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You asked, in your letter, why repeat something that was a success? Indeed the 1990 studbook opening was a success but our goal is to preserve the Basenji breed in a viable state for the long term.

This breed is genetically distinct, and recognized as such in the newest DNA studies on dog evolution and migration. As one of the earliest domesticated dogs, and one of nine recognized progenitor breeds, they are a part of the world's great human heritage. We cannot replenish a gene pool with only thirteen dogs, only ten of which bred on. Based on the advice of geneticists, we have a goal of at least fifty original founders, including previous importation, that are well-represented in the gene pool, to give the unique genotype of the Basenji the best shot at long-term viability.

We have waited twenty years as we evaluated the impact and success of the dogs previously added to the gene pool. The 1990 AKC registered imports and dogs descended entirely from those dogs are on the Stud Dog (five or more champion get) and Brood Bitch (four or more champion get) Honor Rolls. Dozens of their children are champions. Their grandchildren are all breed Best in Show and specialty winners. The number one conformation Basenji of all time is a descendent of these dogs. There are also many field and obedience titled from the 1990 AKC registered imports.

Our intent is to make use of the time we have left before the Congo is modernized. With modernization comes non-African dogs, and with non-African dogs comes the loss of the original Basenji. We consulted with Dr. Jo Thompson, the director of the Lukuru Wild Life Research Project. Dr. Thompson has lived in the Congo since June of 1992. She believes such modernization may come as soon as five to seven years. The plan is to take several trips back to Africa to remove quality dogs for further registration and gene diversity.

We are very close to a Fanconi syndrome marker test (or mutant allele test). We anticipate this test will have a major impact on the genetic diversity of our breed. If the calculations are correct and the majority of Basenjies are carriers or affected, then we will see a significant shift in the gene pool. Clear dogs will become over-represented in the population quickly. Such a shift, following the pyruvate kinase deficient hemolytic anemia carrier test, led to the rise of Fanconi syndrome as a significant problem in the 1970's. Fanconi has been the most serious genetic problem in Basenjies since that time.

Since every individual organism has its own genetic strengths AND weaknesses, in ten years we could easily be right back where we are now with some other genetic issue if we do not enlarge the gene pool. History is destined to repeat itself if we cannot act to maintain the genetic diversity of our gene pool.

As far as the separate registration of imported dogs, we are concerned on a number of levels. Unregistered dogs are difficult to place and few breeders are willing to commit to breeding such dogs without a guarantee of registration. The production of generations of unregistered dogs would be a drain on the resources of participating breeders in terms of time, money and the disposition of the puppies. Also with legislation such as California's proposed AB 1634, the ability to keep or breed unregistered dogs is severely threatened.

Once approved by the AKC board we can and will re-poll the membership to make sure we have the required two-thirds approval for the registration of the newest imported dogs.

Sincerely,

Pamela Geoffroy  
Chair  
BCOA Native Stock Committee