

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL KENNEL COUNCIL



Extended Breed Standard of **THE BEAGLE**

Produced by
The National Beagle Council (Australia)
in conjunction with
The Australian National Kennel Council

Standard adopted by Kennel Club London 1994
Amended 2008
Standard adopted by ANKC 1994 amended 2008

FCI Standard No: 290
Breed Standard Extension adopted by ANKC 2009
Country of Origin ~ United Kingdom

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HISTORY OF THE BREED

The Beagle is the smallest of pack-hunting hounds and one of the oldest of pure hound breeds. Its actual origin is obscure and there are many theories on its origin. Some of these date back to pre-Christian days where small hounds hunted by scent and were followed on foot. Others speak of the Beagle type existing in the British Isles for many centuries. King Canute who reigned in the 10th Century introduced laws to stop certain dogs entering Crown forests, except for the Veltever as it was too small to harm the deer. This English hound was also called "Langehren" which meant long-eared. It is thought that this reference was to the Beagle.

Other theories have Beagles originating in Greece, with their descendants brought to Britain during the Roman occupation. In the middle ages in England, there were large numbers of hunting hounds for trailing hare. It is presumed that the smaller ones were Beagles. In the 14th Century, Edward II was a keen hunting enthusiast and hare hunting became a popular sport.

King Henry VIII kept both Beagles and Buckhounds, while Queen Elizabeth I, in the 16th Century took great interest in sporting events. She had her own pack of pocket Beagles called "The Singing Beagles". Other Royals to own Beagles included James I, William of Orange, George IV and Prince Albert who had a much prized strain of rabbit Beagles.

Early illustrations of Beagles show how varied was the type and size of the hounds - some were cobby little animals, poor in front and short in muzzle. Others were long and low with hanging flews, wrinkled skulls and legs far too light in bone to support their bodies. Not only Royalty but many English gentlemen had private packs. Some were true pocket Beagles measuring up to 10 inches at the shoulder. Some were so small that they could be carried on horseback in panier bags and others could actually fit in a pocket. Today the smaller packs have disappeared and all packs tend to be very uniform.

Beagles have always been renowned for their scenting ability, their incredible tenacity and great stamina. The hare is certainly a very clever and cunning opponent. Each hare has a set of tricks to escape the persistent Beagle. The hare runs straight, then weaves, then lays a set of criss-cross tracks, similar to a footballer. She will even spring sideways and let the pack run past her!

Realisation of the desirability of bringing about greater uniformity in shape and conformation seems to have grown steadily through the latter part of the 19th Century.

The Beagle Club (U.K.) was formed in 1890, and the following year the Master of Harriers and Beagles was formed. The sole object of both bodies was to further the best interests of Beagles as they saw them. The Club welcomed all who cared for the breed, irrespective of the purpose of the hound.

The first Peterborough Hound Show dates back to 1899 and The Beagle Club held its first show in 1896. By 1910 great advances had been made in standardizing the type. Mr. F. B. Lord, a hunting man and very successful show exhibitor in the early 1900's said that

“Type was most lamentably neglected till the Beagle Club took Beagles in hand, but since then, type has been bred for as well as working power..... I was once exceedingly doubtful as to the good of the dog show, but I now think they promote type and quality as well as work”.

This steady increase in type was undoubtedly attributed to the publications of The Beagle Club Standard of Points by which the breed should be judged. It was originally written with the sole object of defining the physical qualities necessary to be able to hunt the hare. It was drawn up by some of the most distinguished huntsmen of that time and has remained virtually unchanged to date.

EXPLANATION AND APPRECIATION OF THE BEAGLE STANDARD

Since the assessment and appreciation of the Beagle is not an exact science each person may see the same dog differently.

With all the differing opinions it is essential to preserve ‘Breed Type’.

Before trying to fully appreciate the Standard it is necessary to have a basic understanding of anatomy, canine terminology and very importantly the history of the breed. The history of the breed will explain the function of the Beagle, which in turn helps to appreciate the form the breed, must take. Indeed the history explains why the Beagle must be what they are in temperament, construction and breed character.

It is hoped that the following text will prove of use to those wishing to extend their ability to appreciate the Beagle.

INTRODUCTION

The Beagle is small hounds bred primarily for hunting hare by scent in packs and were meant to be followed on foot by the huntsman.

The Beagle is a very hardy adaptable dog, which is found in all parts of the world. For some years it was the United States of America's largest registered breed, and is still very popular being used extensively for field trials. They have been used successfully for obedience trials and their natural hunting instincts make them an ideal companion in the woods and fields.

When reading the standard one must remember a few basic points, which underline the Beagle as distinct from other breeds. Firstly, the dog is a hunting dog bred for working in packs and is therefore a dog of even temperament.

As a working dog it would be required to work all day in the field and during the hunting season could be expected to work upwards to four days in the week. Therefore one would expect to see a dog showing good condition without coarseness or weediness and conveying the impression that it has the strength and ability to carry out its duty.



Fig. 1 - On The Scent

Being a simple dog with no undue extravagances one would expect the dog to convey the impression of uniformity and balance.

Beagles today are primarily bred for showing or companions with very few carrying out the duties for which they were originally bred. One must not forget those duties and should try and conjure up in one's mind the type of dog which would perform most efficiently whilst retaining the breed characteristics. In addition the characteristics must be retained and cherished otherwise we will no longer have the unique breed, but just another street dog of nondescript character.

● GENERAL APPEARANCE

A sturdy, compactly-built hound, conveying the impression of quality without coarseness.

The Beagle is a small balanced hunting hound with the appearance of being able to work all day. It is strong and compact without coarseness, with the bitch showing femininity.

Substance in the male should reflect their masculinity and the bitch should appear feminine without being light in bone.

A Beagle with an excess of bone and muscle, a heavy head and loose fitting jacket will be coarse and overdone. Similarly, lack of depth in the body, excessive tuck up in the loins, lightness in bone and snipey head will make the hound very racy, high on the leg and lack correct expression.

The overdone and snipey hounds have exaggerated features, which cause loss of true "Breed Type". Moderation should apply to all aspects of the Beagle.

● CHARACTERISTICS

A merry hound whose essential function is to hunt, primarily hare, by following a scent. Bold, with great activity, stamina and determination. Alert, intelligent and of even temperament.

"A merry hound" is exactly what the Beagle should convey in its demeanour, its attitude, the way it looks at you and goes about its business. Confident and well mannered, the dog should never be aggressive or rowdy but alert and interested in its surroundings, essentially full of life and happy.

A lethargic or disinterested hound does not portray the essence of vivacity, a must for the Beagle.

The function of the Beagle is to hunt for long periods of time by following a scent. Which means that they must be built for endurance. This type of construction enables him to carry out its task not just for a day's hunting but for season after season without problems of breakdown in construction causing the hound to be unsound, lame and unable to hunt. In order to function correctly there should be no gross exaggeration in construction, musculature or features.

MODERATION is the key word for correct breed type.

● TEMPERAMENT

Amiable and alert, showing no aggression or timidity.

The most important thing about correct temperament is stability. Stability as it implies means no hysteria, nervousness or viciousness. Any dog can get a fright at something unexpected and may take a little while to recover its composure. Puppies sometimes suffer from stage fright. The Beagle with a stable temperament will recover and settle fairly soon. The timid or nervous hound becomes more miserable and jumpy and does not recover or settle.

The Beagle was originally bred to work to scent as part of a disciplined pack. As such they must be of even and correct temperament, bad temper just was not tolerated.

● HEAD AND SKULL

Fair length, powerful without being coarse, finer in the bitch, free from frown and wrinkle. Skull slightly domed moderately wide, with slight peak. Stop well defined and dividing length, between occiput and tip of nose as equally as possible. Muzzle not snipey, lips reasonably well flewed. Nose broad, preferably black, but less pigmentation permissible in lighter coloured hounds. Nostrils wide.

The head and expression is of importance because it is the most identifiable part of the Beagle. The head imparts the unique and individual stamp to the breed making it identifiable among all other breeds. The construction of the skull will influence the head shape and expression.

It would be true to say that a Beagle does not run on its head and expression and that if conformation is correct then the head is not important but the atypical head does not truly represent Breed Type. A good Beagle will not only be built right they will also have a pleasing and beautiful head as required by the breed standard.

Fig. 2 - Example of a good Beagle head



The head size must be in proportion to the size of body i.e. a small hound should not have an oversized head and vice versa. The head should be in balance with the body and the “slight peak” referred to is at the occiput. Flews should not be overdone but neatly overlapping. In repose there should be no wrinkle.

Frown or wrinkle on the skull gives the impression of heaviness, coarseness adding harshness to the expression. If the top of the skull is too rounded and the occiput very pronounced then this Beagle would have a basset-like appearance. At the other extreme if the top of the skull is flat then the ears would sit quite high and there would be a terrier-like look to the hound.

The stop should bisect the overall head length and be well defined resulting in eye shape that is a little less than round giving a soft and appealing expression, the hallmark of this lovely breed.

Good definition at the stop and length of muzzle are functional in that they are thought to aid scenting ability. The frontal sinuses are larger and better developed when the stop is well defined thus helping scenting ability and a fair length of muzzle allows for enhancement of the scent along its length.

In the nose the nostrils should be wide, allowing clear airways for breathing and scenting. In tricoloured hounds the pigmentation on the nose should be black and filled in completely, in light coloured hounds the nose may be a lighter shade but also completely filled in.

Skin with black pigmentation is tougher and is less liable to be damaged.

The muzzle shape is completed with the upper lips or flews. Viewed in profile the depth of flew should be almost square and the flews themselves have a little cushioning.

Thin, short cut-away flews make the muzzle pointed and snipey. Heavy thick and deep flews give a very overdone and sombre look to the head.

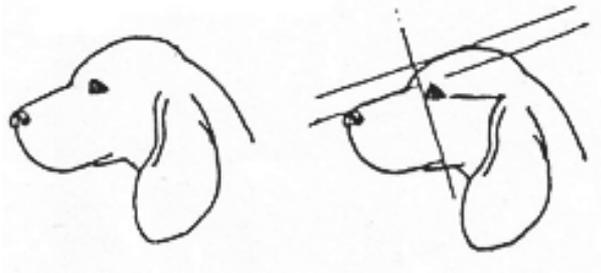


Fig. 3 - Good head proportions and shape



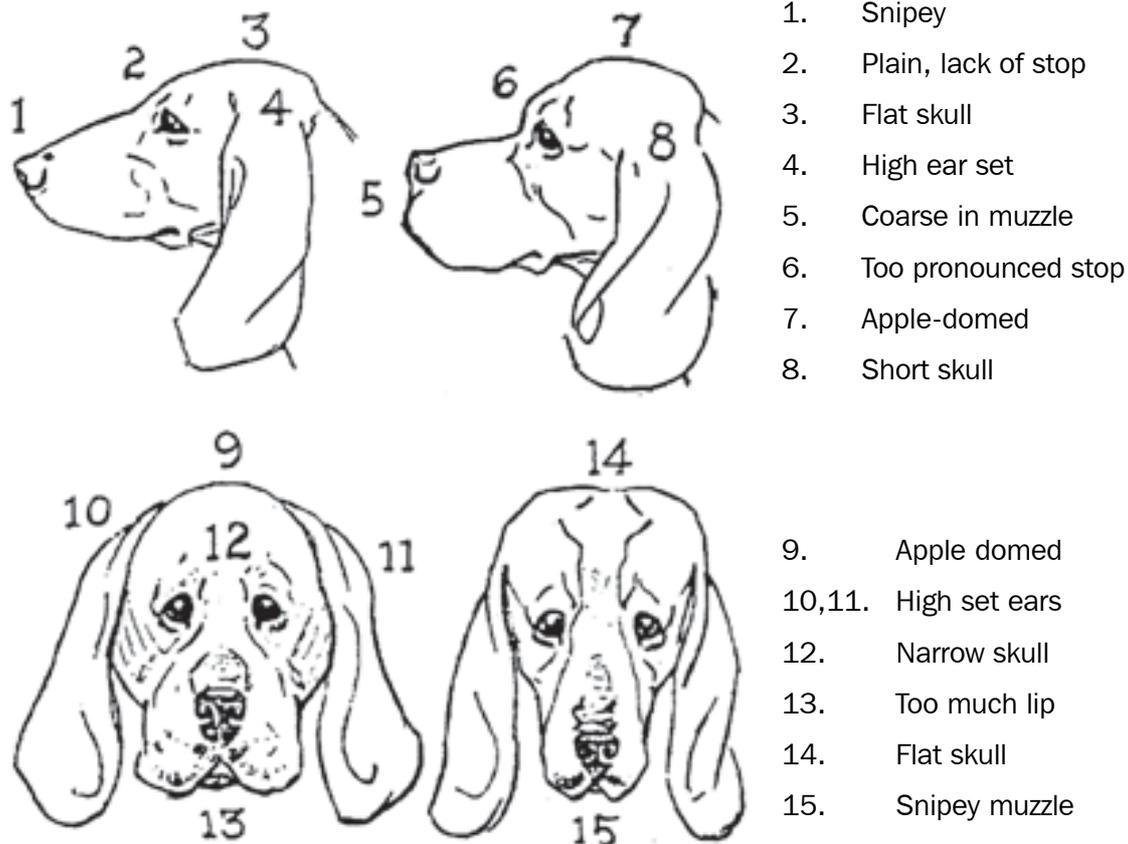


Fig. 4 - Variations in head shape and proportions

● EYES

Dark brown or hazel, fairly large, not deep set or prominent, set well apart with mild appealing expression.

The definition of the stop dictates the angle, placement and shape of the eye. If the stop is well defined then the eye shape will be correct - this is slightly less than round. A round, prominent eye is more susceptible to damage. Large “pop” eyes are to be frowned upon as are small pig eyes (again related to function).

If the eye rims are nicely pigmented, as they should be, it will enhance the outlook. Dark pigmentation on the eye rims is functional in that it absorbs light reflected from the eye. However, in lighter coloured hounds less dark pigmentation is perfectly acceptable.

The bottom eyelid should not be loose or hanging down.

The eye colour asked for is dark brown or hazel. A small blackish eye gives a terrier like expression and a very lightly coloured eye will produce a hard, cold expression. Neither will produce the soft outlook of the Beagle. The correct brown or hazel eyes will give the mild, appealing expression so essential to the head of this beautiful breed. Yellow eyes are completely foreign, as they do not give the mild appealing expression asked for.

● EARS (OR LEATHERS)

Long, with rounded tip, reaching nearly to end of nose when drawn out. Set on low, fine in texture and hanging gracefully close to cheeks.

The set of the ears is important, being approximately level with the eye, to frame and balance the head. Folds in ears or long thin Basset type ears are objectionable, as are ears that are too short or too high set.

The Beagle has a drop ear, which hangs close to the side of the head. When the Beagle is relaxed the top of the ear is in line with the outside corner of the eye. However when excited or inquisitive the ears may be slightly raised and held forward.

If the hound is sorry and submissive then the ears may be dropped down and drawn back against the head. The ears have a little mobility and are a good indicator as to the mood of the hound.

Although fine in texture the skin should be tough so as not to be easily damaged and the hair short and dense. The outside edges of the ears should not have areas of thick cartilaginous tissue somewhat akin to a “cauliflower” ear. Thickly cushioned ears do not hang down gracefully and ears that are too pendulous and heavy may cause the outside corner of the eye and the lower lid to be dragged down. This alters the expression of the eye.

The long ears of the Beagle were at one time said to be functional in assisting the scenting ability. As the head of the hound was lowered the ears fell forward and they acted as a sort of wind tunnel, funnelling and enhancing the scent to the nose.

● MOUTH

The jaws should be strong, with a perfect, regular and complete scissor bite, i.e. the upper teeth closely overlapping the lower teeth and set square to the jaws.

An overshot, undershot or level bite is not acceptable. A scissor bite is essential for hound to catch and hold its prey.

The scissor bite as asked for in the standard is the most functional, efficient and punishing bite for tearing and gripping. The top 6 incisors should be in an even line and sit closely in front of the bottom lower 6 incisors which should also be in an even line. If the incisors are even and positioned in a scissor bite then the canines, premolars and molars will also be correctly aligned to allow maximum efficiency when biting.



Fig.5 - Beagle bite variations

Although it is not stated in the standard that full dentition is required it is a must that a Beagle should have a complete set of strong healthy teeth filling the mouth. Good strong dentition is an indication that the hound will have sound strong bone. The lower jaw should be well developed and strong.

● NECK

Sufficiently long to enable hound to come down easily to scent, slightly arched and showing little dewlap.

As the hound runs or trots it should be able to lower its head to follow scent and raise its head again; it does this many times as it works. The neck must be of sufficient length so that they can do this without breaking their stride and, equally importantly, the muscles and ligaments in the neck must be strong to carry the weight of the head as it is raised and lowered.

A good length of neck is desirable to allow the hound to move at pace with nose close to the ground. A short stuffy neck is a sign of straight shoulders. Crest of neck should be evident and there should be no sign of throatiness (loose skin). The neck should flow into the shoulders so that it is almost impossible to tell where the neck ends and the shoulder begin.

The cervical vertebrae of the neck should be long to allow for good muscle attachment. It is the muscle development in the neck which gives the lovely crest and arch to the neckline when viewed in profile. Also the neck vertebrae provide the attachment for the muscles which help lift and extend the front legs. So good neck construction aids front conformation.

The neck should merge smoothly into the body.

The underline of the neck at the lower jawline may show a small amount of dewlap but the neck line should be clean and free from folds of pendulous skin.

Conclusion on Overall Head

Although not to be considered above everything else, the head must be considered as a characteristic that distinguishes the Beagle from all other breeds. The dark brown or hazel eyes with mild appealing expression, the large low set ears framing a moderately wide skull and an overall balanced head, are the things to look for.

● FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders well laid back, not loaded. Forelegs straight and upright well under the hound, good substance and round in bone, not tapering off to feet. Pasterns short. Elbows firm, turning neither in nor out. Height to elbow about half height at withers.

The forequarters of the dog consist of the shoulder blade, the upper arm, the bones of the forelimb, wrist, front pastern and the foot. This assembly is not attached to the body by a fixed joint. A complex system of muscles hold the shoulder blade and upper arm in place. It creates an oscillating sliding assembly which absorbs the concussive forces as the dog's front feet strike the ground. It also provides the function of front reach and lift as the dog gaits.

The shoulder blades should be well laid back, this is determined by the length of the blade itself; and its fixed position relative to the 3rd to 9th thoracic vertebrae. It follows that the thoracic vertebrae should be long. This is necessary for good lay back of the shoulder blade.

As the head and neck are lowered the tops of the shoulder blades converge. To enable the hound to bring its head down to the ground without restriction or without breaking its stride it is important that there is some space between the tops of the shoulder blades. When viewed in profile the shoulder blade, which should be long, is well laid back. The upper arms should be the same length as the shoulder blades. If the hound has this type of construction then the front limbs will stand well under him. They will also have good front extension enabling maximum front reach of the forelimb. Such a hound will have a good forechest when viewed in profile.

When viewed from the front the bones of the forequarters should be in columnar alignment, i.e. the shoulder blades and upper arms set neatly to the ribcage, the elbows held close to the body by firm muscles, the fore limbs straight and true, the wrist joint strong and the front pasterns continuing the straight line of the foreleg to the feet.

If the elbows stick out or the pasterns are weak and out of line, gaiting problems will occur as a result of the columnar misalignment.

There should not be heavy “bulbous” muscle under or on the shoulder blades.

The bone of the fore limbs is round and of the same dimension right down to the feet.

Round bone is cross-sectionally the strongest type of bone so will be functionally the best for a working hound.

The wrist joints should allow a little flexibility at the pasterns to help absorb the concussive forces when the feet strike the ground.

The flexibility also allows for the absorption of energy used in ‘rebound elasticity’ which is then converted into ‘lift’ at the front end of the dog.

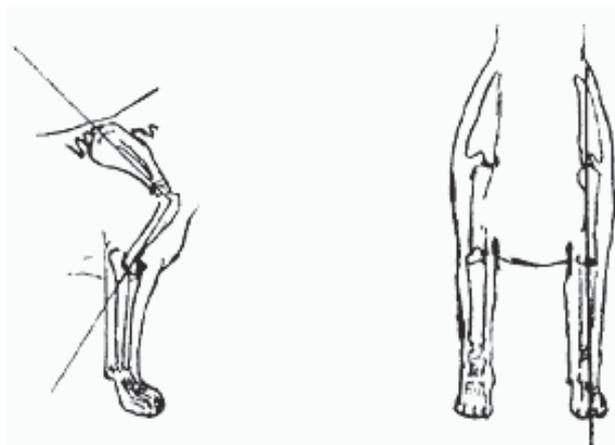


Fig. 6 - Beagle forequarter structure

A good slope of shoulder approaching a 45 deg. angle is desired with equal length of shoulder blade and upper arm forming a 90 deg. angle. The Beagle must have plenty of round bone for their size, however too much bone contributes to coarseness.

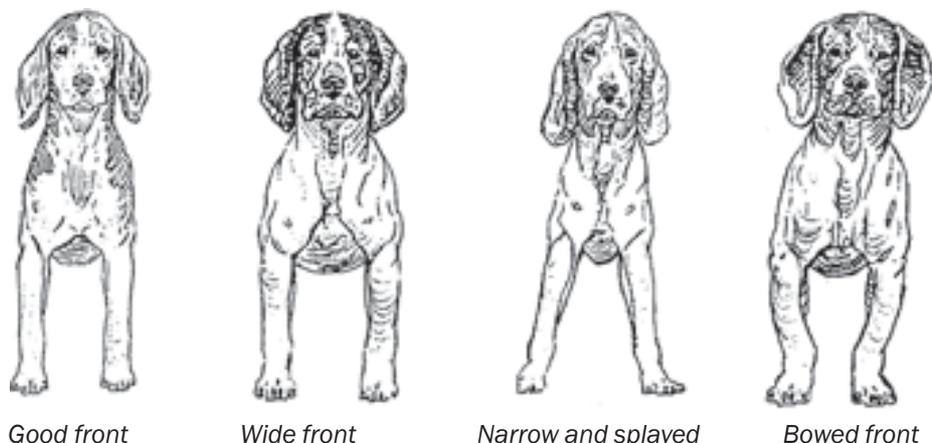


Fig. 7 - Beagle front profiles

● BODY

Topline straight and level. Chest let down to below elbow. Ribs well sprung and extending well back. Short in couplings but well balanced. Loins powerful and supple, without excessive tuck-up.

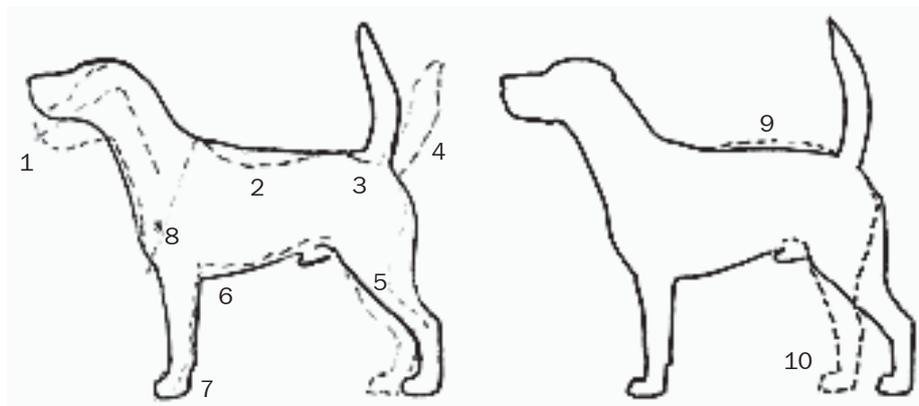
The body structure is most important and one must remember that the Beagle is a working dog. Too round in ribcage (barrel-chested) tends to straighten and load shoulders with consequent unsoundness. Too narrow a chest is deficient in lung space. A good oval shaped ribcage is to be aimed for. Level topline with fair length of ribcage and short coupling * are essential as is some tuck-up at the loins. Excessive tuck-up, as in the Whippet is wrong, as is a level underline. (* Short-coupling refers to the length of loin, which should be in balance with the whole dog as the Beagle is not a square dog!!)

The standard asks for the ribs to extend well back. The 13 pairs of ribs are attached to the 13 thoracic vertebrae along the back. It follows that it is important for those vertebrae to be strong. This provides the foundation for good muscle and rib attachment allowing good articulation of the ribs themselves to help the lungs to fill fully with air. It follows that it is important for those vertebrae to be longer by comparison to the lumbar vertebrae and strong.

In cross-section the shape of the ribcage when viewed from the front is like an upside down egg. As a ribcage designed for endurance this shape is no more functional than the round ribcage of the wolf but is more aesthetically pleasing in that it allows the elbows to fit neatly against the body and lets the shoulder blade oscillate on a flatish surface which is helpful in front reach.

The couplings should be short which means that the 7 lumbar vertebrae must be short and wide providing good attachment for the strong loin muscles. The loin muscles should be supple allowing flexibility at the coupling. This ability is used when galloping, jumping, turning etc. The strong muscles at the loin help transmit the propulsive power generated from the rear quarters into forward movement.

The underbelly at the couplings should be firm and strong, protecting the contents of the lower abdomen. The waistline although apparent when seen from above should not be too tucked up when viewed in profile.



- | | | | |
|----|-------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1. | Head set on badly | 6. | Shallow chest |
| 2. | Sway backed | 7. | Weak pastern |
| 3. | Low set tail | 8. | Upright shoulder |
| 4. | Tail too crooked | 9. | Roach Backed |
| 5. | Weak rear | 10. | Stifle too straight |

Fig. 8 - Good and bad profiles

● HINDQUARTERS

Muscular thighs. Stifles well bent. Hocks firm, well let down and parallel to each other.

Hindquarters should be well muscled with well-bent stifles which are essential for propelling and driving power. Cow hocks or toeing in when moving are faults to be avoided. Overlong hocks contribute to stilted hind movement.

The hindquarters of the Beagle generate the propulsive force and drive for walking, trotting, galloping and jumping. The power from the hindquarters is transmitted along the long muscles of the back, the hound moves forward, the front assembly lifts and the forelegs react forward to regain balance. For good propulsive force much depends on the ability of the second thigh muscle to contract, causing the hock joint to open and press the foot against the ground.

Unlike the front assembly, the rear assembly is connected firmly to the body.

The pelvis lies at an angle of roughly 20 degrees to the horizontal and is firmly attached to the sacrum by gristle and ligaments.

The angle of the pelvis is important as it enables the power generated by the rear legs to be efficiently transmitted through the sacrum along the spine.

If the angle is too steep then the power from the rear legs is not so efficiently transmitted causing an up and down bobbing action at the rear of the topline.

It can be seen in profile as the hound gaits. The bobbing action is not efficient as it wastes energy. Hounds with this construction are very busy going nowhere when gaited.

The root of the tail will also exit the body at the wrong angle thus affecting correct tail set and carriage.

The upper (first thigh) and lower (second thigh) muscles should be long and strong. They should be nicely developed and defined, never “bulbous” and exaggerated.

The angle at the hip joint should be about equal to the angle at the point of the shoulder. This means that the dog is BALANCED in front and rear angulation facilitating good foot timing which is an important factor for sound gait.



Fig. 9 - Beagle hindquarter structure

A number of gaiting faults are caused if front and rear angulation is not balanced.

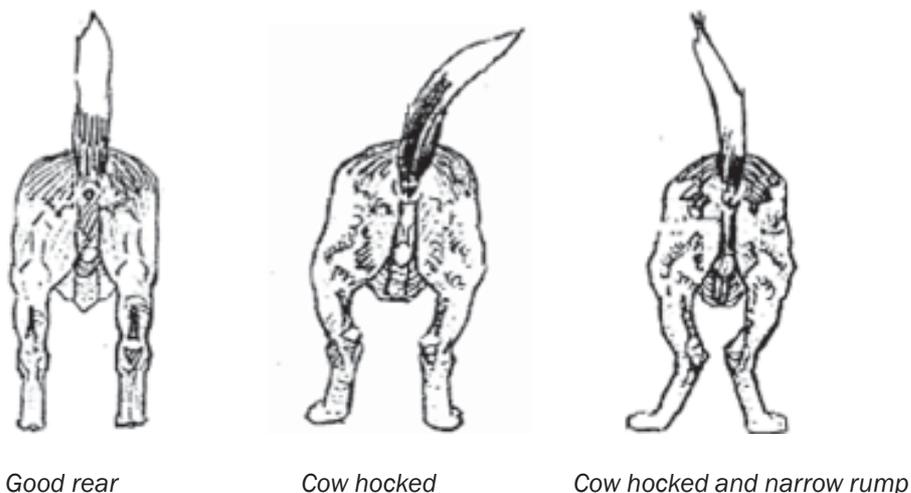


Fig. 10 - Rear profiles

If rear angulation is good and the front angulation lacking then the drive generated from the rear will be greater than the hound’s ability to reach forward. To compensate and delay the foot reaching the ground the dog may have a high stepping front action, or flip their front feet outwards from the pasterns.

The rear pasterns should be short and when the Beagle is standing square, and viewed from the rear, they should be parallel to one another. If they are not parallel then the hound may be cow hocked or barrel hocked both of which put the rear legs out of columnar alignment resulting in gaiting problems.

When viewing the hindquarters in profile one can evaluate the muscular development, the length of second thigh, angulation at stifle joint, hock joint and length of the rear pastern. The Beagle should be well let down at the hock joints, i.e. the rear pastern should be short as this is efficient in dogs built for endurance.

When viewed from the rear one can see the columnar alignment of the bones, the inner and outer thigh muscle mass, the position of the rear pastern and the feet.

● TAIL (OR STERN)

Sturdy, moderately long. Set on high, carried gaily but not curled over back or inclined forward from root. Well covered with hair, especially on the underside.

Tail (stern) should be of a length to balance the hound. A long thin tail gives an unbalanced appearance as does a too short or too thick tail. Sickie and ringtails should be penalised. High set is essential and tail carriage when moving gives a complete picture of the dog's overall disposition. It should be remembered that the correct tail carriage aids the huntsman in the field, as does the white tip.

The spinal vertebrae run from the back of the skull to the end of the tail. The tail is therefore the last section of the spine consisting of the 20 coccygeal vertebrae.

Following on from the broad lumbar vertebrae is the sacrum which consists of three vertebrae fused together and fixed to the pelvis. The coccygeal vertebrae of the tail follow on from the sacrum. The croup is the area just above the sacrum and the first two coccygeal vertebrae and it should be almost level with the horizontal, i.e. shallow, to enable the tail set to be high.

The angle of the croup determines how the root of the tail exits the body.

If the angle at the croup is steep as in the whippet then the root of the tail will be lower set and the tail itself point downwards and be carried low.

The Beagle's tail should be strong. There are four long muscles in the tail, one on the topline, one on the underside and one on each side.

Some of the muscles of the tail are a continuation of muscles which start at the back of the ribs.

The tail muscles function allows great mobility in the various ways that the tail is carried, wagged etc. The mood of the Beagle can be reflected in the tail carriage so it can be a good indicator of temperament. The confident Beagle with a high set on of a strong tail with the muscles operating in balanced cooperative antagonism, should carry it almost straight up in the air as they gait.

A tail which is correctly set on but carried right over the back may have weakness in the underside muscles of the tail. Similarly a tail carried rather low may have weaknesses in the topline muscles.

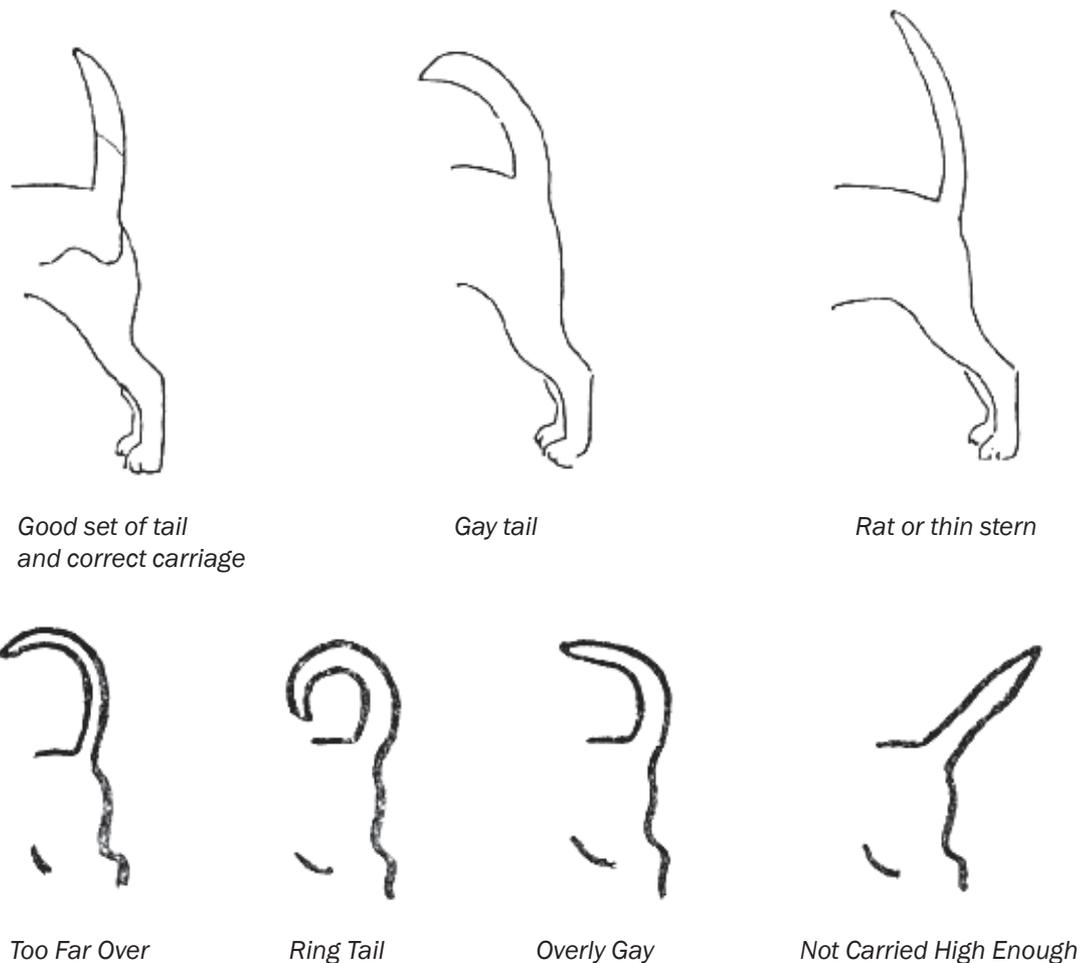


Fig. 11- Variations in tail set and carriage

Sometimes puppies may carry their tails at funny angles as the tail muscles strengthen and develop.

The tail should be free from kinks and deformities; it is part of the backbone of the dog.

The hair on the underside of the tail, forming the 'brush', is slightly longer and coarser than the topside. In some Beagles the hairs taper to a tip at the top of the tail forming what is known as the 'sting'.

It is important that the tail should have at least the tip coloured white. The white colouring on the tail does not help the hound to hunt but it is visually pleasing and an important breed characteristic as it aids the hunter in locating the hound in the field.

● FEET

Tight and firm. Well knuckled up and strongly padded. Not hare footed. Nails short.

The feet should be round, small and cat-like, with substantial nails worn down short. Splayed paws and bent pasterns are undesirable. The pad is thick and tough for long

use over rough terrain. There should be no outward or inward turning to the feet in an adult specimen. Good feet are of the utmost importance in a hunting hound.



Fig. 12 - Feet variations of the Beagle

● GAIT / MOVEMENT

Back level, firm with no indication of roll. Stride free, long-reaching in front and straight without high action; hind legs showing drive. Should not move close behind nor plait in front.

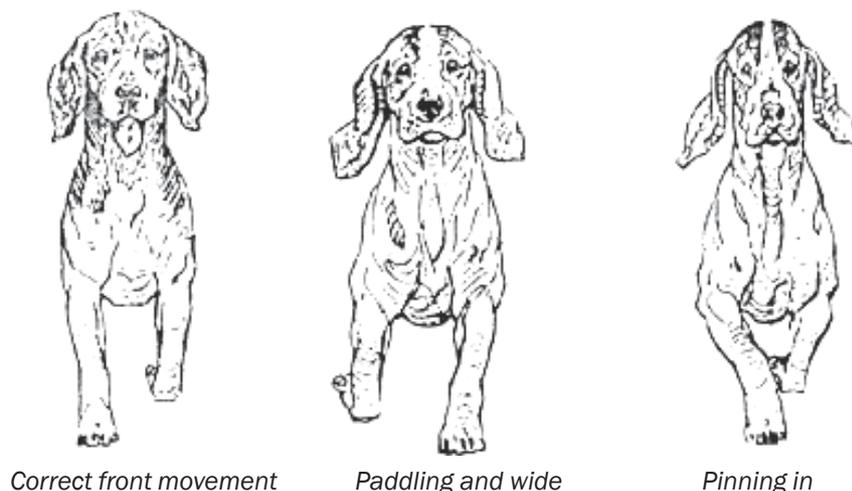
Movement is most important in a Beagle. Viewed from the front, the forelegs should be seen to move parallel with each other, with elbows not turning loosely in or out. No sign of plaiting, weaving, paddling or other indications of unsoundness. Viewed from the rear, the hind legs should also move parallel and not turn in towards the hocks and feet. The Beagle is not a racing dog and should not single track but also should not be too wide when moving. Seven and a half to 10cms (three to four inches) between the legs is desirable depending upon the size of the dog. When viewed from the side it should give the impression of covering a lot of ground with plenty of drive from the hindquarters in an effortless, flowing manner and the back paws should just clear the front paws. The head should be up and the stern carried gaily.

The type of construction as required by the standard will influence how the hound should gait. The construction of the Beagle is that of a dog built for endurance. If it is properly constructed and strides out well the topline will stay virtually level and smooth and the beagle will not roll from side to side as it gaits.

Fig. 13

Front view as the Beagle approaches at the trot:

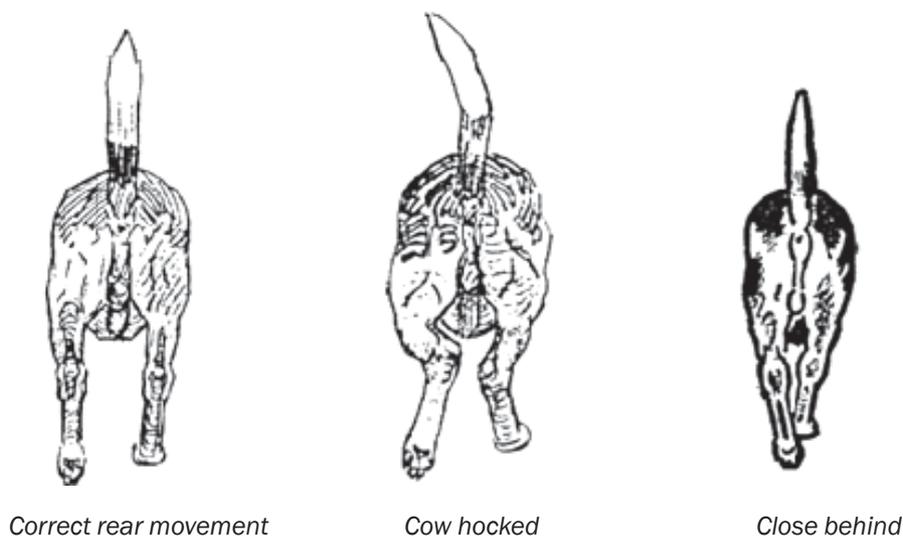
The shoulder blade, upper arm, elbow, forearm, pastern and foot should be in alignment. At a slow trot the legs will be parallel in action but as the hound gaits faster and strides out fully then the front legs will tend to converge slightly.



Rear view as the Beagle moves away at the trot:

The hindlegs function from the hip-joint to the foot in a straight line. At a slow trot the action of the legs will be parallel and as the hound strides out in full action then the rear legs will tend to converge slightly.

Fig. 14



The front and rear legs will tend to converge to a centre line as the dog gaits smartly in order to stop the body rolling from side to side caused by lateral instability. As the legs tend to converge naturally the body travels smoothly without swaying or rolling.

Side Gait:

The view of the hound in profile allows assessment of the propulsive drive from the rear quarters, flexion of the stifle and hock joints and the ability of reach of the front limbs.



Fig. 15 - Good side gait

As the hound moves forward the legs should be picked up cleanly low to the ground and moved in a straight line forward.

The Beagle when gaiting at full stride should be moving in a smooth rhythmic, effortless motion covering the maximum ground with the minimum of strides. A hound gaiting in such a way almost seems to be in slow motion when gaiting alongside those very busy short striding dogs. There should be power and coordination with balance so that there is steady and smooth locomotion. This requires good muscular development.

The smooth flowing gait requires strength and firmness of back as the thrust of the rear quarters is transmitted through the back to the front. The forelegs should reach forward as the shoulder opens to its full extent. Well angulated joints and correct body length go together to allow a long stride without the back and front feet interfering with one another.

Whilst it is important that construction is correct it is of little use if the overlying muscles and ligaments are not properly developed. The bones of the dog form the foundation on which the musculature of the dog is built. A nicely constructed hound must have proper muscle attachment and development in order to gait well.

● COLOUR

Tricolour (black, tan and white); blue, white and tan; badger pied; hare pied; lemon pied; lemon and white; red and white; tan and white; black and white; all white. With the exception of all white, all the above mentioned colours can be found as mottle. No other colours are permissible. Tip of stern white.

Any of the colours mentioned in the standard (above) are acceptable. It should be noted that all these colours are also found in mottle. No other colours are acceptable.

The tip of the tail must be white in order for the huntsman to find the hounds in the long grass. Very often the only thing showing is the white tail tips moving through the scrub or grass. This is a characteristic of the breed that must be maintained. From the day a Beagle is born the coat colour starts to change. The mature hound normally has a different shade of colouring than it had as a puppy and in old age the colouring almost fades away.

The important thing is to be able to appreciate the qualities of the hound in construction, conformation, outline and gait without letting coat colour and the markings mislead the eye during assessment.

● COAT

Short, dense and weatherproof.

The Beagle has a short, smooth, dense and weatherproof coat. Too short and fine with a silky feel is undesirable.

Some Beagles have a few coarse guard hairs along the top of the back. On a healthy coat in good condition, if the hair is pushed back against the lie of the coat then it should immediately spring back into place. A clean coat in good condition will also shine and be sleek.

The skin should be tough and fit the body so well so that the outline is clean and there are no folds or hanging skin.

● SIZE

Desirable minimum height at withers 33 cm. (13 ins.) Desirable maximum height at withers 40 cm. (16 ins.)

Desirable height at the withers should be between 33 and 40 centimetres high. Dogs over and under these limitations though not debarred, should be penalised, although quality should not be sacrificed. It must be remembered that the height is only desirable and not a minimum and maximum as seen in other breed standards.

Just as there are horses for courses there are Beagles for differing terrains. The Beagle is followed on foot so it is important that the field can keep up with and watch the sport. If the terrain is flat and open a smaller hound is needed. On hilly, uneven ground a larger hound is needed.

In the desired height range there is 7 centimetres variance, which is a lot in a breed which is not supposed to exceed the desirable 40 centimetres at the withers.

It is quite natural for a properly built Beagle at the top of the desired height scale to stride out and cover more ground than a correctly built smaller sized dog. They are both equally correct although they have different lengths of stride.

Whilst the height maximum is “desirable” there does come a point however when a hound can have too much bone, too much body, be too high on the leg, have a head that is too big. Such a hound by virtue of their exaggeration ceases to have breed type.

● FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

All dogs have faults. However a few dogs have excellence in some features and it is the excellence which set those really lovely animals apart from the rest. It is always wise firstly to look for and assess the virtues of the Beagle whilst being aware of their shortcomings.

● NOTE

Male animals should have two apparently normal testicles fully descended into the scrotum.

It is important that the male be ‘entire’, having both testicles in the scrotum.

CONCLUSION

The Beagle is a dog of individual characteristics, which distinguishes it from all other breeds. The points discussed above are essential. Desirable points are to be retained and improved upon at all costs.

It is important to note that for a small breed the Beagle standard allows a height differential of 7cms (3 inches). Beagles at either end of this scale can still conform to breed type and are equally correct.

The overall balance of any dog is most important; balance depends on proportion of head to neck, length of body to height, depth of chest to length of leg; plus the whole thing being on a back end that matches the front,

ADDITIONAL READING

The following books are recommended for more detailed information about the Beagle

“Beagles and Beagling”, Douglas and Carol Appleton

“The Beagle”, Thelma Gray

“All About the Beagle”, Heather Priestly

“Beagles”, Catherine Sutton

REFERENCES

The Beagle Club of New South Wales, Beagle Breed Lecture, August 1995.

The Beagle Club (UK), The Illustrated Breed Standard of the Beagle, 1999.