

THE BASSET HOUND

CRUFTS 2012

The Basset Hound Breed Clubs and The Basset Hound Health Group fully support the Breed winner at Crufts 2012. The speculation, rumour and conjecture which has blighted the winner, his owners/breeders and the Basset Hound Breed as a whole must come to an end.

At Crufts, The Basset Hound Breed had the benefit of having a Veterinary Professional, with specific knowledge of the breed and ophthalmology.

Immediately after the winning hound was released by the Kennel Club's Crufts Veterinary Professional, our Breed Vet was called upon to carry out a meticulous examination of the area which failed the Kennel Club's Health Test.

Our Vet found:-

- Moderate haw, which is what the Kennel Club is perfectly satisfied with, as confirmed to the Basset Hound team in attendance at The Kennel Club's Eye Health Symposium in November 2011.
- A normal eye shape for a Basset Hound.
- The colour of the conjunctivae was pink, perhaps a little raised in pink – not red or inflamed. He put the slightly raised colour down to the high level of exercise immediately prior to the Health Check – the high speed and considerable amount of movement, asked for by the Judge, around the ring when the Dog and Bitch challenged for Best of Breed.

As a rule, normal Basset Hound eyes have no pigmentation of the third eyelid, although most other breeds of dog do have this. This factor may have highlighted the conjunctivae as being a darker shade of pink in comparison to the third eyelid. However, the Basset eye *with* pigment on the third eyelid is also normal. These differences are acknowledged in the Basset Hound.

The Kennel Club's Veterinary Professional who examined the Basset Hound stated that she examined the eyes of the Basset Hound as she would a "normal dog", not as eyes of a Basset Hound. This is a rather curious statement, as Basset Hounds always have some haw. It would appear that the Kennel Club's Vet did not consider the Basset Hound to be a normal dog and it would therefore raise the question, did she actually know what she was looking at, or for.

Our Breed Vet, who practices at a large, well established small animal veterinary clinic in The Netherlands, is responsible for almost all of the ophthalmology in the practice. He is a Basset Hound owner, breeder, exhibitor and judge. In his own words, he found the Best of Breed elect "A very sound dog with sound eyes and perfectly healthy skin. He is an effortless, sound mover with enough ground clearance – and certainly fit for function".

(End of Breed Vet Findings and comments)

In 2009 the Breed Clubs, working with The Kennel Club, made minor amendments to the Basset Hound Breed Standard. The shape of the eye, as still laid down in the Breed Standard is "lozenge shaped, neither prominent nor deep set" and results in a degree of "haw". In 2011, at The Kennel Club Eye Health Symposium, the matter of eye shape was

discussed in some detail with officials of The Kennel Club and it was agreed that, in view of the shape of the eye in the Basset Hound the Kennel Club would recognise a moderate amount of "haw". We, as a Breed, accepted The Kennel Club's word on this.

Due to there being only minor amendments to the Breed Standard, it has to be said that most Bassets meet the 2009 Standard while also meeting the previous Breed Standard. Then, as now, the majority of bassets already conformed to the breed standard, including the minor changes. This supports the fact that bassets shown previously are still winners today. However the focus of our future will be in ensuring that exaggerations are not as apparent as occurred in a few bassets in the past. This can be achieved without losing the unique type and shape of the breed It also ensures that future bassets will display all the characteristics of the breed without losing type, and will continue to be a healthy breed. The situation in which the breed found itself at Crufts is untenable. Despite the fact that most dogs in the show ring conform to the Breed Standard, the Kennel Club appears to have an unfair and slanted view of this unique and ancient breed because it does not conform to the generic shape of the standard canine. They appear not to take account of the fact that the Basset is a healthy and long lived breed. The domestic dog did not evolve from the wolf overnight, it took many centuries. The Basset Hound will conform to the new Breed Standard, but not overnight.

We, as a Breed, want a level playing field and a Kennel Club which we can trust to keep its word. When docking was banned, the docked breeds were given genuine assurances by The Kennel Club, who allowed plenty of leeway for docked dogs to continue to be shown in the ring and win high awards. It seems that the Basset Hound is not to be allowed this integrity. The changes which the new Basset Hound Breed Standard will bring about cannot happen in the space of two years. The hierarchy of The Kennel Club is made up of, what we hope are intelligent people who breed and show dogs. We take for granted that they have the intellect to comprehend that careful breeding for the show ring is a measured progression.

The Basset Hound Breed Clubs and latterly the Health Group have worked very hard over many years to establish investigations and research into conditions which acutely affect the Breed. The conditions which have been, and are being addressed, we consider to be the most important factors in improving the health and welfare of the Breed. To date, no support has been forthcoming from The Kennel Club. The Breed has been faced with major challenges to prove that the conditions which The Kennel Club is confronting us with are not top of our list. We will address anything which does not conform to the new Breed Standard as and when we encounter them as an ongoing commitment to the Breed. Unlike The Kennel Club, we know and understand the Breed and its idiosyncratic problems.