

The Wrong Impression

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The American and Canadian Kennel Club Standards (not the British or Australian) advise that the Basenji should "...give the impression of being high on the leg compared to its length." In my opinion the words "gives the impression" gives the wrong impression. Why? Well a poorly constructed Basenji which would otherwise be longer than high because its body is too long or its foreleg is too short can "give the impression" of being high on the leg compared to its length (square) when its shoulder blade and upper arm are steep.

There is a great deal of difference between the impression of being high on the leg and actually being high on the leg. A Basenji's foreleg should be longer than the body is deep however it is not necessary for the leg to be long for a Basenji to give the impression of being high on the leg compared to its length. A Basenji can appear high on the leg because its construction is poor.

How poor construction can make a short-legged Basenji appear high on the leg or a long-bodied Basenji appear short-bodied can best be illustrated by graphic comparison.

Figure 1 – This short-legged Basenji example gives the impression of being high on the leg compared to its correct short length of body. It "appears" typical (square) because its construction is poor. The vertical position of its steep shoulder blade and upper arm has moved the elbow forward raising the

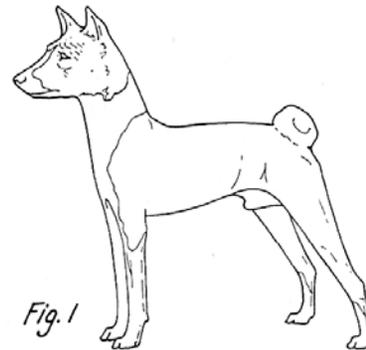


Fig. 1

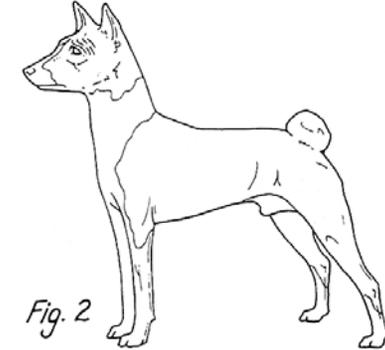


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

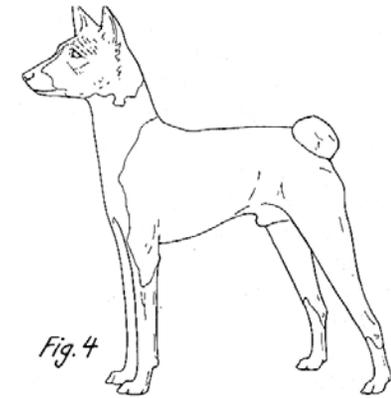


Fig. 4

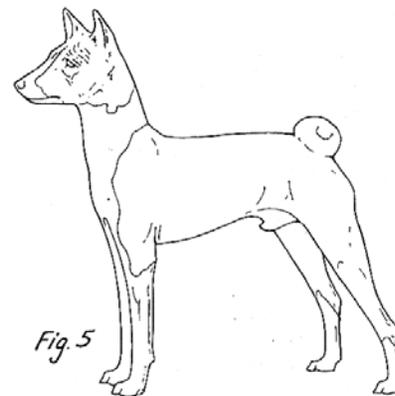


Fig. 5

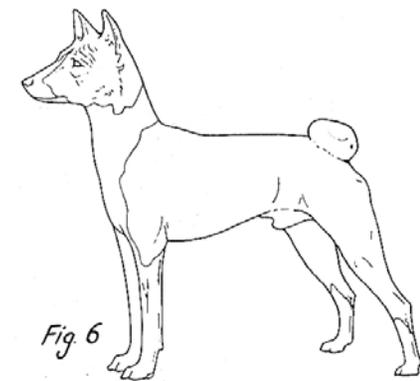


Fig. 6

body above it and creating a hole between the front legs. The hind leg has straightened in following suit. This example “gives the impression of being high on the leg compared to its length” because its poor construction has raised the body above the elbow thereby increasing height and the illusion of squareness.

Figure 2 – This illustrated example has the same too short a leg length as the previous example but its forequarter construction is superior. The elbow position is level with the bottom of the chest. If it is not known that the leg from the elbow to ground should be longer than the body is deep, this short foreleg is often seen as quite correct for a Basenji. Compare this short-legged Basenji example to the illustrated (Figure 3) ideal.

Figure 3 – Correct length of leg as on this illustrated ideal is longer from elbow to ground than the body is deep in a ratio of approximately 6 to 5. It is this very long leg in conjunction with a short back which produces the typical high-on-the-leg-compared-to-its-length appearance.

Figure 4 – Substitute a steep shoulder blade and upper arm and the illustrated ideal becomes higher than long. This tall specimen is sometimes said to have an ultra-short back – it doesn't. What has happened is that the steep shoulder blade and upper arm have raised the body up above the elbow, creating the appearance of an ultra-short back.

Figure 5 – This illustrated example has long back but is made to appear square because the body, due to the same steep shoulder and upper arm, has been raised up above the elbow. The foreleg, from the elbow to the ground, is the correct length; the back (portion between withers and loin) is too long. Sometimes the loin is too long, sometimes it is a combination of back and loin.

Figure 6 – This same back can more readily be seen to be too long when the forequarters are correct and the elbow position's level with the bottom of the deepest part of the chest, and again when this sound but long-bodied Basenji is compared to the illustrated ideal (Figure 3).

Each of these illustrated examples has been taken from photographs of Basenji champions. Each would be in contention for the top award depending on the comparative virtues each possessed – there is more to type and structure than length of leg, length of body, and quality of forequarters. However, the impression of being high on the leg compared to length should not be promoted as typey when this impression is produced by poor construction.

If you were looking for a short-backed dog to breed to, it would not help your program to send your bitch to Figure 5. Or, if you wanted to rescue height, Figure 2 is sound but it is not a smaller dog. It is a dog with too short a forearm for a Basenji.

There is more to high on the leg compared to length than “giving the impression...” To illustrate this point I have graphically shortened the leg and lengthened the back to the point where when the bottom of the chest is raised above the elbow by a steep shoulder and upper arm the proportions change from longer than high to square. No further. Further and the shortness of leg or much too long a body becomes obvious even to those more familiar with other breeds.

For a Basenji to be actually high on the leg compared to its length not just give the impression its elbow should be level with the deepest part of the bottom of the chest sufficiently rearward that there is no hole between the front legs and the length of foreleg from the elbow to ground should be greater than the body from withers to brisket is deep.