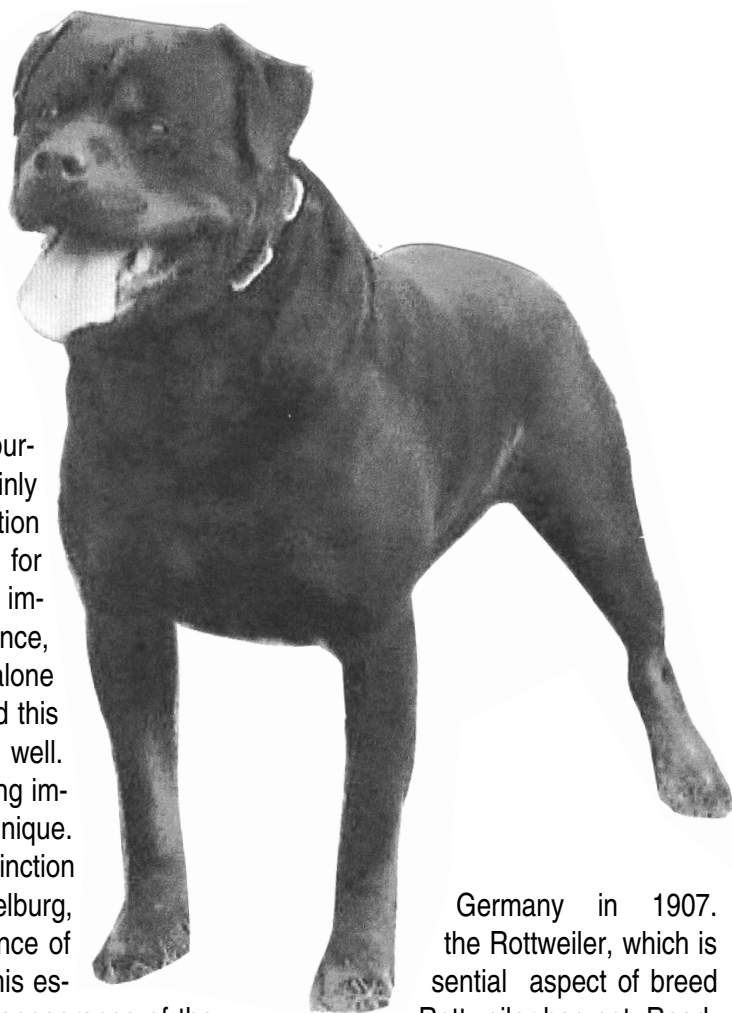


# **BONES** **MUSCLE** **POWER** **BY STEVE WOLFSON**

If one were to take a survey asking, "Why did you purchase a Rottweiler", "Why this breed over others", it would certainly elicit intriguing answers. I cannot say for sure what the attraction others had to the Rottweiler when first encountered, however for me, it was his raw masculine appeal, his unique head and the impressive musculature and power he exuded. From his appearance, one could easily understand that this was a serious dog! Not alone in this view, many other Rottweiler aficionados have recognized this hallmark of the breed and expressed a similar perspective as well. After all, is not the "look" of a dog that makes the first and lasting impression? Surely, his breed type is what makes the Rottweiler unique.

The Germans understood the Rottweiler's distinction when they came together to codify the standard at Heidelberg, They were deliberate when articulating and fixing the appearance of why the standard uses detailed language in its description of this es-type. The standard was modified since 1907, but the general appearance of the dog has remained the same. Reading the current standard, one finds the word "powerful" written 6 times, "bone" mentioned 3 times and "muscle" mentioned 5 times. No other words have such repetition when describing the details.

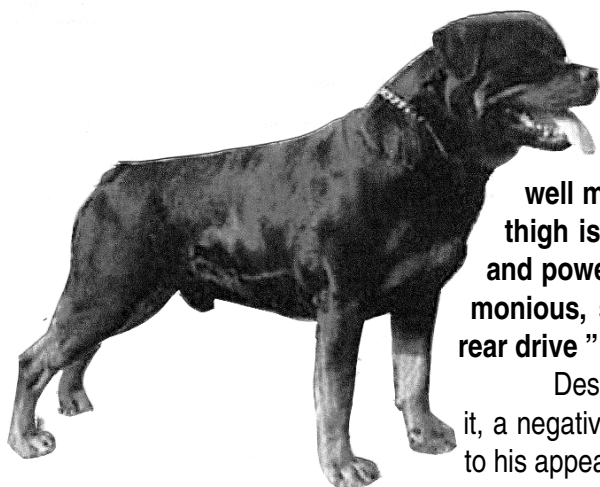


Germany in 1907.  
the Rottweiler, which is  
sentinal aspect of breed  
Rottweiler has not. Read-

## Excerpts from the standard:

**"The ideal Rottweiler is a medium large, robust and powerful dog - Dogs are characteristically more massive throughout with larger frame and heavier bone than bitches - His bone and muscle mass must be sufficient to balance his frame, giving a compact and very powerful appearance - Neck- Powerful, well muscled - Loin is short, deep and well muscled - Legs are strongly developed with straight, heavy bone - Upper thigh is fairly long, very broad and well muscled - Lower thigh is long, broad and powerful, with extensive muscling - His movement should be balanced, harmonious, sure, powerful and unhindered, with strong forereach and a powerful rear drive "**

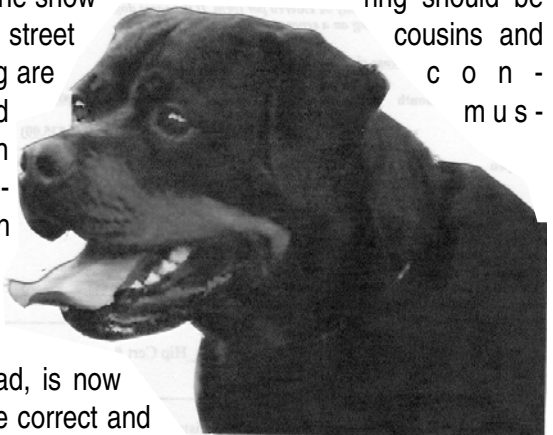
Despite his distinctive breed type and the words used in the blueprint to describe it, a negative, subtle change has occurred over the years, which ultimately is disastrous to his appearance.



Currently in the US, which is observable both in the show-ring and out, is a great loss in the general power of the breed's masculine design. Now, a rarity and oddity, the once major factor in the breed's appeal, its power and substance, is on the "back burner" in many breeding programs. One must look carefully to find this trait; the breed has lost its distinction.

On the street, we encounter Rottweilers that are a poor representation of once was. They possess pin heads, narrow, snikey muzzles, spindly bones, no muscle mass and shallow frames. To the knowledgeable, these Rottweilers appear to be a mix breeding, although they are not. To the unknowledgeable, they appear to be correct!

In the show-ring, this problem has crossed the boundaries. One should expect poor examples of the breed on the street since they are comprised of non-show dogs. However, the show-ring should be the exception. Presently, exhibits share the same problem of their street cousins and are only a notch or two above. Many exhibits that enter the show-ring are constructed well but are also as weak in substance, spindly in bones and musculature like their pet counterparts. Now, when a dog or bitch that is in the ring with correct breed type, exuding power and substance, it appears as the "odd man out". A strong masculine dog or powerful bitch seems strange among exhibits with spindly frail bodies and Doberman-like heads. To the newbie's and unknowledgeable judges, it is untypical and put at the end of the line. Often, I have heard that a female, which possesses strong bones, muscle and a powerful head, is now deemed "too strong" and considered a "doggy bitch". What was once correct and typical is now abnormal. The dogs, which should embody power and masculinity, are now so weak in type they can be considered "beautiful females"!



### WHAT ARE CORRECT BONES AND MUSCLES?

The standard does not give a numerical value for the appropriate bone mass or muscle, only a verbal guide. Therefore, to state a formula, "Dog x must have y amount of bone and muscle to be correct is not possible." To understand what is appropriate for the correct amount for these attributes, one must refer to the blueprint. From the standard: **"His bone and muscle mass must be sufficient to balance his frame, giving a compact and very powerful appearance."**

A reasonable guide when assessing an exhibit, one should ask, "Does this exhibit exemplify a powerful appearance?" - "Is the bone and muscle mass substantial, so that its appearance exudes power?" One should be impressed with the overall appearance for power, muscle and bones.

### A. BONE MASS

Bones mass should be thick enough in width so that it appears to support the frame of the dog in a substantial and powerful manner, without being refined, elegant, too massive or grotesque.

The place to visually assess the bone mass on a Rottweiler, correct or incorrect, is the thickness in the radius/ulna and humerus. When making an "on" so that the full width of the chest can be seen. If a numerical evaluation for the thickness of the bones is desired, it is measured by using a tape measure and wrapping it around the circumference of the pastern (from East to West) can be seen. If a numerical evaluation for the thickness of the bones is desired, it is measured by using a tape measure and wrapping it around the circumference of the pastern amount of skin, muscle and tendon can be found.

Correct bone mass is correlated to the height. The taller the dog, the more bone mass it should possess, compared to dogs of lesser height. Additionally, bone mass should always be proportion-

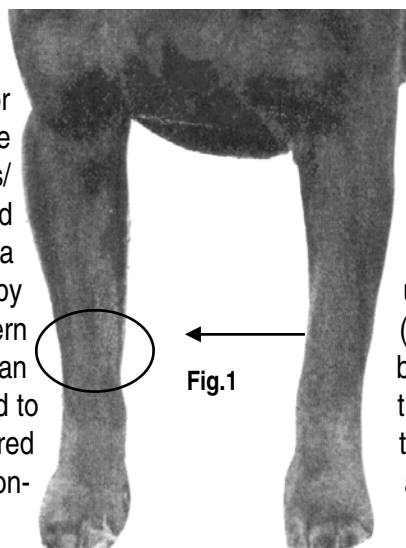


Fig.1

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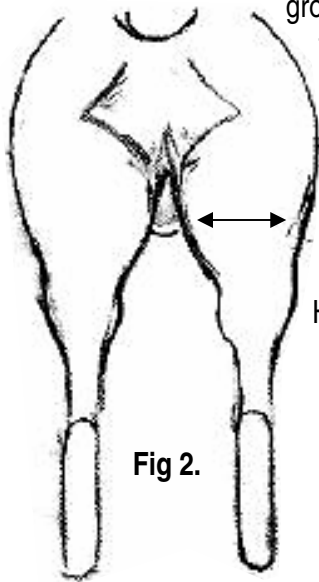
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“Out of balance” is not correct. Good examples of this are the extremes. They are exhibited when a tall dog possess long, fine bones of the radius/ulna and humerus, giving the appearance of spindles, or when a short dog possesses too strong bone mass appearing like “tree trunks”. These dogs are “out of balance”. The Rottweiler is not a St. Bernard or a Dobermann.

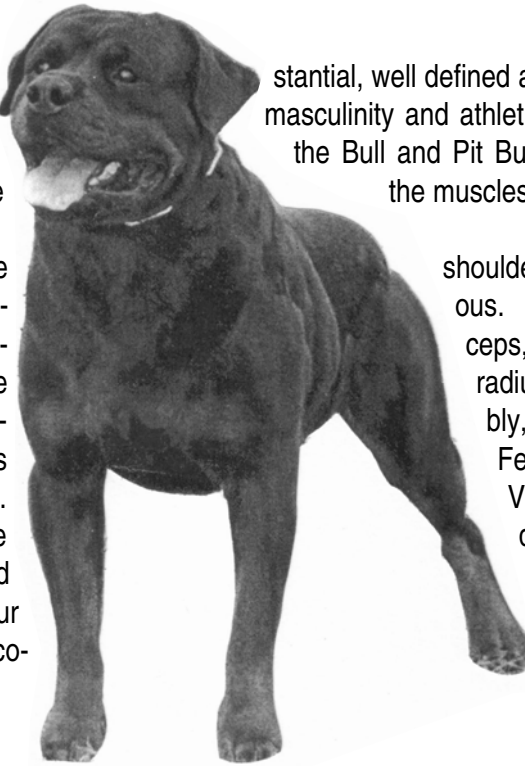
## **B. MUSCLE MASS**

The general muscle mass should be substantial, well defined and in proportion to the frame of the dog so that it exudes strength, masculinity and athleticism. The muscles should be apparent, yet not overpowering, like the Bull and Pit Bull Terriers. The muscle groups that comprise this “appearance” are the muscles of the front and rear assembly.

In the front assembly, the muscles of the arm and forearm should be well developed and obvious. These muscle groups are the Deltoids, Biceps and the Extensor muscles of the radius/ulna. In the rear assembly, the Gluteus and Biceps Femoris well developed and defined. Viewing the rear from the back, the muscles of the Biceps Femoris and Gluteus should be full, supporting the Femur. Here is where all forward locomotion begins.



**Fig 2.**



shoulders, the upper arm and forearm. These muscle groups are the Deltoids, Biceps, Triceps and the radius/ulna.

Viewing the rear from the back, the muscles of the Biceps Femoris and Gluteus should be full, supporting the Femur. Here is where all forward locomotion begins.

## **C. THE CORRELATION OF MUSCLE AND BONE**

With human body-building, the muscles can be developed, shaped and improved, with discipline, hard work, good nutrition and much sweat. However, improvement has limits, since body-building is dependent upon the size, mass of the muscle groups and bone substance. In essence, “you are what you inherited”. The thin framed, fine boned man or woman will always work harder and strain longer to build bulk and definition in the muscle tissue. With this body type, a major factor is bone mass! Strong bone mass is supported by thick muscles. The same principles hold true for the Rottweiler.

Dogs and bitches that are fine boned possess muscles, which are light in their mass and often show little or no definition. This type, will always work very hard to make strides improved from the pedigree. Conversely, there are those dogs/bitches, which impress us with their natural well-developed musculature and powerful bone mass. Their musculature is correlated to their robust bone mass.



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## **BREED TYPE IS A STEPCHILD**

Why is the great majority of Rottweilers here in the states, (especially in the show-ring), not uniformly masculine in type with powerful muscle and bones, which is specified in the standard? Why have they become slight in bone, shallow in substance, and soft in appearance? The answer is breed type has become a stepchild.

In the US, the accent is on the best possible construction demonstrated by superior gait. Those dogs, which display this attribute, are the ones that win in the show-ring. Placing the accent on this attribute is both good and problematic. It is good since all concerned breeders have this as one of their goals in mind when planning their next litter. Sound construction, in accordance with the breed standard is essential. All exhibitors want to win in the show-ring; therefore, many breeders make superior gait their only goal. With this as their prime directive, many breeders have made a detrimental detour; they traded breed type for locomotion. This is problematic.

Often, at ringside, one can hear spectators and breeders alike say, "Oh that dog moved beautifully with great reach and drive", "It was well put together." Yes, that could be said however, the dog looked more like a Doberman than a Rottweiler. Excellent construction with outstanding gait is not breed type. These two attributes are separate entities in a breeding program and are not mutually interchangeable or should be misconstrued for breed type.



Over the years, the masculinity of the Rottweiler here in the states, has slowly eroded. Its masculine power and substance, clearly specified in the standard, has been oozing away. Spindly, fine bones with narrow long muzzles and smooth body lines have replaced broad top skulls, wide, short muzzles and powerful bones and muscles. Working character has also eroded and replaced with many Rottweilers that are shy and lack confidence in their temperament. This is a negative and detrimental trend. Once set in motion, it is extremely difficult to reverse. One only has to see our European and International counterparts by comparison to understand the differences in breed type and working temperament. In the international community, the accent is placed on breed type and working temperament.



Some would argue there is nothing to improve. All is well within the Rottweiler and breed type is where it should be. That is a myopic view. It is valuable and healthy for all concerned to step "out of the trenches" and obtain an international perspective by making comparisons with our domestic breeding program and our international counterparts.

Exchanging ideas and methods to improve genetics and techniques will benefit all. Additionally, it is extremely important to promote and make available more breed seminars in all Rottweiler clubs. There, is where real progress is achievable in an open dialog exchanging opinions and ideas. The benefactor of this is the Rottweiler.

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