

Breeders Talk about Basenjis

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The Basenji asked five prominent breeders to briefly describe their ideal Basenji. We hope this will give an overall view of what these breeders have looked for through their years of breeding and will help you see what they feel are the most important features of the breed – the essence of the breed.

Sheila Smith, Tennji Basenjis, Federal Way, Washington

A Basenji is an elegant fellow with smooth clean lines and is more aptly described as lithe rather than muscular. Not a wishy-washy animal, the Basenji should come into the ring with a "what's up and who's here?" attitude, reaching out smoothly with an easy lift and drive. Good movement on a Basenji can be seen at a slow trot as well as a fast trot: speed does not necessarily denote good movement. A dog with little bend of stifle can be taught to move fast, but his running gear is not correct. A nice long reach must be complimented with easy drive from a well-angulated rear. The dog's topline should be solid and level when moving and standing.

Good balance is most important in a Basenji. A short legged, short necked Basenji is in balance, and the long everywhere fellow is in balance, but neither of these is proper for a Basenji. A proper Basenji should be a graceful in-between. His head should match the rest of him. On a profile view, the head should not appear out of proportion, but in harmony with the rest of the dog.

The Basenji head should angle smoothly back from the side of the muzzle to the ear without a jog. The stop should be a gentle slope made more evident by pronounced eyebrows rather than a sharp drop where the muzzle starts. Small ears and good dark eyes are most necessary. A Basenji's ears are apt to be listening to everything but the judge, and the forehead wrinkle is often hard to see. A push of the hand behind the ears, toward the top of the head, will show up the wrinkle pattern.

A Basenji's feet are neat, and should fit him, with a more oval than cat foot appearance. Hamburger balls or patties are good descriptions for bad feet.

Color and markings are in the realm of personal preference, but can be deceiving. Try to see the structure of the dog rather than being misled by the difference in looks between colors, and the optical illusions given by markings.

Diane Laue, Tamarango Basenjis, Austin, Texas

Temperament and a style of life set the Basenji off from other breeds and make him unique. He is an individual, proud, aloof, sensitive, and alert at all times. A remarkably clean and well groomed dog in appearance.

He is lightly built, elegant in appearance, and his essential characteristics consist of pointed erect ears set well forward on his head which when pricked show off a distinctive pattern of fine profuse wrinkles on the forehead. His eyes are dark, almond shaped and far seeing giving him, along with his wrinkles, a very unique and intelligent expression. His other essential characteristic is his tail which should be high set with the tail curling tightly over to one side with either a single or double curl.

The Basenji is a hound and he should be able move through the fields making proper structure and a flowing action, indicative of proper balance, very important. He should have a level topline, a deep brisket tapering to a definite tuck up or waist and his movement should be swift and tireless with both front and rear legs moving straight forward in a swinging stride.

Damara Bolté, Reveille, Leesburg, Virginia

The Basenji is an elegant alert little dog that stands about 17 inches at the top of the shoulder, has short hair, a foxy face, wrinkled forehead, nice little eyes, stick-up ears and a tail that curls like a doughnut. The legs are long and straight, the body short coupled and level with deep ribs tucking up in the loin. The neck is arched and fits smoothly into clean shoulders. The front and rear should match with a fair amount of angulation to permit the flowing stylish movement that really characterizes the breed.

Rose Newmann, Betsy Ross Kennels, Potomac, Maryland

As a short summary, I would describe the Basenji as high on the leg, alert and intelligent looking, fine boned, and a long arched neck giving the appearance of elegance.

Shirley Chambers, Khajah Kennels, Altoona, Pennsylvania

The Basenji is a small, proud dog carrying its head high on a long, gracefully arched neck which flows very **smoothly** into its **short level** topline. The well curled tail sits over to one side making a smooth seat flowing into the shelf made from the pelvis. The chest is deep and there is a good tuck up in the loin adding to the leggy, square appearance of the dog. The long straight and fine legs are set well under the body in front indicating a laid-back shoulder blade with a **long** well angled upper arm. The rear legs show an equivalent bend of stifle with **long** second thigh to maintain balance in the whole.

The dog moves as you would expect based on its construction – easily, proudly and with long strides. As the dog moves faster it single tracks in both front and rear. You see that the feet are tight, compact and dainty. You see that the head is also **smoothly put together** with well defined planes, fine wrinkles that do not distort the head's shape, with dark almond eyes and ears set well on top of the head.