

JUDGING THE AMERICAN FOXHOUND

By Mrs. Robert D. Smith



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AMERICAN FOXHOUND
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SYMMETRY.”**

The first widely recognized Standard for an “ideal” American Foxhound was drawn up in 1894. The men writing the standard represented the different strains of Foxhounds—thus, compromise was necessary. The seven men were Roger D. Williams, W. S. Walker, W. C. Goodman, Hagan, W. Wade, H. C. Trigg and Dr. A. C. Heffenger. Until that time the American hounds were judged under the English Foxhound Standard.

The very first thing that an American Foxhound should exude is CLASS and that is told in his SYMMETRY. At a meeting of the club held on January 18,

1905, it was voted to call for that type of hound which shows “class” meaning the highest percentage of conformation needed in Foxhounds for field use in America.

An article published in *The Sportsman Review* October 1913 issue says it best, “The high type of the American Foxhound considered ideal by the American Foxhound Club has a physique and characteristics all its own.” This is still true and should be the basis for judging the hound today.

Symmetry as used in hounds means the following: the form of the hound must be harmonious throughout. He must show his blood quality

and hound character in every respect and movement.

When viewing the hound in profile check BALANCE—the parts must be smooth and harmonious. The hound should be in hard muscle and well conditioned. Always remember the outward quality denotes the nervous energy within. With the hound well-proportioned, symmetrical, CHEERFUL, in good condition and moving true and lightly with springiness to his gait, we can study the details and fine points.

The head should be balanced with the body. The muzzle should be about the same length as the distance from the stop to the “inion.” You do not want a

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short head. The upper lip when viewed from the side should make a right angle. This is more important in the dog hound; you always want a strong masculine head on a dog hound. The bitch should be feminine. The eyes, large, soft and dark, must have an intelligent expression.

Now to the crowning glory: the ears. The ear should reach the nose, but don't scalp a hound in the process of measuring the length. Most important is the placement of the ear; it should be just below a line horizontal from the corner of the eye back. The ears should hang as draped in folds like rich, velvet. The ears should NEVER, NEVER APPEAR LIKE A SHINGLE TACKED TO THE HEAD.

The neck should be long and spring upward and forward. While running, the neck is well extended. Throatiness is like a dowager's double chin: most undesirable. Always check for this. The Topline is NOT LEVEL—there should be a slight rise over the LOIN. This should never be confused with a roached or "wheel" back, which is most undesirable.

The underline of the hound is a graceful curve from the deep chest, which gives room for lungs and heart. Remember that the hound needs lung space for the endurance needed to hunt 4 to 8 hours or even longer. The stern, as the tail is called, is the finish of the topline. It should never be stuck upright on the back. Rather the stern leaves in a horizontal curve upward. The amount of the curve may differ, but the tail should never be carried over the back. The tail is strong and tapers uniformly from the root to the tip. The tail can differ in the amount of hair. Some Foxhounds carry more than others, and as long as it is not longhaired like a Setter or a rat tail, it is fine. You also want a shelf just behind the tail.

Now we get to the foundation of the hound his legs and feet. The legs are straight from elbow to pastern but must have sufficient bone: never weedy, but NEVER large and over done as Robert Smith has declared on many occasions:

strength and substance—not lumber. A Foxhound must be able to negotiate timber, woven wire fences and be able to walk the top rail or stone walls. He can do this because of his fox-like foot. It is not a hare foot and not a cat foot. The fox-like foot allows a hound to hunt in rocks and bound over fields. You want a good thick pad and well-arched toes.

The foot of the Foxhound should be like that of the fox: strong and closely knit, but with sufficiently flexible toes to give spring to the toes. With this flexibility, they will not go lame. I have personally seen a young Trigg Bitch come home after 3 days and 3 nights of hunting bear in the mountains of Virginia—tired, walking on tip toes and sore, but not lame. WITHOUT PROPER FEET, YOU DO NOT HAVE AN AMERICAN FOXHOUND.

Never worry about size, a small or large hound as long as you have balance and symmetry, it is fine. Never, ever judge on COLOR; a good hound can not be a bad color.

Now onto GAIT. Our standard does not mention gait; however, it is most important and it follows SYMMETRY. THE GAIT IS THAT OF A WORKING HOUND. Good reach and drive are essential. Never forget, the hind legs must be strong, never weak and never straight. A good hound must be light on his feet have great reach and drive. You can have this only if the hound is symmetrical in conformation. Without this, speed and good movement become mechanically impossible.

What was spoken of over a century ago, as how to become a good American Foxhound judge, is true today. "Read, study and observe closely for twenty years and then ask." ■



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