

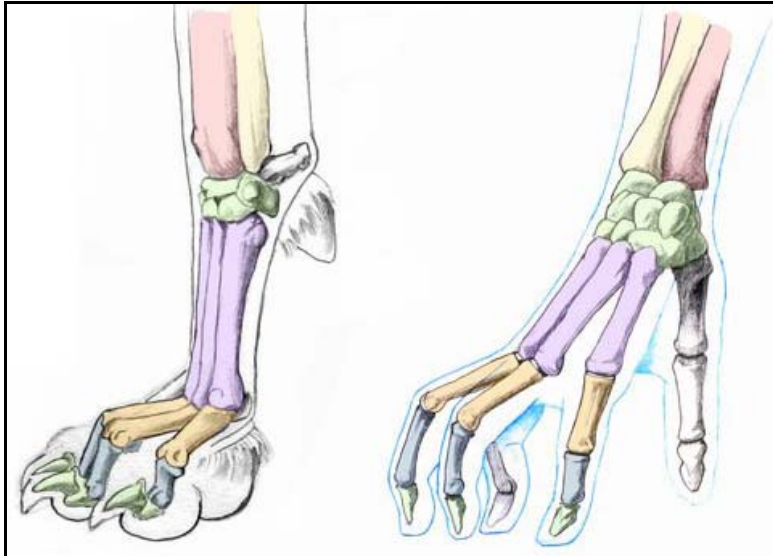


The Rottweiler's Feet & Pasterns

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On the left is a dog's leg and foot. On the right is a human forearm and hand. When you look at the same colors in both drawings, you can see the similarities between them.

As we all know, a dog walks on all four legs and thus on all four paws. These legs and paws are needed to walk, run, jump, and dig. In this article, I focused only on the feet and pasterns.

Anatomy

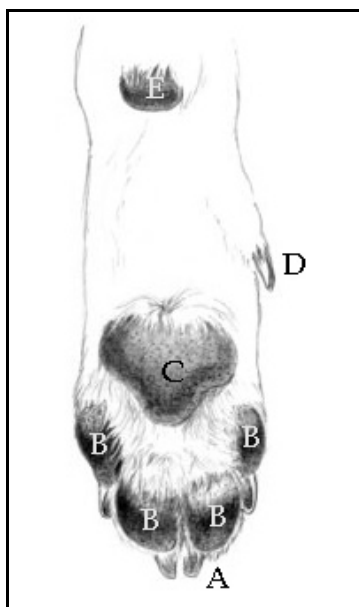
A dog walks on his toes just like a horse. A human walks on his soles. A dog's front leg is the same as that of a human: shoulder, upper arm, and forearm. But then the similarities stop. The human wrist is analogous to the dog's pastern joint. The back of our human hand is the dog's pastern and the fingers of the human are the dog's paws.

A dog's hind leg is the same as that of the human: upper thigh joined at the hip at one end and the knee at the other end, then the lower thigh leading from the knee to the heel. The heel of a dog does not touch the ground. The human foot is the dog's rear pastern and the human toes are the dog's rear paws.

The nails of a dog grow just like human fingernails and toenails. If the dog's toenails do not wear out by themselves, it is important to trim them. Be careful when you trim the nails! A dog's nail has a blood supply and clipping it too short may lead to bleeding. Clip the nails of your dog little by little. Long nails can

cause the dog to move differently. This can cause strain on his legs and that shows in his movement.

The paws are not only made up from bones, but also of tendons, ligaments, skin, tissue, and blood supply. If the weather is hot, the paw can get sweaty. This is (in addition to the tongue) the only way for the dog to lose heat. That is why it is so important to keep an eye on your dog if the weather is hot. Heat stroke is a real danger and it can kill your dog!



A paw consists of five parts:

A—Claw: grip

B—Digital pads

C—Metacarpal pad

D—Dew claw

E—Carpal pad: helps in balancing a dog on steep or slippery surfaces.

The other pads are shock absorbers and carry most of the weight and protect the bones and joints in the paw.

The paws of a dog are being used as traction and shock absorption. Thick pads better absorb the shocks caused by the foot touching the ground during moving

(in every sense of the word). A pad that is rough makes for better traction for switching motion (turning and twisting) and running.

PHANG PHOTOS

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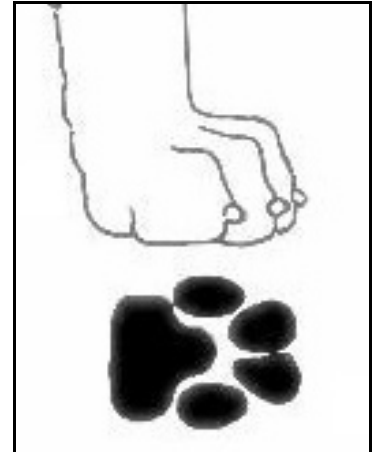
The paws and pasterns work tightly to make all movement possible. However, the parts can only work correctly if the rest of the dog is also structurally sound. They absorb all unsoundness in the dog during movement. Structural (big) imperfections like open elbow, straight stifles, and imbalance between front and rear angulations can cause damage to pasterns and feet. A foot is just a small part of the dog, but they have a very important function.

A dog's paw consists of four pads that touch the ground and each pad has its own nail. Some breeds need to have a dewclaw (French shepherds like the Briard). There are also Rottweilers that are born with dewclaws. The dewclaws can be caught on obstacles leading to bloody messes, pain, and sometimes infections. In some countries, these dewclaws may not be removed any more by law! Therefore as a judge, I do not degrade a dog for having them.

Different paw types

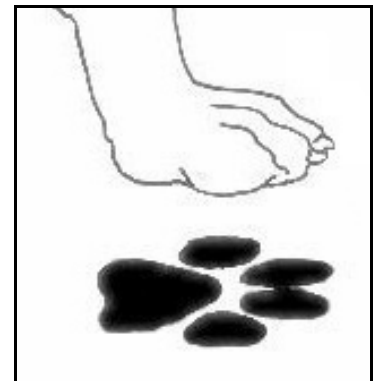
All dog paws are basically similar, but some breeds have slightly different paw shapes than others.

Cat feet (for example, Rottweiler): This is a compact foot due to short third digital bones. Compact feet need less energy to lift. This saves energy and makes for bigger endurance.



This type of foot that is correct for our breed is losing ground. I see fewer and fewer Rottweilers with strong cat feet. Yes, if the dog is standing in "show stand" and is called from the side, he will lean on his front and you (the handler) can hide the weaker foot quite well. But, if the dog is standing next to his food bowl doing his normal thing the cat foot is rare.

Hare feet (for example, Greyhound): this is an elongated foot. The two centre toes are longer than the side toes. Unfortunately, this type of foot is seen more and more. This is not the foot that we want in our Rottweiler.



Webbed feet (for example, Newfoundland): These dogs have thin skin between their toes like flippers. They can use them for swimming. You can compare them a bit with the feet of a duck. Duck feet have a web in between the toes that they use to move more water.



Now that we have had a look at the anatomy, it is time to have a look at our Rottweiler's breed standard.

The FCI Breed Standard

Forequarters:

Pasterns: Slightly springy, strong, not steep.

Front feet: Round, tight and well arched; pads hard; nails short, black and strong.

Hindquarters:

Hocks: Sturdy, well angulated hocks; not steep.

Hind feet: Slightly longer than the front feet. Toes strong, arched, as tight as front feet.

The FCI Breed Standard also describes the faults:

Forequarters: Narrow or crooked front legs. Steep shoulder placement. Loose or out at elbow. Too long, too short or too straight in upper arm. Weak or steep pastern. Splayed feet. Too flat or too arched toes. Deformed toes. Light coloured nails.



Weak or steep pasterns: Weak pasterns make the movement very inefficient. It costs a lot of extra energy to make the same motion, and it can also cause injuries.

Splayed feet: The toes of the dog do not touch each other. There is room between them.

Too flat or too arched toes
Deformed toes
Light coloured nails

Hindquarters: Flat thighs, hocks too close, cow hocks or barrel hocks. Joints with too little or too

much angulation. Dewclaws.



Dewclaws

Depending on how big the fault is, I (as a judge) will take one rating off. A perfect dog with a bit of weakness in the pasterns will still get an excellent, but may not be placed (depending on the quality of the other dogs). If the fault is affecting his ability to work, then I consider taking even more than one rating off.


The part about dewclaws is something that you have to keep in mind while judging. Yes, it's in the FCI Standard as a fault BUT

in some countries, you are by law not allowed to declaw your dogs any more, even if they are just two days old. For me, that is reason enough to not degrade a dog who still has its dewclaws.

Until we meet again.
Yvonne Bekkers



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