

The Rhodesian Ridgeback  
Club of Ireland  
Information Pack



### **What is a Rhodesian Ridgeback?**

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is a hound with a very keen hunting instinct— anything that moves is fair game for a chase, be it rabbits, squirrels or deer.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback's origins are attributed to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in Africa where the breed was used by settlers for hunting game, as companion dogs and to keep lions, leopards and other large prey off the farms. Today as there are few lions left to hunt the breed has been adapted around the world to hunt wild pigs, jaguar and also to track mountain lions, bear and lynx. In his homeland the Ridgeback is used to keep raiding baboons off the crops and also works with rangers in Kruger National Park in the course of their daily duties.

### **Characteristics of the Rhodesian Ridgeback?**

What does a Ridgeback look like?

The Ridgeback is a handsome, muscular dog which is symmetrical in outline and capable of great endurance. The Ridgeback is so-called because of the ridge on the back formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the remainder of the coat and contains two identical crowns., see diagram.



The Ridgeback is a unique hound but is not a suitable dog for everyone due to its size, strength and need for a lot of exercise. Many Rhodesian Ridgeback owners find the Halti head collar useful in effectively controlling their dogs.

#### Rhodesian Ridgebacks and Irish Law:

The law in the Irish Republic requires that the Rhodesian Ridgeback, among 12 other breeds, be muzzled on a lead and under effective control when in public.

#### Personality traits

Ridgebacks as adults, once they have been exercised are more than happy to laze the day away on the sofa. They can get bored and destructive (especially young dogs) if left for excessive periods of time by themselves—this is definitely not the breed for you if you are out all day at work. The Ridgeback is clean of habit, dignified, sensitive, affectionate, intelligent and loyal. They are not unfriendly but prefer to be introduced to visitors and are very good with well-behaved children. Ridgebacks fundamentally enjoy being with their humans and so travelling and socialising (provided they have been trained as a puppy to travel and socialise) should not be a problem.

#### Nutrition

Puppies: It is advisable to feed your puppy on a large breed complete food. Be advised by your vet and your breeder. Puppies should be fed three times per day for the first four months and thereafter twice per day (adults also).

### **Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Ireland Code of Ethics**

Breeder members of the Club will adhere to the Club's Code of Ethics.

1. It is recommended that all breeding stock be x-rayed for Hip Dysplasia before breeding. It is advisable to see the parents' BVA Certificate when buying a puppy.
2. All breeding stock should be believed clear from hereditary defects.

The above is taken from the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club Code of Ethics.

#### **Hereditary defects:**

It has been known that Rhodesian Ridgebacks can suffer from the following hereditary defects:

Hip Dysplasia

Dermoid Sinus

Entropion and related eye conditions

Elbow Dysplasia

Megaesophagus

Epilepsy

Hypothyroidism

## **Breed Standard**

### **General Appearance:**

Handsome, strong, muscular and active dog, symmetrical in outline, capable of great endurance with a fair amount of speed. The mature dog is handsome and upstanding.

### **Characteristics:**

Peculiarity is the ridge on the back which is formed by hair growing in the opposite direction to the remainder of the coat. The ridge must be regarded as the escutcheon of the breed. Ridge clearly defined, tapering and symmetrical, starting immediately behind the shoulders and continuing to the haunch and containing two identical crowns only, opposite each other, lower edges of crowns not extending further down ridge than one-third of its length. Up to 5cm/2 inches is a good average for width of ridge.

### **Temperament:**

Dignified, intelligent, aloof with strangers but showing no aggression or shyness.

### **Head and Skull:**

Of fair length, skull flat, rather broad between the ears, free from wrinkles while in repose. Stop should be reasonably well defined. Nose black or brown in keeping with the colour of the dog, black nose accompanied by dark eyes and brown nose by amber eyes. The muzzle should be long, deep and powerful. Lips clean and close fitting.

### **Eyes:**

Set moderately well apart, round, bright and sparkling with intelligent expression, colour harmonizing with coat colour.

### **Ears:**

Set rather high, medium size, rather wide at

base, gradually tapering to a rounded point. Carried close to head.

**Mouth:**

Jaws strong, with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. upper teeth closely overlapping, lower teeth and set square to the jaws. Well developed teeth, especially canines.

**Neck:**

Fairly long, strong and free from throatiness.

**Forequarters:**

Shoulders sloping, clean and muscular. Forelegs perfectly straight, strong and heavy in bone, elbows close to the body.

**Body:**

Chest not too wide, very deep and capacious; ribs moderately well sprung, never barrel-ribbed. Back powerful; loins strong, muscular and slightly arched.

**Hindquarters:**

Muscles clean and well defined; good turn of stifle; hocks well let down.

**Feet:**

Compact, well arched toes; round, tough, elastic pads, protected by hair between toes and pads.

**Tail:**

Strong at root, not inserted high or low, tapering towards end, free from coarseness. Carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled.

**Gait/Movement:**

Straight forward, free and active.

**Coat:**

Short and dense, sleek and glossy in appearance but neither woolly nor silky.

**Colour:**

Light wheaten to red wheaten. Head, body, legs and tail

of uniform colour. Little white on chest and toes permissible but excessive white hairs here or on the belly or above paws undesirable. Dark muzzle and ears permissible.

**Size:**

**Dogs:** 63cm/25 inches desirable minimum height at withers, 67cm/27 inches desirable maximum height at withers.

**Bitches:** 61cm/24 inches desirable minimum height at withers, 66cm/26 inches desirable maximum height at withers.

**Faults:**

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the faults should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree.

**Note:** Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

## **Viewing and buying a Rhodesian Ridgeback**

1. Before buying a puppy, it is advisable to attend as many shows as possible, speak with exhibitors and meet their dogs. Try to get a broad view of the breed. Visit Ridgeback owners' homes and see their dogs in their home environment, perhaps go for a walk.
2. It is advisable that the breeder is a member of a Ridgeback club and adheres to that club's Rules and Code of Ethics. Puppies should not be bought from puppy farmers.
3. It is important that the purchaser see the dam (mother) and if possible the sire (father), of the litter. Both parents should be registered with a recognised kennel club e.g. IKC.
4. The potential purchaser should satisfy themselves that due care and attention regarding Hip Dysplasia and other hereditary defects has been taken by the breeder. (Puppies should be checked for Dermoid Sinus by two other experienced breeders.)
5. In most litters there will be "pet" puppies, i.e. puppies who do not conform cosmetically to the Breed Standard e.g. ridgeless puppies. They may not be up to the breed standard but make great pets and have all of the Ridgeback personality traits. However, these dogs should never be bred from and generally have a "Not for Breeding" Endorsement on their registration.
6. The breeder may put two endorsements ("Not for Breeding"/"Not for Export") on the registration and the



purchaser should be aware that only the breeder can lift these.

**7. What should you ask the breeder?**

Check with the breeder that the parents of the litter have been hip-scored.

Ask to see the certificate from the BVA?

Ask the breeder if the litter has been checked for hereditary defects such as Dermoid Sinus, Epilepsy, Entropion etc.

The sound health and temperament of the litter is more important than the list of Champions in its pedigree. It is up to you as potential purchaser to satisfy yourself that due care has been taken in the breeding of the litter.

Ask your breeder about the litter's nutrition (it is important to maintain the same puppy food for a number of weeks).

Your breeder should be willing to help re-home your dog should circumstances change.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Is this the right breed for you?**

I work full-time, would a Ridgeback be a good dog for me? No is the answer to that question. Ridgebacks are very much people loving dogs, they need plenty of attention and are not good when left for long periods. They can become quite destructive, especially as puppies, if left alone. It is unfair to any dog to leave it all day whilst you work, do not consider having a dog until you can give it the correct amount of time.

**What does a Ridgeback require in a home?**

Coming from the hot equatorial climate of Africa, the breed is first and foremost a house dog who is not suited to outdoor living conditions in our northern climates. Their short coat means they feel the damp and cold easily and tend not to like rain. They may be housed in suitable, safe, heated, weather-proofed accommodation however companionship is very important.

Tip: If it's too cold for you to be outdoors in shortsleeves then it is too cold for your Ridgeback.

**Are they good guard dogs?**

Ridgebacks, like many other breeds of dog, do have good guarding and protecting instincts but they are not guard dogs in the same way as, for example, German Shepherds, Rottweilers or Dobermans, however they can be territorial. Ridgebacks are hounds and their hound characteristics are generally stronger than their guarding instincts.

**Do they need a lot of exercise?**

Ridgebacks are large active dogs and require good daily free-running exercise.

However, as puppies they should not be over-exercised but taken out for socialisation be it to local shops, friends' homes or to specialised training classes in the car etc. The more you socialise your puppy as a youngster the better adjusted it will be as an adult. Puppies require a lot of sleep, do not over-tire them. Avoid boisterous play with other large dogs as injuries can occur easily to their soft bones if the play is too rough. Once the puppy is about a year old it can be taken for longer walks. Adult Ridgebacks need at least one hour off lead free exercise daily in a safe environment, i.e. away from traffic.

Are they good with cats and other small animals?  
Ridgebacks can live happily with cats, pet rabbits etc. if brought up with them from the beginning. However, being hounds they have a very keen hunting instinct and anything that moves is fair game be it rabbits in the fields, squirrels or deer. They are both a sight and a scent hound and as such use their eyes and nose constantly when hunting. Be extremely careful if you live in an area where there are sheep.

Are they good with children?

This depends on you and your children who must grow up to respect dogs. All dogs should be treated as dogs and not as toys. Dogs must have their own personal space/child-free zone—for example, an indoor kennel or crate. All dogs should ultimately be looked after by a responsible adult. Children, especially young children, should never be left alone with any breed of dog.

**Do I need a large garden?**

It is not necessary to have a huge house and garden in order to give a Ridgeback a good home. Around the house an adult Ridgeback is extremely lazy and loves nothing more than to lie in a warm sunny spot or in front of a fire. More important is the need for outdoor exercise, a smallish garden is adequate but a Ridgeback must be taken out daily. One essential requirement for a Ridgeback is a safely fenced garden however large or small.

**Are Ridgebacks easily trained?**

The Ridgeback is an independent thinker so it is not advisable to train using repetitive exercises, as one would with a German Shepherd or Collie for example. They are probably the easiest of the hound breeds to train—food being the best tool!

**Can you afford a Ridgeback?**

The purchase of a puppy is only the first expense. Ask yourself if you can afford the food bills, vet fees etc for the next 10 years. If you have any doubts, this large breed may not be for you.

### **Where to meet Ridgebacks in Ireland:**

You can meet Ridgebacks and their owners at the many shows around the country as well as in their own homes. Some of the main Championship shows are listed below, however please contact the Irish Kennel Club for a more concise listing ([www.ikc.ie](http://www.ikc.ie) /Tel: 01 4533300)

February: Newtownards and District Canine Club, King's Hall, Balmoral.

March: St Patrick's Show (Two Day International Show), National Show Grounds, Cloghran, Co. Dublin (near airport).

April: Cork and District Canine Club, Cork.  
South Tipperary Canine Club, Tipperary.

Easter: Combined Canine Society (International), National Show Grounds, Cloghran, Co. Dublin.

May Bank Holiday: Fermoy Canine Club,  
Hound Association of Ireland, Rosslare

May: Hibernian All Breeds, National Show Centre,  
Cloghran.

June: Swords & District Canine Society, National Show Centre, Cloghran  
Kilkenny & District Canine Club

July: Bangor & North Down Canine Club, King's Hall, Balmoral.

Munster Canine Association, Cork  
Bray & District Canine Society, National Show Centre,  
Cloghran, Co. Dublin  
Sligo & District Canine Club (alternate years Irish Ladies  
Kennel Association, Cavan)  
Dundalk & District Canine Club, Dundalk, Co. Louth

August Bank Holiday: Dun Laoghaire Canine Society  
(International), National Show Grounds, Cloghran  
August: Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Ireland Club Show,  
Navan Racecourse, Co. Meath.  
Hound Association, Navan Racecourse, Co. Meath.

*Munster Circuit:-*

Clonmel & District Canine Club,  
Killarney & District Canine Club,  
Limerick & District Canine Club,  
Tralee & District Canine Club

September: Drogheda & District Canine Club  
Carlow & District Canine Club

October: All Ireland Bull Breeds Association, National  
Show Centre, Cloghran

November: Cloghran Show Committee, National Show  
Centre, Cloghran

27 December: Dublin Dog Show Society, National Show  
Centre, Cloghran

## **What does the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Ireland do?**

The Club was founded in 1986 and is committed to responsible dog ownership and to the future of the Rhodesian Ridgeback. The Club's mission is to ensure that all of its members are aware of the responsibilities and commitments needed for good dog ownership.

### **Events**

Among events organised by the Club is its Club Show each Summer, plus various social events (for dogs and owners) such as the Summer BBQ.

The Club will be hosting the World Rhodesian Ridgeback Congress in 2008.

### **Ridgeback Rescue**

There is a Rescue arm to the club which aims to re-home any Ridgeback in distress. The Club is a not-for-profit organisation and monies made from events and raffles is used to help Ridgebacks in need.

### **Website**

The Club runs its own website where you will find details on shows and other useful information.

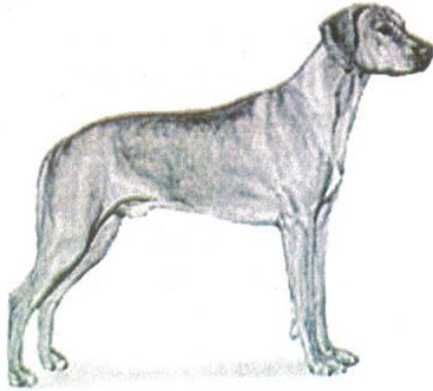
(<http://indigo.ie/~dboyd/> )

### **Ridgeback Review**

A newsletter is circulated twice per year giving show results and offers an opportunity to Club members to publish their thoughts and experiences of being owned by a Ridgeback! The Editor is always grateful to receive items for publication.

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*If, after reading this booklet, you feel that this is the breed for you, please consider joining the Club by contacting the Secretary for an application form.*



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