

## 204 *The Standard*



Prepared by Susan Coe, Laurie Stargell and Pamela Geoffroy

### Gait

The Basenji Standard states:

*Swift, tireless trot. Stride is long, smooth, effortless and the topline remains level. Coming and going, the straight column of bones from shoulder joint to foot and from hip joint to pad remains unbroken, converging toward the centerline under the body. The faster the trot, the greater the convergence.*



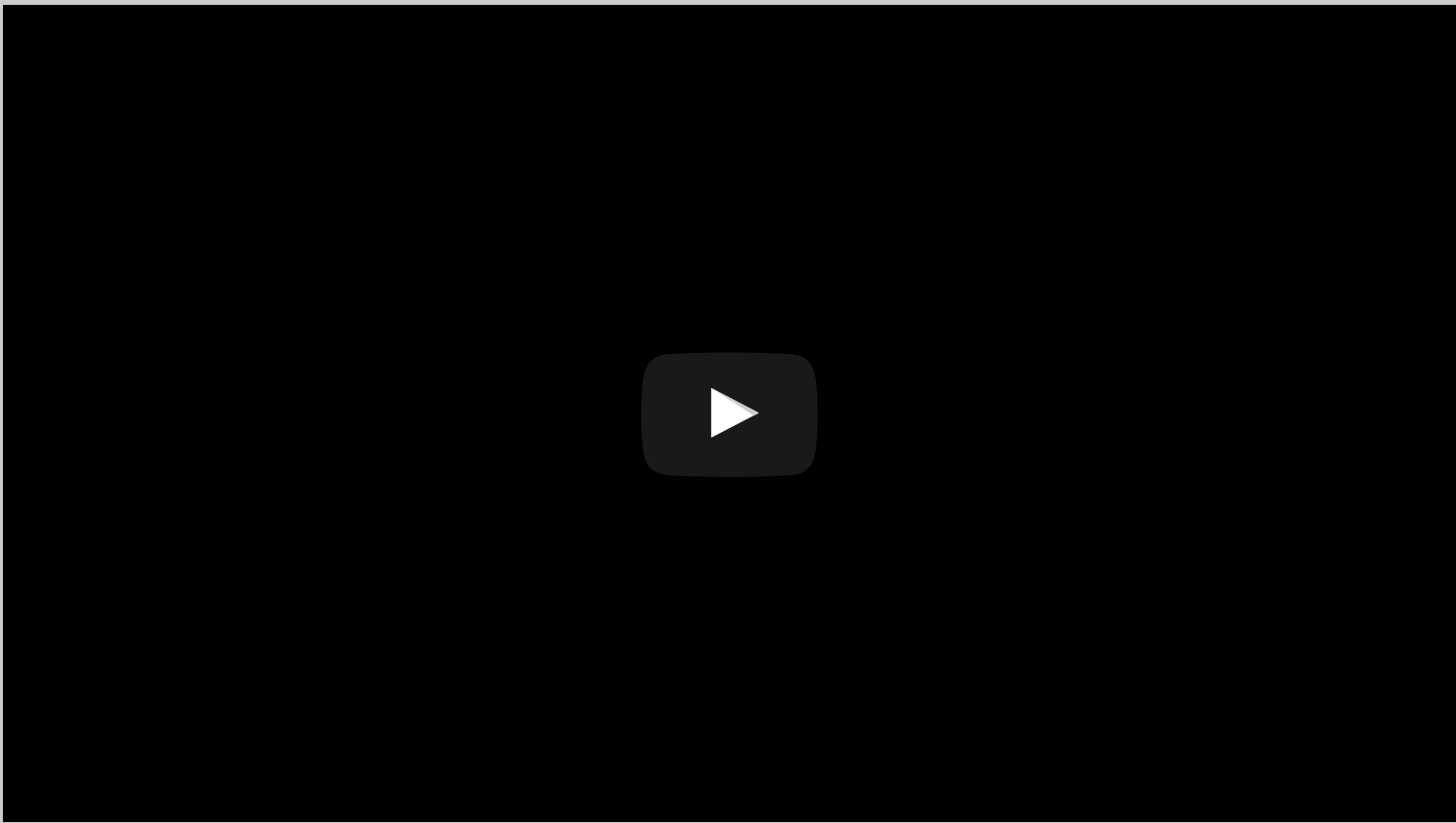
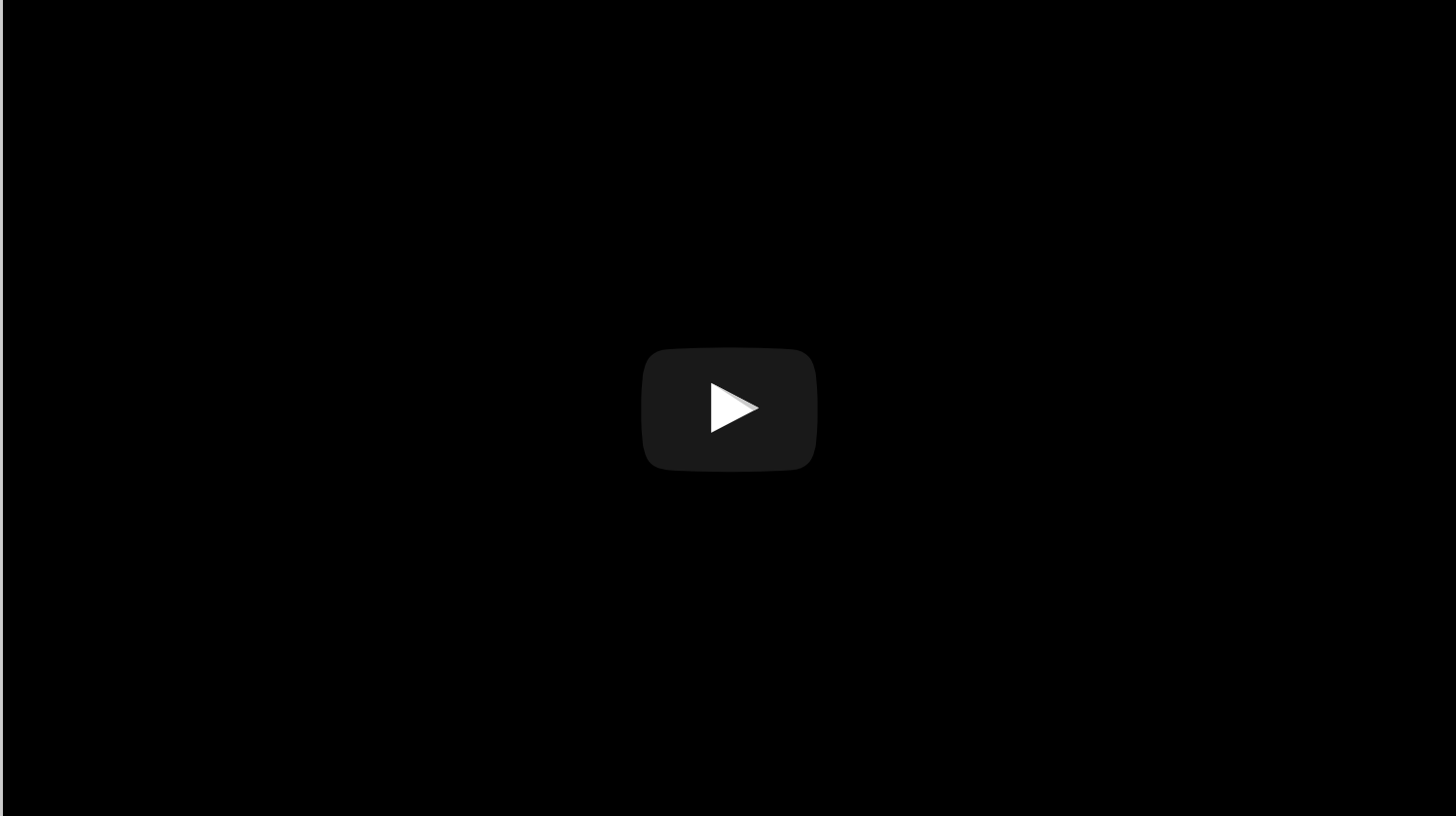
Not so many words here but so difficult to get just right and so difficult for people to agree upon! **"Swift, tireless trot. Stride is long, smooth, effortless and the topline remains level."** Those few words paint a different picture for different breeders.



A dog at a trot is continuously moving over the legs with the legs on opposite sides working in unison. Ideally the front and the lateral rear leg hit the ground at the same time or the back leg hits the ground shortly after the diagonal front leg leaves the ground to allow a short suspension.

Basenji movement should look very easy and effortless. This type of movement requires coordination and balance between all the parts of the dog. Much of what makes a dog able to produce a proper trot is actually described in other parts of the standard — Forequarters, Hindquarters, Neck–Topline–Body. The force generated by the rear action is transferred along the spine propelling the dog over the forequarters to move it forward. A well constructed dog should be able to move tirelessly, smoothly with a level topline at a swift but not excessive speed. The dog's long stride will allow it to travel long distances with fewer steps.

The three videos below demonstrate the trot of a variety of basenjies. The dogs in the videos are not presented as exemplifying perfect movement; however the video shows much more than still photographs can and allows you to compare the added comments to each individual. These comments with the slow motion video will help you learn to evaluate basenjies at the trot.







The dogs in the three videos are moving at good speeds. The trotting speed best for the majority of multi-purpose Basenjis is the collected trot not the as-fast-as-we-can-go trotting speed. Remember that a Basenji is a square dog that must also gallop. Its hindquarters are almost always more powerful than the forequarters to make a square dog that is also strong at a gallop. When dog and handler become excited in the show ring and move very fast, it is not unusual for the dog's hindquarter power to overcome the forequarters causing many movement faults. You might see a dog, viewed from front or rear that is side-winding caused by the rear leg reaching under the body so far that it interferes with the front leg forcing the dog to move at an angle to the line of travel. A very frequent result of lack of balance is the dog, viewed from the side, moving with the hindquarters higher than the forequarters. The better made and balanced a dog is the better the topline is on the move. This is why the standard specifically points out "*the topline remains level.*" However, occasionally one sees a dog with a topline that remains level but makes up for its imbalance by a more lifting action in the forequarters than is desirable. Sometimes you see all these faults combined. The reason they are undesirable is that each of them increases stresses the dog is under and the work that it must do to trot. Words like "*tireless...smooth, effortless*" in the Standard are trying to convey the image of a dog that can go long distances at the trot without wearing out. This ideal Basenji would still be ready for the final burst of speed at the gallop to finish the work of the hunt.



These words: ***"The wrinkled head is proudly carried on a well arched neck"*** are given in the "General Appearance" section of the Standard but should also be applied here in "Gait." The red dog on the left has a poor, low head carriage while the black dog on the right is moving with a correct head carriage. The black dog's head is carried up with a natural arch to its neck just as the standard describes.



Here are a couple of profile views of poor moving dogs to use for comparison. Both dogs are unsound, moving high behind. The dog on the left has obviously unequal length of stride front and rear. The rear leg is starting to reach inside the front leg under the body. The second dog has a short stride. A long stride is desirable because the dog will need to take fewer steps to travel the same distance thereby saving energy. Additionally you can see the front leg on this dog is bending at the elbow rather than have a strong line reaching from the shoulder blade through to the foot in the right side photo. These dogs might look better if slowed down. Or they just might not be constructed at all correctly.





The Standard only describes the trot. We all know Basenjis also work at a gallop. Here is a good series of photos showing a Basenji on the coursing field. One can't help but notice how much the topline varies through the galloping stride. The dogs need both flexibility and strength in the topline. In the first and second photo in the second row you can see how all the force from the powerful hindquarters is being caught by that one front leg. And to think they are doing all this while twisting and turning after game. The gallop is a very strenuous gait.

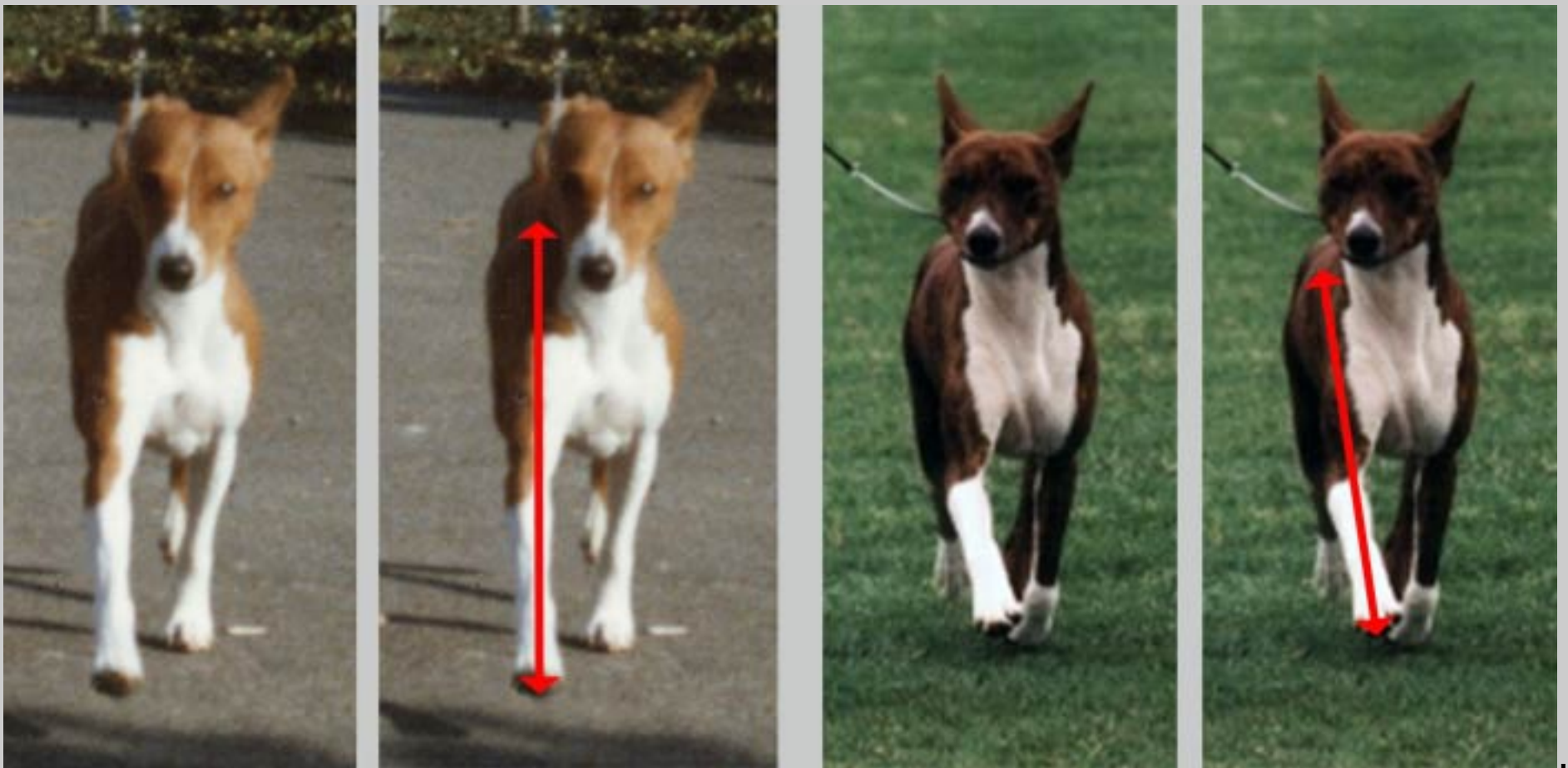
The rest of this Standard section describes the Basenji's ideal gait as seen "coming" and "going:" ***"Coming and going, the straight column of bones from shoulder joint to foot and from hip joint to pad remains unbroken, converging toward the centerline under the body. The faster the trot, the greater the convergence."***

***"Coming and going"*** explains that this is the view of the dog coming directly toward or away from the viewer. The remainder of the Section is requesting a type of movement that is based on the best, most efficient way to trot. The objective is for the forward momentum or force of the trot be conveyed without loss of force, energy, momentum or causing undue stress on the dog.



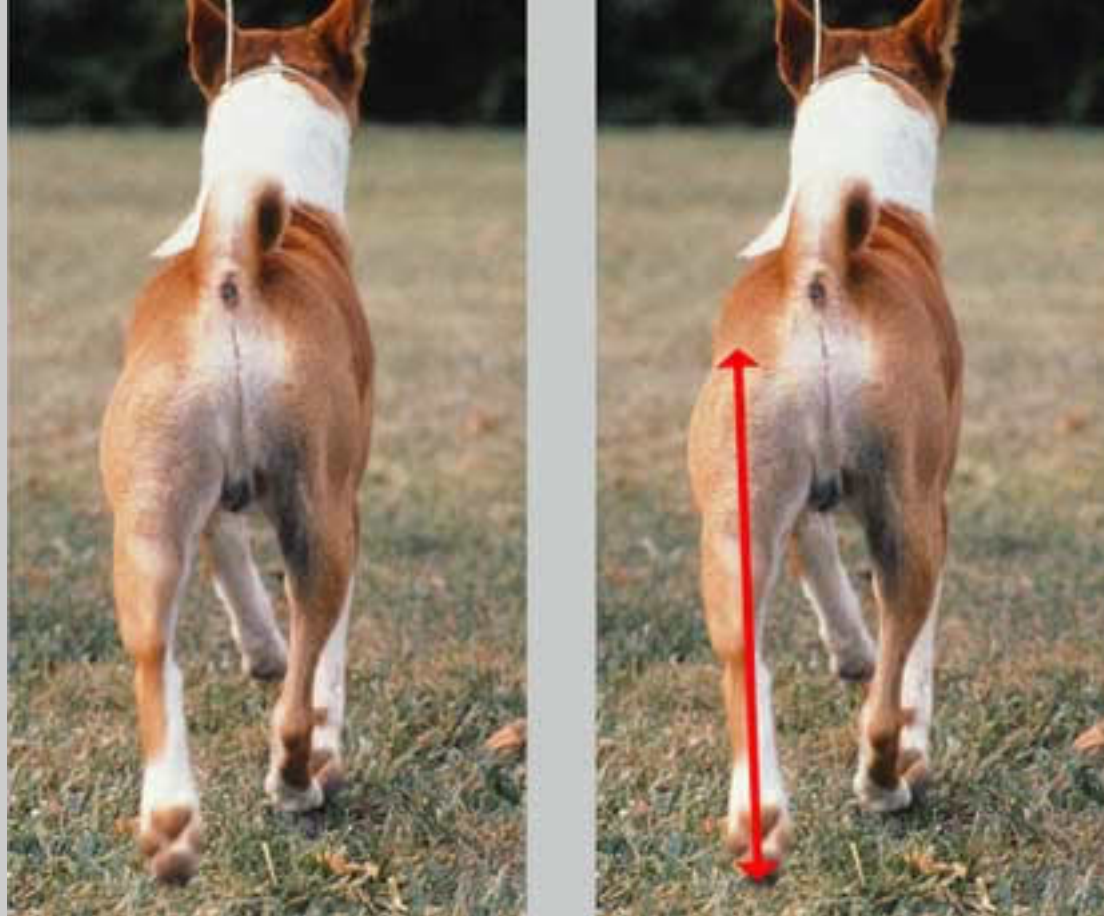
Taking this Section a bit out of order since it is all too related to separate; the Section goes on to ask that the legs are **"...converging toward the centerline under the body."** The trot is a symmetric gait with the diagonal pairs of legs moving simultaneously. Some breeds with a low center of gravity or that are wider than Basenjis ask for a dog that moves with front and rear parallel. Basenjis, on the other hand, are like most moderate breeds of dogs that single track as their trotting speed increases. The reason for this is to make the movement easy. A dog that double tracks, or moves with limbs parallel will tend to roll at higher speeds thereby losing efficiency. The single tracking keeps the dog in balance as the weight is accepted by each diagonal pair of legs at the trot.

The photos below demonstrate the sentence **"The faster the trot, the greater the convergence"** clearly. The dog on the right is moving slower than the dog on the left and you can see the line the leg takes and the difference in convergence.



The two dogs above show **"the straight column of bones from shoulder joint to foot"** on a photo "coming" toward you. The photo to the right has that line of "the straight column of bones" superimposed.





A dog moving away above to show "**...the straight column of bones...from hip joint to pad remains unbroken, converging toward the centerline under the body.**" The dog above displays clean movement. The photo on the right has a red line superimposed to demonstrate the straight line of support. Notice how the hocks are in that line as well.



Here are some dogs demonstrating a few movement faults that can be found in the coming and going view. The two photos at the left show a dog that is out at the elbow. You can see many faults from either coming or going as you do in these two photos. The middle dog is flipping a pastern instead of maintaining a clean line. Sometimes dogs that are very out of condition exacerbate this problem. The fourth dog is moving close behind. Notice how the hocks remain vertical instead of converging toward the center in an unbroken line. The dog in the right side photo is side winding or crabbing. The rear leg is reaching well inside the front leg forcing the dog to go at a slight angle. All unsound movement makes any dog less efficient on the move and takes away from the ease of its movement.

One hears the term "the dog is sound" or "...unsound" as the case may be. Often the term is particularly applied to movement as viewed in coming and going. Soundness in a dog on the move must be considered both coming and going and from the side view.



In the General Appearance section of the Standard there is this small bit on movement **"...swift, effortless gait (resembling a racehorse trotting full out)"**. The straightforward natural trot, as compared to trained variations on the trot, is the gait that horses use to travel long distances. Walking is too slow and galloping too energy consuming. This natural trot requires a long, smooth, easy stride to be efficient. Another factor that makes the horse's trot easy is the time of suspension where all four feet are off the ground so the horse is gliding forward. The time of suspension allows the back foot to slide under the front foot to extend the length of the stride. We can also look for that in Basenjis as part of the ease of their effortless, horse-like full out trot as shown in the photo below.

## Comment on Section

Although it is important to understand faults and how they affect gait, do not simply "fault judge" as the primary means of evaluating movement. First recognize merits, and then evaluate the dog's movement based on balancing the virtues against faults. To emphasize the importance of the positive consideration will allow you to maintain your dog's qualities while improving its faults when you breed.



Focus on the positive features of style, ease and efficiency in movement.

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