

## **TOSA KEN**

Group: Working

### **History:**

The Tosa Ken is a relatively new breed. Shortly after Commodore Perry's arrival in Japan in 1854, Japanese dog fanciers began acquiring "foreign" dogs to cross with their native stock. The breeds that most likely went into the make-up of the Tosa Ken include, among other breeds, the indigenous Shikoku, Bulldogs, Mastiffs, German Pointers, and Great Danes. In Japan, Tosas are the canine equivalent of Sumo wrestlers and are treated with great honor and ceremony. In the United States, the Tosa Ken serves as a companion dog and guardian of the home.

### **General Description:**

The Tosa Ken is a large, short-coated dog, with a stately manner and a robust, powerful, and agile body. The body is slightly longer than tall. The head is large and broad with a boxy muzzle, pendulous flews, and clearly observable dewlap. There is wrinkling on the head, particularly when the dog is alert. Ears are of medium size, drop, and set high. The tail is uncut, very thick at the base, and tapering to the tip. The Tosa Ken may be solid colored, brindle, black with markings, or pied. The overall appearance should be that of a massive but dynamic and flexible athlete.

### **SIZE:**

Minimum height males: 23 ½; females 21 ¾ inches. As long as the minimum height is present, no preference is given to greater or smaller size. Weight should be sufficient to present overall balance and symmetry, blending sturdiness and substance with agility and athleticism. Males are typically large with heavier bone and more muscle.

### **COAT:**

Short, dense, straight, and tight to the body.

### **COLOR:**

Preferred is a deep, solid, rich red. The following colors and combinations are acceptable: all other shades of red, including fawn; any combination of red and black brindling; dull black; brown; black with red markings; and pied, which is the least desirable. Black masks allowed without preference, as are black tipped hairs. White markings are penalized in proportion to the amount of white on the dog. White other than on the chest or above the feet is to be discouraged. *Serious Fault:* Any color, color combination, or color pattern other than listed.

### **HEAD:**

Large and blocky when viewed from any angle. From the side, the skull and muzzle are roughly parallel to each other. Stop is moderately deep and fairly abrupt, forming an angle of about 130 degrees between the line of the muzzle and the line of the forehead. Skin on skull and foreface is wrinkled, the wrinkles often extending down cheeks into the dewlap. Wrinkles become more prominent when the dog is alert. Excessive wrinkling is neither favored nor penalized. Gender difference in the head is slight but apparent in that the female's head is slightly less massive and somewhat more feminine in appearance. White markings on the head are acceptable but not preferred. The skull is slightly arched from side to side and broad between the ears. Viewed from the top, the skull is 10-20% wider than it is long; deep median furrow that diminishes in depth from the stop to the occiput. Muscles above and below the zygomatic arch are well developed and powerful. The supraorbital arches over the eyes are moderately well defined. ***Fault:* Lack of wrinkles when alert.**

**Muzzle:** Broad, blunt, and deep with a very slight taper from the stop to the nose. Length of muzzle is equal to approximately 45% of the length of the head. Jaws are very powerful; nasal bridge straight; lips thick and tight in front, with dark pigment. Beginning just behind canines, lower lips become visible and pendulous as they reach the corner of the mouth. ***Fault:* Snipey muzzle.**

**Bite:** Full complement of large, sound, evenly spaced, white teeth meeting in a scissors bite. The pigment inside the mouth is black, with a dark roof being desirable. The tongue may be pink or pink with bluish-

black spotting. **Judges should not penalize missing incisors provided that there is sufficient space for a full complement of incisors. *Fault:* Missing premolars; level bite; slightly undershot or overshot.**

Eyes: Small to medium size, round to slightly almond-shaped, set well apart and rimmed with solid black pigment. Color is brown with preference given to darker colors. A bluish eye color in a Tosa under the age of 12 months is acceptable; eyelids tight, although some visible sclera or very slight haw is allowed. ***Serious Fault:* Very visible haws; yellow eyes. *Disqualification:* Blue eyes in a Tosa 12 months or older; functional abnormality of the eyelids or eyelashes.**

Ears: Medium sized; drop; V-shaped, with slightly rounded tips. Ear leather is thin in comparison to the overall thick skin of the body; set high, level with the upper line of the skull, hanging close to the cheeks; covered with short, fine hair. Ears may be the same color as the background color of the dog's coat or somewhat darker. When pulled toward the eye, the ear should extend to the inside corner of the eye.

Nose: Always solid black; in profile tip extends just slightly beyond the end of the muzzle; nostrils large and well opened. ***Serious Fault:* Nose any color other than solid black.**

#### NECK:

Moderately long, thick, slightly arched at the crest, particularly when the dog is alert; very powerful and muscular with a clearly observable dewlap; skin is thick and elastic.

#### BODY:

Slightly longer (measured from prosternum to point of buttocks) than tall (measured from withers to ground). Length of the front leg (measured from point of elbow to the ground) should be roughly one half of the dog's height. The body is covered with thick, loose skin, especially around the throat.

*Faults:* Obesity; noticeably higher or lower at the croup than the withers; shallow or narrow chest; pronounced roach back; camel back; sway back.

Topline: Inclines very slightly downward from the withers to a broad, muscular, level back.

Chest: Broad, deep; ribs extending well back and moderately sprung.

Loin: Short, broad, muscular, and slightly arched, blending into a moderately sloping croup. Belly is moderately to well tucked up and firm.

#### FOREQUARTERS:

Shoulders moderately laid back, moderately angulated, and well muscled, but not loaded. The upper arm is roughly the length of the scapula. Forelegs are straight and muscled, with sturdy bone, very strong, and set well apart. Elbows are set on a plane parallel to the body and move freely, neither close to the body nor turned out. The pasterns are short, powerful, and slightly sloping when viewed in profile. Viewed from the front, straight pasterns are preferred, although a slight toeing out is acceptable. ***Faults:* Toeing out; straight shoulders; loose or loaded shoulders. *Serious Faults:* Fine bone; lack of muscle; fiddle front; out at elbows; down at pasterns**

#### HINDQUARTERS:

Sturdy and powerful with well developed muscles. Width and angulation of the hindquarters is in balance with that of the forequarters. Viewed from the side, the rear pasterns are well let down and perpendicular to the ground. Viewed from the rear, they are straight and parallel to one another. A Tosa under the age of 12 months should not be penalized for standing with hocks turned slightly inward as this normally corrects with maturity. ***Faults:* Hocks turned inward or outward, with the exception for puppies noted above; straight stifles; overangulation of stifles or hocks. *Serious Faults:* Fine bone; weakly muscled rear**

Feet: Large, round, and tight; pads thick and elastic; toes well knuckled and nicely arched; rear feet slightly smaller than front; nails hard and preferable dark-colored; front and rear feet pointing straight forward. ***Faults:* Splayed, flat, or thin feet; toeing out. The seriousness of any of these faults is based on the degree of the defect.**

Tail: Set on as natural extension of the topline; thick and muscular at the base, tapering to the tip; “pump handle” tail is acceptable; extends to hock. Correct tail carriage ranges from hanging naturally between hocks when the dog is relaxed to upright with a slight forward curve at the top of the tail when the dog is moving or excited. The tail should never curve over the back. ***Fault: Gay Tail Tail should not be docked.***

MOVEMENT:

When trotting, the dog’s gait is effortless, smooth, powerful, and well coordinated, showing good reach in front and drive behind. When moving, the topline should remain level with only a slight flexing to indicate suppleness. Viewed from any position, legs turn neither in nor out, nor do feet cross or interfere with each other. As speed increases, feet tend to converge toward center line of balance.

TEMPERAMENT:

Normally a tranquil, quiet, and obedient dog with a calm but vigilant demeanor. He is quietly affectionate with his own family, but may be somewhat aloof with strangers. This breed is also by nature watchful of other dogs and may react aggressively to dogs it considers intruders. Overtly aggressive behavior to humans is uncharacteristic of the breed and highly undesirable and to be disqualified. Although some level of aggression toward other dogs is characteristic of this breed, exhibitors will be expected to have their dogs under control at all times.

***Faults:*** The above description is that of the ideal Tosa Ken. Any deviation from the above must be penalized to the extent of the deviation.

***Disqualifications:***

**Unilateral or bilateral cryptorchid;**  
**Viciousness or extreme shyness;**  
**More than four missing teeth;**  
**Bluish eye color in dog 12 months or older;**  
**functional abnormality of eyelids or eyelashes**