

# The Stafford Knot Questions & Answers

Each month TSK will take questions from our readers and present them to breed specialists, experienced breeders, veterinarians, geneticists or experts in the field of the particular questions being asked.

We hope you enjoy the information provided based upon YOUR feedback!



## Ask TSK - Q & A

### Question:

*Dear Staffordknot,*

*Over and over again I hear people arguing about a couple of things in the Staffy breed standard. One being height and weight and the other being toplines. Our standard says level topline. Does this mean flat like a coffee table or does this mean level at beginning and end or what? I am not new to dogs or staffys but I am not an anatomy student either. Can you please give a credible definition of what is a level topline please? Thank you.*

### Answer:

Great question! For your answer we refer to a paragraph on page 170 of the book *Showing & Judging Dogs* by Hilary Harmar (1977, Arco Publishing Co. Inc., NY) called

#### **“UNDULATIONS OF THE SPINAL COLUMN”**

“Owing to the different angles of the spines of the vertebrae from the withers to the tail, it will be seen that the top-line could never be absolutely level. Obviously, since the spinal processes are in four distinct areas and in each area they incline in different directions, where they do meet there has to be a slight dip or rise. There is often a slight dip downwards at the withers and in the show world this is often considered a fault. Structurally, however, it is not a fault; it merely indicates that the spines are long. But where this dipped section meets the five vertebrae of the back, the top-line must change direction and this part of the back must be parallel to the ground. The forward slanting spines of the loins must now meet the more or less upright ones of the back and where they meet there must be another slight undulation, just as there will be where the croup starts. The whole spinal column will not and should not be absolutely straight. Just as the spinal column is not absolutely straight in the human. Yet we erroneously talk about straight backs in both humans and in dogs!”