

YOU BE THE JUDGE

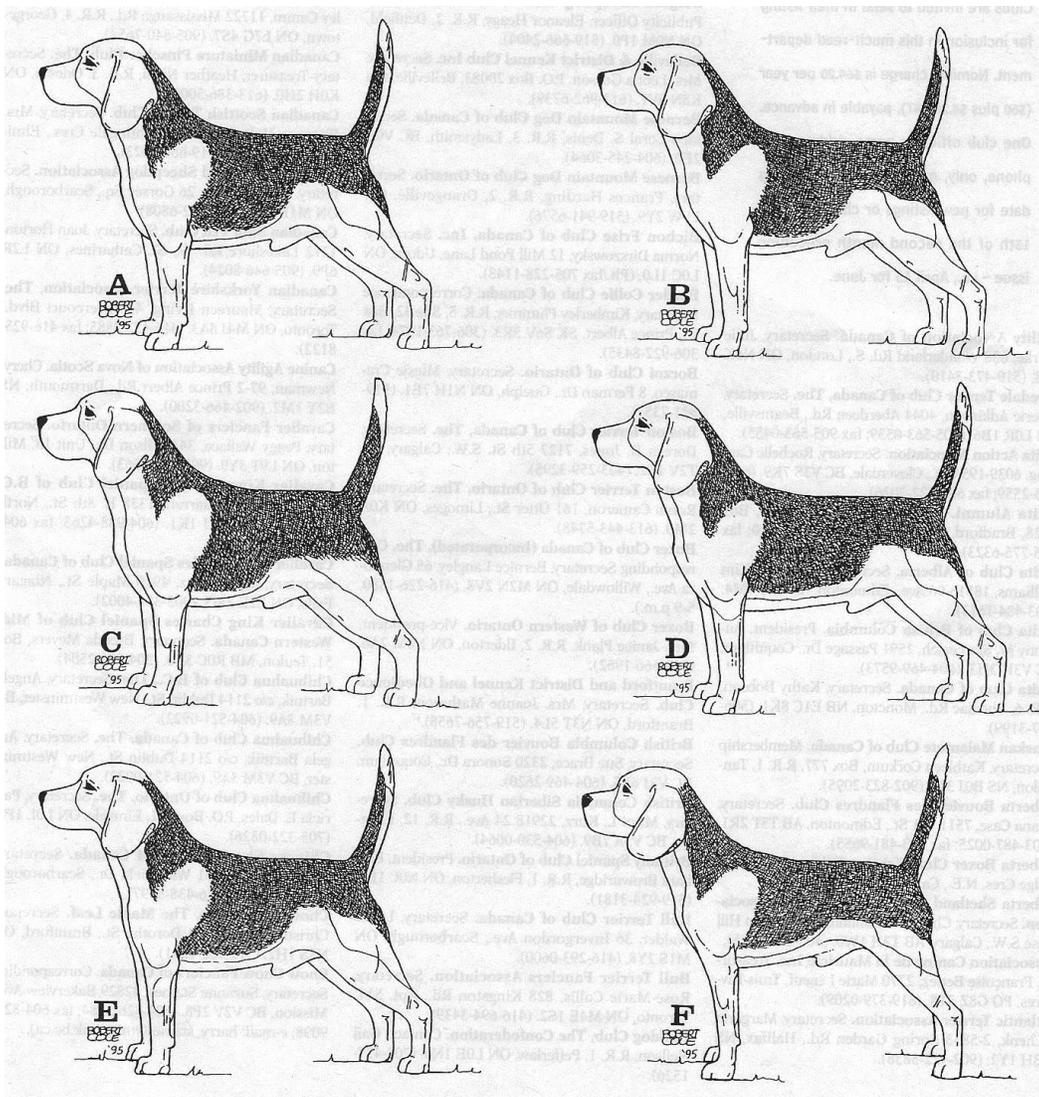
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THE BEAGLE

Place Beagles A to F in order of preference based not on a description of ideal, but on the following list of 31 improvement suggestions to the 1957 Canadian/American Beagle standard.

A number of my improvement suggestions are taken from the current, more comprehensive 1986 British standard, and are reinforced by my having judged the breed in England and New Zealand. Readers who use the British standard will prefer the two Beagles with the longer forelegs. All six Beagles are the same 38 centimeter (15 inch) height at the withers.



IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

1. The skull by itself should not be “fairly long”; it is the complete head in proportion to body that should be of fair length.
2. It is the middle (centre) of the skull that should be slightly domed, not the occiput (rear portion).
3. The head should be described as being “free of frown or wrinkle”.
4. Instead of the muzzle being of “moderate length” which implies a length equal to length of skull, or the British division whereby the stop divides the length of muzzle and skull as equally as possible, I find the muzzle is actually shorter than the skull, therefore making the dividing point the eyebrows.
5. Nose colour should be included. The nose should preferably be black, but less pigment could be permissible where coat colours are light.
6. The mouth should be described as having a perfect, regular and complete scissors bite.
7. Lips should be reasonably well flewed, not “free from flews”.
8. Eyes should be fairly large, not “large” (as a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel’s eyes are large).
9. Canadians and Americans describe the ear as wet on moderately low, the British want low, and writer specialists want not too high but not too low. I have attached them level with top of eye.
10. Ears should be round at tip, not “rounded” (surgically) at tips, as is done to English Foxhounds in North America.
11. The neck should be slightly arched.
12. The neck should flow smoothly into the withers, not rise free from the shoulders and, rather than be of “medium length” make a practical statement: e.g., the neck should be sufficiently long to enable the nose to reach the ground easily.
13. Failure to include the requirement of a forechest has, on occasion, placed the Beagle at a structural disadvantage by inadvertently promoting an up-on-the-toes (short, vertical upper arm and front pastern), Fox Terrier kind of front.
14. Shoulder blades should be well laid back rather than just sloping.
15. Include mention of a slope to the upper arm, as well as good length. This ensures that the straight forelegs, viewed in profile, will set well under (rearward) on the dog and promote a forechest.
16. Describe the chest as let down below elbow (Dog B) if foreleg is to have moderate length (as long in length as the body has depth).
17. Advise that height to elbow is about half the height to withers (the elbow positioned sufficiently high above brisket as to add for foreleg length). Or, if Canadians and/or Americans want a 5:4 body depth to foreleg length ratio (the foreleg length 20% less than body depth; the elbow level with brisket), then we should so state. (See Dog A)
18. Foreleg to have good substance and round bone.
19. Instead of straight when viewed in profile, the short front pasterns should slope slightly (not be perpendicular).
20. Mention that feet are well knuckled up, thick padded, small round and catlike.
21. Topline level (a “slightly arched loin” is often misinterpreted).
22. body well ribbed up in addition to “ribs well sprung”.
23. Loin short and supple as well as “broad”.
24. Slight (not excessive) tuck-up should receive mention.
25. Tail set on high, not “moderately high”.
26. Tail moderately long, not “short as compared with...”.
27. Include that the tail have a white tip.
28. Buttocks project beyond the tail set-on and body length is measured from the forechest to buttocks, a distance slightly greater than height being preferred in North America.
29. Somehow, the text description of stifle and hock was reversed in the 1957 Canadian/American standard and never corrected. It is the stifle that should be well bent, not “well let down.”
30. It is the hocks that should be “well let down” (rear pasterns short). There also should be angulation at hock, not “hocks moderately bent” (the bend is at the hock; the hock is not bent).

31. Gait is free, with long reach and equal extension of all four legs; clockwork action without flex of front pastern on the follow through is incorrect. Front and hind legs follow in line, converging slightly as speed progresses (short, steep, bossy upper arms cause many Beagles to move wide, the same distance apart at the feet as at the elbows). The topline remains firm and level. The tail is carried high.

ORDER OF PREFERENCE

Place all six of these 38 centimeter (15 inch) Beagles in order of preference based on consideration given to the 31 improvement suggestions. I could have varied the set-on of their tails or given one a weak swayback or a faulty Roman nose, but this might have given you an easy out. Instead, you have a number of similar examples to place in order, and some not-so-similar but with similar markings.

Readers who use the British standard will probably opt for Dog B and Dog D. Many Canadians and Americans will prefer Dog A and Dog C; there are others who will place Dog E first. It is unlikely that anyone will place Dog F first. This top winning Beagle might have been (CKC/AKC) under 13 inches, but that is beside the point; in this class, he is 15 inches and is judged as such.

MINIATURE FOX HOUND ERROR

Dog E represents a structural Beagle departure producing a particular balance that, ironically, has appeal for some people. This appeal is strengthened by the advice in the CKC/AKC standard that the Beagle's appearance is that of a miniature Foxhound. This advice promotes forelegs that are straight as a post and in danger of knuckling over.

To achieve this static balance, Dog E departs structurally toward a short, steep upper arm, which moves his whole front assembly forward on his body, reducing the forechest and forcing the front pastern to adopt a vertical position. At the trot there is very little flex, as the front pastern is lifted prior to being brought forward.

This produces a faulty, restricted clockwork action that is considered, erroneously, by some judges to be correct.

MY ORDER

I gave longer legged Dog B first place. For second place, I debated between shorter legged Dog A and longer legged, longer bodied Dog D. In the end, as a Canadian who is more familiar with seeing the shorter leg, I gave the more compact Dog A second.

I placed longer bodied Dog D over heavier Dog C for third place because I know, from having hunted rabbits in New Zealand, that a well ribbed up, longer bodied Beagle can keep going seemingly forever. Fourth place Dog C represents maximum acceptable substance; he is a sound, 'finishable' dog.

The choice for fifth between light Dog F and miniature Foxhound Dog E was interesting because they are so different. In this type of decision, you do not want to get hung up on one fault. My selection for fifth place was Dog E.