

Dog Drool Is Cool at Westminster 2009

Dogue de Bordeaux will take his first lap around the Westminster show ring this year.

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A newly recognized American Kennel Club breed will compete at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show for the very first time at approximately 9:30 am in Ring 3 on Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2009.

The Dogue de Bordeaux is an ancient French member of the mastiff family that bears a close resemblance to the popular Bullmastiff. Since the breed gained full recognition into the Working Group on July 1, 2008, there has been time for owners to finish their dogs' championships and enter the show by the fall deadline. Fifteen of the behemoths are expected to wow spectators.

Most Americans of a certain age will remember the breed's muscular body, massive head, and stocky build – not to mention gallons of drool – from the popular 1989 movie "Turner and Hooch" that partnered mega-star Tom Hanks with a loose-lipped sidekick of the DDB persuasion.

Happily DDBs don't produce drool in the quantity that the movie suggested, but by the same token fastidious housekeepers may not see this breed as the perfect canine fit.

Males measure from 23½ to 27 inches at the shoulder and weigh at least 110 pounds; females stand from 23 to 26 inches at the shoulder and weigh a minimum of 99 pounds.

The breed comes in all shades of fawn, with a wrinkled face that may sport a black, brown, or red mask.

DDBs do best in homes with experienced big-dog owners who are committed to early and ongoing socialization, believe in obedience training and are prepared to take charge of their strong pets. The breed is generally affectionate with children, but due to its giant size, can knock over youngsters in its exuberance. Adult supervision is a must. This is not a breed for young children to be walking on leash by themselves.

Three other breeds joined the AKC fold on Jan. 1, 2009, so you won't be seeing them at Westminster this year, but you will at other dog shows throughout the country. Look for them at Westminster in February 2010.

The Irish Red and White Setter is the new arrival in the Sporting Group. This is an athletic rather than racy breed with long, silky, fine hair and a well-feathered tail. As the name suggests, this breed has a white base color with patches of solid red. In fact, it is believed that the Irish Red and White predates the more popular solid-red Irish Setter we know so well today. Hunters and enthusiasts rallied behind the breed to make sure the Red and White was not lost to the dog world. Happily, their hard work paid off.

The other two new additions join the Herding Group. The Norwegian Buhund is a squarely built Northern breed, with a tail curled tightly over the back, a wedge-shaped head, and erect ears. Buhund males stand 17 to 18½ inches at the shoulder with a weight of 31 to 40 pounds, while females are 16 to 17½ inches at a weight of 26 to 35 pounds.

The outer coat is thick and hard, but rather smooth-lying with a soft and dense undercoat. The breed comes in two colors: the more common wheaten, ranging from a pale cream to a bright orange, and black, with as little white as possible. The Buhund is self-confident, alert, affectionate, and hardy ... destined to gain in popularity as a pet and versatile performance dog.

Also new to the Herding Group is the Pyrenean Shepherd, a light-boned, tousled little athlete adept at herding all manner of livestock. The breed is innately distrustful of strangers. With socialization begun at a young age, the Pyr Shep possesses a lively, cheerful disposition.

There are two varieties, the smooth-faced and the rough-faced (including both semi-long and longhaired coat types) born in the same litter. Males range from 15½ to 21 inches at the shoulder while females stand from 15 to 20½ inches. The breed standard requires an absolute minimum of weight; just enough flesh to cover the bones. Color ranges from shades

of fawn and gray through black and brindle.

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