



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Guidance: Applying the XL Bully breed type conformation standard

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Introduction

The Government is taking urgent action to bring forward a ban on the XL Bully breed type following a concerning rise in serious attacks and fatalities, which appear to be driven by this type of dog. This is a vital measure to ensure the ongoing safety of our communities.

This document sets out the physical conformation standard for the XL Bully breed type. The conformation standard has been developed by Defra in consultation with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) dangerous dogs working group, local authorities, vets and other animal welfare experts.

It is intended to be used by the courts and Dog Legislation Officers to support identification of the XL Bully breed type for the purposes of enforcement of Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Further detailed guidance and training for Dog Legislation Officers will be provided in due course by the relevant training centres.

This document can also be used as a guide for dog owners and keepers to help them to consider whether their dog may be within scope of the ban.

Owners and keepers must comply with the relevant requirements and restrictions as they come into force. Up-to-date advice on what action dog owners and keepers are required to take and when is provided at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs>

Advice for enforcers

For the purposes of enforcement of Section 1 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, Dog Legislation Officers are responsible for identifying XL Bully breed types. The conformation standard provided below is not intended to represent an exhaustive list of the physical characteristics of the “type known as the XL Bully”. Further expert advice and guidance must be sought at an early stage from a Dog Legislation Officer should police or local authority officers suspect that a dog may be an XL Bully breed type.

We consider that a dog will be of a type “known as the XL Bully” if the dog has a substantial number of the characteristics set out in the conformation standard below. This approach reflects how the courts have interpreted whether a dog is of a “type known as the pit bull terrier”.¹

Advice for owners and keepers of XL Bully breed types

Owners and keepers must comply with the relevant requirements and restrictions as they come into force if they think their dog could be identified as an XL Bully breed type. Up-to-date advice on what action dog owners are required to take and when is provided at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prepare-for-the-ban-on-xl-bully-dogs>

We recommend taking a precautionary approach. If you think your dog could be an XL Bully dog, you should comply with all new requirements. This includes puppies that may grow up to be an XL Bully dog.

Owners and keepers should refer to the conformation standard to help them determine whether their dog may be within scope of the prohibition.

A glossary is provided, alongside the conformation standard, to aid interpretation.

It is important to clarify that the assessment of whether an individual dog is prohibited is strictly based on ‘breed type’, rather than breed or crossbreed. This means that whether your dog is a banned type depends on whether it meets the physical characteristics of a banned breed type, rather than its breed name or any DNA test results.

A suspected XL Bully breed type does not need to fit the physical description perfectly. If it meets a substantial number of the characteristics set out in the conformation standard below, it could be considered an XL Bully breed type.

If you think your dog has a substantial amount of the physical characteristics set out in the conformation standard, your dog may be in scope of the ban whether or not it was sold as an ‘XL Bully.’

¹ R v Knightsbridge Crown Court ex p Dunne; Brock v DPP [1993]

Conformation standard: XL Bully type

The XL Bully breed type is a variant of the wider American Bully breed type. The XL Bully breed type is typically larger (both in terms of height and body shape) and more muscular than other American Bully breed types such as the 'Micro', 'Pocket', 'Standard' and 'Classic'.

Characteristics	Description
General impression	Large dog with a muscular body and blocky head, suggesting great strength and power for its size. Powerfully built individual.
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult male from 20 inches (51 cm) at the withers.• Adult female from 19 inches (48cm) at the withers.
Head	<p>Heavy, large and broad.</p> <p>The length from the tip of the nose to a well-defined stop (indentation between muzzle and the head) is equal to around a 1/3 of the length from the stop to the back of the head.</p> <p>Muzzle blocky or slightly squared to fall away below the eyes.</p> <p>Topline of muzzle straight.</p> <p>Prominent cheek muscles with strong, well-defined jaws and lips semi-close.</p> <p>Often having prominent wrinkles on face.</p> <p>Nose is large with well opened nostrils.</p>
Teeth	Level or scissor bite.
Neck	<p>Heavy, muscular, slightly arched, tapering from the shoulders to the base of the skull.</p> <p>Medium in length.</p>
Forequarters	<p>Shoulder blades are long, well-muscled and well laid back.</p> <p>Upper arm length is about equal to the length of the shoulder blades and joined at a 35-45 angle to the ground.</p> <p>Front legs straight, strong and very muscular with dog standing high on the pasterns. (area between feet and ankles).</p> <p>Elbows set close to the body.</p> <p>Distance from the withers to elbows about the same as the distance from the elbow to the bottom of the feet.</p>

Characteristics	Description
Body	<p>Heavily-muscled.</p> <p>Large, blocky body giving impression of great power for size.</p> <p>Broad, deep chest with well sprung ribs.</p> <p>Chest may be wider than deep.</p> <p>Topline level and straight.</p> <p>Loin short and firm.</p> <p>Generally appears square shaped from point of the shoulder to the point of the buttocks compared with the withers (tallest point on the dogs body excluding head and shoulders) to the ground.</p>
Hindquarters	<p>Strong, muscular and broad.</p> <p>Thighs well developed with thick musculature.</p> <p>From behind, both pasterns are typically straight and parallel to each other.</p> <p>Muscular development, angulation and width in balance with forequarters.</p>
Feet	<p>Rounded, medium in size and in proportion to body.</p> <p>Compact and well arched.</p>
Tail	<p>Medium length and low set.</p> <p>Tapers to a point to end at about the level of the hocks.</p> <p>Generally assumes a straight or pump handle shape when dog relaxed.</p>
Coat	<p>Glossy, smooth, close, single.</p>

Reader notes: Descriptors such as 'Medium in length' and 'long' will be assessed by Dog Legislation Officers relative to the conformation of the rest of the dog.

Glossary

	Description
Bite	The relative position of the upper and lower teeth when the mouth is closed.
Coat	The hairy outer covering of the skin.

Description

Croup	Part of the back from the front of the pelvis to root of the tail.
Forequarters	The front part of dog excluding head and neck.
Hindquarters	Rear part of dog from behind the loin.
Loin	The region between the last rib and the beginning of the pelvis.
Musculature	The muscles on an animal's body.
Muzzle	The length from the tip of the nose to the stop.
Pasterns	The pastern is the lower part of the foreleg, just above the foot and below the wrist. Similarly, in the hind leg, the pastern is the portion located above the foot and below the heel (also known as the hock). Every canine possesses a pair of front and rear pasterns.
Scissor bite	The upper front teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.
Spring of rib	Degree of curvature of rib cage.
Tail set	The position of the tail on the croup.
Tapering	Becomes progressively smaller towards one end.
Top line	An outline after the withers to the tail set. Viewed from the side of the dog or from above.
Withers	The highest point of body immediately behind the neck where height is measured.