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THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK  
CLUB OF VICTORIA, INC.

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## **Information kit for puppy buyers**

April 2016

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**President:**  
Kate Smith  
(03) 97879630

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Reg No A0010860A

**Secretary:**  
Cat Glenn  
04094204308  
Email: woopeedoo02@hotmail.com



**C/O PO Box 376 Warragul, Vic 3820**

## **BREED INFORMATION**

This information is a precis of a vast amount of information and should not be used as a rigid set of standards. It is meant as a brief guide, as an introduction to the breed. It does not imply in any form a guarantee of quality or service. Good advice to the novice buyer is, if in any doubt make no commitment, seek advice from breeders/owners, and have all your questions answered to your satisfaction.

## **TEMPERAMENT**

The Rhodesian Ridgeback has a delightful nature. He is a faithful one man or family dog and his friendship, once given, is for life. The Rhodesian Ridgeback is very affectionate and likes to lean on you, lie on your feet or sit on your lap if permitted. He is extremely loyal to those he loves, but distantly offhand with strangers and quite disinterested in anyone outside his chosen circle. He is placid, easy going, putting up with endless torment from children, as well as being highly intelligent and quick to learn. He is happy to participate fully in family activities, but is equally content to laze around all day if there is nothing better to do. The Ridgeback is an excellent guard and his deep bark warns intruders to keep away from his property.

No single breed of dog ideally suits everyone and there are aspects of the Ridgeback character which may not appeal to some people. Most Ridgebacks are independent and stubborn and if you give them an order when they would prefer to be doing something else you will probably not get instant results. Servility plays no part in the temperament of this breed but if you want the rewarding companionship of a dog that has spirit and considers himself your equal rather than your slave you need look no further.

*Reprinted with kind permission from Pauline Sadler, author of "The Rhodesian Ridgeback in Australia"*

## **PROBLEM AREAS**

The Ridgeback is relatively free of problems and those they do have can be minimised by buying a pup from a reputable breeder and/or seeking advice before buying.

A condition peculiar to the Ridgeback is that of the dermoid cyst. It is hereditary, incurable except through surgery but should be found by reputable breeders who will generally euthanise affected pups at birth. It takes the form of a thin, thread like hair lined tube attached to the cervical vertebrae and running up to the surface of the skin. The exit is usually in the middle of the back of the neck. The condition can be diagnosed by feeling the skin on the back of the neck and then pulling it up. The exit hole will be seen where a dimple forms on the surface of the skin. The tube will feel like a piece of thread under the skin. The condition creates a problem during moulting. The hair accumulates in the tube and after a while, sets up an infection, an abscess resulting. This causes extreme pain for the dog. Consult your vet, if in doubt.

Another problem, also very rare in the Ridgeback is hip dysplasia. Again responsible breeding and veterinary screening prior to breeding has done much to minimise this problem. If any condition is found, or suspected, owners should adopt a responsible attitude to breeding so as not to perpetuate the fault. Apart from these rare problems the Ridgeback is a great guard for anyone who wants an intelligent, brave and loyal pet. Obedience training is highly recommended for both you and your dog.

## **RIDGEBACK CHARACTERISTICS**

Because Ridgebacks are off-hand with strangers, people with no personal knowledge of the breed may consider these

dogs to be rather dull and boring. It is not until you have become involved with one that you realise Ridgebacks have personality plus.

Owning a Ridgeback is a tremendous experience and I have yet to meet one that is not a character.

Though a Ridgeback may love you intensely and insist on sharing every aspect of your existence. There is nothing fawning about this companionship. There is something special in being trusted by an independent, highly intelligent dog like this.

Once a Ridgeback moves into your life he will begin to reorganise it to his liking. Ridgebacks may not be able to talk but they can clearly indicate their wishes, and equally demonstrate their displeasure. If a Ridgeback wants you to do something for him he will attract your attention by staring at you, like a sheepdog "eyeing" one of the flock, then flick his gaze from your face to the object in question, such as the door, until you get the message and take him for a walk.

Ridgebacks show their annoyance by demolishing an object like a sock, a thong, or a book and leaving pieces in a conspicuous position. This happens when you go out and leave them, and on your return a guilty or sheepish greeting at the door means you should start looking around!

Ridgebacks turn their ears inside out and look pained when they are told off, made to do something they do not want to do (obedience training or having their photos taken are two examples that spring to mind) and when they are embarrassed. Another way they react to these situations is by yawning hugely, and this particularly signifies embarrassment.

Though Ridgebacks seem to choose one person above all as favourite, they do regard each member of the family as their responsibility and become very upset when they have to pick between you. When you go out hiking in the bush the dogs become distraught if I stay behind while my husband goes on ahead to reconnoitre. If they remain with me they howl miserably, and if they go with my husband they keep trying to come back to check up on me.

Ridgebacks have the disconcerting habit of greeting strangers by thundering up to them baying loudly. This is followed by a close inspection after which the dogs turn away looking bored and go back to resume their siesta. If you want your dog to be a watchdog you should not tell him off for barking at strangers who come to the house, but you should teach him to stop as soon as you say so. Visitors should be advised to let the dog make friends in his own time, without being rushed.

Ridgebacks like to let off steam occasionally by running round and round at full speed, preferably with you at the centre of their activities. They like to charge straight at you, then swerve aside at the last second, and it takes a great deal of nerve not to move out of the way. In quieter moments your Ridgeback likes to be near you; he will even lean on you if you are still for long enough. Ridgebacks are skilled at leaning regardless of whether they are lying down, sitting or standing up. They are always delighted to see you after an absence and when you have a Ridgeback you can be sure of a tumultuous welcome home, whatever the hour!

Some Ridgeback males have a high regard for their own safety, they are reluctant to expose themselves to danger so will ignore or avoid threatening situations at all costs. What these dogs lack in outright bravery they generally make up for with stealth and cunning!

A Ridgeback will tell tales on the other dogs in the household, mainly to be sure of directing suspicion and blame for misdemeanours to the right quarter. Your dog will come to wearing a smug expression and will persuade you to follow him and catch Amber in the act of raiding the dustbin. Later Amber will reciprocate by informing you that Simba has crept onto your bed with muddy paws. Ridgebacks may let you know when your children are up to mischief as well.

In common with other hounds Ridgebacks love to chase anything that moves, so should learn early what they are allowed to pursue and what is forbidden. They should be kept under strict control if they are unreliable.

Ridgebacks like to roll in things that smell, apparently the more putrid the better. This is an old instinct to camouflage their scent when they are out on the hunt, but judging by their ecstatic expressions as they indulge in this habit it has become an enjoyable end in itself

Many Ridgebacks like to eat manure and there seems to be nothing you can do to stop them. This is more popular with the pups but fortunately they do seem to grow out of it. All my Ridgebacks when young have been partial to Kangaroo dung and knowing this infuriates me, they would gobble the pellets up and sprint away before I could reach them. No amount of supplementation with different vitamins and minerals made any difference, so in the end I have given up worrying and just worm them more frequently; they have grown out of it eventually.

Ridgebacks can be unashamed scroungers when food is around. It is best to banish them if you want to eat in peace because the antics they perform to gain a morsel are heart rending and distracting! My dog "Kakamega Timau", who was normally rather dignified, would do anything for a bit of ice-cream or chocolate. His favourite trick was to do his entire novice obedience routine in half a minute flat i.e. sit, stand, drop, come to heel, the recall, the finish- and he absolutely hated obedience. He knew that at mealtimes he did not receive his "contribution" until we were quite finished, but he had a sixth sense that would bring him instantly from the deepest of slumbers at the final scrape of a knife and fork

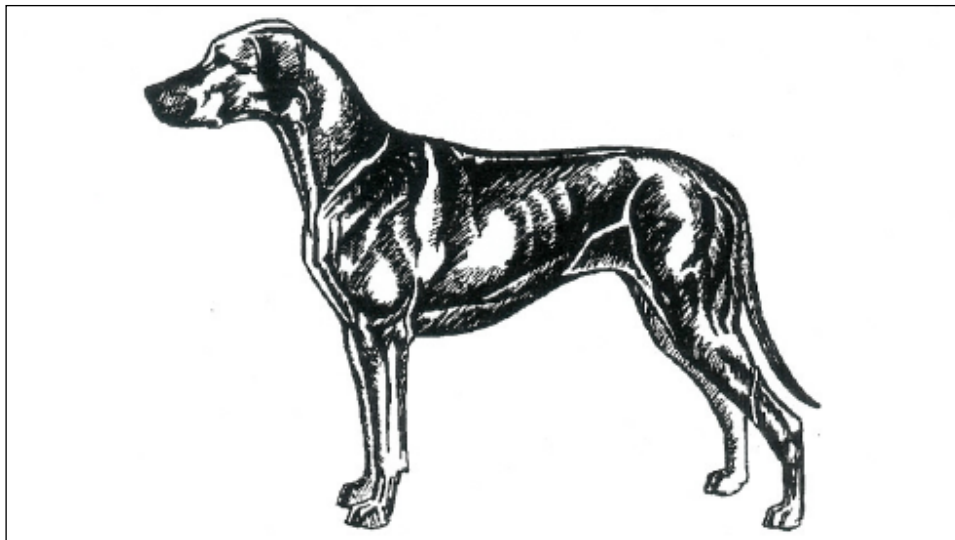
Ridgebacks tend to be dreadful dustbin raiders and are experts at undoing the different types of lids. This is a dangerous habit, as well as a messy one, and should be curtailed as soon as it starts.

This obsession with food means that you must be constantly vigilant when taking your Ridgeback to those outback regions where aerial Dingo baiting takes place. The baits contain Strychnine which kills quickly and agonizingly. They are very attractive to all dogs, and they are long lasting as they only break down after rain. Care should be taken to prevent your dog from eating the carcasses of animals that have died as a result of poisoning e.g. rabbits or foxes.

Although I said earlier that Ridgebacks could not communicate their wishes by talking they are still vocal in their own fashion. They may give you a hurry up if you are taking a long time with their food, or back chat when being told off. This is done in a sort of throaty warble, sometimes punctuated by a short bark or two, and if you reply it can develop into quite a discussion. My bitch, "Ch Byrine Mishindi", snaps her teeth together and yips at us, which looks and sounds rather fearsome until you realize she is just being conversational.

Make the most of your Ridgeback and enjoy his company; he will amply reward your time and attention with loyalty, love, humour and intelligence.

Reprinted with kind permission from Pauline Sadler, author of  
"The Rhodesian Ridgeback in Australia"



Outline of a Rhodesian Ridgeback taken from the National Rhodesian Ridgeback extended breed standard

# CHECK LIST WHEN BUYING A PUPPY

## Questions to ask yourself-

Can you afford to buy a puppy from a reputable breeder?

Can you afford to feed a puppy that will grow into a large dog?

Can you afford veterinary costs for immunisations, worming, and the unexpected complaints or accidents?

Can you afford to spay or neuter your pet? Be aware that it can cost in excess of \$150.

Are you aware that the first year can cost considerably more than for an adult dog in veterinary costs, extra food and additives?

Do you have the time to devote to a new puppy?

Are you able to exercise your new puppy? Don't forget it will one day be a large dog requiring regular exercise.

Will you socialise and train your puppy by taking it out to meet other dogs at puppy classes, obedience etc?

Do you have secure fences around your property?

Do you have a kennel or some other form of shelter for your dog's protection from sun, wind and rain?

Are you able to devote a small amount of time weekly to training your dog to be an obedient, loving member of the family?

Are you able to find and pay for suitable housing and care of a dog when you go away on holidays or business trips?

Do you work all day?

Are all members of your household happy for you to own a puppy?

## BUYER BEWARE

Be very sure of the dog you choose is absolutely right for you and your family's needs.

Are the Sire and Dam registered with the State Controlling Body? Eg VCA

Make appointments with breeders and if unable to keep them, be courteous and cancel.

Try and see as many litters as possible.

Look for good temperament- check the parents, if possible and choose a puppy that is inquisitive and playful, NOT aggressive or shy and retiring.

Assess the conditions in which puppies are raised- cleanliness is important.

Ask the breeder if the litter has been checked for Dermoid Sinus, a genetic defect in Rhodesian Ridgebacks

Ask if the puppies have been wormed, immunised and tattooed.

Ask if the Dam and sire have been x-rayed for Hip Dysplasia and Elbow Dysplasia (inherited diseases) - these problems can cause arthritis in your dog in old age. Ask to see official results.

Make sure the breeder you buy from is going to be available to you after you buy your puppy, to answer questions and generally help if you need it. If you have a problem always contact the breeder first, it may save you a trip to the vet.

Make sure you receive a diet sheet, immunisation and worming cards and Kennel control papers (VCA) when you buy your puppy.

Look for a healthy, well fed, content, clean puppy.

If a breeder offers you "breeders terms" when buying a puppy be extremely cautious and read carefully all paperwork and question any contract you are asked to sign.

## A FEW DON'TS

Don't buy the first puppy you see, compare and choose the best available at the time.

Don't buy an obviously flea ridden or worm ridden puppy.

Don't buy a puppy with an obvious health problem, it could be more expensive than you think.

Don't buy with your emotions only-this puppy will be part of your family for the next ten-twelve years.

## PET OR REGISTERED, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Your Ridgeback puppy can be purchased as a pet (limited Register- orange papers) or Registered (full papers- blue). All pups should come with a VCA registration certificate, or your puppy is not coming from a registered breeder.

Like all pure breeds the Ridgeback is bred to a "Standard" set by the Canine Association. The Ridgeback is not easy to breed to standard and the differences between pet and registered can range from cosmetic to functional problems.

A Ridgeback may become a "pet" with any of the following cosmetic faults (list is not inclusive):

- Faults in the Ridge- crowns not opposite (offset), more than 2 crowns, one crown only, short ridge, no ridge
- Colour faults- too much white- only a certain amount is acceptable or too much black- black on the muzzle and ears is acceptable. Too many black hairs may make the puppy a pet.
- Too big or too small- the breed "standard" calls for the Ridgeback to be a certain size
- Mouth with top teeth too advanced (overshot) or too far back (undershot). The standard calls for a scissor bite.
- Some breeders may sell a pup with a small umbilical hernia as a pet- these should become less evident as the pup gets larger
- Kink in the tail
- Extra crown on the back of the head
- Structural- your puppy may not be quite as good as littermates in terms of some of the subtleties breeders are looking such as rear and front angles, level back etc

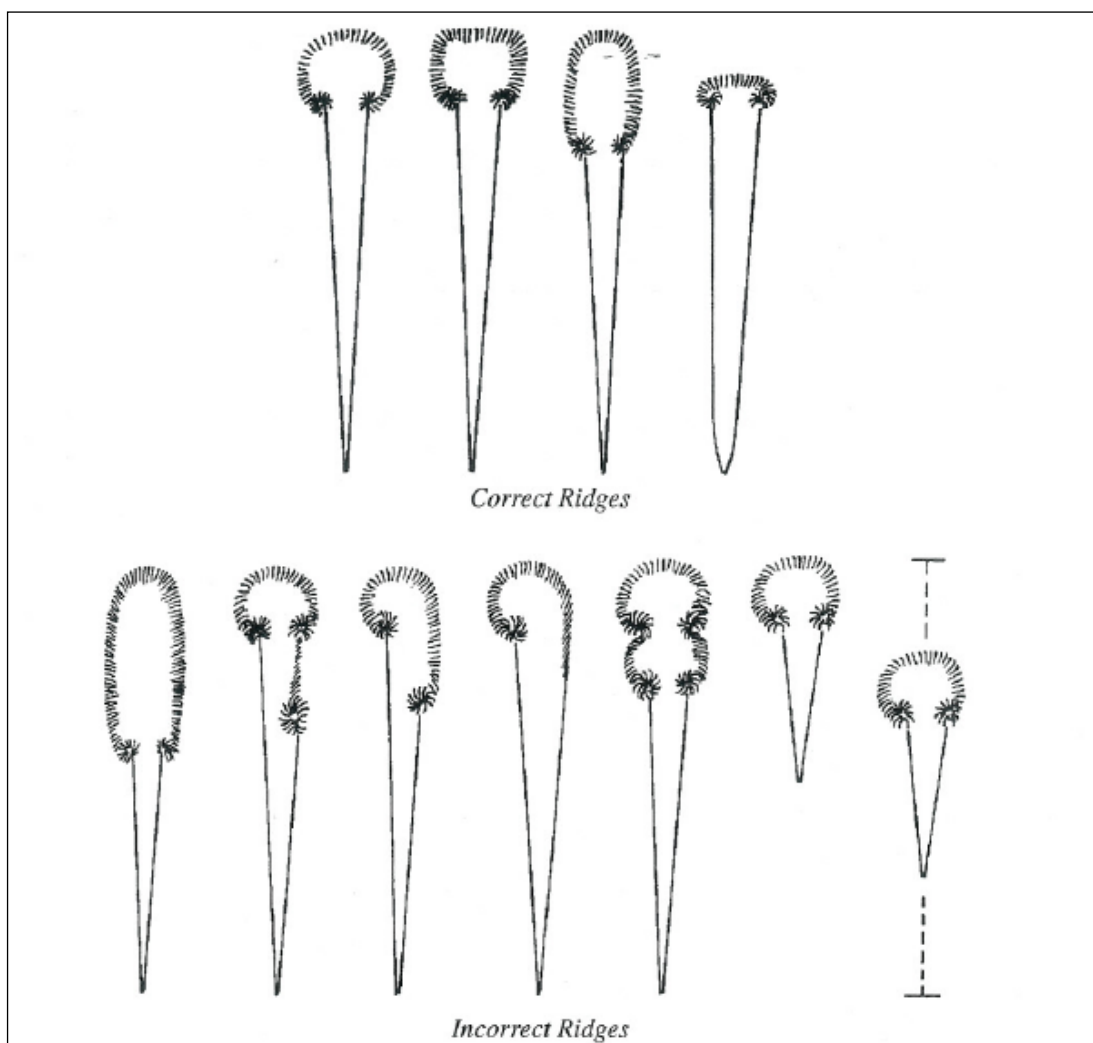
Some more functional problems may include:

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- Ingrowing eyelashes (entropion). This may require an operation.
- Heart defects- be sure you know if you are getting a puppy with a “murmur” how severe this may be. A severe murmur may shorten the life of your puppy.
- Large umbilical hernias- these may need an operation.
- No testicles, or only one testicle. This may also require an operation slightly larger than the normal process for having your puppy de-sexed.

Ensure if you are buying a puppy with a more functional problem that this has been surgically corrected or that you understand from the breeder what will be involved.

**Ridge issues are the major reason why your puppy will be sold as a pet:**



## **THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK CLUB OF VICTORIA**

The Club was formed in August 1985 by some 80 people who were interested in the breed and wanted to promote and improve the standard.

The Club currently has around 200 members and is the only affiliated and recognised Club with the Victorian Canine Association Inc.

It provides a number of services to its members and the most important means of communication is the bi-monthly newsletter. This publication includes articles relevant to our breed and letters from our members about their dogs. We try to include lots of photos of the antics our companions get up to and members are encouraged to submit these. Our activities include fun days, puppy socialising days, lure coursing, member's competitions, shows, obedience trials and social events.

While many of our members exhibit their dogs and some are breeders, the main role of the Rhodesian Ridgeback is, and always will be, as a family pet.

**We encourage you to join our Club to learn more about this lovely breed of ours.**

# WHY BELONG TO A BREED CLUB?

(taken and slightly modified with permission from George Ohanesian, USA).

**“Please remember how important our Club is for our breed. These benefits for our dogs and for our Members FAR outweigh the minimal cost of membership.**

Some of these benefits include:

- (1) The RRCV online Magazine which is an incredible communication and advertising vehicle that goes to our whole community and advises us all on what is going on, what is happening in all areas, who is doing what breeding, asking Members for their opinions, articles on what is happening with Rescue, what our breeders have to say on selected subjects, etc . These publications are certainly also worth the cost of membership alone !
- (2) Club activities such as lure coursing, fun days, tracking demonstrations, meetings to share information and views, “get togethers” such as the Shepparton weekend- come and enjoy your RRs with other club members.
- (3) Special Publications that help us educate the public about our breed. Especially today it is so important to make sure people understand our dogs. Some of these efforts include:
  - (a) The Extended Breed Standard booklet which helps people see what our breed is supposed to look like and why so that, hopefully, our enthusiasts will breed more to the Standard;
  - (b) Information for trainee judges
  - (c) Information for potential buyers
- (4) Assisting the Victorian Canine Association with the Judges training seminars to make sure our judges hear from our qualified people what our Ridgebacks are supposed to do and how they are supposed to be structured. This is needed so that the judges can better judge our Ridgebacks so that maybe, one day (?), there may be consistency in the ring with a clearer direction given to breeders.
- (5) The holding of our Championship, Open shows and Breed competitions. These are a great opportunity to see a large number of Ridgebacks in one place, to meet breeders and for breeders and owners to catch up with each other
- (6) The holding of the National Specialty. The National RR Club provides a structure which organizes our clubs and holds this wonderful bi-annual event. I am sure I am not the only one who looks forward to seeing everyone, meeting those we haven't seen for two or more years, find out who is doing what, go out and party with those who also love our breed, actually see what the breeding results are out there, see our wonderful puppies, how our old guys and girls are faring, cry with those who have lost loved ones, watch all the girls and boys strut their stuff, do some judge education in person, purchase some interesting Ridgeback paraphernalia, watch the amazing entry of hundreds of Ridgebacks in the ring with our members watching to see who will make the cuts, who will win---drama that is exciting and wonderful.
- (7) Setting up and maintaining a web site where members and others can access important information about our Club
- (8) Supporting our rescue groups
- (9) A Code of Ethics which evolves and which tells us what the recommended practices are for our dogs which all of our members are required to accept as part of membership and which helps ensure that our members and, importantly, breeders, meet certain tests which helps increase the quality of our dogs.
- (10) A Breeder's Directory which advises who are our endorsed breeders as those who have agreed to meet the requirements for responsible breeding and helps to ensure that our puppies are well conceived and supported and, hopefully, will lessen the likelihood that our precious puppies will end up in Rescue or in animal shelters.

Well, anyway, I can go on forever. But hopefully one can see from this list alone that you absolutely need to be a member NOW---- So get your renewal or new membership forms in !!

## ORIGINS AND HISTORY

“Tho' my origin is obscure some like to think my breed is pure. Indeed, of my ridge I am most proud”  
An outstanding figure in any crowd; In Africa a friend to all Tho' firstly to the Aboriginal, He used me in the hunt with pride, And found me faithful by his side, so may this chapter recommend The Ridgeback to you as a friend

Centuries ago, when the first white people arrived in South Africa, they found that the Hottentots at the Cape were using dogs of the Ridgeback type for hunting purposes. The peculiar ridge of hair, running parallel to the spine and in reverse to the rest of the coat, at once distinguished it from other breeds.

Early in the nineteenth century, the Rev. Isaac Taylor, in his book "Scenes in Africa and America", wrote of ostrich hunts at the Cape in which packs of dogs were used. Presumably these dogs were of a similar type to those later described by George McCall Theal, litt D Ltd in a book entitled "The Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa south of the Zambesi". Theal wrote that the. Hottentot hunting dog was "an ugly creature, his body being shaped like that of a jackal, and his hair in his spine being turned forward, but he was a faithful serviceable animal of his' kind".

Frederick Courtney Selous was one of many hunters who favoured these Ridgeback dogs for hunting. Towards the close of the last century he spent a number of years hunting and exploring in the Matabele and Mashone territories (Southern Rhodesia), and recorded his experiences and adventures in a book which he called "A Hunters Wanderings in Africa". From Selous' writings it is evident that he was very attached to his dogs, particularly one called "Bill", undoubtedly a real veteran of the chase. This dog was once saved from a horrible death (from a crocodile) by his master. Ironically Bill met a tragic end by a similar occurrence in later years



As to the origin of the Ridgeback and its hunting abilities. the "Handbook of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club", Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia has this to say "The origin of the breed is not definitely known, but the most generally accepted view seems to be that he is the result of an intermixture of the Cuban Bloodhound and the Hottentot hunting dog, the latter supplying the characteristic ridge.

"From such a breeding one would expect just such characteristics as the Ridgeback so markedly shows; speed, power, courage, fidelity, and in addition, a remarkable skill in tackling wild animals.

Unfortunately for the breed the name "Liondog" got attached to this dog because several of the earlier big game hunters - Van Rooyen, Selous, Upcher and others - found them outstandingly the best for lion hunting, and this led many unthinking people to assume that the dogs were the actual killers of lions.

A little thought would have made it clear that no dog known would have any chance in an actual fight with a lion. What the Ridgebacks do and do effectively, is to harass the lion by constant and cleverly made feint attacks until he, or she, is held up in sheer bewilderment, giving the hunter exactly what he is waiting for- a deliberate shot at close range. To do this effectively needs courage, agility, endurance, and an instinctive skill, which this breed seems to possess in a striking degree",

The dogs invariably hunt in packs of four or five, although occasionally one dog is used. On scenting game (not necessarily lion) the pack fan out, one running directly towards the quarry, while the others circle with the object of cutting off any retreat. At this stage their amazing agility is displayed - the ability to turn in a split second, swerve or feint, or maintain a fast pace should their quarry break and run, and a chase ensue.

With the advent of long-range rifles fitted with telescopic sights, hunters have in most instances dispensed with the use of dogs, so the Ridgeback has had to turn to another vocation, that of guard dog, a duty that he performs equally well. It is in this role that he now figures prominently throughout Africa, and to some extent in India, England and the United States of America. Although not an aggressive dog, the Ridgeback is distinctly reserved with strangers and usually objects to them making the first advances to him. He may keep them under surveillance for a time before passing them. His friendship, once given, is for life.

One well known Rhodesian breeder of Ridgebacks has not locked a door in her house for twenty years. Whether she is at home or not is immaterial, the presence of several Ridgebacks on her property is sufficient to discourage trespassers.

An inherent trait of the breed (not always appreciated by owners) is the dog's love of unrestrained freedom. He resents being confined in any way, or restrained by a leash. This possibly explains why South African Police tests made with Ridgebacks were only partly successful.

Of the suitability of the breed for African conditions there can be no doubt. Instinctive knowledge of the proper behaviour in the presence of snakes, scorpions etc, plus the ease with which they are kept free of ticks, endows the Ridgeback with prospects of a longer life than an imported dog.

In order to restore the purity of this indigenous breed, a Rhodesian Ridgeback Club was formed in 1924. Prior to that time, short and long-haired dogs of various colours were to be seen, the principle distinguishing features being the ridge of hair on the back. The conscientious efforts of the club have been amply rewarded, for the modern Rhodesian Ridgeback presents an attractive, alert appearance and he retains all the sterling qualities of his ancestors, the Hottentot hunting dog. May he always be found faithful and serviceable to man as his forebear was to the African Hottentot.

Taken from "Dog Tales and Trimmings" a book on the top ten breed in Southern Africa, with permission of the author, Mrs M Arsenis.

## **THE BEGINNINGS**

The following note on the Rhodesian Ridgeback's origins, and its history outside Africa were supplied by the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club (NSW)

Although a comparatively recently recognised breed, the origins of this remarkable dog are lost in time.

It is well established that the distinctive "ridge" comes from the Hottentot Hunting Dog, but it is the history of that animal that is clouded in the centuries of African History, and has been the subject of many a debate.

Dogs were amongst the few domesticated animals found by first Europeans to arrive in Africa. Theal in "History and Ethnology of Africa before 1505" writes of the native dog ".he was an ugly creature, his body shaped like that of a Jackal, and the hair on his spine turned forward, but he was a faithful serviceable animal of his kind. Where did the Hottentot Hunting Dog come from? The Hottentot are thought to have come from Mongolia over 50,000 years ago and it is possible they brought their dogs with them, C.L. Hubbard in "The Book of the Dog" says that the Hottentot Hunting Dog was a descendant of the Phu Quoc and the Phoenician traders introduced it to Africa in the course of their trade. The Phu Quoc is a similarly ridged dog found on the island of the same name in the Gulf of Thailand in the Indo-China sea. It was known as Mah Land Thuan, which in Tai means Ridgeback.

A later and more generally accepted theory was put forward in an article written by Dr J D W Jeffries, ethnologist at *Witwatersrand* University in 1953. He says that the Phu Quoc was actually a descendant of the Hottentot Hunting Dog taken to the Island by Arab slave traders where it crossed with descendants of the Chow, so giving the Phu Quoc its dark

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blue tongue. This dark blue tongue is typical of the Chow and has never been reported in Africa, thus giving considerable weight to the probable correctness of Dr Jeffries theory. Arabs are known to have traded slaves between Africa and China and Thailand from as early as AD 900. If you are wondering why early Phoenician and Arab traders may have wanted to take dogs with them on their voyages, it is thought dogs, along with other small animals, were a source of fresh meat.

The Zulu also had a hunting dog described by Bryand in the late 14th Century as "carrying a slight mane along the neck and spine". Early missionaries mentioned Ridged Dogs owned by Bantu tribesman, north of the Zambesi river.

It is with these native dogs that the European dogs... Terriers, Mastiffs, Boarhounds, Bulldogs, Foxhounds, Bloodhounds, Pointers, Deerhounds, and, no doubt many crossbreeds brought to Africa during the 16th and 17th centuries, bred. Other dogs used in Southern Africa during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were the Steekbaard (Stickbeard) and Vuielbaard (Dirtybeard) hound. These were rough coated dogs, similar in size to Greyhounds, and known for their speed and fighting ability and probably have a place in Ridgeback history. Photographs of some of the first Ridgebacks to be registered show them to be typical Steekbaard type.

It is the middle of the 19th century before we find dogs starting to look like the Ridgebacks we know today. In 1875, a missionary, the Reverend Charles Helm, took two ridged dogs with him from Swellendam in the Cape Province to Bulawayo in Southern Rhodesia. These dogs were seen there by hunter and naturalist, Cornelius Van Rooyen, who was so impressed by their capabilities and great stamina that he obtained some of their progeny and bred them with many other dogs that showed the necessary hunting instincts. Through all this they retained that characteristic ridge. Van Rooyen's Dogs as they became known, were prized by hunters and settlers alike. They were also known at various times as Boerhunds, Leehonds, (lion dogs) and later in Afrikaans as Pronkrug (Ridgeback).

In 1922, Mr Frank Barnes circularised as many owners of Ridgebacks and Lion Dogs, as they were then known, and asked them to attend a meeting at the Bulawayo Kennel Club Show, with the idea of forming a standard and possibly registering the breed with the South African Kennel Union. The meeting was well attended and the dogs present were described by Mr R W Durham, an all breeds judge, as ..."all types and sizes from what would be regarded as an undersized Great Dane to a small Bull Terrier; all colours were represented with reds and brindles predominating". Soon after this initial meeting, Mr Barnes wrote a Standard with the help of Mr Durham and Mr C G Edmonds, who was then senior Veterinary Surgeon of Southern Rhodesia. In 1924 all their work was rewarded when the breed was first recognised by the South African Kennel Union as part of the Gundog Group. It was only in 1949 that they were changed to the Hound Group. The first dogs registered were actually from South Africa rather than Rhodesia and, bearing in mind the origin of the breed, particularly the ridge, it is no wonder they are considered African, rather than Rhodesian.

Acceptance of the Standard and registration of the breed was followed by the Great Depression and then the Second World War. After the War, we find Ridgebacks gaining popularity in many countries. During the Mau Mau risings in Kenya in the 1950's they were used by settlers for protection.

## ***OUTSIDE AFRICA***

The first Ridgebacks recorded in England were imported in 1928 and the first to be shown were at the Crystal Palace in 1932, but, once again, it was not until after the war that they became known. In 1947, the then Princess Elizabeth, now Queen Elizabeth II was given a pair of Ridgebacks whilst visiting South Africa. The dog, Just of Banda, sired the first English Champion and was used a lot as a Stud dog.

Ridgebacks were recognised by the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI) and have been used and shown in Europe since 1948. There are registered Ridgebacks in Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Portugal and probably other countries. The Canadian Kennel Club first registered Ridgebacks in 1948, the first dogs having come to Canada after the war with a returning Flying Officer. They have adapted particularly well to the harsh climates of North West Canada. The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of America was formed in 1950 and the American Kennel Club recognised the breed in 1955. There are thought to have been Ridgebacks in the United States before World War One, but it is only since the war that the breed has gained in popularity. There are a few Ridgebacks in South America, but it is far from a well-known breed yet.

## ***IN AUSTRALIA***

The first Ridgebacks to be registered in Australia were imported by Mr & Mrs W A Adams in 1967. This dog and bitch, Serengeti Meru and Serengeti Chala, formed the basis of the breed in Australia. Between 1967 and 1969 a further four Ridgebacks, 2 dogs and 2 bitches, were imported. These were Sikota of Owlsmoor (1968); Ch Dabassa of Owlsmoor (1969); Aldonnels Almosa (1969) and Ridinghills Kachindu (1969).

These six dogs formed the basis of the Australian Rhodesian Ridgeback breeding and their kennel prefixes are to be found in a great majority of Australian Ridgeback pedigrees.

From this small beginning in 1967-69 the breed now has 900 registrations in NSW alone (Written 1979). Serengeti Sanya, owned by Mr & Mrs J Morris of NSW, was the first Australian Ridgeback to gain her Championship and her daughter, Ch Glenrowan Alana, was the first Ridgeback to gain a Companion Dog title.

In Australia today the Rhodesian Ridgeback continues to grow in popularity. Admittedly, few of us are plagued by lion

problems, although this is the aspect of the breed which was most concentrated on by the Press during its early days in Australia. It is the Ridgebacks other qualities which have stood him in good stead in this country. The Ridgeback is a fine, handsome and upstanding dog, and whose coat, officially designated as red wheaten, shines like tawny silk in the sunlight. He is a faithful and loving pet and companion and still exhibits the same strong guarding instincts shown by his ancestors in Africa for their Hottentot/Bushmen/Zulu masters. Happily for us the instinct is no longer so savage, as this would be a distinct disadvantage in our often suburban environment. However, it would be a very determined intruder who would not decide that discretion was the better part of valour at the first glimpse of a Ridgeback "on guard". The alert stance, the rising hackle of ridge and the low growl rumbling deep in that capacious chest are usually all that is needed.

Their hunting instincts are also as strong as ever and Rhodesian Ridgebacks are greatly prized as pig dogs both in Australia and New Zealand. Their ancestry of courageous and tenacious big game hunting, has made them fearless, agile and wily opponents of the dangerous wild pig. But in Australia the majority of Ridgebacks are primarily family pets and their owners know that they have not only a courageous defender, but also a steadfast and loving companion.

## ***BRED FOR THE HUNT***

### **Farmers Weekly 1983**

#### **It is a courageous hunting dog and as a guard dog is hard to beat- by Rod Baker**

The first impression I had of the Rhodesian ridgeback was of two big agile brown dogs that barked at me very loudly. So I stayed on the far side of the gate until their owner, Mr Vernon Shephard of Tally-Ho Kennels, Kloof, near Durban came to open it. Having assured the dogs I was ok, I was accepted.

Ridged dogs are indigenous to only two areas in the world south-east Asia and Southern Africa, and it is a moot point as to whether Phoenician traders brought the original dogs to these areas. The important thing is, these dogs have been around for centuries and in Southern Africa were used by Hottentots and Bushmen for hunting. When the first White settlers arrived they too began to use versions of these dogs, for protection and hunting. As the settlers penetrated farther north, so the dogs went with them.

Hunters, in particular, valued the dogs as an aid to hunting lion. Used in packs, the dogs either attracted the lions to the hunter with their barking, or held it at bay until it could be dispatched by their master. But the packs suffered high losses as their great courage allowed them to close with the lion, but their size and their lack of speed left them at a disadvantage compared to their prey.

With the advance of civilization through the area, the hunting role of the dogs lost its importance, but the role of protector remained. Breeders began to refine the breed, without diluting the fine qualities that led to its popularity among the settlers in the first place.

The result today is a handsome, exceptionally brave dog that deserves far greater popularity than it gets.

## ***THE FIRST BREED CLUB***

The first club to devote itself to the breed was formed in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, in 1922, and it was probably due to this that the breed is known as the Rhodesian Ridgeback (and no name change is envisaged, Mr Shephard assures me). The appearance and character of the breed were only really fixed in the 20's and since then the Ridgeback has remained essentially unchanged. Today, as then, it is still believed by its devotees to be the "Rolls Royce" of hunting dogs.

Along with its courage, the Ridgeback has other qualities that go to make it an excellent guard dog.

"I have all the faith in the world when I am away from the house", says Mr Shephard, who owns two Ridgebacks with two more in the offing.

He has found the breed to be a territorial dog, and very protective of the home and family.

"They do tend to have a slightly greater affinity for one member of the family, but when it comes to a threat everybody can count on them", says Mr Shephard.

"They treat the family as a pack, and be a leader, but that does not mean they are difficult to train. They are intelligent dogs that think for themselves and are quick to learn", he says.

Mr Shephard finds Ridgebacks respond to affection, so it will pay any owner to make the dog a member of the family.

"They're such fun-loving dogs, and they love company", he says. The instinct to protect family and property is very strong in the breed and the Shephard garden sports two distinct paths - one around the border of the property, and another around the house. This patrolling of its domain might be because the Ridgeback is an active dog that thrives on work. It's not the type to sit in the kennel waiting for intruders to come - the Ridgeback goes out to meet the threat.

Of vital importance to any owner is the breeds compatibility with children, and when on the farm, with other pets and animals as well.

"We have kids, cats, bantams and beagles and our two Ridgebacks get on with all of them, without any problems. In fact.

our bitch, Modesty, sometimes herds the bantams and even now if you say "Where are the chickens?" she is raring to go", says Mr Shephard.

Finally, the breed's intelligence makes it a good choice for the hunt - where it's versatile and also for obedience work. It could probably perform creditably in such roles as guide dog for the blind, but the breeds usually employed in this role possibly remain the best choice since the Ridgeback, though not likely to start a fight. will probably go all out to finish it.

Most noteworthy feature of the Ridgeback's appearance is, obviously the ridge down the back from which the breeds name is derived. The ridge is considered the escutcheon of the Ridgeback. It should be well defined. symmetrical and have two diametrically opposed crowns of hair. It should start immediately behind the shoulders and continue down the middle of the back to a point in line with the hips.

The lower edge of the crown should not extend than one third down the length of the ridge, and any other crown than the two mentioned is deemed a fault.

## **THE RIDGE**

"Breeders consider the ridge and its appearance of prime importance", says Mr Shephard. Not surprising, for visually it is this one feature more than any other that sets the Ridgeback apart from other breeds.

Other features are important. however, and not least is build and conformation. The Ridgeback should not be heavy and muscular, but rather lean and hard and conformation is important. It is a large dog, the male standing 63 to 69 cm at the shoulder with a mass preferably of about 36.5kg. and the female standing about 61 to 66 cm, with a mass of about 32kg. The chest should be fairly deep and the build muscular. but not overly so.

The coat is short. smooth. dense and glossy and ranges in colour from light wheaten (a lightish tawny colour) to red wheaten (a darkish brown with a red tinge). The dog's tail is held low. always below the line of the back. Grooming the Ridgeback involves little more than a brushing once or twice a week, but as with any facet of care and rearing, commonsense should determine if a particular dog needs more grooming. Dipping when necessary will keep the pet clear of external parasites such as fleas and ticks.

"When it comes to rearing. the commonsense approach is of vital importance" says Mr Shephard. Throughout the entire rearing process, and in the general care of his dogs. Mr Shephard keeps a close eye on each dog and adjusts the programme accordingly.