

Let's Square Off

By Faye Strauss

"The appearance is that of a medium size dog with a body that is square." This is the first line

The Doberman is a square Dog

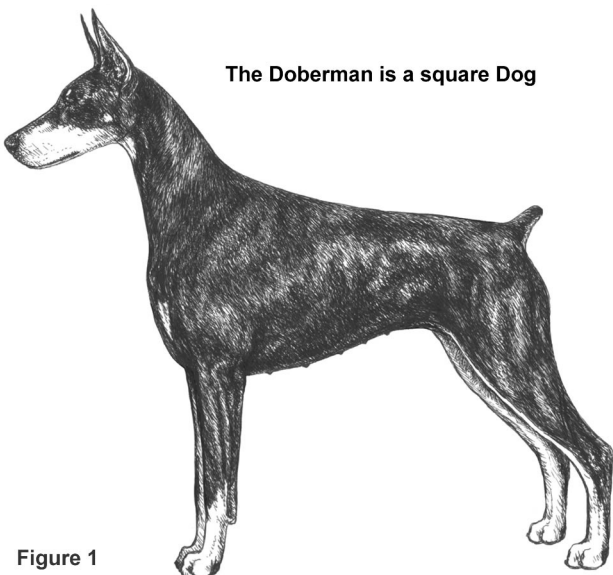


Figure 1

of our standard. When the breed standard was formulated, the wise old Doberman breeders described their ideal working companion, the Doberman Pinscher. They looked and he was square (See figure 1.) So they wrote it down. In

Square. The height measured vertically from the ground to the highest point of the withers, equaling the length measured horizontally from the forechest to the rear projection of the upper thigh.

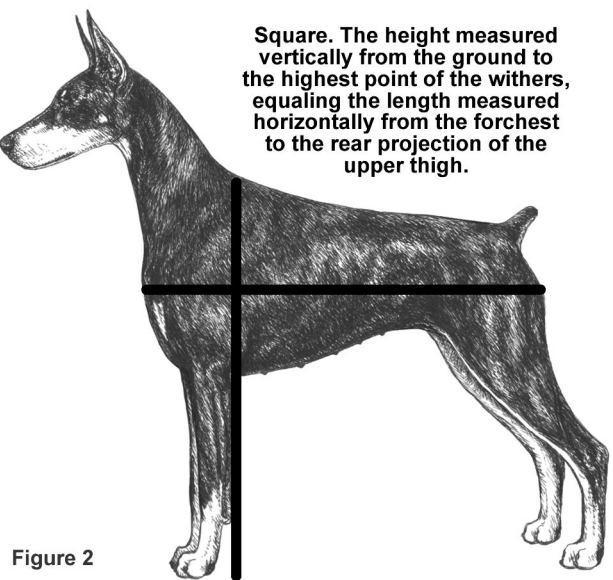


Figure 2

the second paragraph of the standard they told us how to measure square. "The height is measured vertically from the ground to the

highest point of the withers, equaling the length measured horizontally from the forechest to the rear projection of the upper thigh." (See figure 2) Not only does he appear square he measures square. So what is the problem?

The Doberman standard describes our square dog as being "compactly built" with a short back. Nothing in the standard talks of a dog appearing long. Our standard doesn't even mention the long rib cage, which is often accepted as correct. In a short backed dog the rib cage is long and deep to the ninth vertebrae and the loin is short. This ensures enough heart and lung space. The standard bearers wanted a dog that appeared square. To achieve sound structure, the square dog must have a long rib cage and a short strong loin.

Today we have measurement clinics to measure our dogs. It seems we can't visualize a square, so we need to measure it. There are those who actually say a dog with forechest and turn of stifle will appear long even though it is square. That is very interesting. Are we supposed to believe that a dog that looks long is actually square? Why not just say the dog looks long.

Forechest should be the result of correct shoulder and upper arm angulation. Many times the forechest is the product of a protruding breastbone (See figure 3.) This is a

Longer than tall because the prosternum is too far forward.

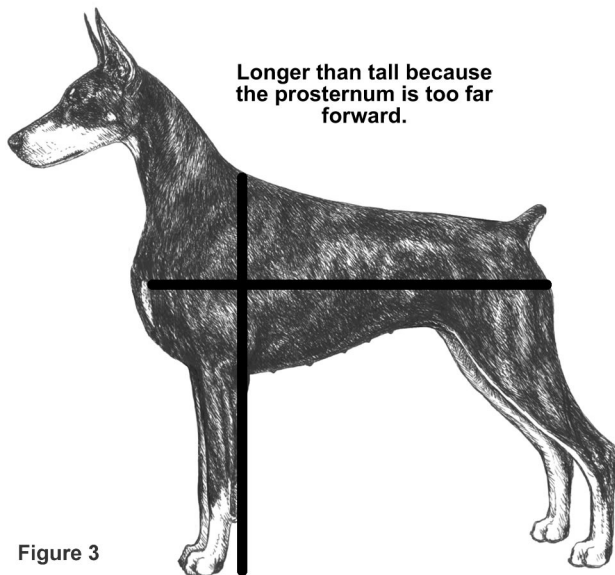


Figure 3

condition where the sternum projects well beyond the point of shoulder (where the shoulder blade meets the upper arm). The length is measured from the forechest to the rear projection of the upper thigh. If you give a square dog extra forechest, then you have to lose length in another area. As the loin is already short, the logical place to lose length would be the rib cage.

The overangulated rear does not factor into our measurement of length. It is strictly a visual factor. It makes sense that an overly extended rear will appear long. A compact square dog should not appear overdone. The Doberman standard states the upper and lower thigh should be the same length. Since lots of rear angle usually comes from a long lower thigh it is then out of balance.

Most dogs appear long because they have a long loin (See figure 4.) This is contrary for our energetic and powerful Doberman possessing great endurance and speed. To achieve this we want a compact body that is square. The quick movements of the breed also require great agility. A short loin and compact body are essential for the agility needed to make quick turns and leap over obstacles. The loin is the lumbar area, extending from the end of the rib cage to the start of the pelvis. It is the bridge with nothing holding up the middle. Therefore a long loin is inherently weak. Structural

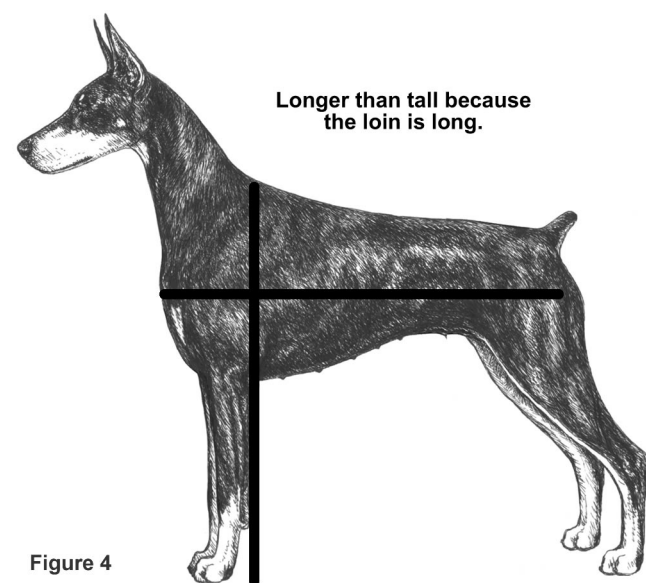


Figure 4

soundness demands a short loin. This square dog should not appear long.

The Doberman is one of only six square breeds in the working group. They include the Boxer, Great Dane, German Pinscher, Standard and Giant Schnauzer. The rest describe a dog that is nearly square, just off square, off square, proportionately tall, slightly longer than tall, longer than tall and rectangular. The Rottweiler asks for a dog to measure 9 high and 10 long yet the judge educators describe their breed as appearing square. They put three paper shapes on the wall and ask which looks square. The piece that is nine high and ten long gets the majority of votes. So slightly longer as ten is to nine appears square. So how can a square dog appear long?

There are many terrier breeds that measure square from the withers to the set on of tail equaling the height of the dog measured from withers to ground. These dogs appear square in body only as the forechest and rear projection of the thigh add extra length to the overall look of the dog. These dogs are longer than tall when the entire body is measured and viewed.

Please stop making excuses for dogs that are longer than tall. Just except the fault and breed to correct it. As a judge, I look at the dogs to see who fits the standard's picture of the breed. The dog must be medium sized and square first. If they are a little off square the fault is taken to the extent of the deviation. If the dog appears rectangular the deviation is more serious.

Remember the first sentence of the standard, "a medium size dog with a body that is square" and let's breed and judge accordingly. The old adage: "if it looks like a duck it's a duck" pertains to the Doberman too. If the Doberman looks like a rectangle, it is not square!