

Wandering Off

Bassets wander off and get lost if their yard isn't well fenced, and they pick up a scent. And they WILL pick up a scent, even if they have to invent one (how would you ever know the difference?) So, if you don't have good fencing for your yard, either get some, or do not get a basset. Most basset rescues won't let you adopt one of their dogs if you don't have a well-fenced yard. Really, how do you think most of their charges came to them, anyway? That's right. They got lost, and no one looked for them. Because they drooled too much, the crate training didn't work within two days, or they bayed too much when they were left alone for eight to ten hours, six days a week.

Many hounds are great at back tracking (finding their way home by tracking themselves; my Walker and black and tan are experts). Bassets, however, are notoriously lacking in this skill. Since they were used to hunt within sight of the hounds-man, they never had this trait consistently bred into them. That's just my guess, anyway, based on 30 years of experience observing hounds.

I'm not going to say "wandering off" is exacerbated in **the rescue basset**, but I will throw this out there -- the animal *may* have a penchant for it. If the breed rescue or shelter tells you, "He was just found wandering around fill-in-the-blank, and no one claimed him", you can hypothesize two things (though you may be wrong): 1) the animal has a tendency to follow his nose and wander off, and 2) his people didn't care enough to look for him, so be prepared for some of the faults we're discussing here. Now it *could* be that: at a rest-stop, he jumped out of his family's car going out-of-state; his people didn't notice in time, so he's really, truly, honestly *lost* through no fault of his own; and his people have *no* idea where to look. It *has* been known to happen! But don't bet on it.

The symptom:

You're home, but your basset is unexpectedly not.

Treatments:

- Something surrounding your yard designed to keep things in. Say, a good, sturdy fence with a lockable gate. Doesn't hurt if it keeps other critters out, either.
- Constant vigilance

The following tale beautifully illustrates the basset penchant for wandering off, and just how quickly it can happen:

Nigel's Great Escape

*Today, July 17, 2007, one of my bassets almost gave me a heart attack. I and my "herd" of eight bassets (including Pierre, Jellybean, Pumpkin, and Jean Paul) nearly lost Nigel. He did **almost** have an adventure, and he got to laugh at me, an old, fat lady in wet flip flops.*

It all began while I was filling the water bowls in my yard. My little basset Jellybean loves to play with the hose, and she got my feet wet. It turns out, wet flip flops are very hard to walk in, which was unfortunate, considering what was about to happen . . .

I was in the process of taking my herd from my fenced yard and bringing them inside. Pierre was already in the house, and I'd gone back out to the pen to get Pumpkin and Jean Paul, the next two to go inside. I was in the process of exiting the pen with those two when, out of the corner of my eye, I saw my worst nightmare. Nigel had sneaked out, and he was making a slow-motion attempt to escape.

I hesitated for just one moment to make sure the gate to the yard was secure, while Nigel, feigning nonchalance, sauntered across the patio. I was desperately hoping he would stop at the door but no, he proceeded to head down the long driveway, picking up speed to a slow trot. I was behind him, mere inches away, calling ever so gently, "Nigel . . . Nigel". He stayed just out of reach. At least he was wearing a collar, but of course he had no leash.

I live on a busy four lane road. I prayed that Nigel would stop when he got to the end of the long driveway, or at least slow down to sniff something. After all, when he's on leash, I have to literally drag him past all the smells and the little elm tree he loves to snack on. But now he trotted out of the driveway with out a second sniff or glance, past my neighbor, purposely remaining just out of my reach.

Mind you, all this time I still had Pumpkin and Jean Paul with me! Fortunately, they behaved beautifully - 100% cooperation - I think they felt my adrenaline rush, even though I was pretending to be calm. All the while, Nigel was trotting just inches ahead of me, looking back on occasion to give me a half-smile -- he was happy, the minx! We'd just turned the corner of the block when I managed to touch the end of his tail. I didn't pull it, but it was enough distraction to give him pause, enabling me to grab his collar.

After I finally caught him, I started to feel the after-effects of my adrenaline rush: rapid breathing; heart pounding; sweating; etc. So with my body trembling and legs shaking, I looped the end of Pumpkin's leash through Nigel's collar, and proceeded home. I haven't stopped thanking God, and giving Nigel extra hugs. I'm just too grateful to be even the least bit angry. But I do have to say . . . "NOT FUNNY, NIGEL!!!" I am so grateful that Nigel is home tonight, rather than a horror story on the Daily Drool or a Lost list.

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I have one last aside on this matter: My black and tan, Jachin ("Jax") may not be a basset, but he is a scent hound; precisely he's a coonhound. When he's on a trail, he's *intense*. The whole universe boils down to the scent he's following. When he gets home, his nose and the front of his muzzle are often rubbed *raw* from constantly planting them on the ground, following the trail. *Now* do you understand?