

## Substance

### Valkyrie Cane Corso

Arguably one of the most misunderstood terms in the Cane Corso community is “substance.” Come to think of it I believe both expression and substance are the most elusive descriptions in the entire dog world. However, in a world that is always changing, substance is perhaps the most important for the show breeder to understand and maintain as they are the leading ambassador to the breed. Historically speaking the Cane Corso is a Mastino. Mastino is the Italian translation for Mastiff. By definition the Mastiff is a group of breeds consisting of large powerful dogs. Each breed within the group having similar characteristics but derived from different localities. When we look around, we see tradeoffs within the breed that causes demise in the end, or loses the traditional large and powerful description of the breed. In the US, the focus is on superior movement, so much so that many breeders make this their primary goal, forgetting the very factor that brought us all together in the first place, “large and powerful dog.” Everybody wants to win and some judges will overlook mass for gait because of this.

So, just what exactly does substance mean? No, it is not a drug. No it is not that icky goopy stuff on the bottom of your shoe. It simply means “substantial.” It is used to describe the combination of muscle and bone balanced on a particular frame or structure of a dog. It is substantial bone mass plus substantial muscle mass proportionate to each other, giving the impression of powerful appearance. It does not describe the weight of the dog nor the height. It is relative to both as long as proportion is achieved.

Now that we have an idea of what it means, how do we determine it? Unfortunately we do not have a numerical value to breed toward. In my opinion we only have a chopped up blueprint to use as a guide based on dogs of yesterday. Perhaps, not the best example of the breed, but a baseline for those to refine the dogs of tomorrow. (Did I say that out loud?) Correct bone mass is determined by the height of the dog. The taller the dog, the more bone it should have in proportion to the frame of the dog. The muscle mass should be well defined but also in proportion to the frame so that it exhibits without a doubt, power and athleticism.