

Match the Movement Exercise By Gwen Ford

I will not place these dogs 1-10 as I know them all and have either judged them or shown against them at some time some where in the world. However, I will group them into groups and discuss the mechanics of what I think may causes them to move as they do. Just to reiterate, this is just my opinion, and it is always open for debate.

All dogs learn from the day they start walking, to compensate for the shortcomings in their structure. If they did not, they would spend their lives tripping over their feet when they moved. Dogs will compensate in many ways to be able to move in the most co-efficient manner for the same structural inadequacy, and they adapt the method that works for them to make up for short upper arm or more angulation in the hind quarter or the forequarter. We will look at some of the ways dogs adapt their gait to their structure.

We must be mindful that our Breed standard was written for a Hound that is Fit for Function, that of a Hunting Hound. However, the way that Beagles hunted in country of Origin and from where the Standard was first written, is different to how Beagles are Hunted in Europe. In country of Origin, UK they were hunted in packs, sometimes of up to 15 to 20 couples, (Couples is Hinting speak for the number of hounds, a Couple is two, so 30 to 40 hounds in the pack). They hunted hare primarily, and the aim was finding, tracking and if it was a good day, kill the hare. The hounds were managed by a Hunt Master, and Whippers In, their role was to make sure the hounds did not get off track and worry any farmer's stock. The hounds had many Hunting devotees, who would come out and follow the hounds for the sheer pleasure of watching them work a scent, put up the hare and keep it moving until they were able to finish with a kill. In European countries, Beagles usually hunt on their own with their owners, their role is to track and put up mainly deer, but also hare, turn to prey back towards the hunter for them to shoot, and in the chance of the Hunter not getting a clean kill, to be able to track the wounded animal, indicate to the hunter where it is so that it can be finished off. These Beagles never get to kill, as the game is for the Hunters table.

So, in looking for the ideal movement we must refer to the Breed Standard:

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 paddle nor plait in front.

My first group is the least co-efficient movers Group. - They are #1-B and #6-D

To begin with the shape is not the desired shape and outline that we are striving for, #1 is very low in leg, and #6 (the daughter) is a little better, but still not quite there.

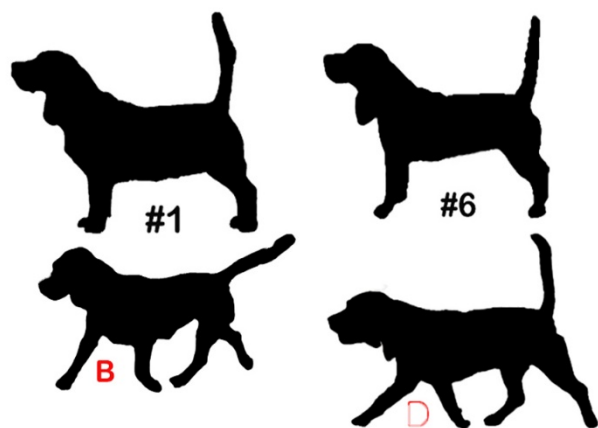


Figure 1 #1-B and #6-D who happen to be Mother and Daughter

#1 struggles to get any reach and it appears that to obtain the little she has, she has to swing out the elbow in an attempt to gain a little more reach. This makes her move with a rolling action. We can see the large gap between the foot fall so she will never have the back foot fill the hole left by the front foot. Her length of body makes that near impossible. Her topline also changes to help her gain forward propulsion.

#6 achieves a little more reach than #1, but the toppling changes shape and she struggles to produce any drive behind. She compensates by dropping her head to a lower position to aid her forward propulsion.

In conclusion, neither have the desired long reaching front movement, or level and firm back, and little or no drive behind.

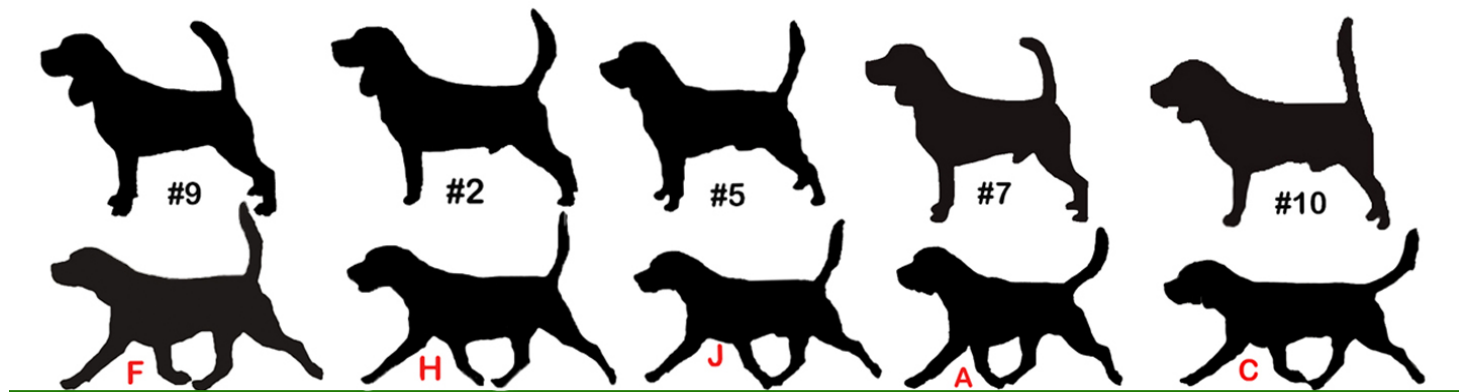
They all have a similar problem of not being balanced fore and aft and have short upper arms. When a dog has more drive from behind and the forequarter is lacking by not having adequate reach, the dog has to compensate to avoid the back feet hitting the back of the front paw when gaitting. Anyone who is from a Horse and Horse sports background will know exactly where I am coming from. In horses, it is called brushing or interfering. Dogs learn to adapt their gait when they first get up on their feet to learn to walk, if they did not, they would keep tripping over themselves. Some dogs like #8-I and #3-G learn to reach from the elbow and adapt an almost goose-stepping front action to avoid the brushing/interference. Other dogs compensate as does #4-E, who twists his spine, to allow the back foot

to fall beside the front foot. In dogs we call this gait, crabbing or sidewinding. #3-G and #4-E cannot hold their topline and have to lower their head to achieve their forward motion, to compensate for their angles. #8-I holds herself together a bit better than the two boys but is still compensation for her short upper arm.

In the extreme cases, you will see a total cross over which I call Over-reaching. This is a gait fault that results from a timing problem between the movement of the hind limbs and the front limbs of the dog. So, the dog learns to compensate by moving forward in an off straight manner to allow the back feet strike the ground beside, or in extreme cases or this dog being gaited faster than his anatomy will allow, forward of the corresponding paw and on the side if view from behind.



The final group These are the most Co-Efficient Movers. - They are #9-F, #2-H, #5-J, #7- A and #10-C.



This group I think are the most Co-efficient movers. They all have firm and level backs on the move, far reaching in front, with smooth and efficient low daisy cutting action. No wasted energy goose stepping, all are using their angles to the best advantage. They move like this because they are balanced, harmonious in height to length, the action looks effortless, nothing laboured and looking like they are overcompensating to achieve their action.

In general, if you compare the stacked outline, these hounds they are holding their outline on the move. If the hound is constructed correctly, looks good on the stack, we expect to see that carry through to on the move. In fact, there are times when a good hound will look better on the move, because it falls into its natural stance and construction and is not moulded into a shape the Handlers thinks look fantastic.

The head carriage is natural, not dropping to the line of the withers to compensate for what they lack elsewhere to try to gain extra propulsion of forward movement.

We of course have had the benefit of a camera stopping momentum s we can fully study the hound in full flight, an advantage we do not have as Judges standing the ring, or ringside judges seated outside.