

## TEETH

BY: MRS WILLIAM BUELL

Michael has been busy taking pictures of Saint Bernard teeth and asked me to share some of my views on bite.

While she was here, she photographed the bite of my Giant Schnauzer, a breed famous as a guard dog, and a punishing jaw is a necessity for their work.

The Saint had a greater need of his nose in his basic work. He has the ability to find bodies buried by avalanche slides, and to foretell the coming of great snow storms. The Standard calls for a nose that is very substantial and broad with well dilated nostrils. At one time the Standard said "The Teeth in proportion to the conformation of the head are only of moderately strong development", however in the late fifties the Standard was changed, and we now have the scissor bite to be preferred with the undershot jaw sometimes found in good specimens. I believe this must mean that if the head is good enough and free of excessives that we can accept a slightly undershot mouth. Too short a nose, too long hanging lips, seem to go hand in hand with weak teeth. Even in the undershot jaw the teeth should be even, strong and in good condition, and never so undershot as to be visible with the mouth closed. I would prefer a slightly undershot mouth with even strong teeth to an even bite with very weak teeth since the Saint will lose the weak teeth much earlier in life.

The badly undershot mouth is often combined with a muzzle that is too short which results in heavy breathing and ugly snorting sounds. Years ago the term Pug head was used since these dogs had the same problems with heat prostration. The Pug was bred as a lap dog with no basic work. Most of them are very noisy breathers, and heat causes them great distress and even death because of their very short nose. No Saint with an excessively short muzzle could work well either in high altitudes, or in the heat.

The overshot jaw is always found in an overly long narrow muzzle with a head completely lacking in breed type. Thus all excessives toward either undershot or overshot mouth must be carefully avoided.

Our standard calls for the scissors bite to be preferred even though our Saint's basic work did not involve the teeth.

The subject of Saint Bernard teeth and bites has arisen often in discussion with numerous all-breed judges. Thus the time has come to clarify the importance (or lack of) of this portion of the Saint, as many good specimens are penalized for having bites that are not up to par with terriers, sporting dogs and other breeds. The photographs were taken with the permission of the owners, Lillian Buell for the Giant Schnauzer and four of the Saints and to Ladd and June Morris for the remainder. I must add that of the many months of Saints that I inspected, these are outstanding, as the majority had smaller teeth with as much as one quarter of an inch of space between each tooth, in addition to the fact that most were level at best. This is admittedly a small sampling taken just on the west coast but includes both puppies and class dogs as well as specials.

Editor



3 year old Giant Schnauzer Bitch



8 month old long-coat Saint Bitch



18 month old male Saint



8½ year old male short-haired Saint



9 month old male short-haired Saint (Morris)