

Meet the Boxer

– a unique breed



The American Boxer Club

The Boxer's background is found in feudal Germany. Here, a small, courageous hunting dog with mastiff type head and undershot bite was used to secure a tenacious hold on bull, bear or boar pending the hunter's arrival. He then went through periods of utility dog for peasants and shop-owners. His easy trainability even found him performing in circuses. In the 1880s, descendants of this type were bred to a taller, more elegant English import, often white in colour, and the modern Boxer was established.

Imported to America after the first World War, his popularity really began in the late 1930s, His appeal in the show ring led to four "Best in show" awards at prestigious Westminster between 1947 and 1970 – out of over one hundred breeds in competition.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A few specifics. The Boxer is a medium sized dog ranging from 21 inches high at the shoulder in a small female up to 25 inches in a large male. Adult weight may reach 75 to 80 pounds, the female usually weighing about 15 pounds less. There are no "miniature" or "giant" varieties.

The short, close-lying coat is found in two equally accepted basic colour classifications, fawn and brindle. The fawn may vary from a tawny tan to an especially beautiful deep stag red. The brindle has dark stripes on a fawn background. Sparse brindling gives a "golden" brindle; dense striping, a mahogany – or even an almost "black" brindle. Puppies for the first few weeks of age will appear darker than their eventual true colour. Genetically, brindles may produce fawns when bred, but fawn mated to fawn cannot produce a brindle. The background colour, whether fawn or brindle, is often splashed with attractive white markings but they should appear only on muzzle, neck, chest, legs or underbelly. White markings on the puppy will usually lessen in relative size as the puppy grows.

An all-white coat, or a predominantly white background (know as a "check") may occur as a throwback to an ancestor of the modern Boxer. In order to retain the beauty and other desirable features associated with the true fawn or brindle colours, breeders of recognized Boxer clubs are pledged not to register, sell, give away or use these whites or "checks" for breeding.

The Boxer's complete blueprint is found in the official Standard.

BREED CHARACTERISTICS

"Brains and Beauty". The Boxer's official classification in the Working Group of dogs is a "natural" along with the sheep herders, sled pullers, guard and "seeing eye" dogs (in which capacity he has successfully been used). His keenest sense, that of hearing, is a guard dog characteristic and, in the Boxer, is enhanced by the cropped, erect ears. (NO cropping permitted in UK, Australia or NZ – Ed).

Although always alert to a strange noise or event, the Boxer is not a nervous breed and will not bark without cause. He has judgement and an uncanny sense of distinguishing between friend and intruder. He mimics the mood of his master and can spend hours lying quietly at his feet.

One of the delightful qualities that sets the Boxer apart is the unique mobility of his expressive face. The skin furrowing of the forehead, dark, "soulful" eyes and – sometimes almost human – attempts to "converse" make his replacement by another breed difficult for one who has once owned a Boxer.

CARE OF THE BOXER

"Should he be confined?"

The Boxer requires relatively little care but ownership of any dog entails a definite responsibility. Your Boxer should not be allowed to run loose. Exercise in a fenced area or on a leash eliminates the better than 50% chance of death from automobile or poison. It also prevents entanglement with a neighbour's dog or an overly effusive greeting that may frighten the small child who may not have had the chance to know how instinctively tolerant the Boxer really is.

The Boxer should be considered an indoor dog as he is unusually sensitive to temperature extremes, both hot and cold. A decision should be made whether he will be confined to a kennel stall or have the run of the house. The Boxer adapts readily to either decision if made early enough.

Even if the puppy is to be the house pet, it is well to set up a large wire type crate (commercially available) in a secluded spot where he can retreat from possibly over-enthusiastic children since the young puppy requires much rest. It also makes subsequent confinement in it simpler when desired.

"HOW MUCH EXERCISE?"

Despite his "athletic" build, the Boxer needs surprisingly little exercise to keep in shape – if not overfed. An outdoor area, perhaps 30 feet long with six-foot high fencing should suffice. Improperly protected screen doors are a common mode of unexpected house exit.

Finally, a brisk walk on a lead two or three times daily will serve both master and dog equally well – and make new friends!

"HOW MUCH GROOMING?"

The Boxer needs very little, and it is easily done by the owner. A rubber curry comb, or light culling with a hacksaw blade will take out loose hair and prevent its shedding on furniture or clothes. For that "show" look trim whiskers, long hair on ears, underbelly, tail and back thigh "seams" with scissors or clippers. Bathing is not necessary, especially if culled regularly. Nails must be trimmed unless worn down by activity on hard or cement surfaces. Tartar may have to be removed from teeth periodically – usually by a veterinarian.

"HOW ABOUT OBEDIENCE TRAINING?"

The same innate intelligence that makes the Boxer quick to learn and please his master also gives him "mind of his own". The trainer should, therefore, be purposeful and patient.



Carmel Bakker with Ch Imatoff Miss Ming after winning Best in Show at the Tasmanian Ladies Kennel Club show 1972. She was believed to be the first Boxer bitch to win BIS in Tasmania

This can be learned with the help of a training book or an obedience training club. The puppy should be about six months old before any serious work is started.

The well-trained Boxer is a beautiful picture going through his paces in the obedience ring, such trials (for awards) usually being held in conjunction with most dog shows.

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