

Types of dogs prohibited in Great Britain

Guidance on the recognition of
prohibited dogs in Great Britain



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Types of dogs prohibited in Great Britain

Introduction

This guide contains important information about prohibited dogs in Great Britain under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, as amended 1997 (this legislation does not apply to Northern Ireland). It is designed to help people identify the types of dogs prohibited in Great Britain and the relevant legislation.

The introduction of the Pet Travel Scheme has increased the need to provide guidance to those people whose work brings them into close contact with dogs, particularly when they enter the country.

This booklet is not intended as an explanatory note on the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 (DDA). Detailed guidance was issued to police forces and the courts between 1991 and 1998 by the Home Office. Copies of these Home Office notices are available on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk

Types of dogs prohibited in Great Britain and the circumstances

The DDA bans ownership, breeding, sale and exchange and advertising for sale of specified types of fighting dogs.

The dogs covered by the ban (under section 1 of the DDA) are of the type known as:

- **Pit Bull Terrier**
- **Japanese Tosa**
- **Dogo Argentino**
- **Fila Brasileiro**

See page 5 for a definition of “type”.

Other types of dogs can be added to the list by means of an order (Statutory Instrument) by direction of the Secretary of State.

The maximum penalty for illegal possession of a prohibited dog is a fine of £5,000 and/or 6 months' imprisonment. The dog may also be destroyed, though the courts have discretion (under the Dangerous Dogs (Amendment) Act 1997) to grant exemptions for seized dogs if in their view it would not compromise public safety (**Note** – exemptions – to be placed on the Index of Exempted Dogs – can only be granted by the courts, and only after dogs have been seized because offences have been committed).

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Exemptions

Immediately before the DDA came into force, owners of the dogs concerned could claim exemption from its banning provisions. This required entry of their dogs' details onto a central index (the Index of Exempted Dogs) and the issue of certificates of exemption.

Exemptions were only granted if stringent conditions were met. Exempted dogs have to be neutered, tattooed, and microchipped, and have to be on a lead and muzzled when in a public place. Owners have to maintain insurance against their dogs injuring third parties.

The DDA was amended in 1997 and one of the effects was to lift the mandatory destruction orders that courts applied to dogs found to be of those types prescribed under section 1. It is now possible for prohibited dogs to be added to the Index but only at the direction of a court and only if the necessary conditions are met (tattooing, microchipping, etc). No owner may "apply" to have their dog added to the Index – it is entirely a matter for the courts to decide whether a dog can be added to the Index.

Other dogs that may be affected

It is important to note the word "type", as none of the prohibited dogs are recognised breeds in Great Britain. The terms of section 1 of the DDA make it clear that it applies not only to "pure" Pit Bull Terriers but also to any dog of the type known as the Pit Bull Terrier.

Whether section 1 of the DDA applies to any particular cross will depend on whether the resulting dog is of the prohibited type – that is to say, whether it has the physical and behavioural characteristics of the prohibited type. Remember that the characteristics are essential in deciding whether or not the dog is prohibited. Not all Pit Bull Terriers will be described as a Pit Bull Terrier by their owner. Some owners may deliberately misrepresent the breed of their dog using terms such as American Staffordshire Terriers (Am Staffs or ASTs), American Bulldogs and the Presa Canaria. Other names used to describe the Pit Bull Terrier types may be Irish Staffordshire Bull Terriers (not to be confused with a Staffordshire Bull Terrier bred in Ireland), Old Fashioned Staffords or Traditional Staffords. There are likely to be other names being used by people breeding fighting dogs.

If a person arriving in this country produces paperwork that purports to prove that the dog is not a prohibited type it is necessary for the authorities to be cautious. Paperwork accompanying the dog should be detailed and comprehensive. Owners should be aware that if the dog displays the defining characteristics that are represented in the prohibited types the dog could be seized and its fate decided by the courts irrespective of the paperwork. It is therefore necessary to be very cautious when buying a dog that is not Kennel Club registered particularly if you are considering bringing a dog to this country from overseas.

If there is any doubt as to whether the dog in question could be considered to be of the prohibited type, the advice is NOT to bring it into this country.

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Frequently asked questions

1. Q. Will I be able to bring into Great Britain a dog designated as prohibited under section 1 of the 1991 Act, which is not on the register of exempted dogs?

A. No. The only designated dogs permitted in Great Britain are those already in the country and registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs. Any other dog considered to be one of the prohibited types runs the risk of being seized and having its future decided by the courts. You could also face imprisonment and/or a fine for having possession of such a dog in the country. Please note this also applies to dogs that spend time in Great Britain during transit to other countries.

2. Q. Is it possible for a dog in the prohibited category to be registered as exempt, so as to possess it legally on a visit to Great Britain?

A. No. New exemptions can only be authorised at the discretion of the courts once a dog has been seized in Great Britain, and then only in exceptional circumstances. It is not therefore possible to gain an exemption without bringing the dog into the country, thereby breaking the law, as well as running the risk of losing it and being prosecuted (see previous Answer). *Dogs of the prohibited type should simply not be brought into Great Britain under any circumstances, unless they are already on the Index of Exempted Dogs.*

3. Q. My dog is an American Staffordshire Terrier (Am Staff) and I have got the papers to prove it and I also have the necessary documentation for my dog to travel under the Pet Travel Scheme. Will it be allowed into the country?

A. Our advice is not to bring an Am Staff into this country as we cannot guarantee that it will not be seized and its fate decided by a Court.

4. Q. Why were the four types of dogs prohibited?

A. The prohibited types were all considered to have been bred specifically to be fighting dogs. Organised dog fighting is illegal in Great Britain. Under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 other types of dogs can be added to the prohibited list by Order in Council.

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5. Q. Can I take a prohibited type that is on the Index of Exempted Dogs abroad under the Pet Travel Scheme?

- A. Yes, provided that you have met all the conditions of the Pet Travel Scheme and all the conditions attached to possessing an exempted type under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. You must check with the country or countries that you are travelling to (or through) to see if there are any laws/regulations affecting your dog.

If you have any enquiries about prohibited dogs in Great Britain, please contact the Animal Welfare Division (Branch E), Defra, Area 506, 1A Page Street, London SW1P 4PQ. Tel: 020 7904 6286. Fax: 020 7904 6710.

If you have any enquiries about the Pet Travel Scheme, please contact:
tel: 0870 2411710, e-mail: pets.help@defra.gsi.gov.uk
website: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/quarantine

Pit Bull Terrier type



Description of the main characteristics of the Pit Bull Terrier type

General Description

Muscular smooth-haired dog.

Has a square profile (ie as tall from the ground to the top of the shoulder and as long from point of shoulder to point of hip).

Height (average for both male and female) (shoulder): 45–55 cm.

Head

Should be wedge-shaped when viewed from the top or side and round when viewed from the front.

Broad jawbones.

Broad skull.

Strongly developed nostrils.

Strongly developed cheek and jaw muscles.

Muzzle

Not pointed.

Ears

Located high on skull.

Tips of ears fold forward or sideways or have been cropped.

No wrinkles.

Eyes

Elliptical when viewed from front.

Triangular when viewed from side.

Small and deep set.

Neck

Muscular all the way up to base of skull.

Chest

Broad.

Deep ribcage.

Ribs strongly curved tapering towards bottom.

Back

Muscular.

Broad sloping hips.

Broad loin.

Legs

Front legs are straight and give a massive, solid impression.

Hips are long and broad and continue on to become relatively long hind legs with a well-muscled thigh.

Coat

Single coat.

Short smooth haired but bristled to touch.

Can be any colour.

Tail

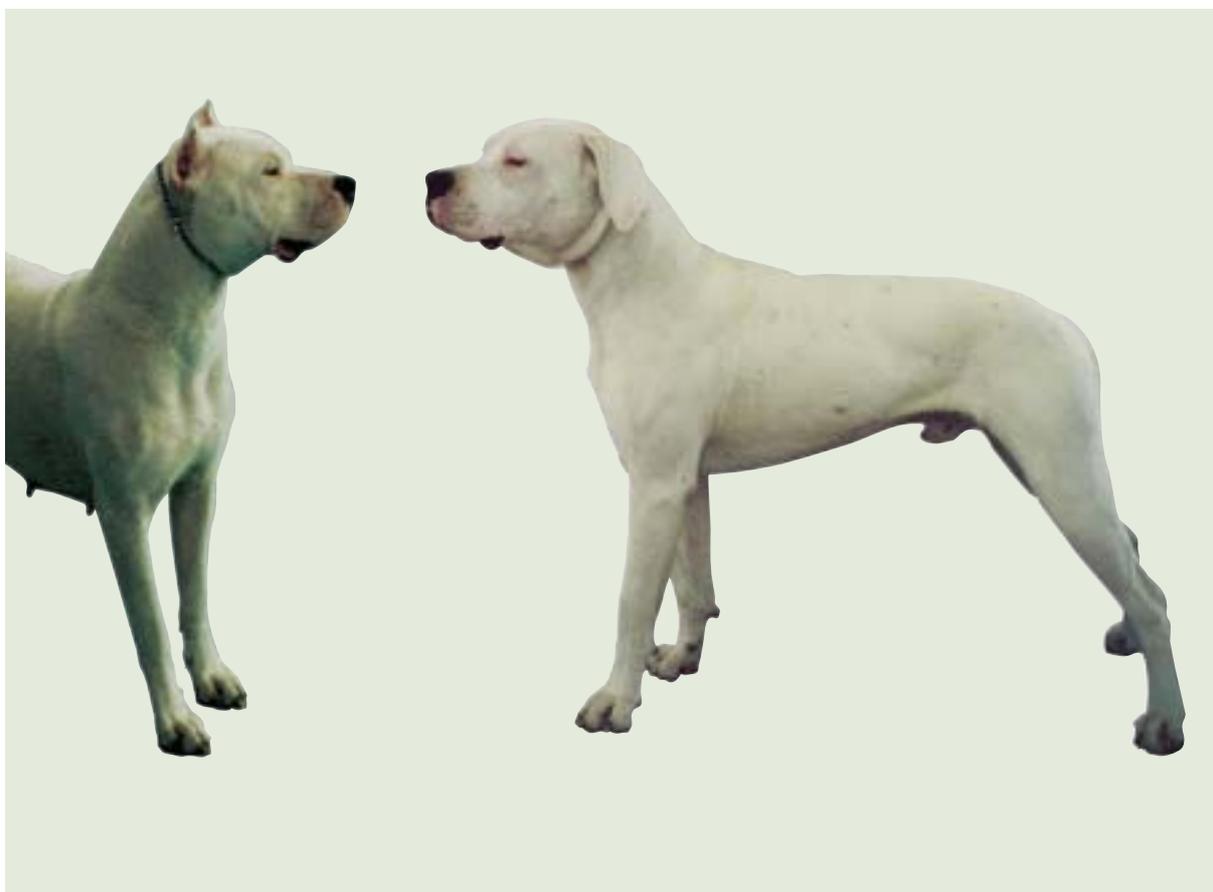
Located low down in hindquarters.

Thick at base tapering to point at end.

Narrows to a slender tip or has been docked.

Should hang like a pump handle when relaxed.

Dogo Argentino type



Description of the main characteristics of the Dogo Argentino type

General Description

Very strong, muscular dog.

Very muscular haunches.

High shoulders.

Height (shoulder):

62–68cm (male)

60–65cm (female).

Head

Massive, domed skull.

Powerful neck muscles.

Powerful jaws with large teeth.

Slightly upturned nose with black pigmentation.

Muzzle

Same length as the skull.

Ears

Set high on the head.

Eyes

Dark or hazel.

Widely-spaced.

Neck

Strong and arched.

With folds of skin.

Chest

Broad.

Deep.

Legs

The forelegs are straight and parallel with short, connected toes.

The upper thighs of the hind legs are very muscular.

Short pasterns with connected toes.

The hind legs are moderately angular.

Coat

Short, stiff and glossy.

White coat, occasional colour marking around eyes.

Tail

Long and strong.

Fila Brasileiro type



Description of the main characteristics of the Fila Brasileiro type

General Description

A heavy-boned Molosser-type dog.
Rectangular, compact and massive.
A strong, broad and deep body.
Thick, loose skin over the whole body.
The chest is longer than the rump.
The body is as long as it is high.
Height (shoulder):
65–75cm (male)
60–70cm (female).

Head

Large and massive.
Snout and skull in proportion.
Large, broad skull.
No clear, visible stop.
Strong, broad teeth.
The area under eyes is broad.

Muzzle

Strong, broad and deep.

Ears

Pendulous, large and thick.
V-shaped with rounded tips.

Eyes

Almond-shaped, somewhat deep-set and average to large.
Protruding.

Neck

Strong, muscular neck, clearly separate from the skull.
Plenty of skin on the throat.

Chest

Deep.
Strongly-arched ribs.
Pronounced prosternum.

Legs

Parallel, with strong bones.
Strong, arched ribs.

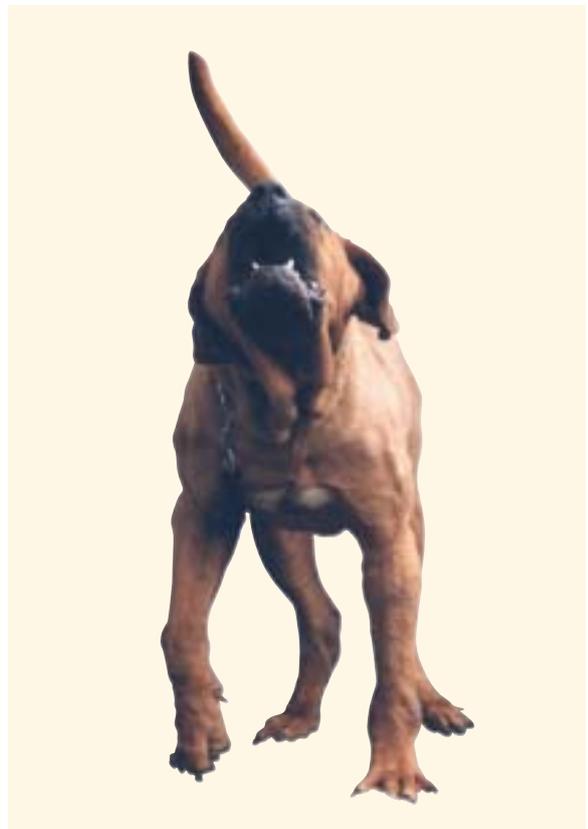
Coat

Short, soft and thick.

Tail

Very broad at the root.
Planted at average height.
Tapers as far as the hock.

Illustrations of the Japanese Tosa



Description of the main characteristics of the Japanese Tosa type (Tosa-Inu or Tosa-Ken)

General Description

Large, powerful, short-coated.

Slightly longer than height.

Thick and loose skin, especially at the neck.

Height (shoulder):

60cm+ (male)

55cm+ (female).

Head

Large, broad, block-style.

Wrinkled extending to dewlap.

Skull

Large, slightly arched and broad.

Muzzle

Box shaped, blunt and deep.

Powerful jaws.

Lips thick and dark.

Ears

V-shaped and dropped.

Sometimes darker than rest of skin.

Eyes

Brown, blue or occasionally yellow.

Round to almond shaped, set well apart.

Neck

Long and thick.

Muscular with dewlap.

Thick skin.

Legs

Straight and muscled.

Sturdy boned.

Forelegs set well apart.

Coat

Short and straight.

No specific colouring but usually either red, fawn, black, brindle or sometimes pied.

Tail

Thick at the base, tapering to the tip.

Pump handle shaped.

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