

JUDGING THE BASSET HOUND

By Richard Nance

The Basset Hound is a breed that is most recognizable due to its long low body, long ears and sad eyes. The Basset was bred to have short legs so the hunter could follow on foot.

The Basset is an achondroplasia (drawf) breed. The Basset is a big dog with short legs. The form of achondroplasia only affects the growth of the long bones.

The achondroplastic, low to the ground Basset Hound is often a challenge to new judges whose expertise is in longer legged breeds with straight columns of support. An added learning curve also involves various hallmarks of our breed, which include a wrap-around front, short legs, heavy bone, a prominent forechest, long ears and wrinkled skin. (Basset Hound Illustrated Standard).

Dwarfism can lead to structural problems in the Basset, including a mismatched front, which is an unequal turnout of the front feet.

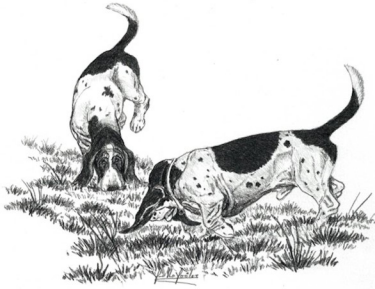
One needs to understand the differences between breed type and style. Discussions on social media demonstrate that the terms breed type and style are used interchangeably. Breed type in the Basset Hound is:

- 2:1 rectangular outline
- Heavy bone
- Large, well-domed head with wrinkles
- Long velvety ears; soft, sad expression
- Prominent forechest
- Body not too heavy, not too low to ground
- Capable of hunting all day

You will see various styles that still meet the correct breed type. In your ring, you might see dogs that are a little closer to the ground, some that have more skin, and some with larger bone and more weight. No matter the style, you still want to see good reach and drive, a level topline, and a nicely balanced hound.

Balance in the Basset is defined as follows:

- All parts fit; looks like one smooth



The Basset Hound

- piece
- Head is large enough and matches body
- Arched neck flows smoothly into shoulders
- Shoulder lays back 45° to the horizontal and forms a 90° angle with upper arm
- Front and rear angles match
- Length of upper arm and shoulder blade are equal
- Shoulders are not set too far forward
- Rear does not look slack or light
- Tail is set in continuation of the spine

- Height is not over 14" at the withers; over 15" disqualifies

Most all Bassets are show by their owners, not professional handlers. That being said, put more emphasis on a level topline when the dog is moving, not when stacked. The Basset is not a self stacking breed. It seems that the more you stack a basset, the worse they look.

As the Basset moves around the ring, your first impression should be that of his topline and reach and drive, not how fast he moves.

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The Basset must be judged on the ramp. If you need to re-examine a dog, please use the ramp.

When viewing the basset from the side, look for proper placement of the front assembly. The front legs should come down from the base of the neck. He is twice as long as tall, measuring from the forechest to point of buttocks and from ground to withers. A balanced Basset should have matching front and rear angles. The tail is a continuation of the spine with slight curvature.

If the dog looks too tall, over 15" at the withers is a DQ, call for the wicket.

The head is large, well proportioned and of medium width. The length from nose to stop is approximately the same length as stop to a pronounced occiput. The ears are set low, long and when drawn forward, fold well over the end of the nose.

Any hound color is acceptable. The distribution of color or markings is not important.



Viewing from the front, you want to see a wrap-around front.

The front legs are crook'd. Forelegs are short, powerful, heavy in bone and close fitting to chest so that legs wrap around the ribcage. Wrists are closer together than the shoulder joints. A crook is necessary for the Basset to get its short legs as directly under the keel as possible and provide a low center of gravity. The front feet should equally turn out a trifle.

The nose is darkly pigmented, black is

preferred.

The bite is scissor or even.

The skin over the head is loose with wrinkles over the brow when the head is lowered. The dewlap is very pronounced.

It's time to put your hands on the Basset. I start from the front and feel the forechest. Make sure there is bone there and not just loose skin. Check the bite for a scissor or even bite. The eyes should be dark brown. Lighter colored eyes are acceptable if they conform to the colors of the dog.

I move to the side and feel the shoulders and that the elbows are close to the ribcage. Continue moving down the ribcage checking for rough or flanged ribs. Check to see that there is sufficient length of keel.

Viewing from the side, the rear pasterns should be perpendicular to the ground, with a well-let-down stifle.

I move around to the rear and see that the legs parallel and straight down from hindquarters. Forequarters and hindquarters should be approximately the same width when viewed from above.

On the down and back, going away hind legs are parallel, (the Basset does not single track). Hind feet follow in line with front feet. You should be able to see the black pads of the rear feet.

Coming back, front legs do not paddle, weave or overlap. There is no single tracking. Prominent forechest gives fill. Bassets with little forechest and/or straight front legs will appear wide. If there is a mismatch of the front feet, you will see it when the dog stops. A good handler may be able to hide the problems with the front when stacking the dog, but not so on the coming back.

Correct movement should be given high priority. Most of the serious faults deal with movement.

AKC Basset Hound Breed Standard Prioritizes Faults As

Serious Faults

- Steepness in Shoulder
- Fiddle front
- Elbows Out
- Feet down in pastern
- Cowhocks
- Bowed legs
- Steep, poorly angulated hindquarters
- Undershot & over shot bites
- High set, flat ear

Faults

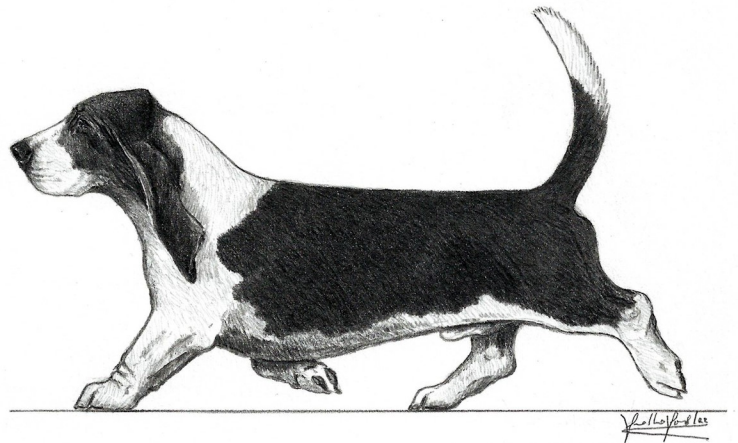
- Dry head with tight skin
- Broad, flat skull
- Very light or protruding eye
- Flatsidedness
- Flanged ribs
- Saggy or roached topline

Permissible but not desirable

- Deep, liver colored nose conforming to the coloring of the head
- Lighter eye than color of coat

Disqualifications

- Knuckling over
- Distinctly long coat
- Over 15" at highest point of withers



For copies of the Illustrated Standard, narrated PowerPoint Presentation on CD, or Judges' Pocket Guide, please contact the author and JEC chair, Richard Nance at Richard@BoBacBassets.com or 505-685-9422.

JUDGING THE BASSET HOUND

The Standard with faults underlined

General Appearance

The Basset Hound possesses in marked degree those characteristics which equip it admirably to follow a trail over and through difficult terrain. It is a short-legged dog, heavier in bone, size considered, than any other breed of dog, and while its movement is deliberate, it is in no sense clumsy. In temperament it is mild, never sharp or timid. It is capable of great endurance in the field and is extreme in its devotion.

Head

The head is large and well proportioned. Its length from occiput to muzzle is greater than the width at the brow. In overall appearance the head is of medium width. The skull is well domed, showing a pronounced occipital protuberance. A broad flat skull is a fault. The length from nose to stop is approximately the length from stop to occiput. The sides are flat and free from cheek bumps. Viewed in profile the top lines of the muzzle and skull are straight and lie in parallel planes, with a moderately defined stop. The skin over the whole of the head is loose, falling in distinct wrinkles over the brow when the head is lowered. A dry head and tight skin are faults. The muzzle is deep, heavy, and free from snipiness. The nose is darkly pigmented, preferably black, with large wide-open nostrils. A deep liver-colored nose conforming to the coloring of the head is permissible but not desirable. The teeth are large, sound, and regular, meeting in either a scissors or an even bite. A bite either overshot or undershot is a serious fault. The lips are darkly pigmented and are pendulous, falling squarely in front and, toward the back, in loose hanging flews. The dewlap is very pronounced. The neck is powerful, of good length, and well arched. The eyes are soft, sad, and slightly sunken, showing a prominent haw, and in color are brown, dark brown preferred. A somewhat lighter-colored eye conforming to the general coloring of the dog is acceptable but not desirable. Very light or protruding eyes are faults. The ears are extremely long, low set, and when

drawn forward, fold well over the end of the nose. They are velvety in texture, hanging in loose folds with the ends curling slightly inward. They are set far back on the head at the base of the skull and, in repose, appear to be set on the neck. A high set or flat ear is a serious fault.

Forequarters

The chest is deep and full with prominent sternum showing clearly in front of the legs. The shoulders and elbows are set close against the sides of the chest. The distance from the deepest point of the chest to the ground, while it must be adequate to allow free movement when working in the field, is not to be more than one-third the total height at the withers of an adult Basset. The shoulders are well laid back and powerful. Steepness in shoulder, fiddle fronts, and elbows that are out, are serious faults. The forelegs are short, powerful, heavy in bone, with wrinkled skin. Knuckling over of the front legs is a disqualification. The paw is massive, very heavy with tough heavy pads, well rounded and with both feet inclined equally a trifle outward, balancing the width of the shoulders. Feet down at the pastern are a serious fault. The toes are neither pinched together nor splayed, with the weight of the forepart of the body borne evenly on each. The dewclaws may be removed.

Body

The rib structure is long, smooth, and extends well back. The ribs are well sprung, allowing adequate room for heart and lungs. Flatsidedness and flanged ribs are faults. The topline is straight, level, and free from any tendency to sag or roach, which are faults.

Hindquarters

The hindquarters are very full and well rounded, and are approximately equal to the shoulders in width. They must not appear slack or light in relation to the overall depth of the body. The dog stands firmly on its hind legs showing a well-let-down stifle with no tendency toward a crouching stance. Viewed from behind, the hind legs are parallel, with the hocks

turning neither in nor out. Cowhocks or bowed legs are serious faults. The hind feet point straight ahead. Steep, poorly angulated hindquarters are a serious fault. The dewclaws, if any, may be removed.

Tail

The tail is not to be docked, and is set in continuation of the spine with but slight curvature, and carried gaily in hound fashion. The hair on the underside of the tail is coarse.

Size

The height should not exceed 14 inches. Height over 15 inches at the highest point of the shoulder blade is a disqualification.

Gait

The Basset Hound moves in a smooth, powerful, and effortless manner. Being a scenting dog with short legs, it holds its nose low to the ground. Its gait is absolutely true with perfect coordination between the front and hind legs, and it moves in a straight line with hind feet following in line with the front feet, the hocks well bent with no stiffness of action. The front legs do not paddle, weave, or overlap, and the elbows must lie close to the body. Going away, the hind legs are parallel.

Coat

The coat is hard, smooth, and short, with sufficient density to be of use in all weather. The skin is loose and elastic. A distinctly long coat is a disqualification.

Color

Any recognized hound color is acceptable and the distribution of color and markings is of no importance.

Disqualifications

Height of more than 15 inches at the highest point of the shoulder blade.

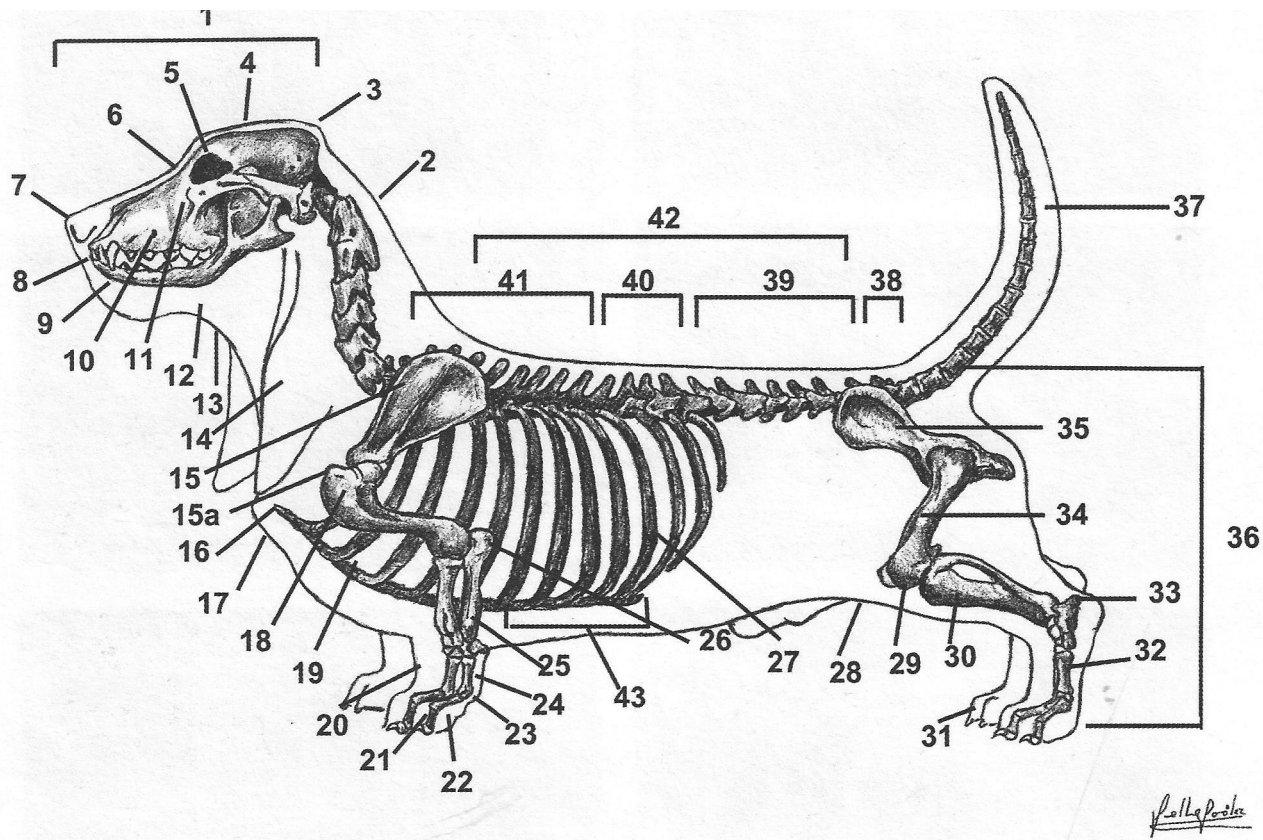
Knuckled over front legs.

Distinctly long coat.

Approved January 14, 1964

Parts of the Basset Hound With Definitions from the Breed Standard

Description **not in italics** describe what the AKC Breed Standard calls for regarding that specific part or feature in the Basset Hound. Definitions in **italicized type** are from Gilbert and Brown (2001). K-9 Structure and Terminology. New York: Howell



1. **HEAD** Large, well proportioned, medium width; covered with loose skin.
2. **NECK** Powerful; good length; well arched.
3. **OCCIPUT** (*High point of the back of the head*) - pronounced
4. **SKULL** Well domed; pronounced occipital protuberance; length from nose to stop is approximately the length from stop to occiput. Top lines of muzzle are straight and lie in parallel planes.
5. **EYES** Soft, sad, slightly sunken; prominent haw; brown or dark brown preferred.
6. **STOP** (*The change in profile lines between the muzzle and skull*) Moderately defined.
7. **NOSE** Darkly pigmented; preferably black; large wide-open nostrils; liver color permissible if conforms with head color.
8. **TEETH** Scissors or even bite.
9. **LIPS** Darkly pigmented; preferably black; pendulous; fall squarely in front and towards the back in loose hanging flews.
10. **MUZZLE** (Head in front of the eyes) Deep, heavy, free from snippiness.
11. **CHEEK** (The side of the head) Flat, free of cheek bumps (i.e., the masseter muscles below the eyes are not overly developed).

12. **FLEW** (*The corner rear portion of the upper lip*) Loose hanging.
13. **DEWLAP** (*Loose pendulous folds of skin about the neck*) Pronounced.
14. **EARS** Extremely long, low set; fold over end of nose; end curls slightly inward; set far back on the head at the base of skull.
15. **SHOULDER BLADE** (*Scapula*) Well laid back.
- 15a. **POINT OF SHOULDER** (*Foremost tip of upper arm*)
16. **PROSTERNUM** (*Point of the breastbone. Is in front of point of shoulder when viewed from side.* Prominent)
17. **CHEST** (*Forepart of the body enclosed by the ribs and breastbone*) Deep, full; prominent sternum showing clearly in front of the legs.
18. **UPPER ARM** (*Humerus*) *In the Basset Hound it is about the same length as the shoulder blade.*
19. **STERNUM** (*Breastbone; brisket. The lower part of the chest between and in front of the legs.* Should extend well back behind the front legs..)
20. **FORELEGS** (*Front legs*) Short, powerful, heavy in bone with wrinkled skin.
21. **TOES** Neither pinched nor splayed.
22. **PAW** (*Foot*) Massive, very heavy with tough heavy pads; well rounded; both front feet inclined equally a trifle outward.
23. **PASTERN** (*Region between the wrist and forefeet*). Feet down at the pastern are a serious fault.
24. **WRIST** (*Region between the forearm and the pastern*).
25. **ULNA** (*One of the two bones of the foreleg*).
26. **ELBOW** Set close to the side of the chest.
27. **RIBCAGE** Long, smooth; extends well back; well sprung.
28. **TUCK-UP** (*Area of the lower stomach line or belly*).
29. **KNEE or STIFLE** Well let-down.
30. **LOWER THIGH** (*Second thigh*)
31. **HIND FEET** Point straight ahead.
32. **REAR PASTERNS** Turn neither in nor out.
33. **HOCKS** Turn neither in nor out.
34. **UPPER THIGH** (*First thigh*)
35. **PELVIS** (*Provide sockets for attachment of rear legs*)
36. **HINDQUARTERS** Full and well rounded
37. **TAIL** Set in a continuation of the spine with but slight curvature, and carried gaily in hound fashion.
38. **CROUP** (*Portion of the body above the hind legs extending from loin to the set-on of tail*).
39. **LOIN** (*Area between the end of the ribcage and croup*).
40. **TRUE BACK** (*The portion of the anatomy between the withers and the loin*).
41. **WITHERS** (*Highest point of the shoulders behind the neck. 1st to 9th thoracic vertebrae*). Should not exceed 14", over 15" disqualifies.
42. **BACKLINE** (*Line from the rear of the withers to the tail set*) Straight, level, and free from any tendency to sag or roach.
43. **POSTERIOR STERNUM** (*Sternum is the portion of the breastbone running between the forelegs and extending backward to the line of the abdomen*). BHCA JE refers to the sternum that extends back behind the front legs as posterior sternum.

