

Secondly, there is persistent reliance upon this myth that the Neapolitan from seemingly the demise of the Western Holy Roman Empire, continued to exist in some small pockets of aristocratic castles and estates in and around Naples, lounging around and barking occasionally. This is simply not true. The precursor to the Neapolitan was the Cane-E-Presa, which more closely resembled the modern Corso, but which nevertheless was the dog of specific groups of land owners and people that worked in agricultural occupations; farmers, goat herders, butchers. Its origins mirror that of the Corso, the Perro de Presa, the Bulldog and so forth. The dogs had to demonstrate value and fulfil a purpose, and that included working on command, even if that command was so crude and brutal as to be 'pin that steer' or 'kill that man'. Romanticism aside, these dogs lived a grim reality the same as their owners. They were NOT owned by rich nobles, partially explaining why so many old writings about them recollect their '*impoverished nobility*'.

As for further evidence of even the early foundation stock being working dogs, recall the Querci's introduction to the dogs came through witnessing them hold cattle for a butcher (on command). Zacchi recounts a number of other cases in point from key Mastinari, how on command, the dogs would hold themselves off the ground, with their feet against the wall of a house and their mouths firmly gripping a rope hanging from a balcony or the like. The dogs would hold and hold until they could hold no more, their owners proud of their winning dogs and happy that they had yet another example of breed worthiness (stamina, determination, strong mouth and dentition) to justify their lines

Another famous Mastinari had dogs that would go out and track nay-do-wells in the mountains simply by command, escorting these deviants back to their owner once found. This is not the remit of a slovenly animal, but one that demonstrates intelligence, awareness of their master's wishes, strong nose, physical soundness, controlled aggression and restraint, i.e. the hallmarks of a high stimulus threshold.

It was even documented on occasion, that many early Mastini loved to swim and would take great joy in retrieving from water. If only half of these accounts were true, this really only serves to undermine modern thoughts about the breed and raise questions as to who really does understand, '*the nature of the beast*'.

Such a comments show, with all due respect, a novice approach to the breed, a mindless acceptance of modern propaganda put out by lazy, often fiscally motivated breeders who might believe they work for the breed, but more often work for themselves and their egos.

On the topic of work, it must also be remembered that people promoting work with any breed are seldom, if ever promoting work amongst PET owners unless those owners are enthused and committed by the sport (*in which case they WILL inevitably get more useful breeds ...which is part of the problem those who love the old guardian breeds face*) and seeking professional, experienced council.

Promoters of work, promote work/testing as a validation process amongst RESPONSIBLE breeders this does not have to be Schutzhund; in fact quite far from it. It should however, represent an indicative, worthy BST for the breed and its true, verifiable origins.

Why is it that dogs are exempt from accountability ...and breeders all the more so?

If we buy a car, it should have been **PROVEN** safe for the road. If it is a sports car it should have **PROVEN** capable of performing to the specified parameters. If it does not, we as **CONSUMERS** have the right to an appropriate refund, replacement or exchange for something different.

- It is frankly hypocrisy to on the one hand promote the "natural guardian concept" and on the other, do nothing to substantiate these claims. Those that cry foul at such comments perhaps should consider their suitability and drive to breed? This should not be an activity for the lazy or the half-hearted after all.

The Dobermann again proves an example of why over time, this does not work.

Instead, breeders should be more discerning on who they sell to test brood stock for health and temperament, before type; to ensure that the highest possible percentage of progeny are likely to be truly representative of the breed. Otherwise, you can have a dog that looks like a Neo, but if it quacks like a duck ...it still isn't a neo!

If one looks at footage of Caucasian and Central Asian Ovcharka type dogs, dogs that share ancestry (pre-dating) and some purpose with the Neapolitan, one can clearly see that they do not behave as a 'sport' dog. However, in breed stock, the good breeders demonstrate not only a stable and reliable disposition in their dogs, but also predictable aggression that when called for, allows them to face up to a challenge or threat in fashion that is in keeping with the breed's origins.

The very response of such a dog to a "sleeve" is as much indicative of true breed type as the fact that the dog is nevertheless, still willing to protect and engage. Breed tests should be composed with such criteria in mind and understanding of the intricacies of the temperament sought.

Because these dogs still are relied upon to protect their owners in often quite dangerous countries, the (admittedly not always) sensible and responsible testing of these breeds is still prevalent. In contrast, more popularised rare breeds such as the Boerboel, have seen their quality drop hugely in only a few short years now that they are entrenched in 'show business' and temperament testing has been actively discouraged.

It is funny that so many so called breeders can be in arms about such issues so readily, yet not be outraged at the awarding of show championships on what are essentially puppies. It is OK for immature animals to be judged breed-worthy and embark upon a life of reproduction thereafter, yet it is not OK to take due care in determining a dog's true soundness?

In the UK, the originators of the Presa Canario have achieved much with their breed despite great disadvantages; as in many cases huge costs, but also lack of KC recognition, media criticism and encouragement of absolutely the wrong sort of people wanting to own

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these dogs. To this end, of course they have made mistakes in placements, but thankfully there have been no serious incidents with the breed based upon unprovoked aggression or unstable temperament. There was one incident of a Dogo Canario, a dog descended from show bred stock "attacking" its owner and this incident was entirely preventable after the dog in question was taken to the Presa breeders for evaluation and warned that it was poorly bred, raised and possessed of a worrying disposition. The dog was not bred by show breeders, but was only one generation removed. True, the breeder did not health or temperament test for sure, but then if two show lines fuse so badly without proper testing, this is surely a far greater worry?

The original Presa's meanwhile, in little over a decade have witnessed incredible progression in terms of health. Their breeders hip score entire litters at their own expense, even going so far as to collect dogs from pet homes at a year old to ensure that this results are accrued for future breeding decisions. The breed average is already down to 22 for hips, which puts breeds such as the DDB, Bullmastiff and many other similar breeds that have had 20-50+ years head-start to shame. This doesn't even convey the true picture, because recent generations have consistently scored 15 or less which shows just how far things have come. There are a few Dogo Canario's from other breeders amongst this BVA pool of dogs, but the Presa's from these early breeders account for 95%+ of all of the dogs scored. In addition, these breeders let the dogs mature and not only take hip exams, but have them evaluated by professional trainers, often with Military backgrounds. They are less concerned about style and finesse, as they are about:

- Their tolerance to "agitation" and "annoyance" i.e. demonstration of high stimulus threshold
- Their response in the face of a serious threat and that it is met with raw courage and a progressively aggressive response as the situation demands
- Lastly, that when the threat is no more, the dogs demonstrate an equally sound 'off switch' after which they demonstrate an understanding that bad people are the exception not the norm and are happy to be social and friendly to all other non-threatening people.

Lastly, if people are saying, that these dogs will naturally protect; indeed are '*genetically predisposed*' to do so; that they are bred to be "*huge and intimidating*" this raises a question as 'devil's advocate' does it not?

What possible defence do such breeders have over the suggestion that such breeds should be banned under BSL?

After all, everything these people describe is also EXACTLY true of the Presa, the Corso, the Argentine Dogo and the AmStaff. Even the true Pitbull terrier, was and is not bred to look intimidating, nor be overtly defensive or aggressive toward people, yet that is the very way in which legislation portrays and persecutes these dogs.

Neo's, like BM's and Dobes were purpose bred by people, to protect them and thus to demonstrate aggression toward other people. Fanciers of such breeds need to be very

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careful about the fine line they tread when discussing such subjects and be cognizant that they are not simply 'pointing the finger' in order to defer immediate attention from their own breed. For it is the same fire which blackens the pot as does the kettle.