

# Basset Hounds



## Learn how this hunter will fit into your home.

Bassetts are hunting dogs but make loving companions as well. This guide shows you how to be the best possible friend to your new dog, including:

- The best places to find and adopt a basset
- The gear and care you need to make sure your basset settles in at home
- Feeding, grooming, and training tips to keep him healthy and well-behaved

### Breed Profile: Basset Hound

The basset hound dates back to 15th-century France and was bred to stand low to the ground in order to hunt rabbits, foxes, squirrels, and pheasants in heavy ground cover. Because many short-legged dogs were referred to as “basset” during that time, it’s not entirely clear which breeds have common bloodlines with today’s basset hounds.

The breed did not come into its own in America until the early 20th century, though it was recognized by the American Kennel Club in 1885. When easterners imported dogs from leading kennels in England in the early 1900s, the development of the heavier, bigger-boned, American-type bassetts began.



### Appearance

The following description is of an “ideal” basset hound. Not all basset hounds fit the description exactly, but that’s not a problem unless you want one who can participate in dog shows.

- **Height:** Both male and female bassetts are typically no more than 14" (36 cm) at the shoulder.
- **Weight:** Weight ranges from 40–80 pounds (18–36 kg) for both males and females.
- **Coat:** Bassetts are tricolor—black, red, and white—and have a short, hard, and dense coat over loose skin, which helps them endure all kinds of weather.

### Temperament and Personality

Basset hounds have generally mild temperaments. They are devoted to their owners, eager to please, quick to learn, and willing to obey. Bassetts are suited for almost any living situation, as long as they are treated with love and respect and given adequate care.

### Traits

Here are some traits to consider when determining how well a basset is going to fit in with you and your family.

#### Companionability

The basset is definitely a “people dog” and is happiest in a home where someone is around during the day. If left alone for long periods of time, a basset will become bored and can get into trouble. With proper care and attention, a basset hound will become a mild-mannered and gentle member of any family. The breed gets along well with children, as long as they are taught the proper way to interact and play with a dog.

#### Environment

Bassetts adapt easily to apartment living as long as they are given frequent walks on a leash. However, most would prefer a nice-sized yard, or at least an enclosed area for outdoor romping. Because the basset is a hound breed, its sense of smell and inquisitive nature makes it impossible to allow him out on his own without supervision—he might run away otherwise. Also, bassetts tend to slobber quite a bit more than most other breeds, which makes them a poor choice for a fastidious housekeeper.

#### Exercise Requirements

Bassetts need only moderate exercise, but lazy or underexercised bassetts are prone to obesity, especially because they have long, low frames. Overweight basset hounds should be exercised regularly, either in a confined, fenced area or on a leash. Short daily walks that are strictly for elimination purposes are not enough to keep extra weight off.

#### Trainability

The basset hound is generally easy to train, but be sure to keep the sessions brief and interesting. He can be stubborn at times, so patience and creativity will be necessary to train him effectively.

### Where to Get a Basset Hound

There are three main ways to get a basset hound:

1. Buy from a breeder.
2. Adopt from a shelter.
3. Adopt from a rescue group.

### Breeders

Buying a basset hound directly from a breeder is the most expensive option, but as long as the breeder is reputable, it’s also the best way to guarantee that the basset you purchase will be healthy and well socialized.

Look for the following when searching for a reputable breeder:

- **Focus:** Breeds only one or two breeds
- **Knowledge:** Knows breed standards and temperaments
- **Care:** Keeps clean, well-maintained kennel areas, and the dogs or puppies appear healthy and happy
- **Support:** Offers support after you bring your dog or puppy home
- **Paperwork:** Provides a written contract and health guarantee; requires you to complete an application and provide references; provides records of veterinary care and shots, as well as references from other customers
- **Mandatory return:** Requires you to return the dog if you decide not to keep him

You can locate breeders on the internet, in breed-specific magazines, at dog shows, or in the telephone book. However, it’s often best to get a personal recommendation from friends or a vet.

### Shelters

Most cities and towns have an **animal shelter**, **humane society**, or **pound** that takes in unwanted, lost, or abandoned pets, restores them to good health, and offers them for reasonable fees to the public. Few people intent on adopting a specific breed, such as a basset hound, think of trying a shelter. But in fact it’s possible to adopt a purebred from a shelter—and often for a fraction of the price that breeders charge. If you’re set on a basset puppy, though, keep in mind that it’s generally less likely that you’ll be able to find a puppy at a shelter.

### Rescue Groups

**Rescue groups** are like shelters for specific breeds. Basset hound rescue groups take in lost or unwanted bassetts and offer them for adoption. Rescue groups are a great option for prospective dog owners who want a specific breed but who also would like to “rescue” a dog rather than buy one from a breeder. They typically charge a bit more than shelters but are still a great option for adopting a purebred dog.

## Gear for Your Basset Hound

Whether you've adopted a basset puppy or an adult, you're going to need some supplies. And though you can certainly spoil your dog as much as you want, the basic must-have supplies are the ones listed here.

### Bed

Your basset's **bed** should be soft, durable, washable, and large enough for him to curl up on. Even if you let him sleep in your bed, he'll still need a place of his own to lie down when you need him out of the way or when he wants a nap. Avoid low-quality beds, which you'll have to replace more often. Even so, expect to replace your dog's bed every few years.

### Crate

Dogs are denning animals who prefer to rest in dark, confined places. A **crate** is designed to contain a dog safely when he needs some down-time, when you're not home, and when you're traveling. Crates come in a variety of sizes, so choose one that's large enough for your basset to comfortably stand and turn around in but small enough so that he can't use opposite ends for eliminating and sleeping. There are four main types of crates:



- **Plastic crates:** Durable, lightweight, easy to clean, and (in most cases) airplane-friendly.
- **Wire crates:** Provide good ventilation, give your basset a great view, and fold up for easy storage or transport. Can't be brought on airplanes.
- **Canvas crates:** Lightweight and easily transportable, making them perfect for travel. Not as sturdy as other crates, so should be used for adult bassets who are past the chewing stage.
- **Decorator crates:** Come in a variety of materials, from wicker to wood. Not easily transportable and are best for a dog who's already been crate trained.

Unless you're willing to buy several crates as your basset grows, invest in one that has dividing panels. These panels allow you to expand the size of the crate as your dog grows without having to buy a new crate each time.

### Crate Pad

To make the crate comfortable, you can buy a fleecy **crate pad** that fits snugly in the bottom. As an alternative, you can use a flat dog bed or an old blanket or towels.

### Collar

Your dog should wear a **collar** at all times, except when he's in his crate or you're not at home. Look for a **flat nylon collar** or **leather buckle collar** with **ID tags** and a **rabies tag** attached to it. You'll probably have to buy two collars as your basset grows—a small one when he's a puppy and

an adjustable collar once he's a few months old. A collar fits your dog correctly if you can fit two fingers snugly between the collar and his neck.

### Choke and Prong Collars

Some people use **choke collars** or **prong collars**. Avoid these collars: it's better to rely on positive reinforcement training (see How to Train Your Basset Hound).

### Leash

There are several different types of leashes available, including:

- **25-foot (7.6-m) cotton long line:** Used during the training process in the park or other open spaces. The long line is great for teaching "come" and many other obedience commands.
- **4- to 6-foot (1.2- to 1.8-m) leash:** Used during the training process and when walking. It should be made of the same material as your basset's collar (nylon or leather).

Leashes should not be adorned with any decoration—some dogs like to carry their leash in their mouth, and ornaments may pose a choking hazard.



### Food and Water Bowls

There are several important factors to consider when getting food and water bowls for your basset:

- **Material:** Stainless steel water and food bowls are best. Ceramic bowls tend to crack, and plastic bowls can scratch, enabling bacteria to gather.
- **Size:** Puppies need smaller bowls, graduating to larger bowls as they grow into adults.
- **Mess proof:** Bowls that are heavy, difficult to tip, and that have a nonskid surface on the bottom will help limit messes.

If your basset also spends time in the yard, make sure to have a second water bowl outside.

### Exercise Pen

An exercise pen, called an **ex-pen** for short, is made of a series of gates that lock together to form a safe area in which a basset hound can exercise. You can buy as many gates as you need to build an exercise area of whatever size you'd like.

An outdoor ex-pen should at least be large enough to house a crate and allow the basset to defecate at the other end of the confinement area. The basset isn't a tall dog, but ex-pen panels should be high enough to prevent him from jumping or climbing out. You also can use ex-pen panels to build confinement areas for your basset inside your home.

### Baby Gate

As an alternative to an ex-pen, you can use baby gates to confine your basset to a specific room or to keep him away from places you don't want him to enter. Gates are sold at different heights, so again, the gate should be high enough to prevent him from jumping or climbing out.

### Identification Tags

Your basset should wear ID tags whenever outside (even in an ex-pen). The tags should be plastic or metal and can be ordered online or made on the spot at most pet stores. Include the following information on the ID tags:

- Your dog's name
- Your last name
- Your phone number

If your dog has a medical condition, include that information and consider signing him up for a service that provides a 24-hour hotline. This will help anyone who finds your dog to provide him with the proper care.

### Microchips

To be extra safe, ask your vet to inject a small microchip between your basset's shoulder blades. The chip number is registered to you and entered into a pet database, making it much easier to identify the owners of lost dogs. The injection process is neither painful nor allergenic.

### Toys

Bassets don't chew much more than other breeds, but they can be destructive if they aren't given the proper chew toys. Basset puppies especially need toys for teething and to keep them occupied. Toys that your basset may appreciate include:

- Hard rubber "stuffer" toys
- Plush squeaky toys
- Rope/tugging toys
- Rubber squeaky toys
- Tennis balls
- Treat-dispensing toys



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Make sure that any toy you buy is large enough that it won't pose a choking hazard for your basset.

## How to Feed Your Basset Hound

The basset's sad expression makes it tempting to give him a treat when he begs, but this breed is prone to obesity, so a high-quality and nutritious diet is imperative. Feeding your dog properly will prevent premature aging, coat problems, and serious health issues.

### Commercial Foods

Using commercial dog food is the easiest way to feed your basset—just open the package and pour it into the bowl.

#### Types of Commercial Dog Food

There are three main types of dog food: dry, semi-moist, and canned.

- **Dry food:** Dry food, or **kibble**, is less expensive than semi-moist and canned foods of equal quality. Dogs who eat kibble usually have cleaner teeth than dogs who eat wet food because the dry bits scrape tartar from the teeth during chewing.
- **Semi-moist food:** Semi-moist dog foods are essentially soft, kibble-like chunks. They tend to stick to the teeth, harboring bacteria that cause gum disease, and most of them contain dyes and chemical preservatives that your dog just doesn't need.
- **Canned food:** Canned foods may be recommended for a dog with dental or medical problems or for a dog whose appetite is poor due to illness or old age. Canned food is usually more expensive than dry food and must be refrigerated once opened.

### Buying Commercial Food

The number of commercial dog foods on the market is staggering. When choosing a food for your Basset, always read the package carefully, including the ingredients, and consider the following factors:

- **Formula:** There are specially formulated foods that are tailored to the needs of dogs of certain ages or activity levels. For example, you can find puppy formulas, active dog formulas, less active dog formulas, and senior formulas.
- **Premium vs. generic:** Premium brand dog foods are more expensive than generic brands but also usually use higher-quality ingredients that are healthier and easier to digest.
- **Meats vs. meat by-products:** Buy only brands that use meat, as opposed to meat by-products. The first ingredient on the ingredient list should be a specific meat, such as lamb, beef, or chicken.
- **Preservatives:** Avoid foods that contain artificial preservatives, which can cause health problems. These preservatives include **ethoxyquin**, **butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)**, and **butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA)**. Natural preservatives such as **tocopherols** (vitamin E) and **ascorbic acid** (vitamin C) are safer.

### Noncommercial Foods

Although it's more expensive and time-consuming to prepare food for your dog at home, some owners prefer to do so. There are two main types of noncommercial diets: home cooked and raw. Before pursuing either diet, consult your vet so that the two of you can design a food plan that helps your dog get the nutrients he needs.

#### Home-Cooked Diets

Proponents of **home-cooked diets** claim that their dogs have more energy, shed less, and are leaner. Home-cooked diets include mostly human-grade foods, such as low-fat cuts of meat, deboned chicken, fish, fruits and veggies, healthy grains, yogurt, and human-grade supplements.

### Raw Diets

**Raw diets**, also called BARF (bones and raw food), usually consist of raw chicken and turkey bones; organ meats (liver, kidney, heart, brain, tongue, and tripe); eggs; some veggies; and apple cider vinegar.

Never feed your basset cooked bones, as they can splinter and puncture the digestive tract.

### Treats

**Treats** are an integral part of training and account for a great deal of pleasure in a basset's life. Rather than use artificial "junk food" treats, look for natural and low-calorie treats in specialty pet stores, online retailers, or even in some big pet store chains. You also can provide carrots, green beans, or freeze-dried chicken as healthy rewards.

### Supplements

It's possible to improve your basset's diet with **supplements**, but it's just as easy to make him sick by introducing an imbalance into his diet. Always talk with your vet before giving your basset any supplements.

### Feeding Schedule

Feeding your dog at scheduled mealtimes is the best way to control how much he eats, resulting in better weight control and allowing you to monitor his health. (Lack of appetite is often the first sign of illness.) **Free feeding**, a method in which food is left out all day, can wreak havoc on the digestive system and lead to obesity.

The best feeding schedule for your basset depends on his age and lifestyle. While your vet or breeder can best advise you as to what kind of feeding plan is appropriate for your basset's particular life stage, the chart below provides a general outline.

Life Stage	Meals per Day	Best Food
Puppies (under 12 weeks)	4 small meals	Puppy formula (protein less than 25%)
Older puppies (12 weeks–6 months)	3	Puppy formula
Adolescents (6 months–1 year)	2	Active formula
Adults (1+ years)	2	Adult formula
Seniors (6+ years)	1–2	Senior formula

### How Much to Feed

Rather than feed your basset each time he begs for food, stick to regular meals and an occasional treat. If you're serving commercial food, the package directions may not suit your individual dog, so talk to your vet or breeder. If you're serving noncommercial food, consult your vet.

### Food-Related Problems

You may encounter food-related problems—picky eating, health issues, obesity, and so on—in caring for your basset.

#### Picky Eating

If your basset refuses to eat the food you serve, try another type of food, but make the change gradually to avoid stomach upset.



### Health Issues

If your basset seems to suffer from gas, intestinal problems, allergies such as itchiness or hair loss, or other health issues, discuss the problem with your vet, who may recommend a specially formulated food.

### Obesity

The primary reason for obesity in dogs is overeating, and bassets will happily overeat if given the opportunity. Be careful not to let your basset get overweight—overweight dogs in general are more likely to get sick and live dramatically shorter lives than thinner dogs do. Older dogs are particularly prone to gaining weight as their metabolism slows down.

#### How to Tell Whether Your Basset Is Obese

To determine whether your basset is overweight:

- **Feel the ribs:** If you can feel your basset's ribs and the spaces between them without feeling an intervening layer of fat, your dog is probably at a good weight.
- **Look from above:** If your basset appears thinner at the waist, he's a good weight. If no thinning is visible, he may need to lose weight.

#### What to Do If Your Basset Is Obese

Regardless of your dog's age, you can help him lose weight if necessary by changing his feeding and exercise habits:

- **Change feeding habits:** Switch your basset to a low-calorie or senior-formula food, and cut back on the amount you feed him at each meal. Also limit his treat intake.
- **Change exercise habits:** Increase your dog's daily walks by just a few minutes each day until he is getting 10 additional minutes of exercise a day.

## How to Groom Your Basset Hound

To keep your basset hound healthy, you must provide regular grooming and care to his coat, skin, nails, ears, eyes, and teeth. Grooming is also a great time for you and your basset to bond, as well as an opportunity for you to inspect his body for changes that may be signs of illness.

### Getting Your Basset Used to Grooming

If you socialize your basset to grooming early, he'll probably enjoy it. And the more your basset enjoys grooming, the easier and more fun it will be for you as well. To socialize your basset to grooming:

- Start a consistent grooming routine immediately after you bring your basset home.
- Keep grooming sessions short.
- Reward your basset with treats for staying still and allowing his feet, muzzle, and ears to be touched.

If your dog doesn't like to be groomed, don't force it. For instance, if he doesn't like his feet to be touched, try touching one foot for one second, then reward him with a treat. A few days later, touch the other foot for two seconds and offer a treat, and so on.

### Coat and Skin Care for Your Basset

Brushing and bathing your basset will help to keep his coat and skin healthy.

#### Brushing Your Basset

A basset's smooth, short coat and skin require regular attention. Although he doesn't have long flowing hair, a basset hound still needs to be brushed once a week, especially when he's shedding (which may seem like a year-round occurrence).



### Brushing Tools and Procedure

To brush your basset, you'll need the following:

1. **Grooming mitt:** A glove with soft rubber tips that lifts dirt, dust, and dead hair. You also can use a coarse washcloth as a substitute. Using either the glove or the cloth, start at your basset's head and work your way back, brushing with the grain of the coat.
2. **Shedding blade:** A loop of saw-toothed metal extending from a brush handle, the shedding blade is good for removing debris and dead hair from the coat. Use this tool after brushing but only when your basset's shedding is at its worst.

Brush your basset's sides, chest, neck, belly, legs, and tail. Avoid sensitive areas such as the nose and eyes. While brushing, always have treats handy in case you accidentally make him uncomfortable.



### Bathing Your Basset

Like many other hounds, bassets tend to develop body odor if they're not bathed regularly. But bathing them too frequently can dry out the skin and lead to scratching and bacterial infections. The rule of thumb should be to bathe your basset when he is truly dirty or has body odor. If you wash your basset in a bathroom tub, set down a rubber mat to prevent him from slipping.

### Bathing Tools and Procedure

1. Wet your dog's coat thoroughly with warm water.
2. Wet his head as well, but tilt it back so that water doesn't get in his eyes.
3. Avoid getting water in his ears, or gently insert cotton balls into the opening to keep out water.
4. Lather your basset well with dog shampoo, rubbing your hands with and against the coat in circles.
5. Once you've shampooed your basset, rinse him thoroughly, making sure to get every last bit of soap out of the coat.
6. Dry him with a towel or a hair dryer set to a low setting, being sure not to burn or frighten him.

### Basset Hound Nail Care

When a basset's nails grow too long, they can affect his gait uncomfortably. You'll know that his nails are too long when you hear them clacking against hard floors. Depending on your dog, his nails will need to be cut every few weeks. If your breeder hasn't removed the **dewclaws**, the nails farther up the inside of the legs, they may need to be cut more frequently.

### Nail Care Tools and Procedure

To cut your basset's nails, you'll need two things:

- **Nail clippers:** Get a medium- to large-sized pair of guillotine-style nail clippers, available at any pet store. Don't use scissors or nail clippers made for humans.
- **Styptic powder or gel:** Styptic powder or gel will stop the bleeding if you cut your dog's nail too far.

Trim each nail just a tiny bit at a time or you'll risk cutting the **quick**, the blood vessel inside the nail. In a dog with light-colored nails, you can see the quick as a pink line running up the middle of the nail nearly to the end. On darker nails, you can see the quick by holding a flashlight under the nail. If you do cut the quick, dip the nail into styptic powder or gel to stop the bleeding.

### Basset Hound Ear Care

Check your basset's ears once a month for signs of mites or illness, and bring him to the vet if his ears have:

- A color different from the skin
- Red blotches
- A strong, unpleasant odor

### Ear Care Tools and Procedure

Even if your basset's ears look healthy, it's still a good idea to clean them each week. To do so, you'll need cotton balls and dog ear cleanser, sold at any pet store.

1. Apply dog ear cleanser liberally to the inside of the ear and massage gently, making sure that the solution goes deep into the dog's ear.
2. Use a cotton ball, not a swab, to clean away the residue, being careful not to go too deep into the ear.
3. Wipe the outside of the ear flaps as well.
4. Ticks are particularly attracted to the folds of a basset's ears, so carefully examine all the nooks and crannies for ear mites, fleas, and ticks.

### Basset Hound Eye Care

Keeping your basset's eyes clean will improve his appearance and help ward off infection.

### Eye Care Tools and Procedure

To clean your basset's eyes, you'll need a moist cloth. Whenever necessary, remove discharge from the corners of his eyes by wiping it away carefully with a moist cloth. If he seems to have constant eye discharge, bring him to the vet. If your basset's brows or eyelashes are interfering with his eyes, you can trim those hairs carefully.

### Basset Hound Dental Care

To keep your basset's teeth and gums clean and healthy, brush them once or twice a week.

### Dental Care Tools and Procedure

To brush your basset's teeth, you'll need a **dog toothbrush** or **finger brush** (a little rubber toothbrush that slides over your index finger) and **dog toothpaste**, all of which are sold at pet stores. Never use human toothpaste on a dog.

1. Put a little toothpaste on the toothbrush.
2. Rub the brush against the front of your basset's teeth. You don't have to brush the backs of the teeth.

If you don't brush your basset's teeth regularly, plaque will build up, and plaque can be removed only via a thorough cleaning at the vet. Vet cleanings require full anesthesia, which can be stressful and can't be given to older bassets or those with certain health issues. That's why it's particularly important for owners of sick or old bassets to brush their dog's teeth regularly.

## Basset Hound Healthcare

Your basset should have yearly veterinary checkups. These checkups allow your vet to become familiar with your dog, monitor his fitness, and find any health issues.

### Finding a Vet for Your basset Hound

It's crucial to find a vet you like and trust, because you'll have a relationship with your vet for your Basset's whole life. To find a dependable vet, ask for references from friends with pets, consult associations such as the **American Animal Hospital Association**, or use services such as the **Veterinary Information Network**. Before selecting a vet:

- **Call and ask questions:** Find out about the number of vets at the practice, on-site testing facilities, emergency and overnight care, appointment policies, and payment plans.
- **Visit the practice:** Meet with one or more of the vets to discuss their services and to answer specific

questions. During your visit, look for the following:

- Is the facility clean and well kept?
- Are staff members friendly and knowledgeable?
- What percentage of the clinic's care is for dogs?
- What are the fees? Is pet insurance accepted?

### When to Visit the Vet

As a basset owner, you'll need a vet at the following times:

- **When you get your dog:** Whether you've gotten a puppy or an adult basset, you should take him to the vet within the first 48 hours of bringing him home. The vet will check him for disease, may give him some **vaccinations**, and will answer any questions you have. Be sure to ask about your new dog's dietary, exercise, and grooming needs.
- **Annual wellness exam:** Healthy adult dogs need just one vet visit a year, known as an **annual wellness exam**. During the exam, the vet will give your dog a full-body checkup, provide any needed routine vaccinations, and possibly administer medicine to fight off **heartworms, ticks, and fleas**. The vet also will ask you for observations about your dog's development and behavior. Senior dogs usually need two visits a year.
- **If your dog gets sick or injured:** Many dogs suffer from burns, abrasions, allergies, or viruses at some point in their lives.
- **Emergency visits:** If your dog becomes severely ill or injured, he may need emergency care. If your vet doesn't offer emergency care, make sure you know the location of a nearby 24-hour emergency care center.

### Pet Insurance

**Pet insurance** is health insurance for your pet, complete with deductibles. Some policies cover only the costs associated with illness and accidents, whereas others cover all vet visits. Consider whether pet insurance is right for you; if so, research available policies before selecting one.

### Licensing Your Dog

Check with your vet about whether you need to get a **license** for your dog. Most communities require every dog to get a rabies vaccination once a year and to have a tag that proves it attached to the dog's collar. Licensing usually involves a fee, which is often used to support local dog shelters. The fees are generally higher for unneutered dogs.

### Getting Your Basset Neutered

**Neutering** is a surgical procedure that stops a dog from reproducing. A female dog is **spayed** by removing her reproductive organs, while a male dog is **castrated** by removing his testicles. Though many dog owners feel that neutering is cruel, in fact the procedure:

- **Improves health:** Neutered dogs live longer and are more resistant to various diseases and reproductive cancers.
- **Improves behavior:** Neutered dogs are less aggressive and more affectionate.
- **Decreases strays:** There are already far more dogs in shelters than can find homes. Each year, communities spend millions of dollars and kill countless animals to try to control stray populations. Neutering your dog will



help to prevent these deaths.

## Treating Parasites

Like all dogs, basset hounds are susceptible to both external and internal parasites.

### External Parasites

The external parasites that most commonly afflict dogs are **fleas**, **mites**, and **ticks**.

#### Fleas

Flea bites cause dogs to itch. A telltale sign of fleas is **flea dirt**—little granules you'll find on your basset or in his bed. If the granules turn red when placed on a white napkin and wetted, your dog has fleas. To get rid of fleas, wash your dog with a **flea-killing shampoo** or talk to your vet about getting a pill that sterilizes fleas. You'll also have to treat your house to get rid of any flea infestations.

Preventing fleas is your first defense, and your vet can prescribe a preventive. You also can use a safe insecticide in your home or in outdoor areas to prevent infestation.

#### Mites

Mites are contagious among dogs and also can pass to humans. On dogs, mites cause a skin condition called **mange**, characterized by intense itching, hair loss, crusty and rotten-smelling bumps on the skin, and lesions at the edge of the ears. Mites can be treated only by your vet.

#### Ticks

Ticks may attach themselves to bassets who play outside in woods or grasses. You'll most likely notice ticks during grooming—they'll feel just like hard little bumps on the skin. The best way to remove a tick is with a pair of tweezers:

1. Grip the tick as close to the skin as possible.
2. Without twisting or jerking, pull the tick out slowly.
3. Make sure that you remove all of the tick, including the head.
4. After you remove the tick, put it in a sealable container and bring it to the vet to test it for disease.
5. Clean your basset's wound with rubbing alcohol or disinfectant to minimize the chance of infection.
6. If you can't get the tick out, bring your dog to the vet.

### Internal Parasites

Some internal parasites have virtually no effect on the host animal's health, while others cause illness and even death if they are present in large enough numbers. Some common intestinal parasites include **hookworms**, **roundworms**, **whipworms**, and **tapeworms**. Your vet can identify these parasites through microscopic examination of your basset's feces. A heartworm infestation is caused by a parasitic worm that infests the heart, clogging the vessels and causing congestive heart failure. If your dog is at risk for heartworm, your vet will prescribe a preventive and suggest that he be tested for the parasite every year or two.

## Basset Hound Breed-Specific Diseases

As a breed, bassets are prone to certain disorders and illnesses, including blood diseases, bloat, and intervertebral disk disease.

- **Blood diseases:** Two blood diseases, Von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and canine thrombopathia (CTP), can affect a basset. vWD is caused by a deficiency or abnormality of blood proteins that control platelet activity; dogs with this disease have a tendency to hemorrhage. CTP is a platelet dysfunction that may keep a basset's blood from clotting properly. Both diseases are permanent and must be controlled through various treatments and medications.
- **Bloat (gastric torsion):** Bloat is a condition in which a dog's stomach twists and traps gas inside. Symptoms include discomfort and restlessness, escalating to aimless pacing, rapid panting, and excessive

swallowing and salivation. Eventually, the stomach will visibly increase in size, and the dog will go into shock if not treated immediately. Ask your vet about over-the-counter rapid gas reducers and other measures you can take, but seek emergency veterinary care immediately if your dog shows any symptoms of bloat.

- **Intervertebral disk disease:** Herniated disks are common in bassets, especially if they frequently jump onto their front limbs from high places. This disease occurs when the jellylike inner layer of a spinal disk protrudes, or herniates, into the vertebral canal and presses on the spinal cord. Symptoms can range from a visible, mild discomfort when your basset's spine is touched or when he attempts to walk or lie down, to paralysis in extreme cases. Treatment ranges from anti-inflammatory medications to surgery.

## Other Common Diseases

Like other dogs, basset hounds are susceptible to a number of general diseases. The most common are:

- **Allergies:** Bassets may be allergic to food, fleas, mites, or mold. Signs of allergies include itching that results in hair loss and sores, and licking or chewing of the legs and paws. Your vet can prescribe medications to reduce allergies.
- **Cancer:** Just like humans, dogs can get cancer in any of their organs. Symptoms vary depending on the type of cancer, but take your basset to the vet if you notice a growth, wheezing, coughing, or weight loss. Cancer in dogs is treated similarly to cancer in humans.
- **Cardiovascular disease:** This disease can be caused by a variety of factors, including the degeneration of the heart valves or the lining of the heart, or a weakening of the heart muscle. Signs include fatigue, coughing, loss of appetite, and shortness of breath. Your vet can provide medication to treat the disease and also may recommend that your basset be fed a special diet.
- **Diabetes:** Though an overweight basset is more likely to get diabetes, any basset can develop it. Diabetes is marked by excessive thirst and urination, as well as weight loss. Mild cases can be treated with a specialized diet and exercise regimen. More serious conditions require you to give regular insulin injections.

## How to Socialize Your Basset Hound

**Socializing** your basset means introducing him as a puppy to all the people, places, and things he might run into as an adult dog so that they seem familiar and don't scare him. The crucial period for socialization is between 7 and 14 weeks of age, although the process should continue throughout puberty and young adulthood. Talk to your vet about when it's safe to begin socializing your particular dog.



## Teaching Your Basset to Socialize

When socializing your basset, be sure to make each new object and situation fun. The more positively he views the outside world, the better he'll be able to interact with it throughout his life.

- Socialize him to other people by having them feed your basset treats and pet him.
- Socialize him to children under close supervision,

reminding them never to tease him, pull his ears or tail, approach him when he's sleeping, take his toys or food, or stare into his eyes.

- Socialize him to other dogs by letting him play with as many breeds and sizes as possible. Supervise, but interfere only if play gets really rough or your dog is cowering in fear.

## How to Train Your Basset Hound

Your basset is intelligent enough to worm his way into the position of pack leader if you don't gain his respect and become the leader yourself. Fortunately, despite a bit of a stubborn streak, the basset is a sturdy, loyal pet who is easy to train as long as training sessions are kept interesting and positive.

## Positive Training

The most effective type of training uses **positive reinforcement** to condition desired behaviors in a dog:

1. You reward a desired behavior every time it occurs, but you ignore other behaviors.
2. The dog soon understands that if he does something you want, he'll get a treat, praise, or toy, but if he does something you don't like, he won't get anything.

Bassets don't take kindly to scolding or harsh training. A pocketful of your basset's favorite treats whenever you attempt to teach him anything new is the best way to motivate him to learn. You can train your basset yourself or can turn to a trainer or training classes for help. The best way to find a reputable trainer is to call your local shelter and ask for recommendations.

## Training Sessions

Training sessions should be kept short (2–5 minutes for a puppy, 5–10 minutes for an adult). You can hold several sessions a day. Sessions also should be specific, focused on a particular behavior. To train a particular behavior:

1. Say "Yes!" as your basset performs the behavior, then provide a reward. This marker word tells the dog that what he did was right. The treat gives positive reinforcement.
2. Once your basset starts offering the desired behavior on his own, add the verbal command, such as "Sit!", to the action. Your basset will associate the command with the action, and every time he performs it, you'll mark it with a "Yes!" After you say the marker word, he'll get a treat.

Make sure to say "Yes!" while the desired behavior is in process, not after the behavior occurs. And never skimp on the reward, or your basset will have little reason to keep paying attention.

## Crate Training Your Basset Hound

**Crate training** is the process of training your dog to enjoy spending time in his crate. Crate training your basset will:

- Help with housetraining
- Allow you to confine and control your dog when you have guests or when you have to go out
- Make traveling with your dog easier

Always remember that a dog can stay in a crate only as long as he can "hold it." Puppies can't spend more than a couple hours in the crate, and an adult shouldn't spend more than six hours. To crate train your basset:

1. Place the crate in a room where you and your family spend a lot of time. Put comfortable bedding inside if you know that your dog won't chew it.
2. Lure your basset into the crate with a treat. Keep the door open.
3. Once he's inside, mark the behavior with "Yes!"

4. Allow your basset to come out, but be calm and don't interact with him.
5. Lure him back into the crate, then treat again.
6. Continue to praise him when he's in the crate, but act indifferently when he's out of the crate.
7. If your basset is comfortable with the crate, close the door for a second, then open it and treat. Repeat until you can close it for a few seconds without upsetting him.
8. Repeat, but get up and take a step away from the crate. If he's calm, come right back, say "Yes!" and treat. Then let him out. Continue until you can walk across the room while he's calm.
9. Continue this training until you can leave the room and then the house, all while your basset is content in his crate.

If at any time in the process your basset becomes upset or is not doing well, quit the training session for the day. But don't stop before you can get one calm second from him in the crate and treat him for it.

### Housetraining Your Basset Hound

**Housetraining** should start the minute you bring your new puppy or adult basset home.

1. Between potty breaks, keep your basset in his crate or within 10 feet (3 m) of you. Tie his leash to your waist or use an exercise pen.
2. Watch for signs that your basset needs to go—sniffing the ground, circling, or scratching the floor. When you see these signs, take him outside to the potty area.
3. Wait for him to pee or poop, then reward him. If he doesn't go, put him in his crate for 10 minutes and then try again.
4. If you catch your basset eliminating inside, bring him outside to the potty area immediately. Let him finish outside, and reward him. Scoop up the mess inside after you return.

Never punish your basset for eliminating in the house, because this will teach him that eliminating at all is wrong. If your puppy or adult basset has a setback, just start the training over again.



### Teaching Your Basset Basic Commands

Any well-behaved basset should know and follow five basic commands: **come**, **sit**, **down**, **stay**, and **walk nicely on a leash**. Knowing these commands will make your basset easier to manage and keep safe in any situation.

#### Teaching Your Basset Hound to Come

1. Begin indoors. Holding treats in one hand, call your basset's name to get his attention.
2. When he looks over at you for a second, mark "Yes!" and treat.
3. Continue until he comes over to you for a treat when you call his name.
4. Put him on a long line and take him outside. Let him explore to the end of the line, then call him.
5. When he looks at you, encourage him to come running

by showing a treat. Mark "Yes!" as he runs toward you, and treat when he gets to you.

6. Once it's clear that he understands that coming to you results in a treat, say his name and the word "come" when you call.

#### Teaching Your Basset Hound to Sit

1. Begin with your dog standing and facing you.
2. Hold a treat between your thumb and index finger over your dog's nose, then move your hand slowly back toward his tail.
3. His head should follow the treat, and his rear should move into a sit. Mark "Yes!" and treat.
4. If he won't sit entirely, "shape" the behavior by marking "Yes!" and treating approximations of the sit, such as the rear lowering a little, then a little more, and so on.
5. Eventually your dog will offer a sit on his own. Mark "Yes!" and treat.
6. Now you can add the verbal "Sit," and he'll come to associate the word with the action. Be very precise with the word, using it only once, then waiting for the action.

#### Teaching Your Basset Hound to Down

1. Start with your basset in the sit position. Hold a treat in your hand and let him smell it.
2. Move your hand toward the floor and slide it along the floor away from his nose. If he gets up to get the treat, put him back in the sit position and try again.
3. Once your basset's elbows touch the floor as he lies down while following the treat, mark "Yes!" and treat.
4. Repeat until he begins to offer the behavior on his own. Then add the verbal cue and continue to treat.
5. Finally, train him to go into the down position from a standing position using the same method.

#### Teaching Your Basset Hound to Stay

1. Put your dog in a sit or down position, then step in front of him, holding a flattened palm to his face.
2. Look him in the eye and say "Stay" in a firm voice.
3. After a second of motionlessness, lean down and mark "Yes!" and treat him. Then say "Okay," which will be the release command from "Stay."
4. Eventually work up to more time in the stay, then vary the time you ask for, so that your dog doesn't learn to stay only for a set amount of time.

The crucial thing is to treat while your basset is *in* the stay, not after, or he'll think that you're rewarding the release.

#### Teaching Your Basset Hound to Walk on a Leash

1. Put your basset on his leash using a flat buckle collar.
2. When he pulls, stop and wait for him to relax and for slack to come into the leash. The second this happens, mark "Yes!" and treat, then keep walking.
3. Repeat until your basset realizes that if he pulls, he won't get anywhere, but if he relaxes, he'll receive a treat and get to keep walking.
4. Add the verbal cue "Let's go" when it's clear that he understands.
5. If your basset pulls when he sees another dog or anything else he wants, turn him around, walk in the other direction, and say "Let's go." Then mark "Yes!" and treat him for coming along.

### Playing Games with Your Basset Hound

Regular play helps develop understanding and communication skills that can't be learned during formal training.

#### Find-the-Treat

Because bassets are such good trackers, this is an excellent game for your dog.

1. Put him in a down or sit-stay position, and hide tasty treats in the yard.
2. Give him the command to "find it," and watch him hone in on his prize.

#### Follow-the-Leader

1. Grab a treat and take off.
2. Urge your basset to follow you as you go over obstacles such as wading pools or footstools.

If you're planning to train your basset for agility in the future, playing these games with him is a great start.

## How to Fix Basset Hound Behavior Problems

Just like other dogs, bassets may sometimes act in ways that their owners deem unacceptable. Many of these behaviors can be resolved with proper training.

#### How to Fix Excessive Barking

It's normal for a dog to bark a few times to warn you of an intruder, but excessive, wild barking is unacceptable. To tone down barking, shake a can of pennies when your dog barks too loudly. When he stops barking to see what this new racket is, call him and give him a treat. Keep doing this until he learns to come to you for a treat rather than continuing to bark.

#### How to Fix Inappropriate Chewing

Chewing is a natural dog behavior, so rather than try to prevent it entirely, redirect the urge to appropriate objects, such as a chew toy. Use **bitter apple spray** (a harmless substance that tastes bad to dogs) on woodwork and furnishings to prevent unwelcome chewing, and confine your dog in his crate whenever you can't supervise him.

#### How to Fix Jumping

Put your basset on a leash and tell him to sit. Have a helper approach to pet the dog. If your dog gets up, the helper should back out of your dog's reach, and you should hold tight to the leash so that your dog can't follow. Wait for your basset to sit again. (Don't tell him to sit—just wait.) When he sits, ask the helper to approach again. Repeat until your dog stays seated as the helper approaches. Reward with praise or a treat. Repeat the process in several locations, including outside with other people around.

#### How to Fix Digging

Bassets enjoy digging, but this habit can destroy your yard. To save your lawn, consider giving your basset his own sandbox in which you bury balls, toys, and treats. He'll soon prefer digging in the sandbox. If you do catch your basset digging outside of his sandbox, don't make a fuss. Call him over, and reward him if he comes. If he keeps digging, calmly and gently take him from the digging area and say "No!" in a firm voice. Then ask him to sit, and reward him once he does.

#### Seeking Professional Help

If your basset doesn't respond to your behavior training, you may need to bring in professional help. **Dog trainers** can help you with basic obedience problems, while **dog behaviorists** are suitable for more severe problems, such as aggression, phobias, and separation anxiety.

To find a reputable dog trainer or behaviorist, get a referral from a vet or rescue group, the **Association of Pet Dog Trainers**, or the **International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants**.

