

RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK INFORMATION BOOKLET



With compliments from:

**The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club
of Western Australia (Inc)**

© RRCWA (Inc) 2013

ABOUT THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

The Rhodesian Ridgeback originated in Southern Africa where the early European settlers mated their imported breeds with the small, fierce hunting dogs owned by the Hottentots in order to produce a guard/hunting dog ideally suited to local conditions. The Hottentot Hunting Dog had a ridge of hair along its spine running in a reverse direction to the rest of the coat and this particular characteristic became a feature of the cross matings between the European breeds and the native dogs.

These “Ridgebacks” were used as functional all purpose guard and hunting dogs and it was found that they surpassed any other breed when hunting lions. During the late 19th century the reputation of “Ridgebacks” in this field became established through the exploits of a famous big game hunter in Rhodesia named Cornelius Van Rooyen, who had a pack of these ridged dogs. Van Rooyen’s dogs were very similar to today’s Rhodesian Ridgeback.

It was not intended that the Ridgeback should actually kill the lion, but rather keep it at bay until the hunter could shoot it. Ridgebacks would, however, kill lion cubs without hesitation and pull down lesser game with ease.

The Standard of the breed was drawn up following a meeting of “Ridgeback” owners in Bulawayo in 1922 and this was accepted by the South African Kennel Union (now the Kennel Union of Southern Africa) in 1926. The Standard borrowed much from the Dalmatian Standard and envisages a “strong, muscular and active dog, symmetrical in outline, and capable of great endurance, with a fair amount of speed”.

Rhodesian Ridgebacks have adapted well to modern day life. They are highly intelligent and have a loving, loyal temperament with those they know, but are distinctly off-hand with strangers. They are good guard dogs, but do not bark unless there is a reason. They are quite happy to lie about all day doing nothing and yet are enthusiastic about walks or expeditions.

No single breed of dog suits everyone and there are aspect of the Ridgeback character which would not endear them to some people. They can be strong willed, determined, independent and extremely obstinate. There is nothing slavish about a Ridgeback – the man/Ridgeback relationship tends to be one of partners rather than a master/servant situation. He never forgets love and understanding, nor does he lightly forgive harsh treatment. He is a dog of noble bearing whose physical attributes should reflect his role as guardian, companion and hunter.

The adults do not require vast amounts of food. They are hardy dogs and routine care consists of checking the ears, cutting the nails, weekly grooming, and regular worming and inoculations.

WHY HAVE WE SENT YOU THIS INFORMATION BOOKLET?

Thank you for contacting the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of WA (Inc). The club has produced this handbook to introduce you to the Rhodesian Ridgeback and to help you choose the right puppy. In the following pages you will find information regarding:

- Page 2 - About the Rhodesian Ridgeback
- Page 4 - What the Rhodesian Ridgeback should look like: The Breed Standard
- Page 6 - What you can do with your dog
- Page 8 - What the Club can do for you
- Page 9 - Resource List
- Page 10 - Hereditary diseases and general health
- Page 11 - What you can expect from Rhodesian Ridgeback breeders
- Page 12 - The Club's 'Code of Ethics'
- Page 14/18 - The answers to some commonly asked questions
- Page 19 - Specialist books written about the Rhodesian Ridgeback

Please note that this Information Booklet is provided to guide you and, due to its size, cannot contain all the information you will need to choose a puppy. You will need to do your own research as well. The Club recommends that you view as many adult dogs and litters as you can and talk to as many Ridgeback owners and breeders as possible.



WHAT THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK SHOULD LOOK LIKE

All breeds of dog which are recognized by the Australian National Kennel Control have what is known as a “Standard”. The Standard is a detailed description of the various characteristics of the breed and registered breeders constantly strive to ensure that the dogs they breed conform as closely as possible to the Standard. The Standard for Rhodesian Ridgebacks in this country is that which is used all over the world. It is the “Country of Origin” Standard which was recently revised by the Kennel Union of southern Africa and the Zimbabwe Kennel Club.

FCI STANDARD No 146 dated 10/12/96. Adopted in Australia 1/1/98.

UTILIZATION – The Rhodesian Ridgeback is still used to hunt game in many parts of the world, but is especially prized as a watch-dog and a family pet.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW – The Rhodesian Ridgeback is presently the only registered breed indigenous to southern Africa. Its forebears can be traced to the Cape colony of southern Africa where they crossed with the early pioneers’ dogs and the semi-domesticated, ridged Hottentot hunting dogs. Hunting mainly in groups of two or three, the original function of the Rhodesian Ridgeback or Lion dog was to track game, especially lion, and, with great agility, keep it at bay until the arrival of the hunter.

The original standard, which was drafted by F. R. Barnes, in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, in 1922 was based on that of the Dalmatian and was approved by the South African Kennel Union in 1926.

GENERAL APPEARANCE – The Rhodesian Ridgeback should represent a well balanced, strong, muscular, agile and active dog, symmetrical in outline and capable of great endurance with a fair amount of speed. The emphasis is on agility, elegance and soundness with no tendency towards massiveness. The peculiarity of the breed is the ridge on the back, which is formed by the hair growing in the opposite direction to the rest of the coat.

CHARACTERISTICS – The ridge is the escutcheon of the breed. The ridge must be clearly defined, symmetrical and tapering towards the haunch. It must start immediately behind the shoulders and continue to the hip (haunches) bones. The ridge must contain only two crowns, identical and opposite each other. The lower edges of the crowns must not extend further down the ridge than one-third of its length. A good average width of the ridge is 5 cm (2ins).

TEMPERAMENT – Dignified, intelligent, aloof with strangers, but showing no aggression or shyness.

HEAD AND SKULL – Cranial Region: Skull – Should be of a fair length (width of head between ears, distance from occiput to stop, stop to end of nose, should be equal), flat and broad between the ears; the head should be free from wrinkles when in repose.

Stop – Should be reasonably well defined and not in one straight line from the nose to the occiput bone.

Facial Region – Nose – Should be black or brown. A black nose should be accompanied by dark eyes, a brown nose by amber eyes.

Muzzle – Should be clean, closely fitting the jaws.

Cheeks – Should be clean.

EYES - Should be moderately well apart, round, bright and sparkling, with intelligent expression, their colour harmonizing with the colour of the coat.

EARS - Should be set rather high, of medium size, rather wide at base and gradually tapering to a rounded point. They should be carried close to the head.

MOUTH - Jaws strong with a perfect and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws. The teeth must be well developed, especially the canines or holders.

NECK - Should be fairly long, strong and free from throatiness.

FOREQUARTERS - The forelegs should be perfectly straight, strong and well boned, with the elbows close to the body. When viewed from the side, the forelegs should be wider than viewed from the front. Pasterns should be strong with slight spring. Shoulders – should be sloping, clean and muscular, denoting speed.

BODY - Back - Powerful.

Loins - Strong, muscular and slightly arched.

Chest - Should not be too wide, but very deep and capacious; the brisket should reach to the elbow.

Forechest - Should be visible when viewed from the side.

Ribs - Moderately well sprung, never rounded like barrel-hoops.

HINDQUARTERS - In the hind legs the muscles should be clean and well defined with good turn of stifle and strong hocks well let down.

FEET - Should be compact and round with well arched toes and tough, elastic pads, protected by hair between the toes and pads.

TAIL - Should be strong at the root and gradually tapering towards the end, free from coarseness. It should be of moderate length. It should not be attached too high nor too low and should be carried with a slight curve upwards, never curled.

GAIT/MOVEMENT - Straight forward, free and active.

COAT - Hair - Should be short and dense, sleek and glossy in appearance but neither woolly nor silky.

COLOUR - Light wheaten to red wheaten. A little white on the chest and toes is permissible, but excessive white hairs here, on belly or above toes is undesirable. A dark muzzle and ears permissible. Excessive black hairs throughout the coat are highly undesirable.

SIZE - The desirable heights are:

Dogs 63cm (25 ins) to 69cm (27 ins)

Bitches 61cm (24 ins) to 66cm (26 ins)

Weight – The desirable weights are: Dogs 36.5kg (80lbs)

Bitches 32 kg (70lbs)

FAULTS - Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportions to its degree.

NOTE: Male animals should have two apparently normally developed testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR DOG

First and foremost, your Rhodesian Ridgeback will be a beloved companion and family pet. You can take it for walks, it can come with you when you go jogging and it will love trips to the beach. When you want to relax, the Ridgeback will relax with you: when you want to be active, the Ridgeback will be happy to join in. These dogs are happiest when they are with their owners, preferably touching them.

There are a number of other things you can do with your Ridgeback.

OBEDIENCE TRAINING

Most dogs benefit from obedience training and Rhodesian Ridgebacks are no exception. The Ridgeback is an intelligent animal but it was developed to be able to think for itself, an essential characteristic in the breed's early days in southern Africa. This means that it will not always unthinkingly obey commands and it tends to become easily bored by repetition. Obedience training of Rhodesian Ridgebacks is a challenge but it is well worth the effort.

For information about where you can find Obedience classes in your area, contact the Canine Association of WA on 9455 1188 or log onto their web site www.dogswest.com

OFFICIAL CANINE ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

If you are interested in exhibiting (conformation) or taking part in obedience trials, agility trials or endurance tests, you will need to become a member of the Canine Association of Western Australia (the CAWA). This is the body that governs all canine activities in this state. The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club is an affiliate of the CAWA.

Official CAWA activities include:

DOG SHOWS

Basically, a dog show is a beauty contest where dogs are assessed as to how closely they correspond to the Judge's interpretation of the breed Standard. One dog and one bitch from each breed are awarded "Challenge Points" toward the title of "Australian Champion". There is a dog show on somewhere in WA on most weekends, with the majority of these taking place at the CAWA grounds in Southern River. Dog shows provide a good opportunity to meet other Ridgeback owners and enjoy discussing the breed while socializing your dog.

OBEDIENCE TRIALS

After you have gone through basic training, you may wish to enter official obedience trials with the aim of achieving an obedience title. There are four titles which a dog can obtain: Community Companion Dog, Companion Dog, Companion Dog Excellent Utility Dog and Utility Dog Excellent. Three passes are required at each level. Some people will tell you that it is impossible for a Rhodesian Ridgeback to attain these heights. This is not true. Many Ridgebacks have achieved Companion Dog, and several Ridgebacks in Australia have attained Companion Dog Excellent and Utility Dog. Positive training methods, patience and perseverance are the key.

AGILITY & JUMPING TRIALS

These are activities which Ridgebacks really enjoy, but as all Agility and Jumping work is done off lead, a certain level of obedience is required. In Agility & Jumping a dog runs through an obstacle course directed by its owner with commands and hand/body signals. Many obedience and training clubs offer Agility & Jumping training to owners. Basic training can begin at any age, but training on courses with jumps and scaling A-Frames can begin once dogs have reached 18 months of age. In Agility & Jumping Trials a dog runs through a set obstacle course within a set time. Any dog which passes through the course within the set time, and without making a mistake gains a “pass”, and three, five and seven passes respectively are required to obtain each title. Again there are three levels of title, Agility Dog/Jumping Dog, Agility Dog Excellent/Jumping Dog Excellent and Agility Master/Jumping Master. There are several Ridgebacks in Australia who have attained Excellent and Master titles in these sports.

ENDURANCE TRIALS

Again, a certain level of obedience is required for participants, and a dog must be aged between 2-8 years. An endurance trial consists of a 20 km bike ride for the human with his/her dog running beside the bike on a lead. There is a set time for the completion of the 20km, however speed must be controlled so that the dog is not overtaxed. There are three stages of 8km, 6km, and 6km, with a fifteen minute break between each stage. The dog is examined by a vet before the run, at each break and again at the end of the 20km. The dog must be able to show its willingness to work, and perform a short obedience exercise in the forest/bush surroundings both before and after the endurance run. Obtaining an Endurance Title is quite an achievement for any dog and only a few Ridgebacks have managed it in this State.

There are many other activities and competitive sports open to Ridgebacks, including Tracking and Flyball.

Any enquiries about the above activities, events and relevant training can be obtained from the CAWA office during normal business hours, Monday to Friday, or again go to the CAWA website at www.dogswest.com. The CAWA grounds are located on the corner of Warton and Ranford Roads in Southern River (Gosnells/Canning Vale area).



WHAT THE CLUB CAN DO FOR YOU

The Club conducts two official CAWA sanctioned shows during the year, an Open Show and a Championship Show. Members of the public are always welcome to come along and it is good way to meet a lot of Ridgeback owners and have a look at a selection of dogs. (There is no entry charge to the Canine grounds for visitors). If you should decide that you wish to participate in sanctioned show/obedience activities, you will have to become a member of the Canine Association.

However, you do NOT have to be a member of the Canine Association to become a member of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club. If you own a registered RR in your name, you can become a Full member. Those who own an unregistered RR may become Associate members and we shortly hope to have a provision for a Junior membership.

Membership of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club will allow you to benefit from the following:

SOCIAL EVENTS FOR OWNERS AND DOGS

The Club will hold a number of Fun Days throughout the year. These may take the form of a BBQ/Fun Day in a park, perhaps a bush walk in the winter. Informal gatherings are circularized via the club magazine and usually advertised in the Sunday Times a week prior to the event.

INFORMATION AND GENERAL BACK-UP

The club publishes a bi-monthly magazine called with “Western Ridge” which includes informative articles, members stories, pet profiles, poems etc and as many photos as we can manage. Show activities, show results and the various club competition results are published in each issue.

As a member you will also have access to a pool of knowledge and experience accumulated by other members, many of whom have been involved in the breed for upwards of 20 years. Club committee members are happy to hear from potential and new Ridgeback owners, and even if they cannot advise you on a specific question, they will be able to guide you to the person most able to give you the advice you seek.

RESCUE SERVICE

From time to time Rhodesian Ridgebacks, for one reason or another, need to find new homes. The Club has a Rescue Officer who coordinates such moves. If you are interested in giving an older dog a good home, please contact our Rescue Officer.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Sometimes the need for the intervention of the Rescue Service is because owners make simple mistakes early on with their Ridgebacks. These mistakes magnify as the dog grows older, until the owners feel they cannot cope any more. Separation anxiety on the part of the dog and accompanying destructiveness and/or noise complaints are a sad recurring theme of Rescue. Owners leave it so late that they have lost the energy to turn the situation around, and the love they felt for the puppy or young dog has gone.

The Club urges new owners to seek help early on if they are having problems or if their relationship with their Ridgeback is deteriorating. There are people in the Club who are willing, anable, to help in these situations.

RESOURCE LIST

Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Western Australia (Inc)
Postal Address: PO Box 631, Cannington, WA 6987.
Web: <http://www.rrcwa.com.au>

Canine Association of Western Australia (Inc)
Location: Cnr Warton & Ranford Roads, Southern River WA 6110
Postal Address: PO Box 1404, Canning Vale, WA 6970
Phone: (08) 9455 1188, Fax: (08) 94551190
E-mail: k9dogswest.com
Web: www.dogswest.com

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

The Rhodesian Ridgeback in Australia
By Pauline Sadler

The Definitive Rhodesian Ridgeback
By David Helgesen

Rip the Ridgeback
By Mylda Arsenis

Ridged Dogs in Africa
By Mylda Arsenis

The above four books are available from: The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Victoria PO
Box 7109 Karingal Centre KARINGAL, VIC 3199

*The Rhodesian Ridgeback Indaba An Omnibus of Rhodesian Ridgebacks A Handbook of
Rhodesian Ridgebacks At Home & Abroad – Dog Tails*
All by Miss J N Murray
Available from the author
5 Melbourne Road, YEA, VIC 3717

Rhodesian Ridgeback Pioneers
By Linda Costa
www.kantara.com.au

HEREDITARY DISEASES & GENERAL HEALTH

The Rhodesian Ridgeback is basically a healthy dog with very few inherited defects. It is, as are the majority of breeds, affected by Hip Dysplasia (see Answers to Some Frequently Asked Questions), but this is not a major problem in Australia and responsible breeders are working to ensure that this continues to be the case.

A certain percentage of the breed population will have faults such as over/undershot jaws, kinked or knotted tails, excessive white or black in the coat, and other minor faults. Others may have more serious conditions, requiring surgery, such as entropion (an eyelid defect) or one or more undescended testicles, but the majority of Rhodesian Ridgebacks will be free of such inherited conditions.

There is, however, one very serious condition with which all owners and potential owners of Rhodesian Ridgebacks should be familiar. This a condition known as the dermoid sinus.

DERMOID SINUS

The Dermoid Sinus is a thin tube which joins the spine to the outer skin surface. The interior lining of the tube is epithelium, and as such may grow hair and have all the other characteristics of skin – except that it is fully enclosed within the flesh. The Dermoid Sinus can occur anywhere along the back of the dog usually on the midline from the occiput (the prominent bone at the back of the head) to the root of the tail, but is most commonly found in the neck.

Dermoid Sinus is inherited, but the mode of genetic transmission is not yet clearly understood. Whole litters may be free of Dermoid Sinus, or two or more affected puppies may appear in one litter and there may be more than one sinus in the same dog. Affected Ridgebacks are born with Dermoid Sinus so all puppies should be checked at birth and regularly thereafter. This is done by taking up a fold of skin in one hand and running it lightly between the thumb and forefinger of the other hand; the sinus will be felt as a fine thread joining the exterior skin to the bone beneath, and the fold will not lift as freely as that in the unaffected areas. If in doubt you can shave the place you suspect and the top of the sinus will reveal itself as a pucker or dimple when the skin is raised, and there may also be a stubble of hair sticking out of the opening (this will be hair growing on the inside of the tube).

Puppies with Dermoid Sinus should be euthanased as the sinus will almost certainly become infected due to the build-up of debris in the narrow passage (loose hairs, dead skin etc.) requiring an operation. The surgery is very expensive, traumatic for the dog and not always successful.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK BREEDERS

When purchasing a puppy it is advisable that you deal only with breeders who are registered with the Canine Association of Western Australia (Inc). Registered breeders are expected to abide by the Association's Code of Ethics and regulations. Breeders who are members of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of WA (Inc) must also abide by the Club's code of Ethics which is more stringent than that of the Canine Association.

You should expect breeders to provide the following:

- Proof of membership of the CAWA (they will tell you their "Kennel Prefix")
- Proof that the parents of the puppies are registered Rhodesian Ridgebacks (you will be able to sight their registration/pedigree papers)
- Hip dysplasia scores for both parents, and possibly many of their ancestors
- A vaccination Certificate showing when the puppy was vaccinated, what vaccine was used and when the next vaccination is due
- The certificate may also include the puppy's worming history
- A diet sheet
- A receipt stating whether the puppy was sold to you with or without papers
- Advice about prevention of internal/external parasite infestation (ie fleas, ticks, worms, heartworm, etc.)
- Advice on how to look after and train your puppy
- A puppy which has been regularly checked for Dermoid Sinus
- A puppy which, as far as the breeder is aware, is free of hereditary defects which will affect its welfare and good health
- A back-up service
- Registration/pedigree papers for your puppy (if you have purchased papers) which should arrive within approximately one month of the puppy entering your home.

Some breeders will offer a written guarantee with the puppy but this is not required by any regulations. The majority of Club breeders also have each puppy tattooed with an identification number. This is usually on the inside of the right ear and can assist in locating the puppy should it become lost. The Tattoo Prefix is recognised Australia wide. Some puppies are microchipped as well as, or instead of, being tattooed. The microchip is about the size of a grain of rice and is inserted beneath the skin on the back of neck just above the shoulders. It can be read by a special scanning device, and a record of the microchip number and corresponding ownership details are kept on a centralised database.

The Club recommends that you have your vet give your puppy a thorough examination at the time that it has its next vaccination.

THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK CLUB OF WA (Inc) CODE OF ETHICS

The primary role of this Code is to serve the welfare and interests of Rhodesian Ridgebacks - as a Breed and individually, in any activity involving ownership, breeding, sale and exhibition of Rhodesian Ridgebacks, members should act with this in mind. All members of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of W.A. (Inc.) are expected to adhere to its principals.

1. The acquisition of a Rhodesian Ridgeback is to assume responsibility for its welfare and behaviour until its death or transfer to a new home.
2. Concern for the animal should always take precedence over personal gain, profit or glory.
3. A breeder shall only breed from registered Rhodesian Ridgebacks which conform to the breed standard, all breeding animals will have been x-rayed and scored for Hip Dysplasia, except under exceptional circumstances, and are believed to be free of other hereditary defects, they should also normally be mentally and physically sound and not suffering from acute nervousness or aggressive tendencies.
4. Bitches should not be used for breeding prior to two (2) years of age and should not be bred from on consecutive seasons (in unusual circumstances two (2) litters in three (3) seasons is acceptable) or over the age of seven (7) years. No bitch should be expected to produce more than four (4) litters or forty (40) pups in her lifetime. Should a breeder feel it necessary to go outside these limits, the opinion of a veterinarian must be sought first.
5. All puppies must be carefully examined for dermoid sinus a few days from birth and at least twice thereafter before leaving for new homes. Any puppy discovered to have a sinus before leaving the breeder should be humanely destroyed. When a sinus is detected after the puppy has been sold the breeder should, in consultation with the new owner:-
 - a. agree a financial contribution towards the operation to remove the sinus and neuter the puppy, OR
 - b. take the puppy back and either reimburse the owner OR undertake, in writing, to supply another puppy. In this event, the puppy may be humanely destroyed or be operated upon for the removal of the sinus and neutered. Thereafter it may be retained or rehomed without charge.
6. All new owners should be made aware of the facts about sinus, its implications for the breed and how to detect its presence.
7. All puppies should be inoculated, and none should leave the breeder under the age of eight (8) weeks. They should be accompanied by a diet sheet, details of worming and inoculation certificate. All puppies sold must be registered*.

8. Ridgeless and mismarked puppies should be registered on the Limited Register. New owners of ridgeless puppies should give an undertaking to neuter at the appropriate time.
9. Puppies should not be sold through dealers, pet shops, puppy farms, etc. Ideally, they should be sold direct after the breeder has attempted to ascertain that the new owners have the facilities, time and commitment to correctly raise, train, exercise and appreciate a large, active but sensitive hound.
10. A breeder must make every effort to rehome any of their dogs that subsequently needs it.
11. Stud dog owners must satisfy themselves as to the suitability, breeding and condition of any bitch presented to them and also as to the conditions under which any resultant litter would be reared.
12. No member should engage in false or misleading advertising or other falsification of their Rhodesian Ridgebacks, nor should they malign judges, fellow competitors, breeders or owners by making false or misleading statements about other dogs, members' practices or character.
13. When a Ridgeback must be destroyed, it will be provided with a death free of pain or suffering and where possible a veterinarian will perform the euthanasia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Breeders should be available to their purchasers for consultation, even after the completion of the sale; likewise new owners should give credit to their breeders' concern by periodically informing them of their dog's welfare. Checks for dermoid sinus should be undertaken by at least two competent persons, i.e experienced breeders/veterinary surgeons with some knowledge of sinus and its detection.

Owners of bitches should ensure that any bitch to be mated to another persons stud dog has had a pre-mating vaginal swab showing her to be free of infection. Should the bitch have an infection then the owner should ensure that appropriate veterinary treatment is in progress.

* *The Canine Association now has two levels of registration; a "Limited Register", where although they are registered with the Canine Association, dogs cannot take part in conformation shows, or parent registered puppies. Dogs registered in the "Main Register" are eligible to do both. Only the breeder can request that a dog be upgraded from the Limited Register to the Main Register.*

THE ANSWERS TO SOME COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS?

We have attempted to give answers to a number of commonly asked questions and we hope that this will assist you in the selection of your puppy.

Q: Is my home suitable for a Rhodesian Ridgeback?

A: If you have secure fencing and enough shade or shelter if the dog is to be left outside for any length of time, and/or somewhere safe to keep the dog inside the house while you are not at home, then your home is probably suitable for a Rhodesian Ridgeback. As a rough guide, if your home is safe for a young child, it should also be safe for a puppy. It is important that you bear in mind that, as is true of any puppy, a Ridgeback will be mischievous and may decide that it is fun to burrow under a fence, excavate under the house, dig up your favourite plants, rearrange your reticulation or chew on your furniture. You will have to make contingency plans for all of these in the early months and take all this into consideration when coming to your final decision.

Q: What are my responsibilities towards the dog?

A: THE RRCWA URGES YOU TO THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT THE FOLLOWING RESPONSIBILITIES BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO HAVE A RIDGEBACK. When you purchase a puppy, you should be making a commitment for the lifetime of the dog; some 10 to 12 years or maybe more. During this time your Ridgeback will need the basics of food, water and shelter, but this is not enough. You will also need to provide the dog with a sound vaccination regime against Parvovirus, Hepatitis and Distemper and any veterinary care as and when required. Add to this lots of love, attention and consistency in training. It is most important that your pup be well socialized from an early age, with other dogs and people, and introduced to all new experiences in a caring and thoughtful manner. Puppy pre-school and later basic obedience classes are strongly recommended as these will cement a more positive relationship between you and your dog.

Q: Are Rhodesian Ridgebacks good with children?

A: If a Rhodesian Ridgeback is properly socialized and brought up to accept children, yes, it will be very good with them. The children however, should also be taught the correct way to deal with a dog.

Q: Are Rhodesian Ridgebacks good guard dogs?

A: Adult Rhodesian Ridgebacks are usually very devoted to their families and are protective of them. They will also attempt to protect the home when it is unoccupied. Rhodesian Ridgebacks should on no account undergo “attack”: or “protection” training – they already possess, instinctively, all the guarding ability which is necessary for a family pet.

Q: Do Rhodesian Ridgebacks bark a lot?

A: Rhodesian Ridgebacks are not usually barkers. Your Ridgeback will bark to let you

know if there is someone at your door, or if it thinks something is happening that you show know about and it will stop as soon as it has gained your attention. In other words, it will bark if it has a reason and not just for the sake of it.

Q: Where can I find out about puppies that are for sale?

A: There are a number of different sources. Some breeders pay to advertise in the CAWA News. You can obtain details of these breeders by phoning the CAWA (or through www.dogswest.com). The internet is a rich source of information about breeders and available litters. Newspapers also advertise puppies for sale. Remember, however, that it is advisable to see as many breeders and their dogs as you can, and do not be afraid to ask questions, so you can make an informed judgment about the purchase of your puppy. Breeders should not denigrate other breeders, and be suspicious of any breeder who claims to have “the best” Ridgebacks or to be “the best breeder”.

Q: Should I buy a “show quality” or “pet quality” puppy?

A: The terms “show” and “pet” quality are misleading. A responsible Rhodesian Ridgeback breeder should always be doing his or her best to ensure that every puppy bred is suitable to be a pet. The majority of dogs owned by breeders are pets first and showing or breeding stock second. The real difference between the two is that a “show quality” puppy is, as far as the breeder is aware, free of any genetic or cosmetic faults and is the one most likely to develop into an adult that most closely conforms to the ideal as described in the breed standard. In their endeavour to breed a show quality puppy, there are, of course, all the other puppies in the litter, all carrying the genetic material of their carefully selected parents. Sometimes there will be one or two exceptional “show quality” puppy in the litter. Small faults – perhaps a touch too much white or an imperfect ridge will make an ideal “pet quality” puppy. More significant faults, such as an incorrect bite or an undescended testicle, need to be addressed at the time of purchase, so that you are aware of any problems that might arise in the future. In all cases the quality of the puppy should be reflected in the price.

Q: Are Rhodesian Ridgebacks good family pets?

A: The short answer to this is yes. Rhodesian Ridgebacks are whatever their owners want them to be. They are just as happy going for a jog with their owner or lazing around the house. Ridgebacks are basically lazy dogs and they spend a lot of time asleep but they will be ready to be up and doing as soon as their owners wish...but don't expect young puppies and adolescents to be quite so slothful!

Q: What should I look for when choosing a puppy?

A: To begin with, you should visit as many breeders as you can before making your final selection of either puppy or the person you feel most comfortable with to breed your puppy. You need to consider the environment of the puppies (cleanliness, socialization), the looks and temperament of the parents (at least the mother) and the temperaments of the puppies themselves. Within a litter you will find varying degrees of dominance and submissiveness. The old myth of getting the most dominant, pushy

puppy could see you with a dog that is more than you can handle. You are looking for a happy outgoing puppy. Good breeders try to match the temperament of the puppy with the experience, handling ability and lifestyle of the new owner.

The mother of the litter (the dam) should be available for you to meet but you may not be able to see her with her puppies. Some bitches are extremely protective of their young and do not like strangers to be near them. This is a perfectly normal reaction. The bitch should however, show no signs of aggression when she is viewed away from the puppies. The bitch should be clean and should appear to be healthy, with bright eyes. Her coat may not be in top condition and she may be a little on the thin side because feeding puppies takes quite a lot out of the bitch. The father of the litter (the sire) may not live with the breeder but you should be able to see photographs of him. If at all possible, you should try to see as many relatives of the parents of the litter as possible so that you can get some idea of what the puppies will grow into.

The surroundings in which the puppies are kept should be clean and free from unpleasant odours. It should be readily apparent that the puppies have sufficient shelter from the weather and that there is a supply of fresh water available to them at all times. The puppies themselves should be clean and their coats soft to the touch and free of fleas. Their eyes should be bright and alert. They should be well covered in flesh without being fat. Bear in mind that a very full, rounded tummy (or pot belly) may actually be a sign of intestinal worms. Breeders should be worming puppies fortnightly to prevent this. The puppies should be bright and active and show no signs of being shy or timid. They will want to play with you, lick you and be cuddled. Puppies that have just had a meal may be quite sleepy and just want to snooze with their litter mates!

Q: When can the puppy come home with me?

A: Breeders who are registered with the Canine Association are not allowed to let their puppies leave home until they are eight weeks of age. This will be two weeks after they have had their first vaccination against parvovirus, hepatitis and distemper.

Q: Can I be sure that a puppy does not have a Dermoid Sinus?

A: The puppy should have been carefully examined for dermoid sinus at least weekly by the breeder and should also have been examined thoroughly by a knowledgeable veterinarian at least once. The litter may also have been examined by other breeders. The more people with experience of locating dermoid sinus who have been over the puppies, the less likely it is that a sinus would slip through.

Q: Do Ridgebacks have Hip Dysplasia?

A: Almost every breed of dog, with the exception of racing greyhounds, has a degree of Hip Dysplasia. This is a condition in which the ball of the hip joint does not correctly fit into the socket and it may lead to the dog experiencing some pain and developing arthritis in later life. Unless the dog has a permanent or semi-permanent limp, the only way of diagnosing HD is by means of x-ray.

Breeders who are members of our Club MUST have all their breeding stock screened

for HD (hip dysplasia) and should be able to produce the relevant score sheets for both parents of the litter.

The degree of HD is measured on a score that ranges from 0 to 106 with the lower the score the better status of the hips. Each breed has an average score and that of the Rhodesian Ridgeback is currently 6.3, which is relatively low.

According to veterinary advice, from the original developer of the scoring scheme used in this country (Dr Malcolm Willis) and from the local authorities at Murdoch University, any dog with a score of less than 20 is unlikely to show any clinical signs of the condition and is not likely to experience any distress. Their advice is that it is acceptable to breed from animals with scores of up to approximately 15, providing that the breeder is careful.

It is not yet known how HD is inherited or to what degree environmental factors may influence a dog's score.

More recently a new "Penn HIP" evaluation has been introduced that measures the laxity of the hip joint. The current breed average is a Distraction Index of approx 0.33. (low risk when DI is close to 0.30, high risk when DI is close to 0.70 or above). Babies cannot be scored – the scoring is done on dogs over 12 months of age.

Q: Should I choose a male or female?

A: The choice of sex is something that can only be left to the individual. Dogs, on the whole are larger and physically stronger than bitches, while bitches tend to be a little sharper and generally more alert. Both sexes are equally affectionate and devoted to their families.

Q: Should I have my Rhodesian Ridgeback sterilized?

A: If you do not intend to breed from your Rhodesian Ridgeback or to show it, then it is a good idea to sterilize it. Your veterinarian will advise you as to the best time for this to be done. Rhodesian Ridgebacks are not aggressive animals but sterilization of males will reduce any aggressive tendencies which may develop and prevent the male from wandering off to look for a mate. Sterilization of females will remove the danger of unwanted puppies and the inconvenience of cleaning up after a bitch in season twice a year.

It is a myth that sterilizing your dog will make it fat: overfeeding and under-exercising your dog will make it fat, whether it is sterilized or not.

Q: What should I do if there is something wrong with my puppy?

A: If the puppy becomes ill, the first priority is to get it to the veterinary surgeon and take such corrective action as is necessary. If there is something else wrong with the puppy, or its illness is something to do with the breeder, then you should talk to the breeder and negotiate a solution to the problem. Breeders who are members of the RRCWA should always be available to puppy buyers, in accordance with our Code of

Ethics. If the breeder is not able to solve the problem then he or she should at least be able to steer you in the right direction and if the breeder is part of the problem there are other avenues which you can pursue.

Q: If I choose a puppy without a ridge, will the ridge grow later?

A: No. What you see is what you get. A Rhodesian Ridgeback is born complete with the ridge it will have as an adult dog. In very small puppies, the ridge may appear to be indistinct for a period of a few weeks, but it should be there. A typical ridge should look something like this (the shape of the top will vary), and it should run from the shoulders to the top of the hips.



This publication has been put together by the Members of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of WA (Inc) as an aid to members of the public wishing to purchase a Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy. It is not the work of any one individual and copyright is vested in the Club.

The members of the Rhodesian Ridgeback Club hope that the Information Booklet has been of assistance to you and look forward to meeting you and your new companion at one of our future functions.

SPECIALIST BOOKS WRITTEN ON THE BREED (IN DATE ORDER)

T. (Tom) C. Hawley (First printed 1957, reprinted 1967, 1975), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback: The Origin, History and Standard*. Published and printed in South Africa. No ISBN.

J. (Janet) M. Murray (1976), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback 1924-1974*. ISBN 0 620 02204 3.
Mylda L. Arsenis (1981), *Ridged Dogs in Africa*. ISBN 0 620 05042X.

Pauline Sadler (First printed 1982, reprinted 1986, 1992), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback in Australia*. ISBN 0 9593193 0 1.

David H. Helgesen (1982), *The Definitive Rhodesian Ridgeback*. No ISBN.

Stig G. Carlson (1985), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback: A Close Encounter of the Personal Kind*. No ISBN.

Ann Woodrow (1986), *Rhodesian Ridgeback*. ISBN 0 9511408 0 9.

The RR Club of Great Britain (1987), *Guide to the Rhodesian Ridgeback*. No ISBN (Limited edition printing of 1000).

J. (Janet) M. Murray (1989), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback Indaba*. ISBN 0 9588874 1 1.

Peter Nicholson & Janet Parker (1991), *Book of the Breed: The Complete Rhodesian Ridgeback*. ISBN 0 948955 81 3.

Rhodesian Ridgeback Club Nederland (First printed 1992, reprinted 1995, 2000), *De Rhodesian Ridgeback in Nederland 1945-1991*. ISBN 90 802595 1 9 (written in Dutch).

Stig G. Carlson (1999), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback Today*. ISBN 1 86054 089 9.

E. Bailey (2000), *The Rhodesian Ridgeback: An Owner's Guide to a Happy Healthy Pet*. ISBN 1 5824 5011 0.

Ann Chamberlain (2000), *Rhodesian Ridgeback*. ISBN 1 902389 27 1. S. Fox (2003),

Rhodesian Ridgeback. ISBN 0 7641 2376 9.

Linda Costa (2004), *Rhodesian Ridgeback Pioneers*. ISBN 0 646 43501 9

The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of W.A. (Inc) would be grateful for information regarding any books missing from the above list. Many of the books are out of print or otherwise difficult to obtain, but some are available through your local library (on request), or may be viewed (not for loan) in the State Library. See page 9 of this Information Booklet for details of the books available for purchase.

