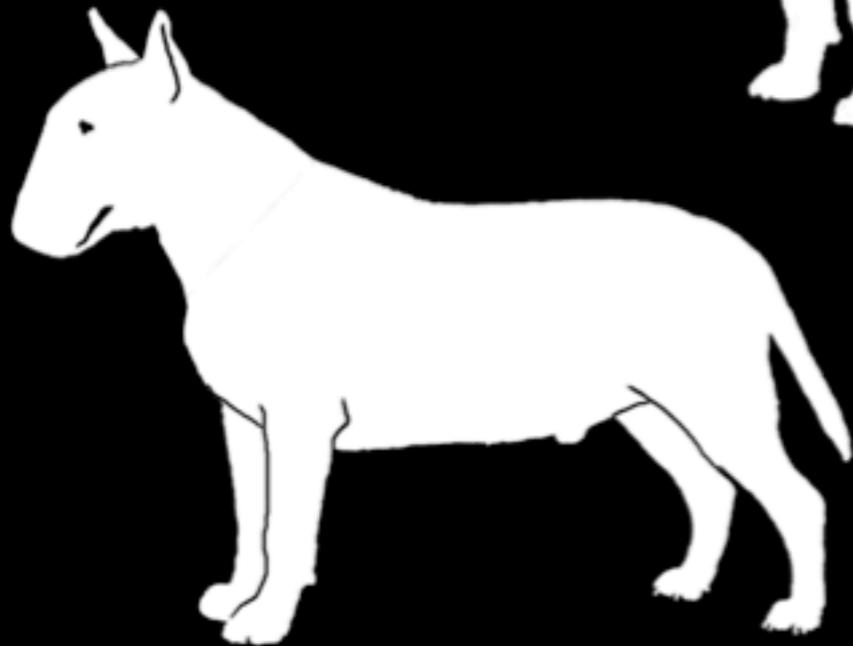
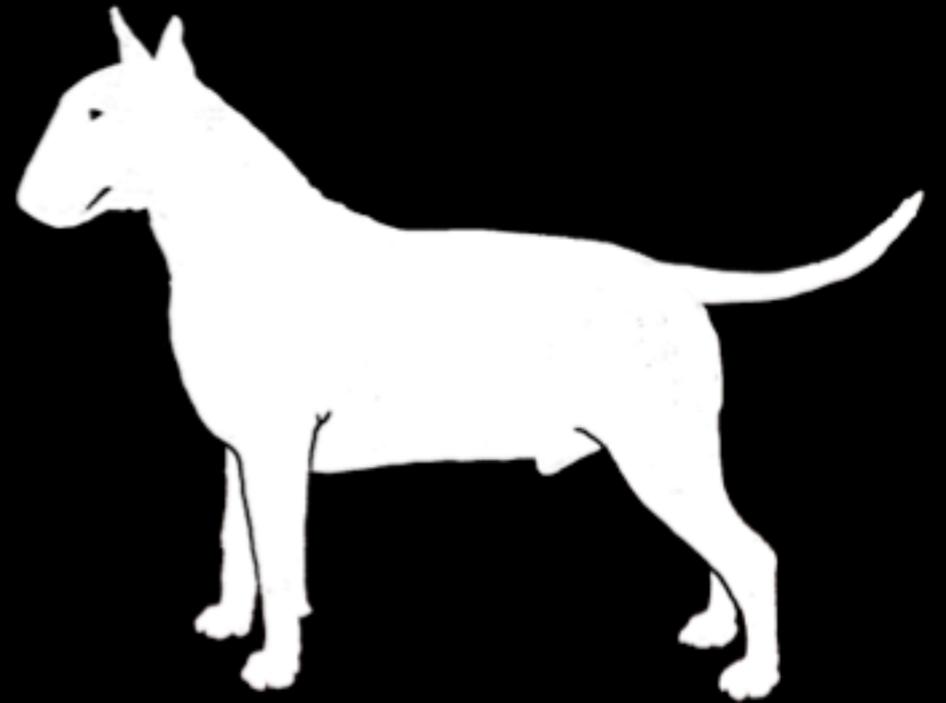
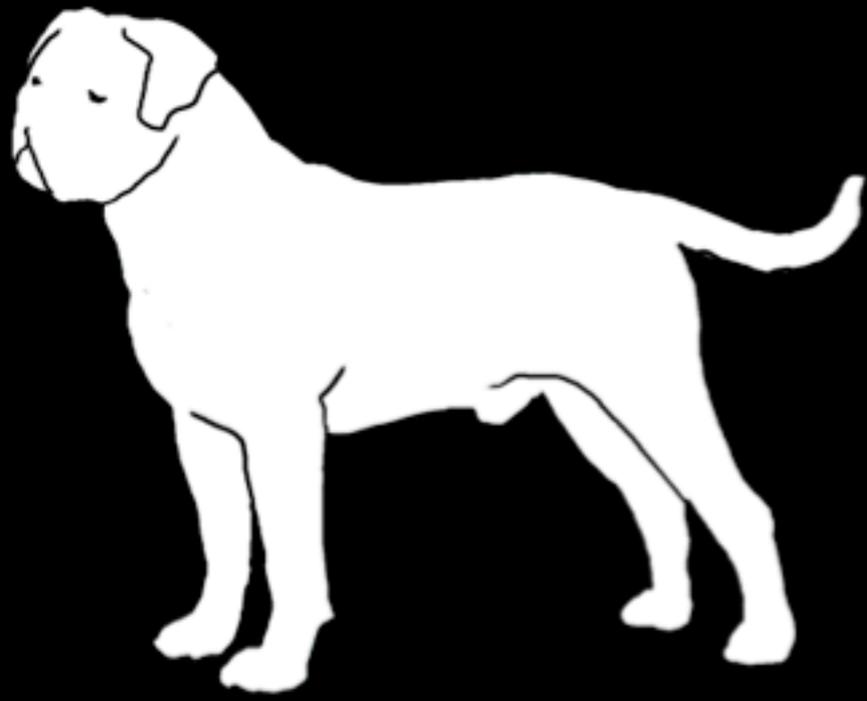
There is a bull terrier in this collection.  
Chances are that you will quickly settle on  
the outline which couldn't be anything  
BUT a bull terrier.  
The next graphic should verify your  
choice.





The next two slides can be shown in sequence. In the first slide, guess which one is the bull terrier. Is there some guesswork involved, or is it a “slam dunk”?

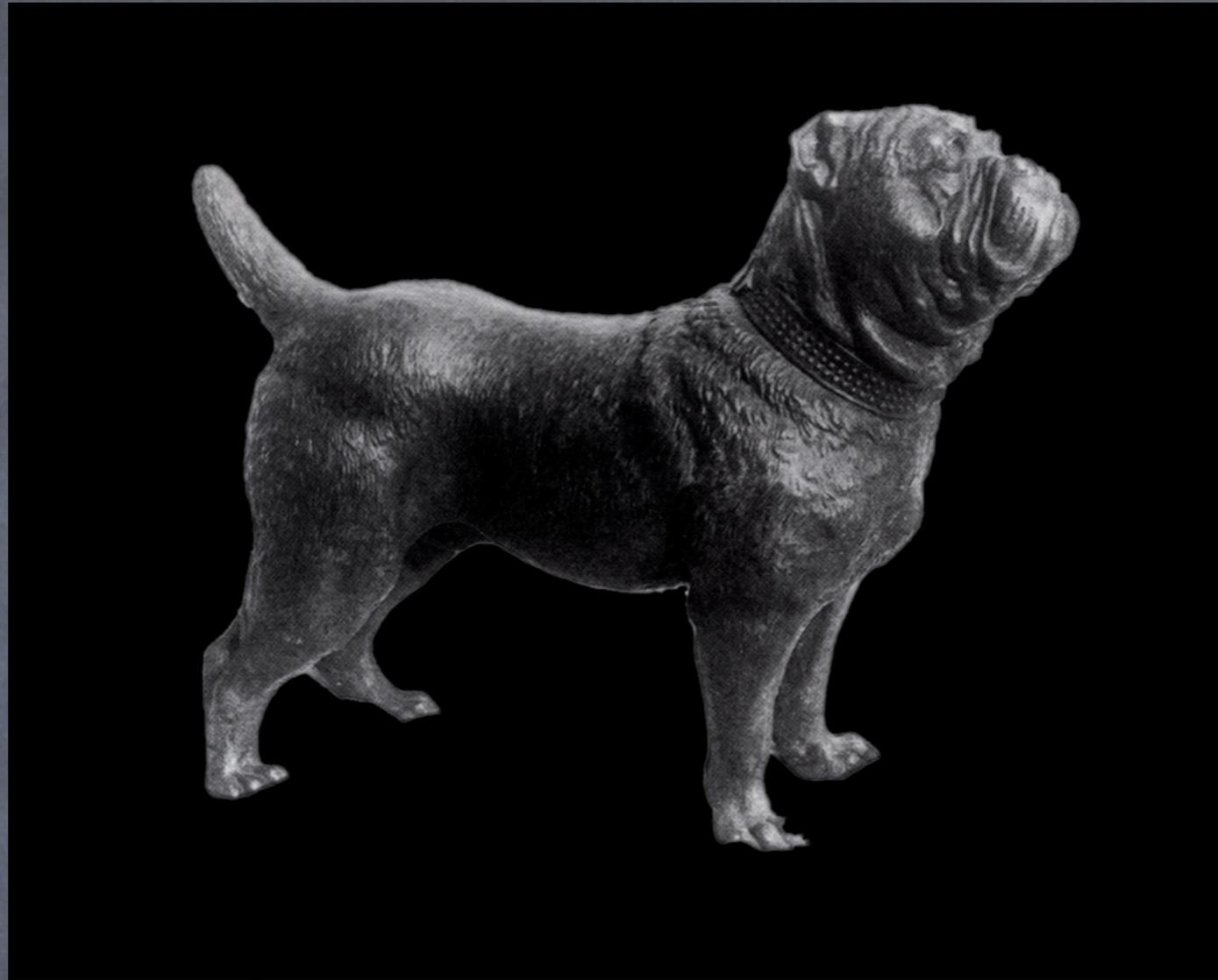




Maybe you guessed that there was more than one bull terrier in the first of the last two slides, and maybe you didn't. I would venture to say that even if, after some consideration, you picked out the three bull terriers in this graphic, the first one that you picked out was the one in the middle... the one that is the typical.

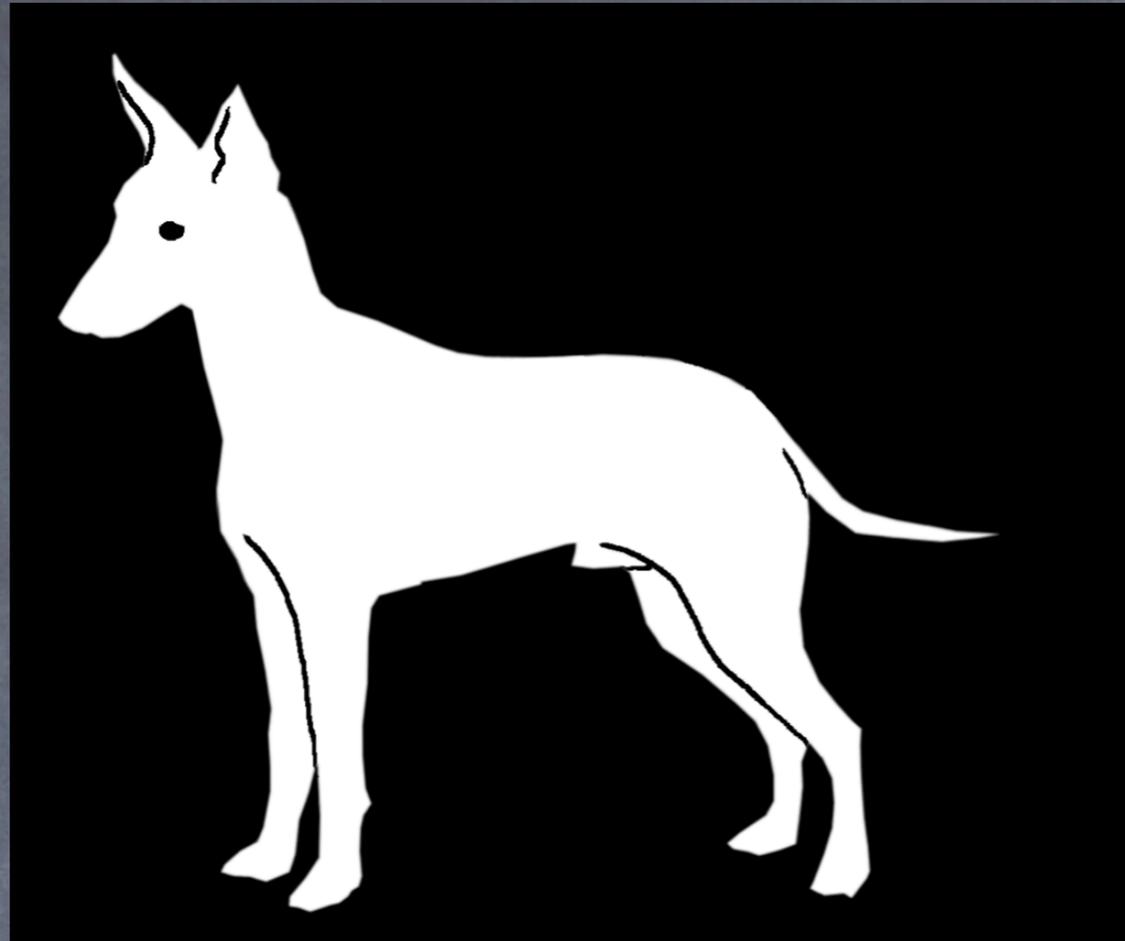
Now we will go back.... to the "BIG BANG"

The bull terrier, originally the "bull and terrier" is a merging of three different breeds which are ideally blended to be the dog which is described in our Breed Standard.



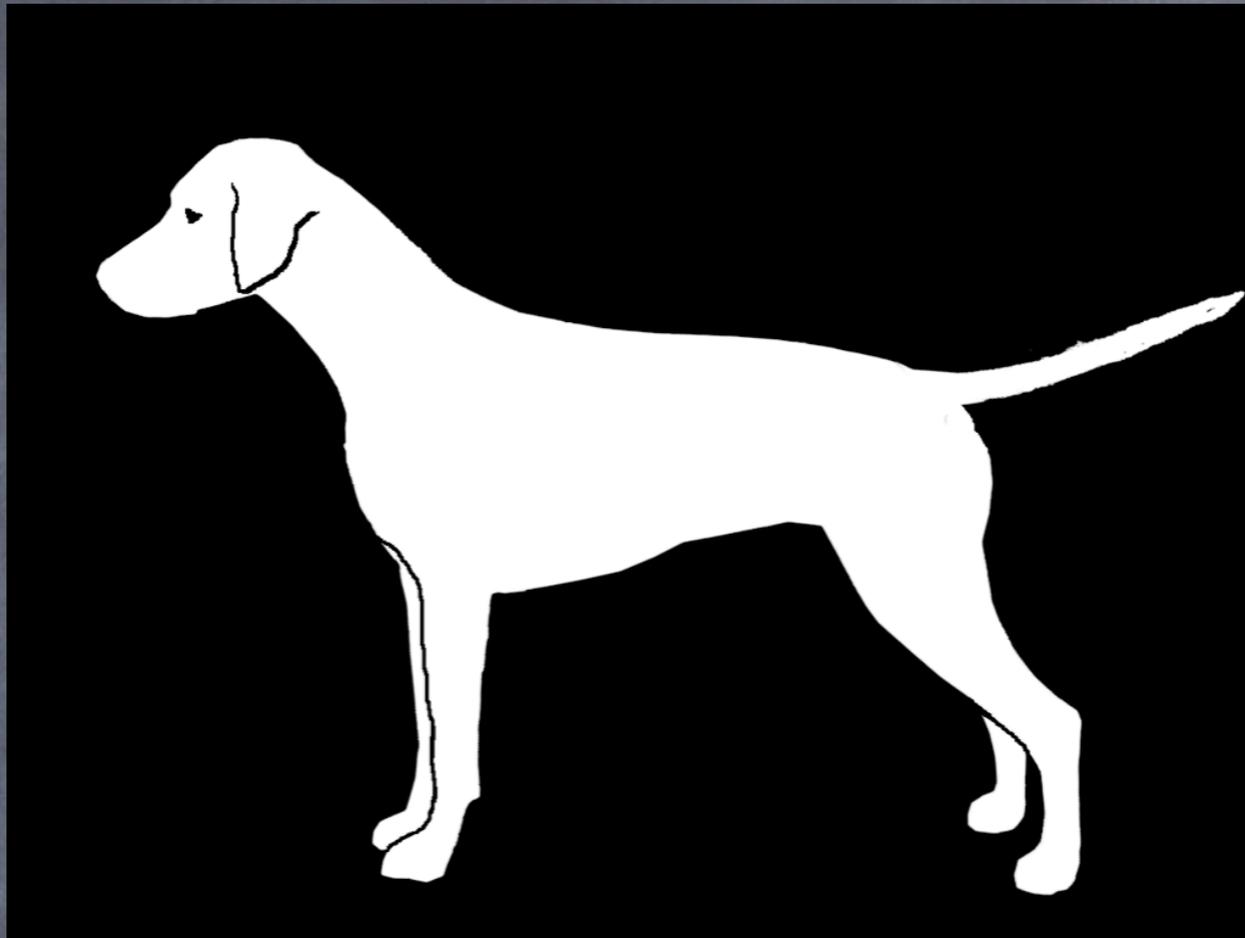
### The Old Fashioned Bulldog

The bulldog, highly regarded in the 1800's for its strength and tenacity, brings several things to the table, It had heavier than average bone, dense musculature, and a short back with an arched loin, indicating extra strength in the lower back. In short, it was neither graceful nor fast, but it was constructed to “grab hold” and “sit against” an adversary. In addition it had a proportionately larger head, and great power of jaw and neck.



Old English White Terrier

The terrier which was crossed with the bulldog was the Old English White, which was small, agile, and by and large, correctly made, with a short back and straight limbs. These terriers were largely used to find and kill small vermin, such as rats. This required a high degree of agility, but not brute muscular strength. The English Whites brought a smoother musculature, alertness and quickness, but doubled up on the short back, strength over the loin, and shapeliness.



Dalmatian (without spots!)

How much dalmatian is blended into our breed can only be a guess, but we can assume there is some, as we see many individuals today which exhibit the grace and elegance of the dalmatian as well as different proportions of body parts when compared to our bull and terrier. With more elegant necks and smooth shoulders, they have contributed a “style”, but with proportionately longer backs and legs, and a proportionately smaller headpiece.

This completes the three breed sub-types which are merged into the dog described in our Standard, which we recognize as a “typy” bull terrier.



To our predecessors who wrote the Breed Standard, the written description of the ideal bull terrier paints the picture of their ideal type. It covers, in one sentence, the three points I have just made, and without going into a list of “body parts” it says:

“The Bull terrier must be strongly built, muscular and symmetrical.”

This, of course, refers to body type in the most general terms, but it is a good basis to build on in a discussion of how the parts fit together to produce a “typy” animal.

In regard to the phrase “Strongly Built” the Standard says:

“The chest should be broad from the front and have great depth from the withers to the brisket so that the latter is nearer the ground than the belly...the underline should form a graceful upward curve...the body well rounded with a marked spring of rib...the back should be short and strong - back ribs deep - slightly arched over the loin... Shoulders strong and muscular without heaviness. Shoulder blades wide and flat with a pronounced backward slope from the bottom edge of the blade to the top edge. Behind the shoulders there should be no slackness or dip at the withers”

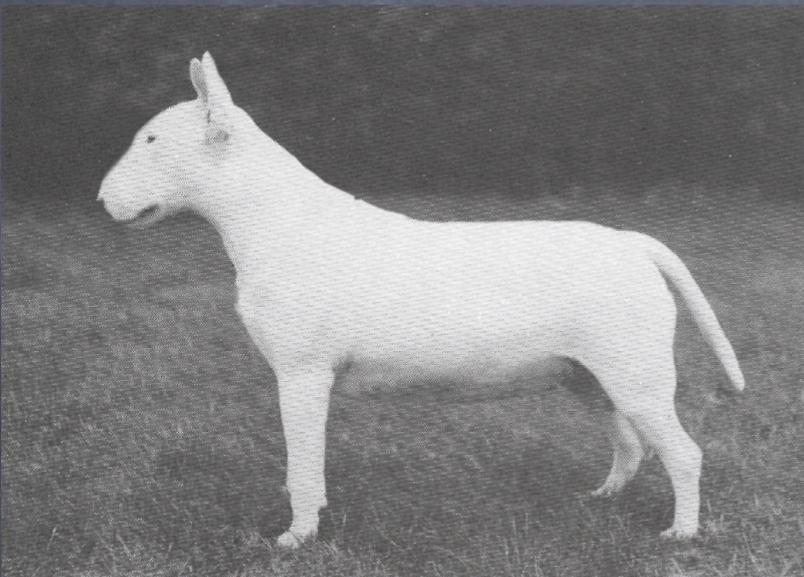


We interpret the description in the Standard as calling for a dense, cobby individual with emphasis on strength and athleticism.

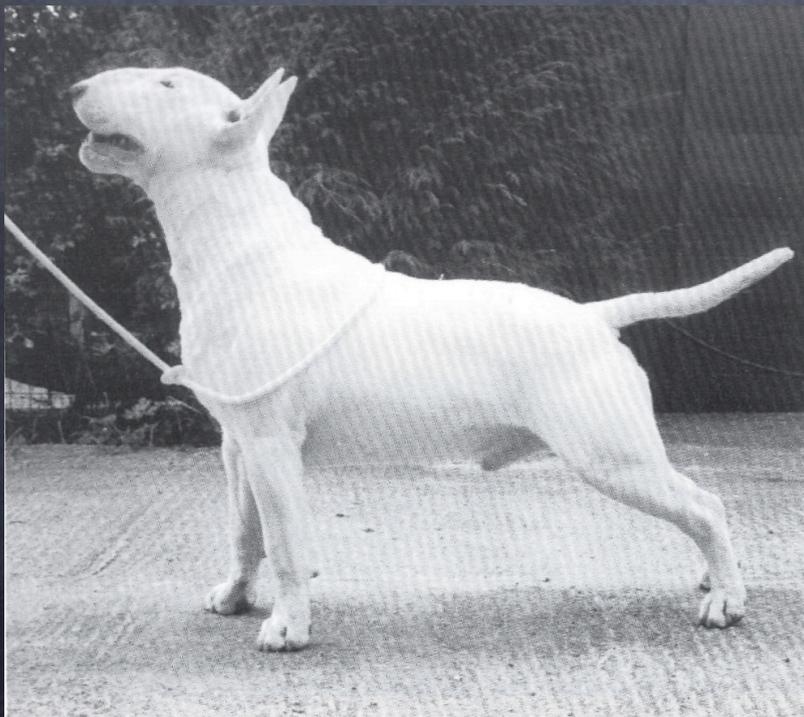
“Strongly built” with a “wide chest”, “short back”, “slightly arched over the loin”... This description with the additional details of: “depth of brisket” which refers to the ribcage, “graceful underline” and “slope of shoulder” tells us exactly which virtues should be combined in our hybrid “bull and terrier” to exhibit the epitome of body “type”.



The other adjective used in the Standard's general description is "symmetrical". Many breeds can be described as "symmetrical"; the Labrador, the Collie, even the Pug! But we have the carefully described details in the Standard which must be present in our "symmetrical" animal. In times gone by, this was described as "make and shape"



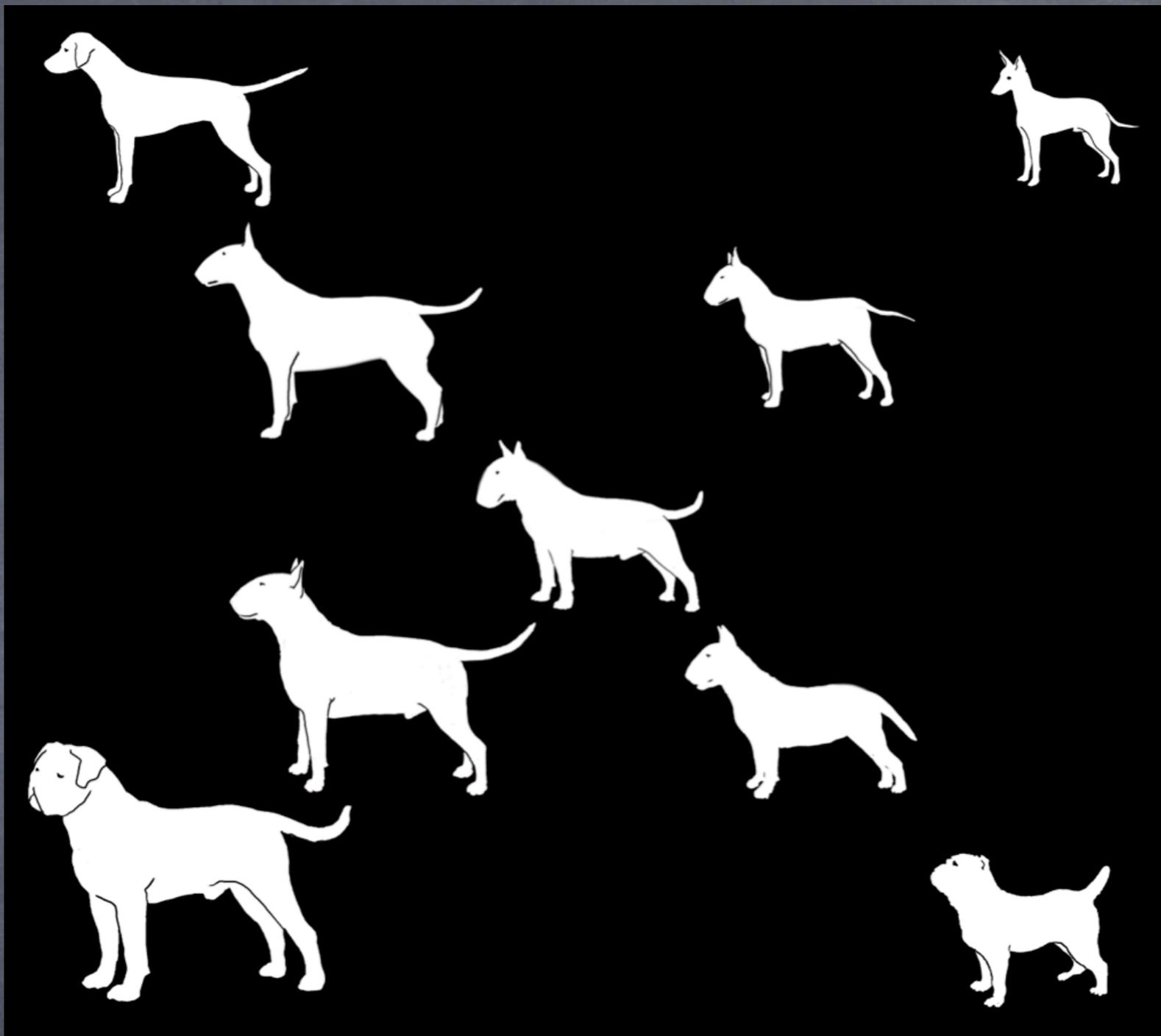
Given the Standard's description, is the dog short-backed and deep-chested behind the elbows with the overall shape described in the Standard, or is he long bodied and shapeless, resembling a bratwurst on four sticks? He can be tall and long-backed and still be "symmetrical", but now he lacks the body type that the Standard describes.



The lower dog of these three is much closer to the Standard's description, with his short back, sloping shoulder, and correct top and underlines. His head is also larger in proportion to his body, which gives this dog a "typier" look.



This comparison gives additional visual emphasis to the importance of head size and proportion in a “typy” bull terrier. The one on the right is a lovely bitch, but to my mind, would be much improved by a proportionately larger head.



This graphic shows the three sub-types our breed is made of, and I have added a fourth, which is not one of the founding sub-types, but is the one toward which the breed is marching ever closer in height, weight, and body type. It has been a while since the bull terriers we see in the ring have been either extremely “terrier” or extremely “bulldog” in body type, and the last ten years has seen the breed transitioning toward the two types on the left of this chart, the dalmatian and the bull mastiff.

If we, as breeders and judges, do not try to get back toward the middle of this chart by choosing “typy” animals with more than “lip service”, we will indeed have lost the opportunity to get back to the short-backed, deep bodied, shapely and athletic animals described in our Breed Standard.