

JUDGING THE BASENJI

By Marianne Klinkowski

Judges Education Coordinator, Basenji Club of America

The Basenji is one of only a few breeds on earth in which healthy populations of indigenous native stock can be accessed and bred into AKC domestic populations. The American Kennel Club has allowed us to re-open our stud book on a temporary basis and incorporate carefully selected and rigorously evaluated native African Basenjies into our breeding programs. Several expeditions composed of intrepid Basenji fanciers have already made the long trek to central Africa to bring back native Basenjies and more deep-jungle safaris are currently planned. This is an exciting time for Basenji enthusiasts and judges alike who are intrigued by these enchanting African imps.

This is an ancient breed, long prized as silent hunters by tribesmen in remote areas of central Africa. The hunting dogs lived in the villages with the families, played with the children and slept in the huts at night. Living in isolation, the dogs would be protective of the villagers and naturally aloof with strangers.

A typical hunt takes place in the dense jungle where long nets are stretched out by experienced hunters who wait with sharpened spears for approaching game flushed by the pursuing dogs. Basenjies do not hunt in organized packs but are more like independent contractors who move at breakneck speed through virtually impenetrable brush, wearing hand-fashioned hunting bells around their necks so the hunters can track the individual dogs at all times. Their working gait is a series of lightning fast leaps and bounds through tangled undergrowth and the dogs must be small and agile enough to traverse the jungle yet strong enough to push through nearly impassable thickets when necessary, while not getting hung up in the dense cover.

When you judge the Basenji, you will be looking for a dog which is not only capable of performing his ancestral duties but of surviving the experience as well. The Basenji standard was well-written to describe such a dog, a natural hunter.

When a class enters your ring, your first impression should be that of square, fine-boned, leggy dogs with the grace



of gazelles. The clumsy, cloddy Basenji should not make it past your first cut. Toplines should be level, necks should be well-arched, curly tails should be high-set, angulation should be moderate and balanced and front fill is a necessity.

Movement is light and effortless and should put you in mind of a highly-bred Thoroughbred horse joyfully skimming the earth while out for an afternoon jaunt.



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