

YOU BE THE JUDGE

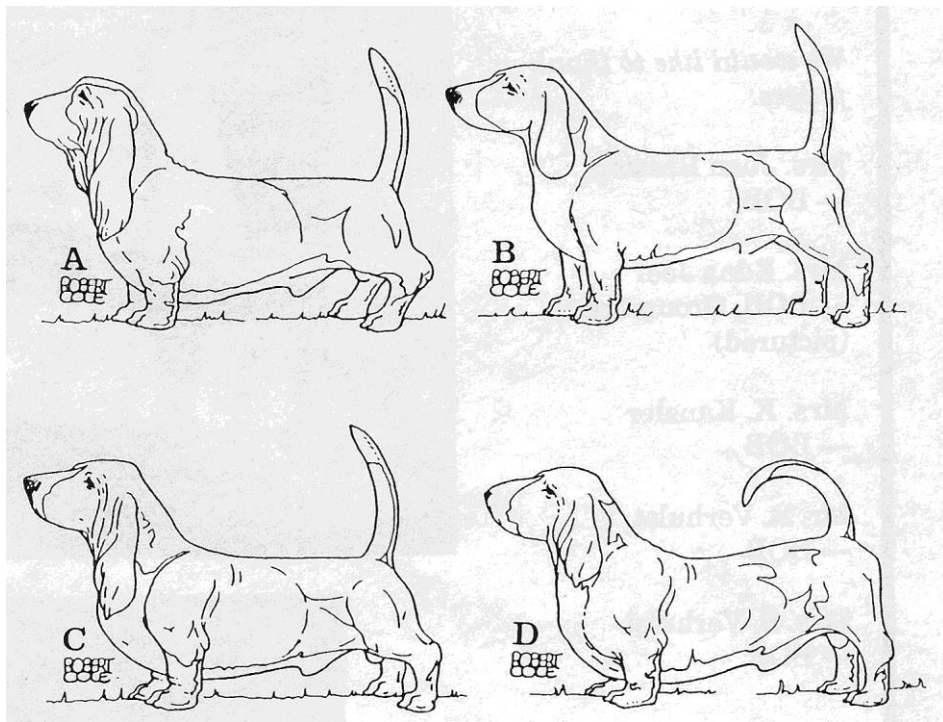
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THE BASSET HOUND

HOW WOULD YOU PLACE THESE FOUR BASSETS?

One of these four Bassets stands more than 15 inches at the highest point of the shoulder blade. This is not a disqualification in Canada, as it is in the United States (in Canada only unsoundness in legs or feet disqualify). However, this dog is a good place to start because he possesses three unacceptable departures that you must identify in order to fully appreciate typical.



DOG B

This is not to say this over-sized, fourth place dog is without virtue. In addition to soundness, he has a large, black nose (large, open nostrils), a nice, firm topline and a correctly high-set tail. As for his markings (not mentioned in the CKC standard), they are of no importance – any recognized hound colour is acceptable worldwide, and the distribution of colour and markings is of no (or little) importance. (In Canada, we have a rider that advises that, in close competition, colour can have weight with a judge's decision!)

An unorthodox breed conformation wise, this example best serves to illustrate two head departures blending into a neck fault and a *major* forequarter departure.

For a Basset, his head lacks the power that depth and deep flews would convey. This form of dry neck is a fault. The second head fault is the high-set, thick, flat, rounded-at-the-bottom, ugly ear.

The major forequarter departure centres on the shape of the front legs. The straight legs are wrong for a Basset, and are the reason he is too tall. He has been graphically made too tall by raiding the body up till the chest is level with the elbow – correct for most breeds, but wrong for the Basset.

The CKC standard describes correct Basset front legs: “forelegs should be short, very powerful, very heavy in bone, close fitting to the chest with a crooked knee and wrinkled ankle (I prefer “wrist”), ending in a massive paw.” I would also prefer ‘heavy’ bone to ‘very heavy’ bone. This dog’s legs are short, but lack crook.

In addition, the standard advises that: “A hound (Basset) must not be out at elbows. He must be perfectly sound and true on his feet, which should be thick and massive, and the weight of the forepart of the body should be borne equally by each toe of the forefeet, so far as it is compatible with the crook of the legs.”

To this description I would add that, viewed head-on, the upper arm should incline slightly inward, but not to such an extent as to prevent free action, or to result in legs touching each other when standing or moving; the wrist should be slightly closer than the elbows – a wrap-around front.

FIRST PLACE

This representation of typical (Dog C) stands 14 inches at the shoulder (the standard does not advise as to height) and weighs 60 pounds. His large, impressive head fits the dog. No one feature is exaggerated; each part balances with its adjoining part, coming together as an unusual but complete whole. He is heavier in bone, height considered, than any other breed, but is in no way clumsy. The skin is loose and elastic.

In profile, it can be seen that the front leg of this example covers the lowest point of the chest line, that there is wrinkling at the wrist and, unlike most breeds, the elbow positions *well above the bottom of the chest*.

The large head is domed, has some stop, and the occipital bone is prominent. Width is medium at the brow and tapers slightly to the muzzle. The foreface is lean, but not narrow – a width opinion seeming to conflict with the standard’s advice, “skull narrow”, but I believe the standard really means *narrow in proportion to its length*. I mention this because narrow, knife-blade heads are a current concern.

In profile, the top of the muzzle is nearly parallel with the line from stop to occiput, and not much longer than the skull. The sides of the head are flat and free from cheek bumps. The nose is black and protrudes a little beyond the pendulous, dark pigmented lips, the nostrils are large and well opened.

The eyes are dark, lozenge-shaped, neither prominent nor too deep set; expression is calm and serious. The standard calls for a “prominent haw”. I have found this direction, on occasion, to be taken too literally, and would add that the red of his lower lid is obvious, though not excessively so. A prominent haw is one thing – a scoop collecting debris is another.

The body is long and deep, the breast bone prominent, the ribs carried well back, the topline level. The hindquarters are full and rounded, stifles are well bent, hocks are well let down. Wrinkles may appear between the hock and the foot and, at rear of joint, a slight pouch can occur due to the looseness of skin.

SECOND OR THIRD?

My second place dilemma is between Dog A and Dog D. I like the head on one, but not the other. I like the ears on one, but not the other. The same goes for topline and feet. I don’t like either of their fronts but, having a choice, I’m going with the one that, all things considered, would appear the best equipped of the two to follow a trail over and through difficult terrain.

SECOND PLACE

It’s sacrilege, but I’m going with the Basset with the poor head (Dog A) and the steep shoulders and the faulty hindquarters – but faulty in a different way than Dog D’s. this dog’s hindquarter fault disturbs me, as it does you, but the whole dog has to be taken into consideration, and then you go with what you have. You also have the option of withholding ribbons.

This head has faults, but the ears are correctly low set, extremely long, narrow throughout their length and curling well inwards; they are fine and velvety in texture, very supple, and hang in loose folds.

There are three head faults, as well as one combining head and neck. First, the muzzle and the skull are on two different angles, the stop is too pronounced, the occiput is not pronounced enough and there should be dewlap (two small pouches of skin on the neck) – but not to this extent.

This dog has a pincer bite. The standard requires only that the teeth meet. I interpret this as meaning either a scissors or pincer bite is correct (overshot or undershot are serious Basset faults).

His topline is level, his tail is set on high and he does have forechest – but he is not functionally balanced. Steep shoulders have moved the front assembly forward on the body, reducing the amount of forechest exposed and positioning the foreleg in front of the deepest part of the chest, instead of covering it.

Often, this kind of departure causes the rear end to rise but, here, faulty sickle hocks have lowered the rear. Sickle hocks prohibit a Basset at the trot from extending the hind pastern rearward further than the vertical.

THIRD PLACE

Like this example (Dog D), many Bassets have a slight Roman nose. The reverse – a dishface – is a bad fault. This head has two faults, one affecting function and the second, appearance. The functional fault is a small nose (and small nostrils). The fault affecting appearance is the short ears (which, if you believe trap scent, can also be thought of as a functional departure).

The front feet are less than ideal. His neck is short. His tail curves too far forward. His shoulder blades are steep. The body is too low slung not because the chest is too deep (this body has the same depth as the other three examples), but because the forequarters are inferior.