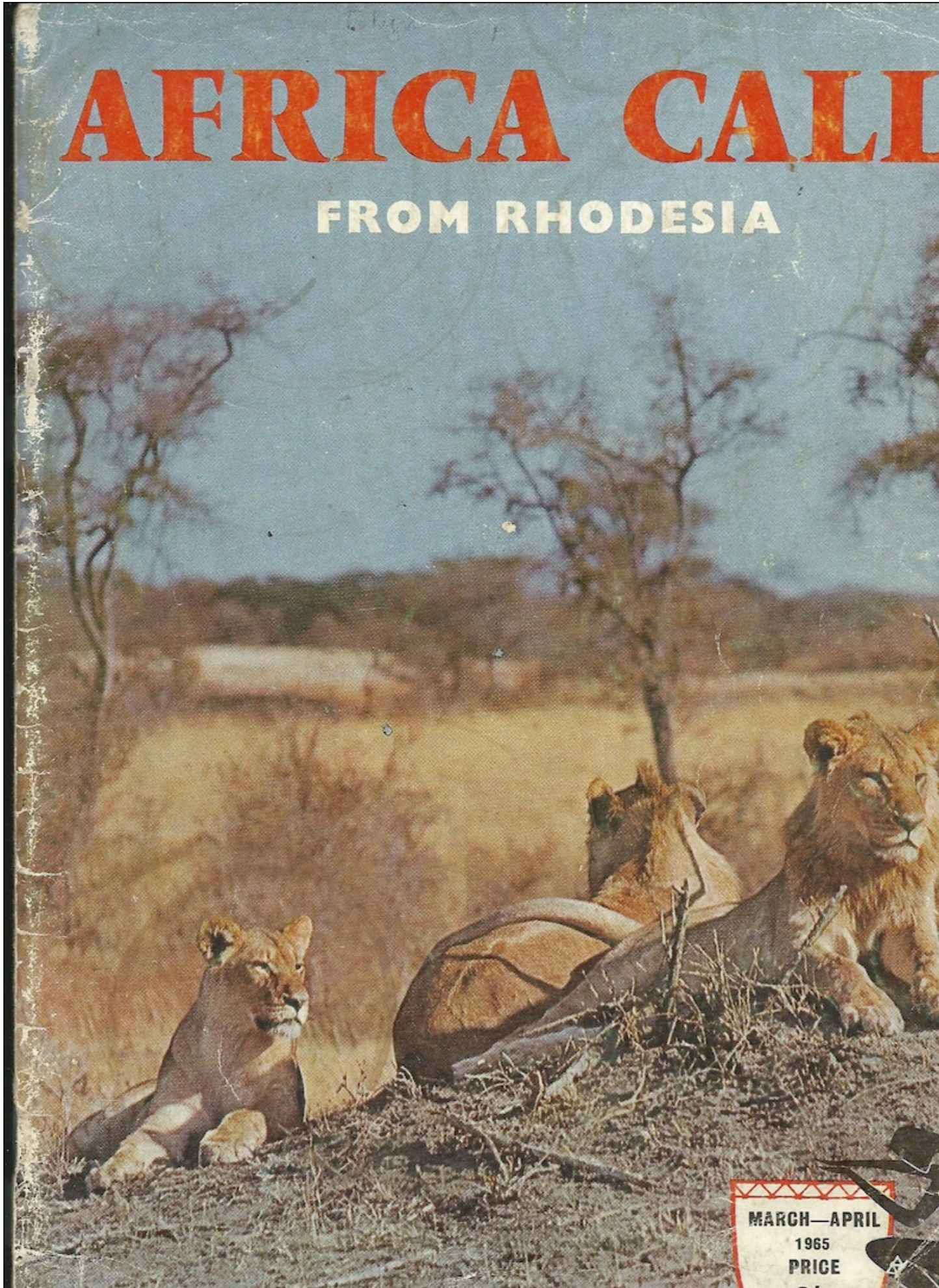


AFRICA CALL

FROM RHODESIA



MARCH—APRIL

1965

PRICE



Famous "Lion

by

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*President, Rhodesian
Ridgeback Club*

RHODESIA is lion country, so what could be more fitting than that it should have a *lion dog*? It most certainly has such a dog in its national breed, the Rhodesian Ridgeback, a dog with a history as old and intriguing as the Zimbabwe Ruins themselves.

This handsome utility breed is rapidly gaining favour in countries far removed from its homeland. It may well be regarded as one of Rhodesia's "natural resources," a dog with a bright future both in Africa and overseas.

Conscientious Rhodesian breeders have worked and are still working hard to breed and export only top-notch dogs that will be a credit to both breeder and buyer as well as to Rhodesia itself. A confidence, born of the knowledge that their stock is second to none, has spurred them on.

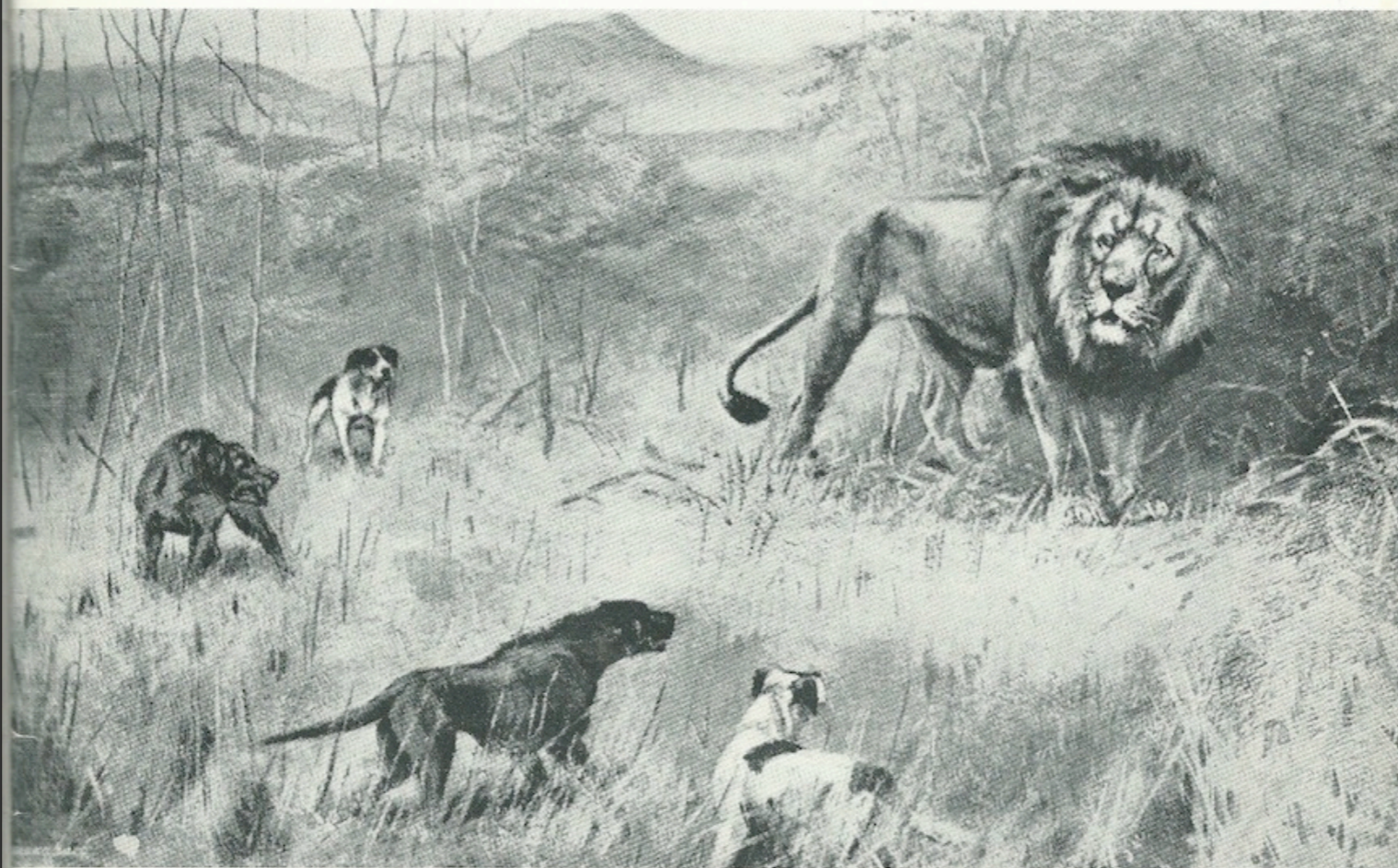
Depending upon the breeding and the age, puppies of from eight to ten weeks old are exported at prices ranging from 25 guineas upwards. A four-month-old specially selected dog or bitch puppy fetches anything between 50 and 75 guineas. Adult dogs are seldom offered for sale, and it has been found that pups travel best by air when seven to 10 weeks old.

To date, puppies have been sent to India, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Europe, and to most countries in Africa. In-

Rip of Colemor, a 2½-year-old Ridgeback owned by Mrs. Arsenis. He is a Rhodesian Challenge Certificate winner; another certificate will make him a champion. His ridge well conforms with the breed's standard. It is symmetrical and tapers to a point midway between the haunch bones.

Dog'' of Rhodesia

Story of the Ridgeback, country's natural breed,
who is prized by dog-lovers all over the world.



A picture, from F. C. Selous's *Travel and Adventure in Africa*, showing the hunting pack of Cornelis van Rooyen, another famous hunter of the 'eighties. Two dogs clearly show a ridge of hair on the back. Van Rooyen crossed his own dogs with the ridged dogs belonging to the Matabeleland missionary, the Rev. Charles Helm, and produced dogs very similar in appearance and type to the modern Rhodesian Ridgeback.

quiries have recently been received from Italy, Israel and Australia.

In 1922, some 20 to 30 Rhodesians met in Bulawayo to formulate a standard for their breed and to establish a club to be known as The Rhodesian Ridgeback (Lion Dog) Club. From these small beginnings, increasing interest in the breed has necessitated the forming of specialist clubs in other countries.

A South African club, to care for

the interests of the breed south of the Limpopo, was formed in 1945. East Africa, Britain, Canada and the United States have since been added to an ever-increasing list of countries having similar clubs. The year 1955 saw the Rhodesian Ridgeback admitted to the American Kennel Club's Stud Book, the first breed in 10 years to be so honoured, and within a matter of months hundreds of dogs were registered there.

The Rhodesian Ridgeback as a distinct breed was recognised in 1924 by the South African Kennel Union, whose area of jurisdiction extends from the Cape to the Equator. It was then placed in the Gun Dog Group, but in 1949 was transferred to the Sporting Group where it remains to this day.

However, the history of the "ridged dog" is far from recent, for the ridge, which is the breed's unique feature, has come down to us

South of the Zambezi, (published in 1910), that the Hottentot dog resembled a jackal, and had the hair on its spine turned forward.

In 1939, Professor von Schulmuth, excavating near the Orange River, unearthed the remains of Hottentot dogs. From these skeletons he was able to form a clear picture of what the dogs had looked like when alive. In one instance, in particular, enough was preserved to show the ridge, the erect ears and



The dog in the right-hand corner in this picture of Hottentots round a dead hartebeest, shows a distinct ridge on its back. The picture is reproduced from Dr. David Livingstone's *Missionary Travels in South Africa* (1857).

through countless generations by way of the African Hottentot Hunting Dog.

The late Professor von Schulmuth firmly believed that the Hottentot Hunting Dog was a very old breed and had itself descended from an animal that was not pure dog as we know it today, but was something akin to a hyaena. This idea seems borne out by the historian Theal's observation in his book, *The Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa*

long, bushy tail, as well as some of the coat, which had a red-gold hue to it.

Many cynologists now regard the Hottentot Hunting Dog as an extinct breed, but there are some who believe to the contrary and maintain that primitive Bushmen in remote parts of South-West Africa still hunt with ridged dogs possibly derived from the Hottentots.

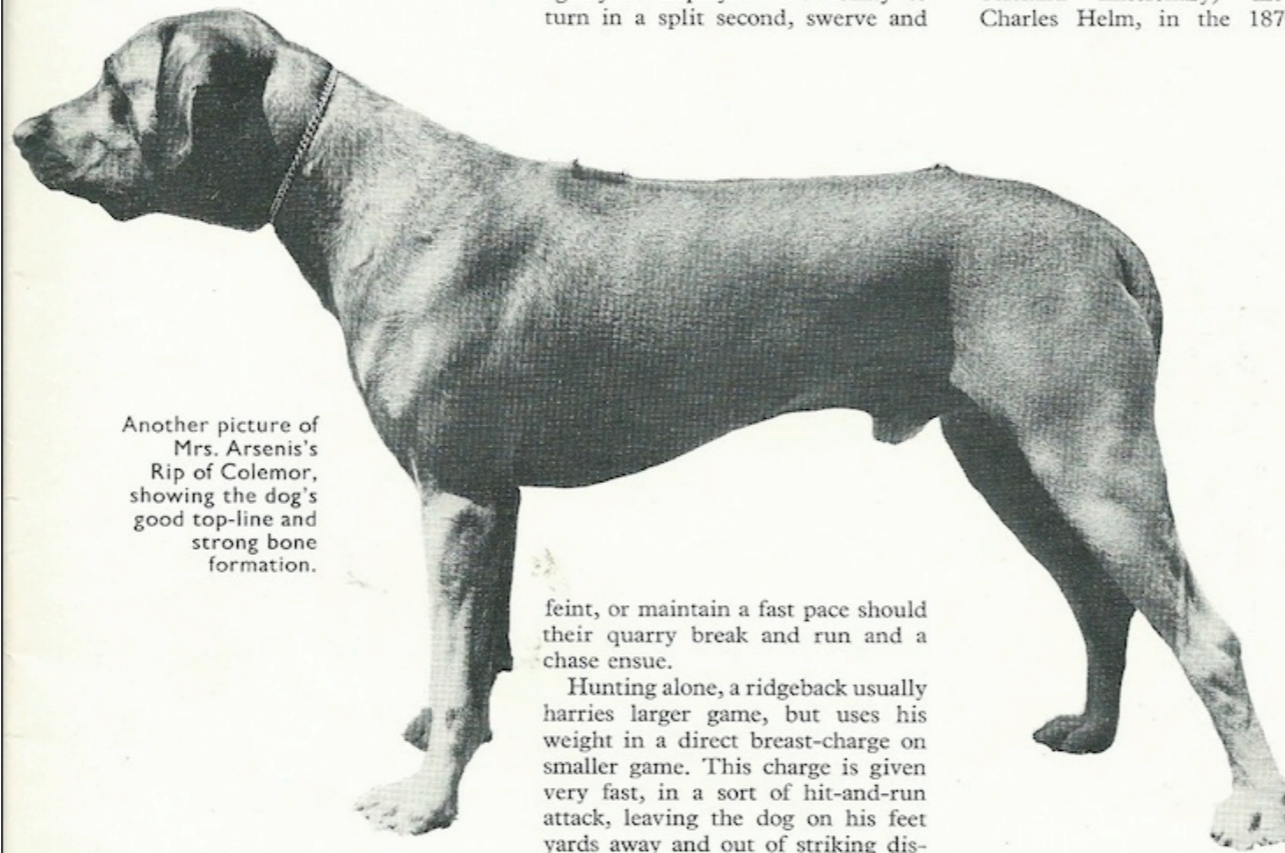
Big-game hunters of the 19th century found that the Hottentot

dogs, crossed with the various *boerhonde* (farm dogs) of the Cape, produced ridged dogs that proved outstandingly the best for lion-hunting. This discovery led some people to the erroneous belief that ridgebacks actually attacked and killed lions. Nothing could be further from the truth. What a hunting pack did, and did so effectively, was to harass a lion and hold it at bay for the hunter's *coup de grace*.

Upon scenting game (not necessarily lion), a pack of four or more dogs will fan out, one running directly towards the quarry, and the others circling with the object of cutting off any retreat. It is at this stage that the ridgebacks' amazing agility is displayed—the ability to turn in a split second, swerve and

veteran of the chase, who "had faithfully followed his master's wandering footsteps over many hundreds of miles of wilderness, and had ever done his duty at pulling down wounded game or catching wild pigs and could show at least a dozen honourable scars, chiefly administered by the tusks of these latter animals." (*Vide*, "A Hunter's Wanderings in Africa").

Perhaps Cornelis van Rooyen, who began his career as a hunter at the early age of fourteen years, did more than any of his contemporaries in developing and popularising the ridgeback for hunting. By crossing his own hunting pack with the ridged dogs belonging to the Matabeleland missionary, the Rev. Charles Helm, in the 1870's, he



Another picture of Mrs. Arsenis's Rip of Colemor, showing the dog's good top-line and strong bone formation.

feint, or maintain a fast pace should their quarry break and run and a chase ensue.

Hunting alone, a ridgeback usually harries larger game, but uses his weight in a direct breast-charge on smaller game. This charge is given very fast, in a sort of hit-and-run attack, leaving the dog on his feet yards away and out of striking distance of his quarry.

The man who led the Pioneer Column to Mashonaland, Frederick Courteney Selous, was one of many hunters who favoured ridgebacks for hunting. Towards the close of the last century he spent a number of seasons hunting and exploring in the Matabele, Mashona and Manica territories, now known as Rhodesia, and often mentioned his hunting dogs in his writings.

He had a special fondness for one named "Bill", undoubtedly a real

produced dogs very similar in appearance and type to the modern Rhodesian Ridgeback. Throughout his life, van Rooyen was seldom without one or more ridgebacks, and visitors to his home in Plumtree (west of Bulawayo) remarked about his great attachment to his dogs.

The 1920's saw the almost legendary "Tractor" Arthur Smith, prospecting and hunting with a pack of ridgebacks in the Umvukwes district of Rhodesia. The extent to

which he depended on his dogs' hunting prowess is best summed up in the following verse of a rhyme:

"The yellow dust would oft evade,
Then the dogs came to his aid,
Hunting to provide the meat on
which he fed.

His ridgebacks loved a foray
And soon tracked down their
quarry,

A duiker or a stembok to which
the scent had led."

One of Smith's dogs, named "Ginger," was the progenitor of many present-day Rhodesian Ridgebacks.

The Rhodesian club has been most fortunate in having, until recently, the expert guidance of two noted authorities, Miss M. Wellings and Major H. G. Mundy, C.B.E. Practically all the Rhodesian dogs, and a fair proportion of those in other countries, contain some "Leo Kop" blood, originating in the late Miss Wellings' world-renowned kennels.

Over the years, selective breeding and the weeding out of specimens that failed to conform to the required standard has resulted in a marked improvement in the breed. Where years ago it was not uncommon to find in litters a high percentage of puppies with defective ridges, or no ridges at all, nowadays such instances are rare.

The general appearance of a Rhodesian Ridgeback should be pleasing to the eye; he must be a handsome symmetrical animal standing from 25 to 27 ins. at the shoulder (bitches 24 to 26 ins.). He should be a strong, muscular and active dog, capable of great endurance—hence should not be too light or too heavy-boned. His short, smooth coat should be light-to-red wheaten—colours that blend so well with the Rhodesian countryside and offer a natural camouflage in such a setting.

The ridge, which is the *escutcheon* of the breed, should be wedge-shaped, commencing just behind the shoulder with two crowns directly opposite one another, and tapering to a point between the haunch bones. The hair forming the ridge runs in reverse to the rest of the dog's coat, but should lie flat with the coat. A narrow, pencil-like ridge, or a so-called "cow-lick", would not be in conformity with the breed standard.

Wherever Rhodesia's "lion dog" has gone in the world it has never failed to draw interest and admiration.



Mrs. Arsenis, the writer of this article, with Rip of Colemor and a young bitch. Mrs. Arsenis has been interested in the breed for many years. She is the author of two books, *Adventures of Rip the Ridgeback* (Stockwell), a children's book, and *Dog Tales and Trimmings* (Timmins).

A rather amusing instance may be cited of a ridgeback bitch in Morocco. Her owners were exercising her on the beach near Tangiers when they met a Frenchwoman with a poodle, both beautifully coiffured and manicured. Madam was most intrigued with the ridgeback, and wanted to know to which beautician she had been taken to get that very special hair style on her back. When told that the ridge of hair was natural, and that this breed was used in Southern Africa for lion-hunting, Madam hurriedly picked up her poodle and fled, leaving the ridgeback owners wondering what had gone wrong with their best

"school" French.

If courage is required, then Rhodesia's dog has it. Could a dog of any breed, for example, be more courageous than the Appleton family's "Simba"? This ridgeback stood on the very edge of the crater of an active Costa Rican volcano, with hot ash falling all around him, and, as his owner puts it, "did not even turn his ridge".

Quite often a Rhodesian Ridgeback will manifest what may be termed a sixth sense, a sort of uncanny inner discernment relative to people and places.

Take as an example the case of a

faithful bitch named Matilda. She always tolerated her mistress's African servants, but in one instance showed a marked distrust and open hostility toward a certain newly-acquired one. Whenever he had occasion to come near her mistress, Matilda, of her own accord, would immediately place herself between them, growling and baring her teeth at the servant. If he happened to be holding a broom, she would grasp the broom-handle in her mouth in one quick movement and wrench it out of his hands.

Of course, her mistress realised that Matilda had some good reason but, much as she wanted to dismiss the servant, there was no valid reason for doing so, he worked well and was always most polite.

Then one night a dreadful commotion broke out in the servants' quarters. An investigation revealed that the house-servant had suddenly gone berserk and had brutally stabbed several fellow-Africans with a knife.

Matilda's distrust had been justified!

Whether Rhodesia's "lion dog" is found hunting the King of Beasts in Africa, or wild boar and cougar in North America, or jackal in India; or gracing the Show Ring with his distinctive presence; or guarding special property; or simply as friend and companion to someone, he will always remain a true canine aristocrat.

Yes, the ridgeback dog, developed in Rhodesia by Rhodesians is proving a first-class Rhodesian ambassador, for wherever he emigrates he is making a good name for himself and his homeland. ■



Two pictures of a Ridgeback bitch in the down position. The top picture may be used in the future on a Rhodesian postage stamp.



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