

## 204 The Standard



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### Coat and Color

The Basenji Standard States:



*Coat short and fine. Skin very pliant. Color—Chestnut red; pure black; tricolor (pure black and chestnut red); or brindle (black stripes on a background of chestnut red); all with white feet, chest and tail tip. White legs, blaze and collar optional. The amount of white should never predominate over primary color. Color and markings should be rich, clear and well-defined, with a distinct line of demarcation between the black and red of tricolors and the stripes of brindles.*



The overall quality of the skin and coat is described as: "**Coat short and fine. Skin very pliant.**" There are several reasons these qualities are desirable. The short coat is the appropriate coat for the heat and humidity of the Basenji's native countries where the weather is generally hot and fairly humid. A short, fine coat is also useful in the dense bush where Basenjis actually hunt. The less their hair catches on plants, the better they will hunt.



The photo above was taken of a Basenji in Africa, you can enjoy the hunting bell but also notice the dense bush behind and around the dog, which is typical of what the dog travels through to drive game toward the hunters. The conditions in which Basenjies work also explain why it is important to have: **"Skin very pliant"** included in the description. A pliant skin does not tear easily in rough country protecting the dog from small injuries that can become major health concerns if left untended.

It is interesting to compare the types of skin different breeds have. For example the whippet has a very thin skin, which tears easily. A normal rough and tumble with a Basenji in play can cause tears in the skin of a whippet. Basenji skin is pliant and strong.



The pliant skin produces the Basenji's typical facial wrinkles as well as protecting them while they work.

Sometimes when a dog is out of coat, changing to a fresh new coat or has developed an undercoat because of cold weather, the coat is not as glossy as the photos above. The photo above is showing the coat at its best. For a Basenji fancier, there is nothing quite so

pretty as the gleam of their colors in the bright sunlight.

Taking things a bit out of order here again: ***Color and markings should be rich, clear and well-defined, with a distinct line of demarcation between the black and red of tricolors and the stripes of brindles.*** Below are some nice examples of Basenji colors. Each has clear color demarcation. The demarcation between red and black on the brindle is not like the stripes of a real tiger but they are clear enough to not be confused with a sable coat where the black is not formed into stripes.



***Color—Chestnut red;***



***Color— ...pure black;***



***Color— ... tricolor (pure black and chestnut red);***



Tricolors sometimes come with a bar across the red on the cheek. They are still within the standard's description of tricolor. The strength or width of the bar varies from fairly strong to quite faint. These are sometimes called barred tris. If a barred tri or a red carrying this type of tri gene is mated to a bitch who also carries the gene, a recessive black and white can be produced. Recessive black and whites tend to have tan hair intermingled in the black as they mature which is less desirable than pure black.



Note that the AKC has deemed that a tricolor with brindle marking showing in the red area should be considered a tricolor for the purposes of showing. Colloquially, most Basenji breeders call this color trindle. The photo above shows a brindle and a brindle patterned tri puppy. Some people think brindle is only on the cheeks patches of the trindle but this is incorrect. If you think of a regular tricolor as a red with a black overcoat then you can imagine the brindle tricolor as a brindle with a black overcoat. The brindle shows in all the regular places. The black overcoat which makes the tri-color pattern is genetically separate from the base color of red or brindle. They are separately inherited and are passed on to progeny independently of each other. Some breeders do not like the trindle variation but a good trindle has already won an all-breed best in show. They can be just as good overall as the other colors.



***Color— ...or brindle (black stripes on a background of chestnut red);***

At one point in time AKC asked the Basenji Club of America to provide a list of all the colors that have ever appeared in the breed. While the odd ones are not favored, they are also not disqualified as the breed has no disqualifications. In the future certified pedigrees from the AKC can include the actual color so will be more useful to breeders.



The requirements for white markings are the same for all the colors. ***"...all with white feet, chest and tail tip. White legs, blaze and collar optional. The amount of white***

**should never predominate over primary color.** Above are two dogs that are at the extremes in markings from quite flashy to rather plain. The amount of white is not something all breeders agree about. One person's too much is another's flashy. The definition of lacking white also varies. Especially when it comes to what is the absolute minimum or maximum.



Sometimes a pup is born with just a dash of white on one or more toes. Generally breeders prefer that at least the entire foot is white but it is important to realize this marking detail is a small part of being a Basenji. Unless you are consistently seeing lack of white, one dog is not likely to adversely affect your breeding program.

Markings can be deceptive. There are several places in other sections where this is pointed out. The apparent degree of shoulder layback can be improved or spoiled, the apparent length of the neck or the hocks can be altered and in moving sometimes where the white is can be a factor in appearance of faults.

### **Comment on Section**

Keep perspective on the importance of color and markings. The standard describes the most desirable colors and markings but it also makes no disqualifications about color. It is your decision when you breed about how much emphasis you want to put on color and markings. Don't lightly give all the other breed qualities away to have the most attractively marked, brightest colored Basenjies.

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