

204 *The Standard*



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General Appearance

The Basenji Standard states:

The Basenji is a small, short haired hunting dog from Africa. It is short backed and lightly built, appearing high on the leg compared to its length. The wrinkled head is proudly carried on a well arched neck and the tail is set high and curled. Elegant and graceful, the whole demeanor is one of poise and inquiring alertness. The balanced structure and the smooth musculature enables it to move with ease and agility. The Basenji hunts by both sight and scent. Characteristics—The Basenji should not bark but is not mute. The wrinkled forehead, tightly curled tail and swift, effortless gait (resembling a racehorse trotting full out) are typical of the breed. Faults—Any departure from the following points must be considered a fault, and the seriousness with which the fault is regarded is to be in exact proportion to its degree.



The General Appearance section is meant to distill the essence of the breed. These overall qualities make Basenjis unique from other dog breeds. Each of these broad strokes will be covered more deeply in the remainder of The Standard Dissected as they appear in

the Standard. To make these attributes clearer, an image of a strong example is provided for each on this page.



This photo taken in Africa in 1987 introduces the first sentence: ***"The Basenji is a small, short haired hunting dog from Africa."*** The Basenjis are used to drive game into nets for the hunters in Africa. Basenjis are willing to hunt in other ways as well including coursing in open country, pointing, scent and have been known to go down a hole after game.



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"The wrinkled head is proudly carried on a well arched neck and the tail is set high and curled."



"Elegant and graceful, the whole demeanor is one of poise and inquiring alertness."



"The balanced structure and the smooth musculature enables it to move with ease and agility."



"The Basenji hunts by both sight and scent."



"Characteristics—The Basenji should not bark but is not mute." There isn't sound here to show off our yodelers. These photos demonstrates how it can look with the photo on right showing the mouth just opening in temptation, the beginning of the sound in the middle and finally the head thrown back for the great joyous Basenji yodel. Basenjies may rarely make one or two insubstantial woofs in alarm but are generally quiet. Sad Basenjies can howl and distressed Basenjies have a pretty awful scream.



"The wrinkled forehead, tightly curled tail and swift, effortless gait (resembling a racehorse trotting full out) are typical of the breed."

"Faults—Any departure from the following points must be considered a fault, and the seriousness with which the fault is regarded is to be in exact proportion to its degree." Over the years the section on faults in the Standard has varied as different faults seem most important at each time a revision was made. In 1990 the AKC encouraged clubs updating their standards to use this more general statement. It is a bit vague but it should also be timeless.

Every dog has virtues and faults. As a breeder you must be able to recognize what is correct and what is undesirable for a Basenji. It is very easy to point out faults, but it is more important to think positively and look for the dog with so much virtue that the good carries the day. Each breeder is going to handle the balance between virtues and faults in their breeding program as an individual. In this way, a breeder makes their mark by developing a line of Basenjies that reflects the Standard as they see it; and yet their line is different, individual to their vision of the correct Basenji.

Comment on Section

This quote applies equally to breeders as to judges: "When judges are completely besotted by glamour, or by showmanship, or by exaggeration or blinded by coat so profuse as to hide the true dog, one of the most important qualities in livestock goes out the window. Symmetry or balance between the parts, which is unique to each breed, is a paramount ingredient and contribution to breed type. Unless we respect the symmetrical harmony of the anatomical parts of the dog, each section to the whole we are heading for caricatures."

Peter Luyten, all-breed Australian judge in *Classic Terriers* for "DOGS Victoria" August 2012

The General Appearance description forms the larger balanced picture of Basenji type. Basenji breed type is dependent on these unique overall features. Keep all the broad statements from this section in mind as you learn about the details of the Standard. Do not let the riveting details make you forget the whole dog — the details should build into a balanced whole.

Contact the Basenji University with comments, questions, updates and Workbooks at [**BasenjiU@basenji.org**](mailto:BasenjiU@basenji.org)

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