

Chad Taylor, an owner and breeder from Markleville, Ind., loves opportunities to change people's minds about his Cane Corsos. At first, Taylor's 135-pound, solid Baby Boy doesn't seem like the right candidate to do this. On a walk at the park, a young girl looked at Baby Boy and said, "Whoa! He looks really mean!" With the consent of her parents, Taylor welcomed the girl to pet the dog.

To her credit, the girl worked up enough courage to at least approach Baby Boy, who took his cue and placed his massive head under her little hand, gently nudging it to encourage petting. During the next 20 minutes a love fest of tummy rubs, giggles, and face-licking ensued.

Hailing from Italy, Cane Corsos worked as watchdogs and long ago took care of one other little job: wild boar hunting! The Cane Corso is a mastiff breed, but without the wrinkles and loose skin of his more massive Italian cousin, the Neapolitan Mastiff. In general, the public continues to have an initial reaction to mastiff-type breeds like the Cane Corso that isn't entirely positive or realistic.

Looks can be deceiving

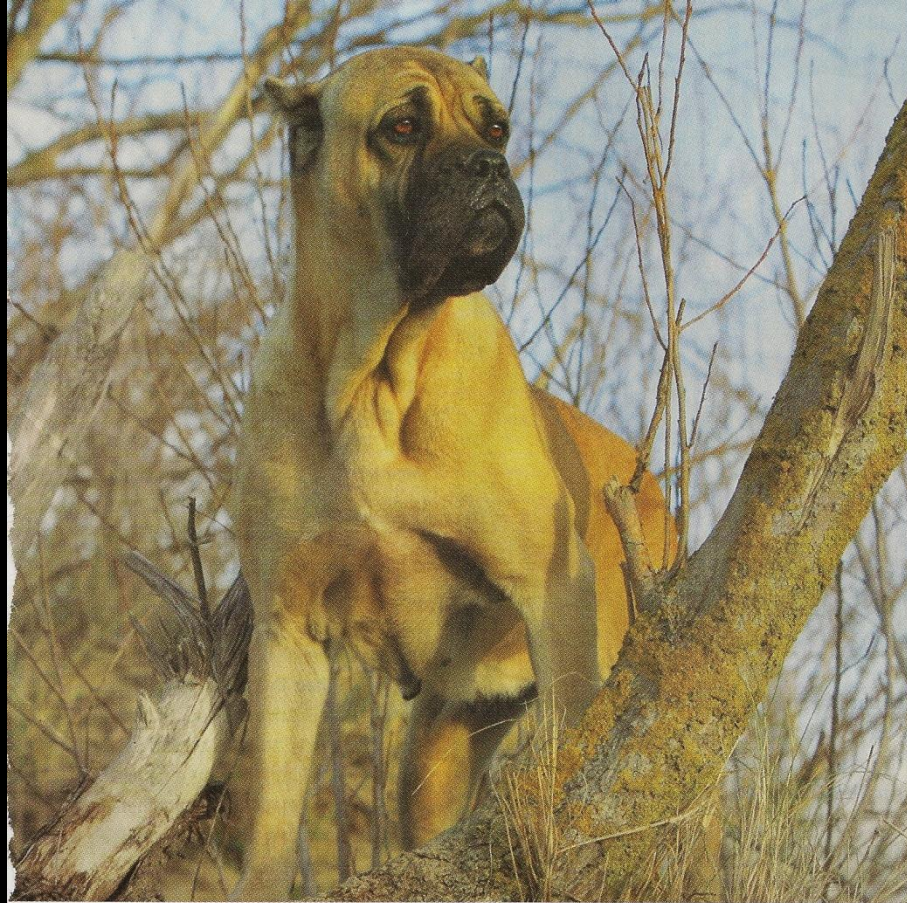
So what is the correct opinion to have about Cane Corsos? Certain broad characteristics describe the breed as a whole: active, highly trainable, protective, and devoted. Michael Ertaskiran, Cane Corso Association of America

Command presence

Like a Roman statue, the Cane Corso personifies beauty and strength.

BY
HEERA
KANG

DIANE LEWIS



president and longtime owner from Bronxville, N.Y., sums it up.

"My first female, Diva, was a Cane Corso through and through," he says. "She was loving and dedicated to her family, while protective and suspicious of strangers. She was a tremendous athlete. In the dead of winter, I would go to the bottom of what we called 'Champion Mountain,' drop her off, and drive a mile and a half straight up this ridiculous mountain road. Most times she made it up before we did, and wanted to go again!"

ing

Cane Corsos seem to exhibit personalities that make each unique. Astro was by far Ertaskiran's most devoted Cane Corso — forever gazing at his master with that look of love — and a champion in the show ring. But he had eccentricities. "He never saw a piece of paper

he didn't want to shred into a thousand pieces." And Ertaskiran never needed to set an alarm when Astro was around. "Just before the alarm clock went off he would wake me up by driving his head into my chest, pushing me against the headboard."

Some can be clowns. "Logan is just plain funny," Ertaskiran says. Picture a 7-year-old, 115-pound Cane Corso who cuddles up and sleeps with the house cat every night. Logan's 3-year-old son, Keno, loves nothing more than a day at the beach, and shows a distinct preference for blondes in bikinis, judging from who he tends to cozy up to.

"You have to remember that the Cane Corso is a relatively new breed," says Society in America for Cane Corso Italiano President Jimmy Stanchio from Grand Bay, Ala. In fact, the breed only began to gain a presence in the U.S. in the early '80s and became eligible to compete in American Kennel Club shows on July 1, 2010.

When a breed gets to be a couple hundred years old, that's when you'll see more uniformity in physical type and temperament, Stanchio says. For now, Cane Corso fanciers delight in the

Cane Corso

Country of origin: Italy.

Original use: Watchdog and hunting wild boar.

Group: Working (AKC); Guardian (UKC).

Average life span: 8 to 12 years.

Color: Black, gray, fawn, red, or brindle (any of these colors with stripes).

Coat: Short, coarse, waterproof.

Grooming: Brush a few times a week to deal with light shedding, bathe only occasionally, trim nails as needed, keep ears clean.

Height/weight: Males, 25 to 27 inches, 120 to 135 pounds; females, 23 to 25 inches, 90 to 110 pounds.

Personality: Devoted, eager to please, protective, suspicious of strangers.

Trainability: High.

Activity level: High.

Known health problems: Hip dysplasia, cherry eye (a condition that causes a swollen gland in the eye), bloat.

Good with children? Yes, when they are socialized from an early age. Interaction with small or unfamiliar children should always be monitored.

Good with other pets? Yes, if raised together. Be sure that any other dog is smaller and/or submissive, and not of the same sex.

National breed club:

> Cane Corso Association of America, Michael Ertaskiran, president; 58 Tunis Ave., Bronxville, N.Y., 10708-6611; m1erky@aol.com; www.canecorso.org

> Society in America for Cane Corso Italiano, Jimmy Stanchio, president; president@thesacci.com; www.thesacci.com

Rescue:

> Cane Corso Rescue; www.canecorsorescue.org

> Society in America for Cane Corso Italiano Rescue, Patricia Storm; working@thesacci.com; www.thesacci.com

More info: DogChannel.com/canecorso





Did you know?

> “The Cane Corso has, in my opinion, an innate sense of family and the protection of that family,” says Mario Gutierrez of Selma, Calif., Cane Corso Association of America western regional vice president. “They do know that children are smaller and are generally very careful around them. They seem to know the difference in children and adults, and how to operate carefully around children.”

> “The Cane Corso is an unmatched family companion. However, it’s important to remember that you will need to teach both the child and the dog how to interact with each other, at an early age,” says Chad Taylor, an owner and breeder from Markleville, Ind. Interaction between Cane Corsos and small children or children they are unfamiliar with should be monitored. An unintentional bump from a 135-pound dog would jostle a person of any size!

Warnings about behavioral traits

> In general, Cane Corsos should not be left off leash without proper supervision. Remember that he is a powerful dog and intimidating to many people, says Donna Hiebert, a longtime owner in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. > “Cane Corsos can be belligerent toward other dogs of the same sex, as any dominant breed tends to be,” says Michael Ertaskiran, Cane Corso Association of America president. “It is not recommended to have two dominant animals together because all it will take is one fight or disagreement and they will hate each other for life. It’s best to have a smaller dog or a submissive large dog.”

conformation shows and are in the beginning stages of advanced obedience training in order to take next steps toward competing in events such as agility,” Taylor says. “There is really very little that a Cane Corso can’t do!” **DF**

Heera Kang is a writer and editor in Austin, Texas, where her Golden Retriever-Poodle mix, Holly, keeps her company.

VANESSA GROSSEMY

Test your Cane Corso knowledge and win points toward prizes by taking a quiz at DogChannel.com/extras

spectrum. “Some are softer than others — happy-go-lucky, wagging their tails, never met a stranger. On the other side, some are a more alert,” Stanchio says.

Prospective owners need to be aware of the diversity in this breed and do their homework, researching the breed and the breeder. Visit the breeder and spend time with the dogs. Watch the temperament of the parents/grandparents closely because it will likely reflect the puppy’s temperament.

Socializing early is a must for these dogs to become gentle giants — interacting with children, other dogs, and different kinds of people and settings. “Be committed to consistent, positive training methods and ongoing socialization,” says Donna Hiebert, a longtime owner and

trainer in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, who does not recommend Cane Corsos for first-time dog owners. “Corsos need firm leadership, but no harshness.”

Grooming and health

Upkeep for Cane Corsos is not a colossal task. Their stiff double coat will shed lightly and more during certain times of the year, but it’s nothing that a quick brush a few times a week won’t take care of. Bathe and trim nails only as needed and keep their ears clean. Cane Corsos can be susceptible to conditions including hip dysplasia, cherry eye (swollen eye glands), and bloat. Regular vet visits will help catch the onset of such conditions.

Best home and owner

Cane Corsos can live happily anywhere in the world as long as they are near their human family. “The easiest and hardest part of owning this breed might be the same thing: their profound attachment to their owners. The breed suffers if left out in the yard away from its family. This breed develops a bond [to their humans] that is quite unique,” Ertaskiran says.

He keeps his city dogs mentally and physically challenged with 4- to 5-mile bike rides, training for competitions and shows, long walks in Central Park, and, of course, the beach for Keno to swim and check out the babes. The more this dog is integrated into daily activities, the happier he will be.

“Our dogs accompany us to family gatherings, the park, the lake, visits to the pet stores. We also enjoy participating in

ASKTHEBREEDER

- **Why did you choose to breed these two parents?** The answer, as well as spending time with the puppies, parents, and grandparents, will help you get a better idea about the puppies’ temperaments.
- **Can you provide a contract that guarantees the health of the puppy?** Also, ask to see health testing for the parents, especially hip scores.
- **How long have you been involved with the breed?**

Find more questions at DogChannel.com/breederquestions