

THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB

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REVISION of the STANDARD for WEIMARANERS

The Board of Directors of The American Kennel Club has approved the revision of the Weimaraner Standard, adding the sentence "A distinctly blue or black coat is a disqualification." under the heading "Coat and Color", and deleting the sentence "A color darker than mouse-gray." under the list of "Very Serious Faults". This revision will be effective December 31, 1972.

A number of letters were received by The American Kennel Club following publication of the proposed revision, from fanciers who favor the blue coat color. Many of these letters indicated lack of understanding of the procedures, purposes, and effects, of such a revision of the Standard.

The by-laws of The American Kennel Club provide that it "shall be the duty and privilege of each parent member Specialty Club" to write the Standard for its breed, subject to approval by the Board of Directors of The American Kennel Club. The Weimaraner Club of America is the member parent club for the breed, and the revision was submitted to the entire membership of the Club for a vote by mail ballot in accordance with the Club's by-laws. The provisions in the Club's by-laws with respect to revisions of the breed Standard correspond with the provisions recommended by AKC, and with the procedure generally followed by other breed parent clubs in revising their Standards. They require a two-thirds favorable vote of the persons whose ballots are returned within a period of not less than 30 days of mailing. In this case a high percentage of the entire membership voted, and 75% of the votes were favorable.

The primary purpose of any breed Standard is to give dog show judges a "yardstick" against which to measure the respective qualities of the dogs presented to them in the show ring. An important secondary purpose of a breed Standard is to encourage breeders to breed dogs that conform as closely as possible to the Standard. The purpose of dog shows is to afford recognition to the dogs which win awards at such shows, and which ultimately earn the title of Champion, because of their close conformity to the Standard; and thereby to promote the breeding of such dogs to improve the breed.

Many breed Standards require disqualification of dogs with coats of certain colors, or with certain markings. There is nothing new or unusual about such a provision in a breed Standard. Some Standards merely provide that certain coat colors or markings are Faults or Serious Faults. The silver gray color of the Weimaraner coat is a distinctive feature of the breed as is, for instance, the red coat of the Irish Setter.

In many breeds there is a minority of the breed fanciers who disagree with some provision in the Standard specifying that some color or certain markings, or some other physical characteristic not related to color, is a Fault or a Disqualifying Fault. The purpose of such a provision in any breed Standard is, of course, to discourage the breeding of dogs with this particular physical characteristic, or at least to encourage a breeding program designed to eliminate such Faults.

The Weimaraner Standard, since January 1954, has specified that a coat color "Darker than mouse-gray" was a Very Serious Fault. It is quite obvious from the correspondence in the AKC files over a period of a good many years, that Weimaraner fanciers, both those who favor the blue coat and those who are opposed to it, have considered that the coats of the blue dogs were "darker than mouse-gray". It seems equally clear that most, if not all, of the breeders who have purposely bred blue Weimaraners during the last 18 years, have known that they were breeding dogs which had a "Very Serious Fault" under the breed Standard.

The problem has been that the phrase "darker than mouse-gray" was never clear to many judges of the sporting breeds who judged Weimaraners, but who were not themselves breeders or exhibitors of Weimaraners. It has been obvious to AKC for some time that clarification of the wording was necessary. We sincerely hope that the revised wording will be clearer.

The Dog Show Rules provide that when a dog has been disqualified under the Standard for its breed, the dog may not again be shown until the owner has been notified by AKC that the dog's show eligibility has been reinstated. The owner of a disqualified dog, if he believes that his dog was improperly disqualified under the breed Standard, may apply to AKC for the dog's reinstatement. When AKC receives such an application, a committee of experts is appointed to examine the dog and to make recommendations to AKC.

This revision of the Standard does not mean that AKC will cancel the registrations of blue Weimaraners or refuse to register pure-bred blue Weimaraners in the future. The fact that a dog of any breed has a fault requiring it to be disqualified in the show ring, does not mean that it is ineligible for registration or that it is not a pure-bred dog of that breed.

The judge alone decides whether the dog should be disqualified in the show ring, except that when a qualified person files a written protest with a Bench Show Committee the decision is made by the Bench Show Committee. Either party involved in the protest may appeal to AKC from the decision of a Bench Show Committee. The color shown on a dog's registration certificate is not considered either by a judge or by a Bench Show Committee in making such decisions.

Weimaraner breeders who prefer the darker coat may continue to breed such dogs and to register them with AKC. They would, of course, be under some obligation to inform prospective buyers of blue puppies concerning their disqualifying fault under the breed Standard, just as they would be concerning any other major fault.

According to the best information available to AKC, the darker coat color can be eliminated in a few generations of selective breeding even when a blue coated dog or bitch is used in the breeding program. There would therefore appear to be no reason to fear that the outstandingly good qualities of any blue dog or bitch could not be passed on to future generations of the breed without retaining the darker color.