

You Be The

**Bulldog
Action
Going
Away**

by Robert Cole

Judge

Can You Describe It?

Bulldog movement going away is the most complex of canine actions due to this breed's unorthodox conformation. Because of its complexity the Bulldog's "peculiar" action at the trot is difficult even for the specialist to describe.

This is why The Bulldog Club of America have produced their own special video on correct and incorrect movement at the trot. This excellent training aid is available from the BCA Education Committee and was one of the sources used in this article.

I can appreciate the difficulty those of you who haven't seen this BCA gait film may have in determining in your own mind what form Bulldog action at the trot going away should take. I was sure that I knew and had on film an excellent representative of Bulldog action going away until in the process of providing a one days all-breed seminar to the Northwest Judges Study Group in Vancouver Washington, open discussion led to the opinion from two knowledgeable Bulldog breeders that I was only close. They explained why and it wasn't until the following year that I finally captured on film what later the BCA gait video confirmed is correct action going away.

The challenge then was to translate correct action going away into a graphic representation. Not easy, but before we see the two methods I ended up with it is necessary that you be aware of what is involved structurally viewed both from behind and from above.

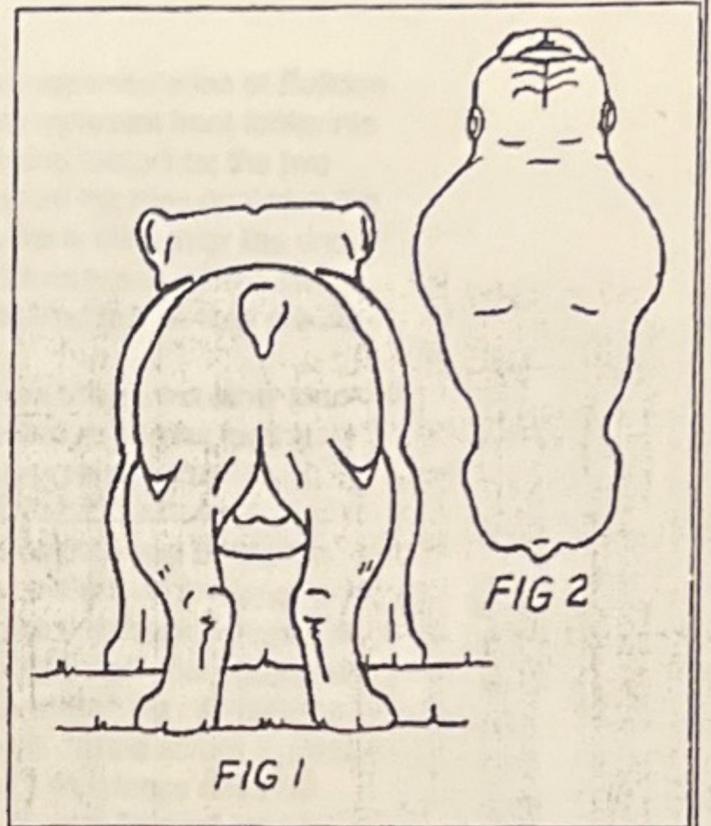


Fig 1 And Fig 2

From behind and from above the Bulldog's unorthodox conformation is seen to greatly depart from the norm and it can be readily appreciated that this dog will not track in the manner of an endurance trotting breed. First of all the

hocks approach each other and second the stifles (knees) turn slightly outward as must the hind feet. From above the body appears pear-shape being much wider at the shoulders than at the hips.

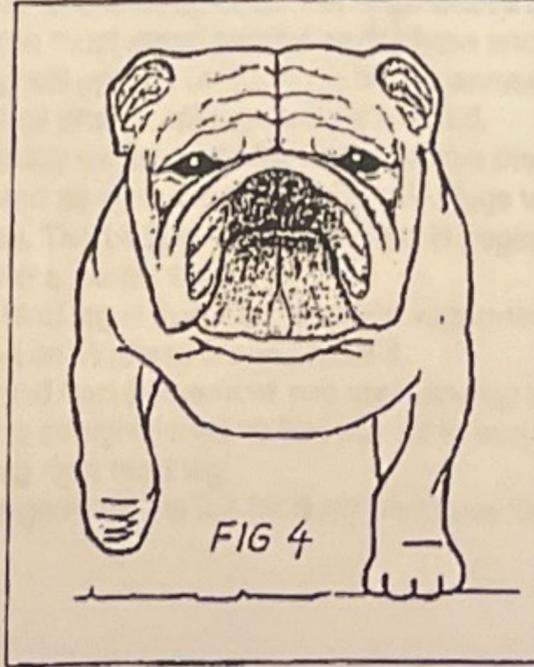
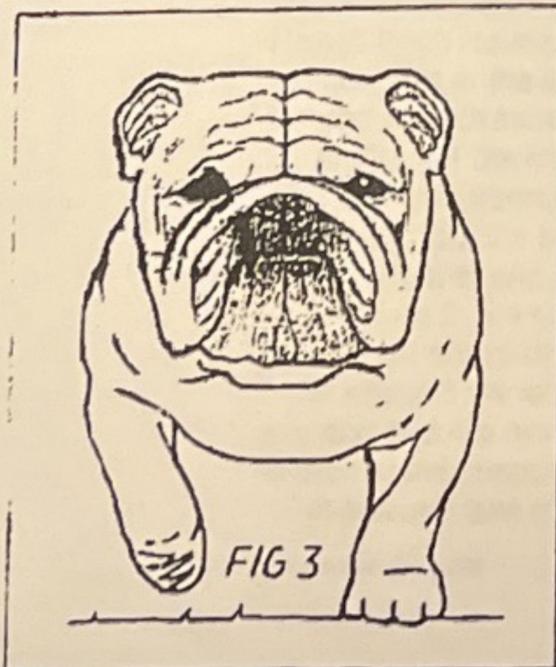


Fig 3 And Fig 4?

And before you can fully appreciate what is involved going away you must first know if coming the Bulldog's front legs converge to the degree displayed by Fig 3 or do they travel straight for-

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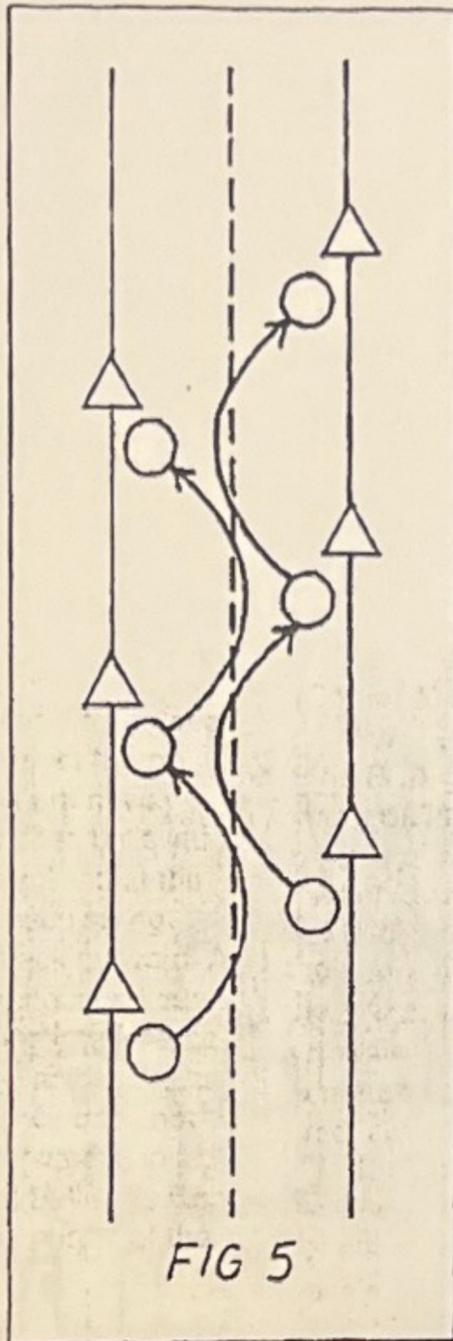


FIG 5

ward, the feet the same distance apart as the elbows as in Fig 4?

A number of books tell us that wide-track Fig 4 is correct, however the BCA gait video informs officially that Fig 3's slight convergence is actually correct. This slight convergence reduces the distance between the front footprints in diagram Fig 5.

Fig 5

In this updated graphic representation of Bulldog action at the trot, triangles represent front footprints and the circles represent hind footprints; the two lines on the outside represent the lines on which the front feet fall; the broken line is the center line under the body; and the curved lines represent the swing inward and outward of the hind feet as they are carried forward.

This diagram differs from what I and other locomotion investigators depicted as correct for the Bulldog a decade ago in one very important way.

The difference between what is often believed to be correct and what is actually correct is that the hind feet as demonstrated in Fig 5 each swing inward *across* the center line than back outward. A decade ago we promoted a less pronounced curve because we wrongly believed that leg interference would result if the curve was carried across the center line. Now we know that interference does not occur because unlike the straight forward hind leg carriage of most breeds, the correct Bulldog's hind leg is carried forward in a wide arc in front of the supporting hind leg not beside it.

Fig 6

Diagrams do not work for everyone so I produced an illustrated sequence format similar to one used in Rachel Page Elliot's *Dogsteps*, Howell Book House. You must stand behind each phase and keep moving to your right or the dog will appear to move crab-wise across the page instead of each individual phase moving straight forward.

In phase 1 the relatively wide-apart rear pasterns give the false impression that all is normal and as speed increases the hind legs will converge. This is far from the truth. The truth is the left hind leg is beginning its curve inward towards and over a center line.

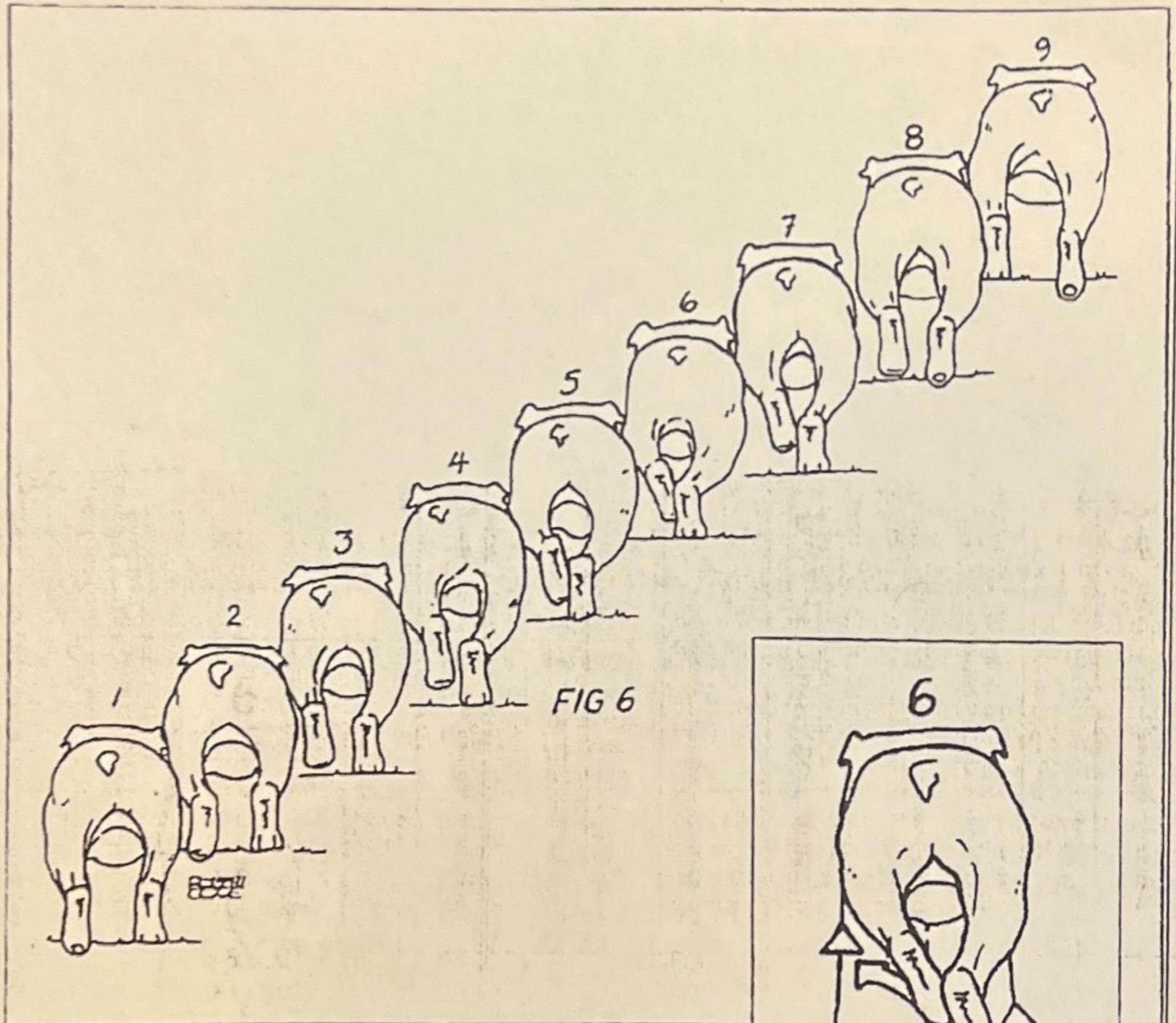
In phase 2, the left hind leg is swinging past the supporting right hind leg and continues doing so in phase 3 and phase 4.

In phase 5 the left hind foot (remember you are standing directly behind this dog and it is moving straight forward) has started to curve inward and in front of the supporting right hind leg.

In phase 6 (see enlargement) the left hind leg continues its inward curve,

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the left foot swinging in front of the right supporting leg, and then starts to swing back out in phase 7.

Phase 8 would in the case of a less unorthodox breed, be the phase where a brief period of suspension occurs during the change-over of supporting diagonals. It took a very high speed camera to capture this Bulldog's very, very brief suspension period in phase 8. In phase 9 the change-over of diagonals is complete and the right hind leg is now in support having landed slightly behind and to the right of the left front foot.

Roll

The "characteristic roll" from side to side going away that the Standard speaks of is due to a critical balance of short wide front and longer narrow set hind legs. It is observed by following the sideways movement of the skin at the base of the tail. 🐶