

YOU BE THE JUDGE

By Robert Cole

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THE AMERICAN FOXHOUND

Based on CKC and AKC standards

DOG A VERSUS BITCH A

Your task is to formulate an image of the ideal American foxhound as you judge each pair of dogs and bitches, and then decide how close my final graphic representation is to your image. However, before you do, it helps to be aware of the history of the American Foxhound, its purpose and the current situation in regard to variety in type within this breed.

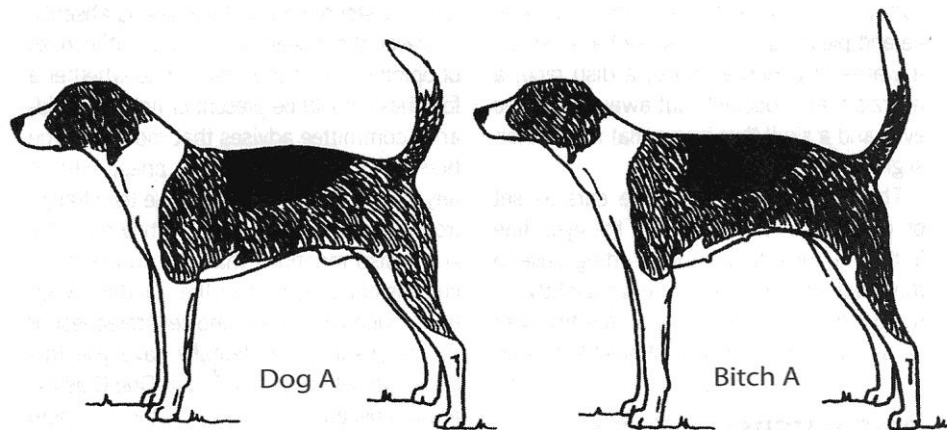
HISTORY

The beginning of the American Foxhound predates that of the United States. The breed descends from the English Foxhound. According to *The Canadian Kennel Club Book of Dogs* (1988), between 1650 and 1750 the quarry was the American grey fox and the descendants of the original English imports were adequate for the chase. Then, probably about 1730, the red fox was introduced from England; a willier, faster fox than the grey. Pursuit changed and a racier hound more suitable for American hunting conditions was required.

Imported Irish, English and French hounds were crossed and re-crossed until the end results were quite different from the English Foxhound. I say “results” because there are a variety of strains recognized as American Foxhounds. It is beyond my resources to illustrate the physical characteristics that may distinguish the Walker strain from the July, Trigg, Calhoun, Hudspeth and Goodman. And in addition to strains there are now three distinct American Foxhound groups – running hounds, show hounds and combination hounds.

DOG A VERSUS BITCH A

Real-life Dog A went BB and Bitch A went BOW and BOS under a breeder judge. The entry was not large. Their colour markings have been changed to protect the innocent. They are closely related. Are they the same type? They have similar heads – one masculine, one feminine – however, their outlines are quite dissimilar. If you were judging the well represented Hound Group that day, would you have considered either for a further award?



THE HEAD

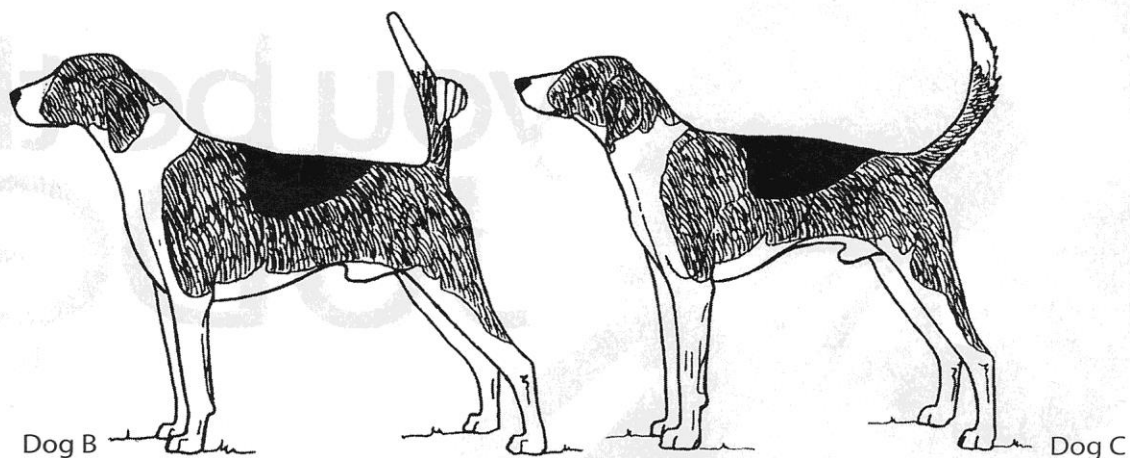
The American Foxhound standard is vague in many areas and my interpretation of this breed's physical characteristics leans heavily on the informative book *America's Foxhound* by James Rea, and a four page contribution by the Committee on Judges Education, American Foxhound Club Inc. For instance, this guide for judges informs that: the muzzle should be equal in length to the skull; the bite is scissors or pincer; the skull should be a little wider than long; and the muzzle should be broad all the way to the tip of the nose, with flews that should not drop or be wet.

The standard itself describes the stop as moderate; the large eyes as wet well apart, soft and houndlike, the expression as gentle and pleading, of a brown or hazel colour. It warns of a Roman nose, a dish face, a muzzle that is decidedly cut away below the eyes and a skull that is very flat rather than slightly domed.

The standard describes the ears as set on moderately low (level with the eye), fine in texture, long, fairly broad, setting close to the head with the forward edge slightly in-turning to the cheek, round at the tip, with an almost entire absence of erectile power.

DOG B VERSUS DOG C

The head differences between these two dogs remind that the muzzle should be "straight and squared off". No one has advised that the planes of the muzzle and the skull should be parallel. As for Dog C's vine-leaf shaped ears, "fairly broad" and "setting close to the head" would suggest that vine-leaf shaped is not desired.



THE NECK

The medium length neck (eight to nine inches on a 25 inch hound) is strong in substance but not loaded. Look for a graceful light neck rising free and clean from a really good shoulder. The topline of the neck should always be longer than the bottom line. Loose skin to the extent of throatiness is faulty; however, a slight wrinkle below the angle of the jaw is allowable. Dog C's neck is short.

UPPER ARM AND FORECHEST

Neither the standard nor the guide mentions length or angle of the upper arm other than the brisket being at least as deep as the line of the elbow. The presence of a forechest is closely related to upper arm angle (usually steep when a forechest is absent); however, there seem to be some differences of opinion within the breed as to whether a forechest should be present or not. The guidance committee advises that most old time breeders preferred a smooth chest without any protruding bone in front (like the straight front on an Airedale Terrier?); however, the guide also mentions that an exposed forechest is not a fault under the standard. With this advice you have a choice – forechest or no forechest. I intentionally gave you this choice is selecting Dog B and Dog C as examples because, like it or not, there is more involved than just forechest.

Forechest (and sufficient upper arm angle) have a direct influence on the slope of the front pasterns. Too steep a front pastern created by a steep upper arm, and the wrist knuckles over. The committee's concern

in this area is reflected in the advice that a minute amount of slope to the front pastern is required, plus a short pastern bone. A pigeon chest is wrong, but I believe a degree of forechest is very necessary.

THE TOPLINE

The topline is described very well in *America's Foxhound*, as , “The back should have a beautiful smooth topline, fairly wide, sloping from shoulders smoothly over a good muscled loin to strong hindquarters. We want a hound with just a little arch at the juncture of the back and loins. Too much and you have a humpback hound or kyphosis which is an abnormal curvature of the spinal column.” The slight slope over the loin should then fall gracefully into the croup.

Neither Dog B nor Dog C has a correct back or loin, nor does the croup follow in a graceful curve. Dog C's withers lack height, the rise is in the wrong place and doesn't flow smoothly into the croup. Dog A has a level topline.

THE BODY

The ribs should be well sprung and the back ribs should extend well rearward. The flank should be about a hand wide, more or less, depending on the length of body. We are also advised that there is “some” tuckup. Until the AFC provides an illustrated ideal stacked in profile, words like “some” will continue to be subject to interpretation. Degree of tuckup should complement topline rise and in the process aid in the foling of the legs well under the body at the gallop.

Both Dog B and Dog C have the required deep body and their elbows are level with the brisket; however, Dog B's body is deeper and there is less tuckup, while Dog C has tuckup but the loin is longer than the average hand width. Neither body is correct.

THE TAIL

The tail should be set on moderately high, flowing smoothly from the end of the spine, broad at the base and tapering to the end, curved like a sabre held at about 2 o'clock. It should have a slight brush on the underside and be long enough to almost reach the hock. An extra-long tail or one that bends forward from the root is faulty.

The hand holding the Dog B's tail has pushed it too far up and forward. This tail lacks brush and the end does not taper. Although Dog C's croup is not the correct shape, the set on of his tail and the brush is.

LEG LENGTH – BODY DEPTH?

We are advised by the AFC Judge's Education Committee that we are not likely to see an American Foxhound in the show ring today that is within the 25 inch height limit (bitches 21 to 24 inches) recommended in the standard. The reason given is that the American Foxhound has grown taller and larger over the years due to better nutrition and the American way of thinking that bigger is better. Both of these dogs stand 26 inches at the withers. Dog B is the heavier and longer of the two. There are some that who would say Dog B was too heavy for an American Foxhound.

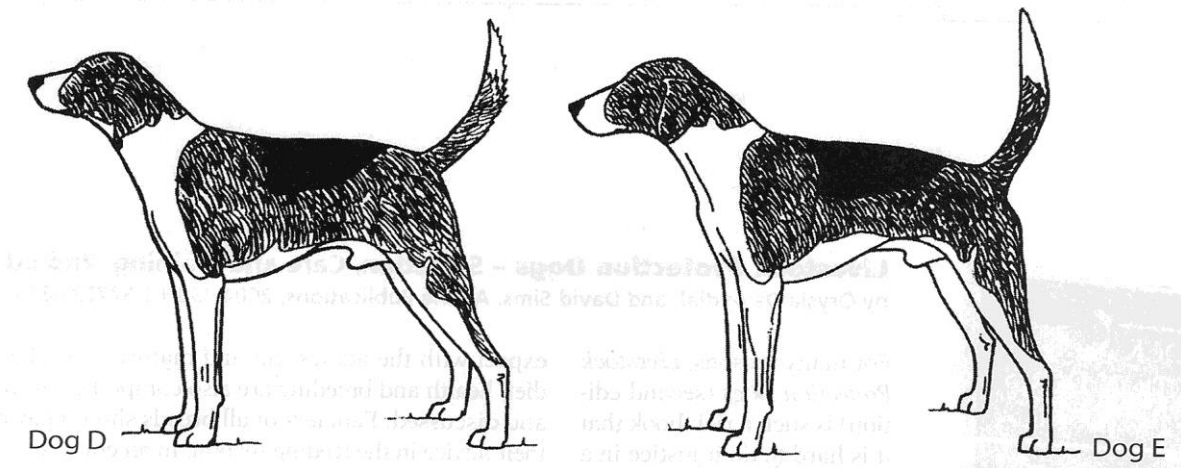
The committee advises that if a hound is so large or gross that you know he cannot run a fox like a Foxhound should, he should be penalized. Be that as it may, the question here is: what is it that makes Dog B appear heavier and more powerful than Dog C? It is not weight of leg bone because they are about the same. Their length of foreleg from elbow to ground also measure the same. The guilty part is Dog B's greater depth of body and less tuckup.

Dog B's greater depth of body measures the same from withers to brisket as from brisket to ground, the elbow level with the brisket. The standard doesn't advise as to foreleg length but in my opinion an American Foxhound foreleg should be slightly longer than the body is deep.

Dog B is a very sound dog. Would it surprise you to learn that in his day he did very well under all-round judges, winning a number of groups and at least one BIS? As his sound conformation suggests, he moved extremely well coming, going and in profile. Sound though he was, he does not convey my image of ideal or even typical. Knowing what you know, would you place him first over more-typical but less-sound Dog C? I don't believe I would.

The symmetry and balance possessed by group winner Dog C would be improved if the shoulder blade and the upper arm as well as the hindquarters had more angulation. With greater forequarter angulation, the brisket would lower to the elbow, height would decrease and the body would appear longer and better balanced. (The AFC advises that the height and body length should be approximately equal or as 9:10). A longer rib cage and a shorter loin would improve the topline.

The neck could do without the loose skin. A slight wrinkle below the jaw is allowable, more is a fault.



DOG D VERSUS DOG E

Dog D is a step closer to typical, his five faults more difficult to determine. His head appears small for his body and although the neck is not short, it lacks American Foxhound symmetry. Depth of body, although not as deep as the foreleg is long, is too English. It is difficult to explain what is wrong with his topline until you compare it with that of more typical Dog E, the arch being more over the croup than the loin on Dog D. Finally, although no one mentions a requirement for a projected shelf under the tail, it is taken for granted it should be there.

With input from experts I have chosen a particular American Foxhound to represent typical. In my opinion, Dog E conveys the essence of the American Foxhound. James Rea sums up “appearance” rather well in his book as, “The appearance of an American Foxhound should be that of a speedy, well muscled individual, well proportioned, neat with a glossy coat. The head carried up, eyes clear and keen. The tail carried gaily, not curled or dropped between the legs. A proud hound. Beauty in the whole hound is more to be sought after than a perfect part. The key word is symmetry.”

Dog E does have one obvious fault, but I don’t know how heavily you personally would penalize it. The standard calls for a “fox foot.” Dog E has a cat foot. The original American Foxhound standard called for cat feet, as does the English Foxhound, but early breeders soon found that a foxlike foot was better and changed the standard. A fox foot is less rounded, with the two middle toes slightly longer – about midway between a hare foot and a cat foot. The feet should be fairly large, thick and compact, with well-arched toes and thick pads.

COLOUR

Even though the standard accepts any colour, there have been judges who have penalized a lemon-and-white or spotted hound. The experts are adamant that this is wrong. Colour should have no bearing on the quality of the hound.