

THE PHENOMENON OF “RARE”, “EXOTIC” and “FAD” COLORED BULLDOGS

For those that have been involved in the Bulldog breed for a substantial length of time, 20 or 30 years, there was never an issue of “exotic colors” in the breed. Yes, occasionally a black or black/tan dog, or one with a Liver-colored nose would appear, but when this occurred, the dog would be spayed/neutered and placed in a pet home with no AKC registration papers. The history behind this is Black and Black/Tan dogs were considered of impure blood. When the original breed Standard was written, it was written with this in mind in an effort to keep impurely bred dogs out of the Bulldog gene pool.

Today, our breed is facing a very disturbing trend with the appearance of Non-Standard colors, something the founders of our breed could not possibly have anticipated. We are seeing an alarming increase in the numbers of breeders purposefully breeding for and advertising “exotic”, “fad” or “rare color” Bulldogs. This color phenomenon is fairly recent, appearing within the last 10 years or so. These rogue breeders have capitalized on recessive color genes, DNA test their dogs for those recessive colors, and very likely engage in outcrossing with other breeds, to intentionally and prolifically produce Non-Standard colored Bulldogs. They breed strictly for color, at the expense of and disregard to conformation, health and temperament. They charge outrageous prices for puppies, dogs and stud fees. Depending on the color and genetic DNA make-up of the individual dog, prices can range from \$5,000 - \$30,000, with stud fees commonly in the \$2,500 - \$7,500 range.

“Rare”, “Exotic” and “Fad” colors include any Non-Standard color for our breed: Black, Blue (Grey or Mouse), Chocolate-Liver-Seal (what we refer to as a Dudley), Lilac, and now even Merle. All of these colors can be solid, have tan points, or be tri-colored with white patches/tan points. In addition to these colors being highly objectionable and undesirable, both to the BCA Standard and to the individual responsible breeder, we are facing a serious problem with the integrity of our breed and stud book with AKC! The introduction of the Blue color into Bulldogs is highly suspect, as is the recent appearance of BLUE MERLE and CHOCOLATE MERLE Bulldogs, with evidence suggesting the outcrossing with other breeds to produce them, along with “hanging papers” (falsifying papers) to get them registered. The merle color pattern has NEVER been in the Bulldog gene pool. Yes, these off-color dogs are being registered with AKC, sometimes under a different color, particularly the Merle patterned Bulldogs.

Here are a few examples of Non-Standard Colored dogs:



Black/White



Black/Tan



Black Tri-Color



Blue/White

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Lilac Tri-Color



Chocolate Tri-Color



Blue Merle



Blue Merle Tri-Color

The problem stems from unscrupulous breeders and AKC’s practice of registering these Non-Standard colors. While the paper registration form shows correct colors and markings for our breed, the online registration form includes a whole host of additional “Non-Standard” colors and markings, as does the Bulldog breed information page on the AKC website. These non-Standard colors are **WRONG** and should not be listed on these AKC online resources.

Adding to the problem is the wording in the BCA Written Standard on coat color. Although our Standard does not clearly define non-Standard colors as a disqualification, experienced and knowledgeable dog men and women know the intent and meaning behind the words, which carry significant weight. The current wording in the BCA Written Standard for color is “preferred” colors, and black is “highly objectionable”. Our only disqualification is a Brown or Liver-colored nose. It is clearly understood by anyone who knows the breed, its history, and understands the Written Standard that non-Standard colors are not acceptable. Color breeders twist the intent of our Standard and use the lack of a DQ as a platform and argument to promote their breeding of non-Standard colors as “acceptable by AKC”.

Even more disturbing, this is becoming a much broader issue with non-Standard colored dogs appearing in other countries, as well. They are showing up in Canada, England, France, Australia, Mexico and many South American countries. Other breeds have had or are currently having similar problems with non-Standard colors, including the French Bulldog, Labrador Retriever, Dachshund, Newfoundland, Chihuahua, and Siberian Husky, to name a few.

Let's face it, non-Standard color breeders do a fantastic job marketing and promoting their “product”, primarily through online resources, i.e. websites, E-Bay, Craig’s List, Facebook, Instagram, etc. They misrepresent the AKC as the holder of the Written Standard (wrong - BCA owns the Standard and is the only body that can change it) and AKC’s acceptance of these colors since they register them. Unfortunately, this is reinforced by all of the non-Standard color choices displayed on the AKC online registration form and the AKC website Bulldog Breed Information page. The result is the public is being educated to think non-Standard colors are correct and permissible. **THEY ARE NOT.** AKC is doing a huge disservice to our breed by allowing misinformation to remain on their site.

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Another drawback is the public often isn't even aware of the Bulldog Club of America, and has no idea there is a Written Standard and a Breeder Referral program for puppy buyers to find reputable and responsible breeders. When they search for a Bulldog puppy, the first place they think to look is the AKC website. Once there, they see all of the non-Standard colors, the uploaded public pictures of Blacks, Blues, Lilacs, etc., and the classified ads reflecting the same. Since they're on the AKC website, they must be correct, right? NO, they are not.

So, what is wrong with breeding for color? When you breed solely for color, you can very quickly lose the very characteristics which make our breed so special: their particular conformation, their wonderful temperaments, and good health. If you disregard all of these traits solely for color, double up on bad traits through both parents, the likelihood of perpetuating bad traits is very high. A by-product of selective color breeding is a Bulldog population that is conformationally incorrect, has many faults, and doesn't look like a Bulldog, has a much higher frequency of health problems, and can be mean, overly sensitive, submissive, or highly unsocial, all of which gives our breed a bad reputation. This is NOT responsible breeding.

Furthermore, the color Black is a genetically dominant color, trumping red and fawns. Color should not be confused with coat "patterns", i.e. Brindle (an overlay of black striping on a fawn/red/brown colored coat), Sable (black tipped hairs on a fawn/red colored coat) or Piebald (patches of white overlay over a red/fawn colored coat). If the population of black-bodied dogs gains a strong foothold in the overall numbers in the breed, it will take over, and we will lose our beautiful reds, fawns and fallows - never to get them back. Yes. It could happen. It's that serious.

As reputable breeders, whether BCA members or not, whether you show in conformation events or not, lovers of the Bulldog must take a stand to protect the future integrity of the breed. Or it will be forever changed. It has happened in other breeds. You can do your part by denouncing the breeding of non-Standard colors. Educate yourself on the issue and use every opportunity to be proactive in changing public perception, whether that is at shows, at your veterinarian's office, while walking your dog, at club events, Meet The Breeds, etc. If you have a personal website, consider devoting an entire page to the issue. And ADVERTISE your well-bred, healthy, health-tested, Standard-colored puppies! The color breeders excel at getting their "message" out with a very active internet and social media presence and are not afraid to promote their puppies and kennels. Why shouldn't we do the same? Get OUR word out, make our presence known, and educate!

**WE ARE REPUTABLE AND RESPONSIBLE BREEDERS.
WE HAVE BEAUTIFUL, HEALTHY, STANDARD COLORED BULLDOGS!**

