

THE WEIGHTY SAINTS

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From a survey done by Maxwell Riddle, lifted from Northern Highlites, via the Poop Sheet, via the Scoop. Submitted by Sherl Long. Via the Valley Bark.

Some years ago, a program told of research that was supposed to have proven that the Pekingese dog as a descendant of a giant lion dog which weighed 350 pounds or more. It must have been a lion dog as history has no record of any dog ever reaching that size. But dog people are constantly faced with statements almost as absurd. Some are flat lies, by people who did know the truth, but now prefer to believe their own stories.

One hears of Saint Bernards weighing 300 pounds; one man told of a Saint weighing 350 pounds. When questioned, he swore that his statements were "gospel truth--I saw it weighed", he said. What is more, the man offered to show the dog to any doubters. Investigation showed it to be a Saint Bernard of rather average size -- it weighed 152 pounds.

AVERAGE SIZES: We can see Saint Bernard owners bridle at that statement. After all, don't most Saints go from 190 to 200 pounds? We decided to make some tests. A large certified Toledo scale was set up at the Cleveland Dog Show. This was the large platform scale that had been used for weighing Soap Box Derby cars. It had a walk-up platform at each end so the dogs could be walked upon the scale platform. These scales were adjusted after being placed so there was no chance of its being out of balance because of moving it to the show or because of the way it was placed.

As a side angle of this, which was used for the show's promotion, a Saint was selected and its picture was run in the Cleveland Press. Readers were invited to guess its weight. A tie breaker was included and the readers were also asked to guess the paid attendance at the show. The one winning was to receive a transistor radio. No one connected with the dog knew his exact weight and all were pledged not to have the dog weighed before the show.

More than 1500 people sent in guesses. They ranged from between 73 to 550 pounds. The dog's owner said it weighed between 205 and 225 pounds. The dog's handler thought that was too much. "About 190," he thought. Eight people guessed the correct weight--163 pounds. Now its owners, breeders and handlers can be so far off, is it any wonder the general public has little conception of the actual weight of dogs? And is it so surprising if most dog owners don't either?

The purpose of the Cleveland study was to get some correct information on the subject. There were 988 dogs entered at this show. The show was in an active Saint Bernard area, so there were 26 entries. There were also 37 Great Danes and 74 German Shepherds. It is worth noting that dogs far above or below average size are scarce enough that they do not often have sufficient influence on their breed to increase or decrease the average weight appreciably. In the weigh-in only four of the Saints weighed 160 pounds or more. Only 5 weighed over 140, but under 160. Heaviest was a male named Fritz von Eiger, owned by Richard Wentzel. Fritz weighed 197 pounds. The lightest was a nine month puppy which weighed 106 pounds. The mature dogs weighed from 120 up to 197. Only one other male came close as 19 pounds to the heaviest dog.

Before weighing, one owner said he already knew his dog's weight--220 pound; it actually weighed 159. The owner did not believe the scale but said he knew his own weight accurately, so we weighed him, and he and scales agreed. As a side note there was little difference between the Great Dane and the Saint Bernard. The heaviest Dane was 195 pounds. Although there was little difference the survey showed that the Saints are heavier on the average than the Great Dane.