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## Some Comments Concerning Revisions to the AKC Weimaraner Standard: 1944-Present

By Elizabeth J. Wood (May 1992; rev. 10-98, 5-99)

In April and May 1991 two articles, "The Longhair Weimaraner" and "Weimaraner Coat Genetics -- Parts 1 and 2" appeared in *The Weimaraner Magazine*. These articles form part of a recent campaign to revise the AKC Weimaraner Standard with respect to the current disqualification of long-haired Weimaraners. However, these articles not only present a mistaken genetics of Weimaraner coat colors (which the writer of the articles has acknowledged and attempted to correct), but they also create a distorted history of the AKC Weimaraner Standard revisions disqualifying both long-hair and "blue" Weimaraners.

When the WCA originally moved to have longhair and "blue" Weimaraners disqualified in the early '50s, different rationales were offered for the proposed disqualification in each case. The 1952 "President's Report" of WCA President, Marion Kellogg, states the reason for proposing a disqualification of the longhair Weimaraner as follows:

"Long-hair is a recessive factor and ... if there is interbreeding between dogs that have the long-hair recessive factor with the short-haired, which is the dominant factor, some of the pups of such a litter would be short-haired, but carry the longhair factor. In buying a short-haired bitch you could not be sure she did not carry this recessive factor.[1]

In other words, the trait was considered detrimental because breeders would not be able to determine with certainty when they might be introducing it into their bloodlines. Although the WCA had earlier (in September 1951) condoned an experiment to see whether the longhair might be established as **a separate variety** it was under the condition, expressed by Howard Knight, that " ... any longhair litters containing shorthaired pups should not be registered or bred..."[2] By 1952, it appears that many breeders who wished to maintain exclusively shorthaired Weimaraner lines realized that this condition was insufficient to assure the "purity" of shorthairs. AKC had no *provision* for restricting breeding among varieties of a breed, nor any means of identifying the "carriers" of a recessive variation. Thus, accepting the longhair would make it extremely difficult, if not impossible to maintain any exclusively short-haired Weimaraner lines. In 1952 the WCA decided "... to sponsor and promote only the short-haired Weimaraner."

The 1952 "Report" also offered a rationale for the proposal to disqualify the "blue" Weimaraner:

" ...the [proposed] standard has clarified the question of color. The range of color is comparatively narrow. Dogs that do not conform to this rather narrow color band would be disqualified. While there are dogs in this country *today* which would be so disqualified as being outside the color specifications of the standard, it was the opinion of the Board of Governors that it was not what we are breeding or have in the country, but what we are shooting for as the ideal Weimaraner that should set the standard specifications.

There is no indication that there was any confusion or misunderstanding regarding the two coat variations, nor is there any indication that the German acceptance or rejection of either variation played a significant part in the WCA's decision. The two variations were related only in the sense that they were both coat variants not considered representative of the "ideal" Weimaraner.

Though AKC rejected the WCA's proposal to disqualify "blues" and longhairs in the 1953 Standard revision, both variants were classified as "very serious faults" and were **(mistakenly)** "lumped together" in the wording of the new Standard: "Any **long-haired coat or coat darker than mouse-gray to silver-gray** is considered a most undesirable **recessive** trait."

Nothing in AKC's "Weimaraner Standard File" or in any source I have consulted explains why or how the dark gray color, called "blue", came to be mistakenly classified as **recessive**. Before the 1953 Standard revision and again before the minor revision of 1959, Mr. Homer L. Carr had informed AKC that "blue" coloration in the Weimaraner was the product of a **dominant, not** a recessive, gene.[3] We can only speculate why the WCA and/or the AKC failed to investigate the discrepancy. Perhaps, once the AKC had refused to allow disqualification of these coat variants, the WCA felt the need to offer a substantial rationale for rejecting a color that had been **specifically included in the 1944 AKC Standard** for the breed: "*Color Gray (Silver, Bright, Dark, Yellow); the **Dark Gray may be either ash or blue...***" [my emphasis]. Thus, perhaps, the change in the Standard was rationalized by classifying the "blue" with the longhair as an "undesirable recessive trait."

By the 1960's, the movement to disqualify the coat variations had again gained momentum. The Weimaraner column of the August 1963 *AKC Gazette*, written by Cloie Bover reveals that, by then, a significant segment of the breed carried the recessive longhair gene. In addition, opposition to this variation had once again been voiced by the WCA: "They [the "Club" = the WCA] seem set against facing the fact that so many of our dogs contain the longhair factor and can reproduce it....[4] This remark itself may have solidified those who opposed the longhair. In any case, an AKC "Memorandum" of January 1965, concerning a conversation between AKC's Executive Vice-President, Alfred Dick and WCA President Gil Wehmann, suggests that support for the variety had waned: "Mr. Wehmann said that long-hairs are no longer a problem -- few if any are around and no one is pushing them as was previously the case." [5] Consequently, **when the Standard was revised in 1965, long hair became a disqualifying characteristic in the Weimaraner.**

The WCA also attempted to disqualify "blue" in 1965, but AKC once again refused this revision. The reason was offered in the AKC "Memorandum" quoted above: "... I [Mr. Dick] said that our [AKC's] Committee was quite concerned over the number of letters we had received protesting such disqualification, adding that the Board was generally reluctant to publish even as a proposal a change in Standard when the American Kennel Club was aware of some considerable sentiment against the change."

By now, apparently, the genetic facts of the matter were evident. Long hair had been correctly identified as the product of a recessive genetic combination. But, the so-called "blue" (or dilute black) coloration, on the other hand, is dominant to the typical "gray" (dilute liver) color. Nevertheless, "blue" coloration retained the "very serious fault" status it had gained through being incorrectly classified with the longhair as a recessive trait. The WCA merely deleted the mistaken "recessive" qualification and the new 1965 Standard -- under the heading "Very Serious Faults" -- simply read: "A color darker than mouse-gray."

In the late '60s and early '70s, the movement to revise the Standard and disqualify "blue" had once again gained impetus. By this time, many (if not most) WCA members had no memory of how or why "blue" had originally come to be considered a "very serious fault". But many who owned and showed typical "gray" Weimaraners were offended when "blues" -- that is, dogs which, according to the official AKC Standard for the breed, exhibited a "Very Serious Fault" -- continued to appear and to win in the show ring. Several rather nasty incidents were reported to AKC, and there were complaints on both sides. In 1971, after two rounds of voting, and in spite of more than a hundred letters written to AKC protesting the change, the Standard was revised once again. **Since 1972**, when the current Standard became effective, **distinctly "blue" or "black" coloration has been a disqualification in the Weimaraner.**

The recent campaign to "requalify" the longhair coat variation, involving both articles in *The Weimaraner Magazine* and separate mailings to the WCA membership, has contributed to a history of ignorance and WCA

misinformation that has persistently plagued issues involving the coat variations and their disqualification throughout the history of the Breed in this country. "The Longhair Weimaraner," for example, suggests that the disqualification of the "blue" was somehow responsible for the *disqualification* of the longhair: "... for reasons I am unable to elucidate, except that they were lumped in with the blue issue, the Weimaraner Club of America disqualified the longhair Weimaraner ...". Nothing could be further from the truth. As I have pointed out, although the two coat variations were falsely "lumped together" as recessive traits in the 1953 revision, it was the "blue" that suffered the consequences of an incorrect genetic classification. This mistaken classification still affects understanding of the coat variation today: one still hears "recessive trait" ignorantly offered as the rationale for the "blue" disqualification.

"The Longhair Weimaraner" suggests, and "How the Longhair was Disqualified by the WCA" virtually states, that there just wasn't a **good** reason for the disqualification of longhairs. In fact, if one views the Weimaraner as a short-haired breed, the longhair disqualification was based on a very good reason -- to discourage the perpetuation of a **recessive** (hence, difficult to manage) coat variation not considered typical of the breed.

Genetic ignorance has played a significant part in the history of WCA misinformation. The genetic rationale for rejecting the longhair variation was clearly, though incompletely, presented in 1952. It did not effectively deter proliferation of the recessive longhair gene, not, it seems, because so many breeders **chose** to breed longhairs, but because the genetics of the trait were incompletely understood. Now, although the basic genetics of long hair have been presented in "The Longhair Weimaraner", the other side of the genetic picture has been neglected: there is a noted omission of the "genetic" rationale -- the "**why**" -- of the WCA's original move to reject the trait. This side of the picture, of course, is not favorable to the longhair cause. But it needs to be understood if there is to be a **choice** of Weimaraner coat types in the future. The truth is that management of an "undesirable" (depending on one's point of view) recessive gene is difficult at best; it is nearly impossible in a general breeding program where a basic understanding of elementary genetics is the exception rather than the rule.

Still another example of how the "longhair campaign" has distorted Weimaraner history and obscured Weimaraner coat genetics is the suggestion, in "The Longhair Weimaraner", that the disqualification of the "blue" color was somehow based upon a decision by the German Klub (or its officials) that a certain dog -- Casar von Gaiberg -- was cross-bred: The author justifies her attack on the "blues": "Because some Weimaraner owners have trouble understanding the difference between the longhair and the blue disqualification, I feel I must include here the difference according to the Germans [sic.] historians." But, although evidence does suggest that a charge of this nature was discussed (in 1950 -- soon after Casar von Gaiberg was imported from Germany), AKC's "WSF" shows that neither Casar nor any other "blue" Weimaraner was **ever determined** to be cross-bred, and AKC **never** allowed the disqualification on that basis. Casar von Gaiberg was registered in the AKC studbook in September 1950. As far as AKC is concerned, he, and all his descendants, "blue" and "gray" alike, are pure-bred Weimaraners.

Study of the AKC "WSF," the transcript of the "Minutes of the 1950 Board of Governors Meeting", and *Weimaraner Magazines* from 1966 to 1971 -- the years that separate the longhair and the "blue" disqualifications -- reveals that the WCA has almost traditionally ignored the German standard for the breed **unless** it accorded with the position the WCA **already** wished to take on a given Standard issue.[7] The WCA's disqualification of long-hair, despite the German Klub's protest ("Only the mother club is allowed to make up a standard") is itself testimony to this attitude.[8] In fact, it appears that the decisions of the WCA actually influenced the policy of the German Klub, rather than the other way round. By 1965, the year that the disqualification of long coats was approved by AKC, the Germans had placed a ban on breeding longhairs with shorthairs. **Pressured by the WCA**, the Germans then agreed to provide American breeders with information regarding the coat types of Weimaraners being bred in various kennels in Germany.[10]

Evidence that the Germans were willing to go to rather extraordinary lengths to preserve the American market for their dogs is so overwhelming that it cannot be ignored in consideration of these issues. This was especially true during the early years of importation following WWII and so, must be taken into account when considering the "story" of the "blue" Weimaraner. The transcript of the "Minutes of the 1950 Board of Governors Meeting", for

example, suggests that, **if** the Germans formally rejected Casar v. Gaiberg's registration, they rejected it only **after** some members of the WCA had pressured them concerning the status of the dog.

In fact, the 1950 "Minutes," letters from the German Klub President Heinz Kullmer, and several old German articles all suggest that dark gray colors, including the color called "blue" in this country, were acceptable (and often called "mouse-gray") in Germany up until the WCA made it clear that the color was not acceptable in America and actively solicited a German response on the issue in 1970.[12] This response, the second of two letters written by Herr Kullmer on the subject, was printed with an English "translation" in the *Weimaraner Magazine* in April 1971.

The "translation" distorts the context and wording of the original letter so that it **appears** to be an unqualified rejection of the "blue" color in the Weimaraner.[13] Yet once again the WCA membership was misinformed regarding the so-called "blue" Weimaraner. The second, disqualifying vote of the WCA membership followed immediately upon the publication of this letter.

It is simply a distortion of the history of the breed in this country to make the German acceptance or rejection of a given coat variation in the Weimaraner **appear** to be the crucial factor in the WCA's rationale for accepting or rejecting that variation. The WCA, or any faction thereof, merely uses German precedent as a rhetorical device to support a given position. This was true in 1950 when the issue concerning Casar von Gaiberg was debated, it was true in 1970 when "blue" Weimaraners were disqualified and it remains true today in the argument for accepting the longhair. To my knowledge, the only **gray** color variant *specifically* disqualified in the current German Standard is a "brown tint," but **we** don't disqualify this coloration, nor are we *considering* its disqualification.

Yet the articles in question do more than offer an unsubstantiated and genetically unsound "history" concerning the "blue" Casar von Gaiberg.[14] The incorrect genetics and unlikely "Dobe-Weim cross-breeding story" presented in "Weimaraner Coat Genetics -- Part 2" (May 1991), advanced to corroborate this "history", promotes the false impression that many **living** "blue" Weimaraners may also be the result of such cross-breeding.[15] the fact that the Standard has discouraged the breeding of "blues" since 1953 does not alter the fact that, despite this discouragement, "blue" Weimaraners have been purely and **intentionally** -- that is, **by choice** (since "blue" is **dominant**) -- bred in this country for over forty years by breeders who believe them to be a **legitimate "gray" coat variation**. The historical evidence and the color itself -- dark gray -- *justifies* this belief. The pedigrees of "blue-grays" or "silver-blue agouti grays" are just as extensive as those of typical "liver-grays." Indeed **the "grays" that form many of our major bloodlines today are the descendants of one or more "blue" ancestor.**

In the course of this recent move to revise the Weimaraner Standard with respect to the longhair variation, do we really wish to claim that many of our typical "gray" Weimaraners are cross-bred because they are the descendants of an **alleged** cross-bred as the Elena Smith articles demand? On the other hand, are we prepared to produce longhairs, whether we like it (or them) or not, perhaps, simply because the gene is already so pervasive in certain Weimaraner lines that it is easier to accept it than to attempt to preserve any exclusively short-haired lines? It appears that the heart of the issue is just the fact that a number of breeders in this country, whose breeding carries the longhair gene, now wish to avoid the consequences -- embarrassment, financial loss, or whatever -- of admitting that many of their dogs will produce a disqualifying coat variation by promoting a revision of the Standard to make that variation acceptable. Or, perhaps, there's something more honorable in it: the disqualification has obviously failed as a means of managing the trait. Whatever the case, why not admit it and work toward a resolution of the real issue: namely, how we can so manage the long-hair recessive that those who prefer to breed only the short-haired variety will be able to do so and those who like the longhairs can have them? At least this tack makes sense. Is it really necessary -- or, perhaps, just easier and more efficient -- to promote an obscure and incorrect genetics of Weimaraner coats and to create mythological distortion of Weimaraner history, smearing the pedigrees of many well-bred dogs along the way, in order to make the longhair variant appear more acceptable? The old saying, "You can fool some of the people, some of the time..." still applies.

## NOTES

[1]The Weimaraner Magazine, July 1952. A copy of this issue is contained in the "AKC Weimaraner Standard File" (hereafter denoted WSF) researched by Elena Smith in her preparation of the articles, "The Longhair Weimaraner" and "How the Longhair Was Disqualified by the WCA" (WM, April 1991)

[2]quoted in Elena Smith, "How the Longhair was Disqualified"

[3]"WSF" Letter dated September 9, 1957, addressed to Mr. John C. Neff, Executive Vice-President, American Kennel Club. This letter contains a copy of a portion of the Carr letter written before the 1953 revision Referring to the mistaken classification introduced in the 1953 revision, Mr. Carr wrote:

"Before the American Kennel Club this Standard in 1953, I wrote to you advising that the ... statement was scientifically incorrect and that the gray color was the recessive to the dominant blue. You saw fit to disregard my warning. Page 6 of my letter to you of 1953 is enclosed herewith for your reference.

"For nearly four years now, the rank and file members of the Weimaraner world, assured by your endorsement of its correctness, has accepted this false statement as being genetically true and has been guided accordingly in its breeding practices.

[4]Quoted in Elena Smith, "How the Longhair was Disqualified"

[5]AKC "Memorandum" re: Gil Wehmann's conversation with Mr. Alfred M. Dick, in Mr. Dick's office on January 22, 1965. "WSF"; also quoted in Elena Smith, "How the Longhair was Disqualified"

[6]A transcript was made of the "Minutes of the Board of Governors Meeting" held on May 8, 1950 at the Hotel Ambassador in New York City. This meeting consisted primarily of the testimony of the Captain Holt who imported Casar von Gaiberg from Germany. [The first 42pp. of this 192pp. transcript are missing from my copy.] AKC's response to the WCA's initial attempt to disqualify the "blue" Weimaraner was published in the March 1953 "President's Report" (*Weimaraner Magazine*): "Mr. Neff stated that the disqualification of any dog with 'coat any other color than mouse gray to silver gray' was indefinite and could not be easily administered by a judge in the ring where disqualifications are claimed and judged; further, that this was pointed at a group of dogs, the so-called black or blue, and that **AKC was not convinced that this group of dogs are cross-bred or undesirable**" [my emphasis].

[7]The position taken by Netta P. Scott ["Our Standard," *Weimaraner Magazine* (March 1953)], is, perhaps indicative of the more general attitude of the WCA at that time: "We may consider the old German standard much as one would a rough diamond, and we, the craftsman who conscientiously polishes and cuts the precious gem to bring out its fine depth and flashing facets."

[8]"From the German Klub," *Weimaraner Magazine* (February 1966)

[9]See Gillian Burgoin, *Guide to the Weimaraner* (Suffolk Britain: Boydell Press, 1985), p. 29.

[10]"From the German Klub"

[11]According to the 1950 "Minutes" Casar von Gaiberg's German Registration papers were subjected to examination by a police forensic laboratory and no evidence of tampering could be found. Moreover, the "Comments" ("Anmerkung") on these papers, clearly initialled by Eric Kuhr, then President of the Klub, describe the coloration of the dog precisely.

[12]A letter from Heinz Kullmer, President of the German Klub, dated April 20, 1967, is contained in AKC's WSF. A second letter dated September 27, 1970, was published in the *Weimaraner Magazine* (April 1971). Articles providing evidence of "blue" (or dark gray )Weimaraners in Germany include: J. Carl Linke quoted in William W. Denlinger, *The Complete Weimaraner* (Richmond: Denlinger's, 1954), p. 36; Chief Justice Richnow, "The Weimaraner," originally published in "The German Hunter's Magazine" (October 28, 1923), translation by Ann K. MacHemer published in the 1980 "Supplement" to the WCA's *A Pictorial History of the Weimaraner, Vol. II*.

[13]The English "translation" published with the 1970 Kullmer letter in *The Weimaraner Magazine* for April 1971 mistranslates the German, obscuring its reference to the 1967 letter in which Kullmer had claimed, regarding a photo of a "blue" Weimaraner, "... this is only a short explanation to assure the American Weimaraner Club and Weimaraner friends that they have an approved Weimaraner acceptable to the German Weimaraner Club by scientific examination, whether you called it blue or mouse-gray." An example of the mistranslation of the 1970 Kullmer letter is as follows: the German, "... der bei Voraussetzung der Identität des Bild- und Originalfarbtones nicht anzuerkennen ist," referring to the same photo mentioned in the 1967 letter, is mistranslated to read: "This color and its shades will not be recognized in our standard." A more accurate translation of the German is: "... **assuming** the color (hue) of the photo and the original [i.e., the dog] are identical, [the color] is not recognized" (as translated by Reilly Translations, Gardens, CA; my emphasis). In 1967, Kullmer had regarded the color reproduction of the photo to be inaccurate; in 1970, although assured by an embassy from the WCA, Mrs. Helen Schultz, that the photo accurately represents the color of the dog, his doubt is yet evidenced by his qualification "der bei Voraussetzung" ("assuming").

[14]"Genetically unsound" because **if** Casar had been a Dobe-Weim cross, then he would have carried the recessive 'at'-gene producing tan-points and his line-bred offspring would have exhibited a much higher than average occurrence of tan-points. To my knowledge, this has not happened.

[15]I am referring to the remark made on p. 31 of "Weimaraner Coat Genetics -- Part 2": "Of course, some years ago, the German Weimaraner Breed wardens **determined** that the so called "blue" Weimaraner was produced **exactly** in this manner" [my emphases].

[16]By 1953 Casar von Gaiberg had sired at least eight champions, though his name has been omitted from the WCA's "Honor Roll of Top Producing Sires." The foundation bitch of "**Valmar**" Weimaraners, Ch. Von Gaiberg's Anna Schwenden, was a descendant of Casar von Gaiberg through both her sire and dam. The "**Hoot Hollow**" line was founded on Ch. Wetobe's Ballerina Ribbons, who was descended from Casar through her dam, Ch. Wetobe's Ballerina Deb. Weimaraners featured by such kennels as "**Smokey City**" and "**Silversmith**," which are bred upon Valmar and Hoot Hollow lines, are likewise "blue" descendants. *Many* kennels could be added to this list. A 12th generation "blue" descendant of Casar von Gaiberg is no more cross-bred than any of his 12th generation "gray" descendants, no matter how you wish to look at it.