



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Guidance for enforcers: Applying the XL Bully breed type conformation standard

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Contents

Introduction	2
Advice for enforcers	2
Conformation standard: XL Bully type	3
Glossary	4
Examples of XL Bully breed types	5

Introduction

From 1 February 2024, it is a criminal offence under Section 1(3) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 to be in possession of an XL Bully breed type without a valid Certificate of Exemption.

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.

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

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. 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.

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'.

To be considered a type 'known as the XL Bully' a dog must meet the minimum height measurements set out in the conformation standard below.

In addition to this height requirement, we consider that a dog will be of a type 'known as the XL Bully' if the dog has a substantial number of the other physical 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

From 1 February 2024, XL Bully breed types without a Certificate of Exemption, or those who breach the conditions of their Certificate of Exemption, can be seized under Section 5(1) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991. The owner or other person in charge of the dog will be taken through the courts under the Dangerous Dogs Exemption Schemes (England and Wales) Order 2015.

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 (51cm) at the withers.• Adult female from 19 inches (48cm) at the withers.
Head	Heavy, large and broad. The length from the tip of the nose to a well-defined stop (indentation between muzzle and the head) is equal to around one-third of the length from the tip of the nose to the back of the head. Muzzle blocky or slightly squared to fall away below the eyes. Topline of muzzle straight. Prominent cheek muscles with strong, well-defined jaws and lips semi-close. Often having prominent wrinkles on face. Nose is large with well opened nostrils.
Teeth	Level or scissor bite.
Neck	Heavy, muscular, slightly arched, tapering from the shoulders to the base of the skull. Medium in length.
Forequarters	Shoulder blades are long, well-muscled and well laid back. Upper arm length is about equal to the length of the shoulder blades and joined at a 35-45 angle to the ground. Front legs straight, strong and very muscular with dog standing high on the pasterns. (area between feet and ankles). Elbows set close to the body. Distance from the withers to elbows about the same as the distance from the elbow to the bottom of the feet.
Body	Heavily-muscled. Large, blocky body giving impression of great power for size. Broad, deep chest with well sprung ribs. Chest may be wider than deep. Topline level and straight. Loin short and firm. Generally appears square shaped from point of the shoulder to the point of the buttocks compared with the withers (tallest point on the dog's body excluding head and shoulders) to the ground.

Characteristics	Description
Hindquarters	Strong, muscular and broad. Thighs well developed with thick musculature. From behind, both pasterns are typically straight and parallel to each other. Muscular development, angulation and width in balance with forequarters.
Feet	Rounded, medium in size and in proportion to body. Compact and well arched.
Tail	Medium length and low set. Tapers to a point to end at about the level of the hocks. Generally assumes a straight or pump handle shape when dog relaxed.
Coat	Glossy, smooth, close, single.

Reader note: 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.
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.

Examples of XL Bully breed types

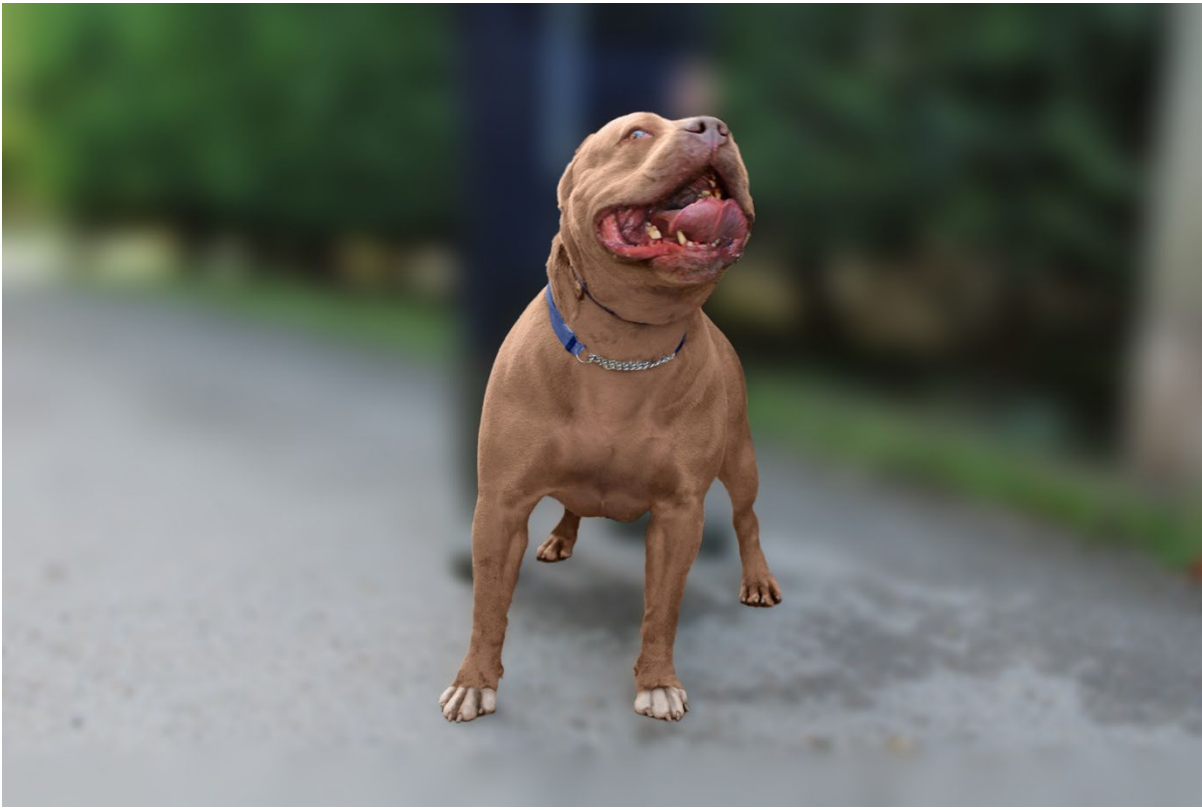
These pictures are indicative of what an XL Bully looks like. A dog does not have to look exactly like this to conform with the standard above.

Reader note: Some of the dogs below have cropped ears. The cropping of a dog's ears is an offence under the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Dog 1



Dog 2



Dog 3

