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*This is a book review with follow up articles and letters.*

# ***Review of***

# ***“The Basenji Illustrated”***

Jon Coe

*The Basenji” December 1978 page 24*

The Basenji is unique in being a specialized generalist. With the flying trot he can cover distances more efficiently than most and with the double suspension gallop he is faster than many. He is neither the best trotting breed nor the best running breed — both of these would be over-specialized for the work at which the Basenji excelled for at least 5,000 years. Make no mistake, the Basenji standard describes a dog that is what it is for the very best reasons: **it works!** If you want to learn more about why it works, read Robert Cole’s book. It is by far the best illustrated clearest explanation of the breed standard and Basenji structure and movement that I’ve had the privilege to see.

The author’s drawings (two to five or more per page), combined with a generally clear text, make this book more easily understood than most technical all-breed sources and also, of course, much more specific to uniquely Basenji characteristics. The author goes item by item through the standard, clarifying, interpreting and illustrating, usually by comparative drawings, the ideal and the common faults. The head studies are unusually well presented. However, the book is not merely descriptive. Anatomical studies show how things should be put together and accompanying texts explain why.

After covering the Basenji stacked and dissected, the book discusses characteristics of the trot and the gallop including the authors clearly and strongly-worded opinions in a chapter entitled “The Dog-Horse Trotting Controversy.” (Those who obtain the book will enjoy the subtle humor of the accompanying drawing!)

As a fellow student of Basenji movement, I find some difficulty in agreeing with his contention that the standard refers only to a trotting thoroughbred, a type not particularly know for its ‘collected trot.’ (A term he uses widely but fails to define in an otherwise complete glossary.) The thoroughbred also lacks the high head carriage the author finds desirable for his dogs. I agree with his main thesis that the Standardbred trotter is more specialized at the trotting gait than the Basenji, but I maintain that if this is true, it is also true that the thoroughbred is the greyhound of horses and equally too specialized as a standard for the Basenji. Perhaps we should all just say the Basenjis looks and trots like a small antelope! Of course, the physiological difference between any canine and any hoofed animal make comparison tenuous at best.

There are very few other areas in which I feel that the book could be improved. Some of the filler sketches seem unnecessary or misleading. For example, there are drawings of Basenjis with a Masai tribesman, some zebra and later sketches of a Cape Hunting Dog and a cheetah – all of which are found in the open grasslands and savannas of East Africa. I mention this because if the Basenji had been developed for hunting on the open plains, he would have been a very different dog probably resembling the Cape Hunting Dog or similarly proportioned Saluki.

There is more that could be said about structure and movement than is included in this book and the reader may have to take some explanations on faith, for few are extensive. Yet this brevity and simplicity will be useful to the majority of readers who aren't really interested in complete discussion of anatomical fulcrums or *longissimus dorsi*. If you want to find out why a long-coupled dog can't manage a collected trot, read Hollenbeck's "*The Dynamics of Canine Gait*" (1971). If you're satisfied with a clear, relatively concise and well illustrated study and explanation of the Basenjis, then order a copy of "*The Basenji Illustrated*."

# Responses

*"The Basenji"* May 1979 page C3

The Basenji has received copies of several reviews of Bob Cole's book "*The Basenji Illustrated*." They are almost entirely complimentary but each brings up one question in regards structure and movement. We have elected to print the controversial sections only so please keep this in mind as you read on.

## **Letter from Bunty Bowers (Domewood Basenjis)**

In the December issue I was interested in your comments on Robert Cole's excellent book. As a student not only of Basenji, poodle and all dog movement, but also of horses and ponies, which I have also bred for 35 years, I would suggest that a fairly accurate description of Basenji movement would be that of the Arab horse at the **extended** – not collected – trot. The late Macdonald Daly once described the Basenji as similar to the Arab horse, and I guess he had in mind the "proud, lofty head carriage," not always so noticeable in the thoroughbred. Also the short backed, square outline, and the "daisy-cutting" front movement, the legs reaching far forward from the shoulder, as opposed to the hackney, knee action movement.

I am enclosed a critique written by Tom Horner, of Mr. Cole's book, which appeared recently in "*Dog World*" (the English paper) and also a copy of a letter I felt impelled to write to the editor, Ferelith Hamilton, as I am totally in sympathy with Mr. Cole's views, and those of Rachael Page Elliott in "*Dogsteps*" regarding movement.

## Mr. Horner's Comments

(Please note this is just a brief quote from the critique.)

...There is just one fly in the ointment and I feel sure most experienced breeders will disagree with the illustrations on movement coming and going. The text does modify what is illustrated. It seems a pity they were included. That apart, the book is a masterpiece, a definite must for every Basenji breeder.

## Bunty Bower's Letter to "Dog World"

From long observation of Basenjis, not only in the show ring but also out hunting and on the race tract, Robert Cole's chapters and illustrations on movement clarified the perfectly acceptable, to me, Basenji movement.

As Mr. Cole quite rightly stresses, the main Basenji movement is "a swift, tireless running gait." It is unusual if not unique. Over a number of years as I have observed individual animals who are not only fine show ring specimens, many of them champions, but which also cover the ground well both when hunting or racing. Those conform to the requirements both posed and moving as laid down in Mr. Cole's book.

Once we expect all breeds to move more or less alike, or bred for movement in the show ring only to please judges who look for "four-square" movement, I fear one of the several distinctive features of this ancient breed may disappear.

# Depicting the Normal Trot

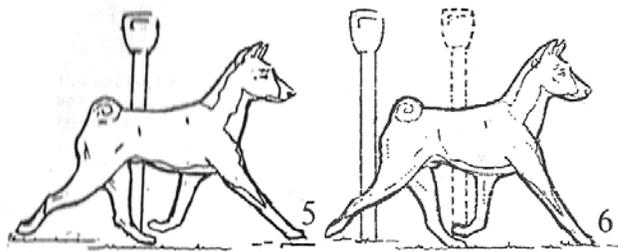
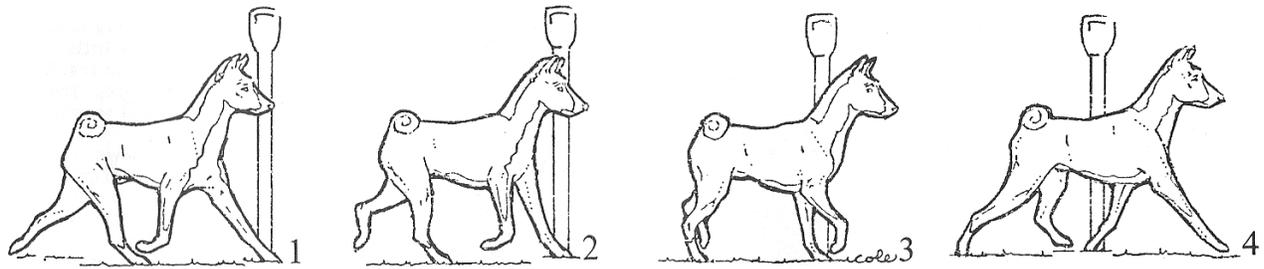
Robert (Bob) W. Cole

"*The Basenji*" June 1979 page 13

Jon Coe's informative review of my book "*The Basenji Illustrated*" in the December 1978 issue of *The Basenji* magazine raised some interesting questions. Those questions relating to structure and movement I shall attempt to elaborate on. Those that pertain to its native African habitat I will leave to others more knowledgeable in these matters than myself.

The use of the term "collected trot" I borrowed from my conversations with the all-breed judge Tom Horner in England. In his excellent book on judging the dog, "*Take Them Around Please*" (1975), Tom uses the term to define "The proper pace at which movement is judged in the show ring." The word appealed, it seemed to convey a natural, controlled gait whereby energy was conserved and the dog was not being over extended. A more readily understood term would have been "normal trot" as being descriptive of the natural speed and the least fatiguing rate at which the Basenji can travel long distances. Horsemen call this gait the "ordinary trot" or the "normal trot" whereby the hind feet more or less cover the print of the fore feet and there is a brief period of suspension during the change over of diagonal supports.

This brief period of suspension when all four feet are free of contact with the ground during the normal trot is graphically depicted as a complete sequence similar to Figures 1 to 6 in my book. Notice that in the second to the last sketch (Fig. 5), the dog's body is not supported by the legs. I have included a parking meter as a stationary object in the background in order to convey an appreciation of the distance the body is projected during the period the body is free of contact with the ground as opposed to when it is supported.



The position of the parking meter remains constant in relationship to the supporting the left front foot in the first four sketches. The body is carried forward over the supporting diagonals but the dog remains earth-borne. The body continues to pass the parking meter until in the fourth sketch final thrust is generated. From this point as

indicated in the fifth sketch, the body is propelled briefly forward through the air as support is transferred from one pair of diagonals to the opposite pair. It is my contention that without this brief period of relinquished support the dog would be travelling at the speed of the walk. To illustrate what I mean I have indicted with broken lines in the last sketch the position where the parking meter would be if a period of suspension did not occur. The speed of gait would be that of a walk.

This brief period of suspension is not illustrated in Tom Horner's book nor will you find a complete stride sequence of the trot illustrated in Leon Hollenbeck's book *"The Dynamics of Canine Locomotion"* (1971). He does refer to a short period of suspension but only in connection with the "fast trot" (page 96.) He "alludes" to an authority's contention that this always occurs but neglects to express his own opinion. By neglecting to provide a complete sequence at the normal trot Hollenbeck leaves many readers wondering how a dog manages to transfer support from one pair of diagonals to the opposite pair and still maintain a rate of speed faster than a walk.

In Hollenbeck's defence he is not the only all-breed author who has neglected the speed of gait that most breeds are assessed at in the show ring. You will not find a complete action sequence of the normal trot in the guidelines by McDowell Lyon, *"The Dog in Action"* (1950), Anna Katherine Nicholas, *"The Nicholas Guide to Dog Judging"* (1970), Rachel Page Elliot, *"Dogsteps"* (1973) or Curtis and Thelma Brown, *"The Art and Science of Judging Dogs"* (1976). Each of these authors by neglecting to provide a complete description directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally promote what I believe is an incorrect theory, a theory initiated in book by McDowell Lyon.

This theory is stated simply on page 45 of Lyon's *"The Dog in Action"* and reads, "Except at the flying trot, which has a period of suspension, the body always has support. It is my contention that this theory is not only incorrect but is the reason why the study of the trot has progressed very little since 1950. I believe that the dog's body is NOT always supported at the normal trot and that until investigators of canine locomotion include a

brief period of relinquished support the study of the normal trot cannot progress beyond that of conventional earth-bound support.

There is proof that Lyon's theory is incorrect but his theory has never even been questioned. No one has ever contested Lyon's theory of continuous support...Ann Katherine Nicholas in an introduction to the chapter written for her on dog gait in her aforementioned book notes, "McDowell Lyon's writing on dog gait remains the 'bible' on the subject." Lyon's writings still remain the bible on the subject, the writings of Eadweard Muybridge, R. H. Smythe and A. Brazieir Howell provide proof that a brief period of suspension does exist but Lyon's contention that at the normal trot the body is always supported continues to be preferred in dogdom.

By neglecting a century of photographic proof only half the canine locomotion study has been told. The methods poorly constructed dogs adopt to regain a semblance of synchronization during the transit period when support is being transferred from one pair of diagonals to the opposite pair has never been documented. Neglect of a period of suspension has limited study to the support phases. The normal trot is the simplest of all gaits, it is the speed of gait used in the show ring to judge the movement of the majority of breeds, yet it has never been fully depicted in all all-breed book intended to assist breeders, exhibitors and judges in understanding, assessing and improving canine movement.

## “The Mailbox” letter RE: Depicting the Normal Trot

“*The Basenji*” July 1979

From Curtis M. Brown

I read Robert Cole's article on “Depicting the Normal Trot” in the June issue of *The Basenji*. His concept that there must be a period of suspension in the trot seems to be a bit awry. It is quite simple to prove that there is a period in which all four feet are on the ground by taking slow motion movies as has been done by many authorities in the field of gaits.

His comment: “It is my contention that without this period of relinquishment of support the dog would be travelling at the speed of the walk” indicates he thinks the rate of speed has something to do with the definition of the word trot. It does not. Apes in their slowest speed use the trot sequence of footfall pattern. In four legged animals (not humans) the word “trot” means the diagonal legs move nearly in cadence. The word “walk” means that each footfall occurs in nearly equal time intervals. The word “pace” means the lateral legs (legs on the same side) move nearly in cadence. Normally the walk is slower than either the trot or pace, but this is not always so. Danes that pace usually do so at their slowest rate (that is, at what humans normally think of as their walking speed.) The Tennessee walker (horse) can perform the walk at very fast rates, much faster than a slow trot.

Cole's remark that “**no one** has ever contested Lyon's theory of continuous support” is without foundation. Has Cole met everyone? To begin with, the period in the trot wherein 4 feet are on the ground was not Lyon's theory; it was established as a fact

before Lyon's time. While Lyon's book is far from being free of errors, that happens to be one place where he was right; it is hard to contest a truth.

One of the fallacies of today is that dogs should have 45° shoulder layback; everyone seems to know this because Lyon says so. Those who have made measurements know that something is wrong with the generally accepted concept; normal dogs do not have 45° layback. Some of us are challenging Lyon's ideas, but let it be by measurement proof, not abstract thinking.

The reason so much misinformation on gaits exists is that too many writers are willing to pass out unproven thoughts as factual when a little measurement checking would prove them false. Before a person becomes a critic of others, he should first make sure of his fact. There is an old saying: people who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

## “The Mailbox” letters RE: Depicting the Normal Trot

“*The Basenji*” December 1979 page 2

From Bob Cole

My article “Depicting the Normal Trot” in the June issue of *The Basenji* accomplished that which was intended – response, but not entirely the response I expected.

The response from Curtis M. Brown, co-author of “*The Art and Science of Judging Dogs*” (1976) was appreciated but not quite what I expected. His contention that my concept of a period of suspension at the trot seems a bit awry because it is quite simple to prove that there is period in which all four feet are on the ground by taking slow motion movies is quite true...But that is not what I said was that the dog's body is not always supported at the normal trot and that until investigators of canine locomotion include a brief period of relinquished support the study of the normal trot cannot progress beyond that of conventional earth-bound support.

If a dog is moving slow enough at the trot, there will be a period when all four feet are on the ground. However, speed up the Basenjies to the speed of the normal trot and there is a brief period of suspension during the diagonal change over of supports. Increase the speed further and the period when all four feet are free of the ground become even more obvious on slow motion film. Investigators using movie film at 32-6 frames per second have proven this again and again. I was sure of my facts before I wrote the article.

Edward Muybridge was photographically sure of his facts when he stated in 1899 that the legs relinquished the support of the body twice during each stride at the trot demonstrated by the ox, wapiti, eland, fallow-deer, dog and the cat.

More recently (1970) Dr. R. H. Smythe in his book “*The Dog Structure and Movement*” on page 129 states: “For a fraction of a second during the change over of limbs from one side to the other, all four feet are off the ground.” I am not the only student of canine locomotion who disagrees with Brown's insistence that Lyon's theory of continuous support at the trot is correct. We all owe McDowell Lyon's “*Dog in Action*” a great debt, but too many writers tend to treat that which he has written as gospel rather than conduct their own studies.

There is a great deal yet to be learned and much investigation yet to be conducted. I am sure Lyon did not intend that he be “lionized” without question. Lyon claimed that dogs’ shoulder blades should ideally lie back at a 45° angle – Brown’s studies challenge this theory. The same degree of open mindedness should be extended to all aspects of functional canine structure and locomotion.

We often only see what we want to see or what we believe and fail to see the obvious.

Knowledge is gained through controversy. I was concerned that there would not be any. Mr. Brown’s letter contributes an opinion. If you wish to learn more about studies on shoulder layback, I strongly suggest you read his illustrated article in May, 1979, “*American Kennel Gazette*.”

## “The Mailbox”

### Letters on Robert Cole movement and book

*The Basenji*, January 1980 page 2

From: Curtis M. Brown

Re: *The Basenji Illustrated* by Robert Cole

My wife and I, after reading *The Basenji Illustrated*, both wanted to congratulate Mr. Cole on a job well done. In most books that illustrate a breed, the author has a tendency to exaggerate leg positions when the dog is in motion; in Mr. Cole’s book he is to be particularly congratulated for picturing Basenjies as they normally appear in good dogs.

Since Basenjies have long legs compared to the dept of their bodies and they are short bodied, it would be easy for the breed to drift into crabbing. Breeders as a whole should feel proud of the fact that Basenjies as seen in the show ring seldom display this fault.

Mr. Cole classifies the Basenji as a trotting dog. I tend to think of them as a galloping dog with better than average trotting ability. The object of the short body in most breeds is to improve endurance at the gallop, and the short body is usually a disadvantage at the trot. Paws tend to interfere and short strides generally result. Regardless of whether the dog is a trotter or galloper, the book should be well read by those interested in the Basenji. Good work.

Curtis M. Brown was a well know author on dogs while his wife, Thelma Brown was a well know AKC judge.

From Rachel Page Elliott

I was much interested in the June and July issues of *The Basenji*. Thank you for sending them. Bob Cole’s writings always lend food for thought and I have commended him on his fine book about your breed. As for his reference to authors who overlook the aspect of suspension during a dog’s transfer of support from one diagonal to the other (at a normal trot), I doubt that any of these writes, myself included, intended to deny this phenomena. It is easy to see when a dog is going faster, but can be such a microsecond phase at slower speed in many dogs that even the sharpest eye can fail to notice it. Take,

for instance, the flat, heavy movement of the Newfoundland in contrast to the spring of the Basenji.

Anyone who understands canine gait recognizes the need for coordinated lift as well as thrust for easy ground covering agility, regardless of leg length relative to depth or length of body. Variations depend on structural balance, angulation, rate of speed and functional type.

I have missed the point of all this discussion but it seems to me we are “straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.” Thinking people rarely agree with all they hear and read, but I doubt if any of us can disagree with what McDowell said in one of his early articles, a forerunner to his *Dog in Action*:

“The crux of this whole question is coordination. The front and rear must coordinate and match in stride length, power and timing. Lack of these results in padding, pounding, rolling, side-wheeling, choppiness and early fatigue despite the fancy appearance the gait might have. If we do not have this coordination, there is something wrong with the physical or nerve structure of the dog. Once we see the symptom of a deficiency in this we can look for the cause.”\*

I'd be delighted to see any further discussion about all this – if there is any. Your magazine is attractive and readable. Continued success and best wishes.

Sincerely,

\* 1953, Collie Club of America Bulletin  
Rachel Page Elliott is noted for her books on dog movement.

## “The Mailbox” April 1980

From Wilma Bauer

In the January issue I was surprised to see in writing what so many of us know is wrong with the breed, but we never expected to see it in print from such an authority. I am referring to Curtis M. Brown's letter, “Since Basenjies have long legs compared to the depth of their bodies and they are short bodied, it would be easy for the breed to drift into crabbing. Breeders as a whole should feel proud of the fact that Basenjies as seen in the show ring seldom display this fault.”

FIRST let's look at the standard which the judges are to use when judging and the breeders are to use when breeding, what does it say? GENERAL APPEARANCE: The Basenji is a small, lightly built, short backed dog, giving the impression of being high on the leg compared to its length. SIZE: Bitches 16 inches and dogs 17 inches from ground to the top of the shoulder. Bitches 16 inches and dogs 17 inches from the front of the chest to the farthest point of the hindquarters.

NO WHERE in the standard does it say the Basenjies have long legs compared to the depth of their bodies and that they are short bodied. WHAT IT SAYS is the Basenjies are square, bitches 16 x 16 inches and dogs 17 x 17 inches and short backed. The back is only a small portion of the top line and that is the loin, the area between the hindquarters and the rib cage. It says Basenjies give the impression of being high on the leg compared to its length.

In the show ring we do see just what Mr. Brown described but on a loose lead they do crab, cross-over and have other movement faults. ...

# “The Mailbox” June 1980

From Curtis M. Brown

Apparently Wilma Bauer, in her letter to you, completely missed the intent of my remarks in my recent letter to you. Some time ago, longer than I care to remember, I spent some time studying the length of legs of various dog breeds and made comparisons. The length of back is a poor criterion for classifying dogs as long or short legged.

The area of attachment of the legs to the chest is increased by a deep chest and decreased by a shallow chest. The longer the legs are compared to the depth of chest, the greater the tendency to paddle, weave and have wobbly legs; the shorter the legs are (Dachshund and Basset) the less tendency to wobble and crab. The Dachshund is short legged because the leg below the chest is short compared to the depth of the chest. The elephant is a short bodied animal; its height at the withers is greater its length of body, yet is very short legged. Its legs are only about half as long as its depth of chest. It has a vast area for the muscles to attach the front legs to the body, and its tendency to crab or have wobbly leg faults is nil.

Let us compare different breeds on the basis of length of leg compared to the depth of chest. The giraffe's legs are 1.75 times as long as the depth of chest; they are the longest legged animal that we have. Other animals and dogs are as follows:

- 1.75 Giraffe
- 1.70 Camel, a pacer
- 1.50 Manned Wolf, a pacer
- 1.40 Italian Greyhound
- 1.32 Whippet
- 1.32 Saluki
- 1.22 Horse
- 1.22 Basenji
- 1.17 Greyhound
- 1.13 Min Pin
- 1.13 Doberman
- 1.08 English Foxhound
- 1.00 Wolf
- 1.00 Dingo, Fox Terrier, Boxer, Boston Terrier, Harriers, German Shepherd
- .89 St Bernard
- .82 Beagle
- .78 Bull Terrier
- .59 Clumber Spaniel
- .58 Elephant
- .30 Dachshund
- .28 Basset

Only four breeds were found to have longer legs than the Basenji when comparing leg length with the depth of chest (Italian Greyhound, Whippet, Saluki and Deerhound). I

still say that the Basenji, when taking leg length into account, is remarkably free of wobbly legs and crabbing. I do not believe it is possible to have a Beagle crab; we raised lots of them and never had that fault show up.

I agree that the Basenji is a square dog; but I also say it is a square long legged dog, not a square short legged dog.

*Wilma followed up with a letter agreeing now that he had made himself clear to her.*