

Why Change the Standard?

-Robin Stansell

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Like many of you, I have been proud that we have made only three changes to our standard since it was written in 1896:

1. In 1914, Dudley nose was added as a disqualification.
2. In 1976, Dudley was changed to “liver colored” for the purpose of clarity.
3. In 1990, the standard was reformatted at the request of the American Kennel Club, but no wording was changed.

However, times have changed and recently there has been an explosion of non-standard color Bulldogs being bred and promoted to the public as acceptable, and even desirable. Although a few non-standard dogs such as black or black & tan Bulldogs existed in the past, Bulldoggers recognized that these were undesirable and they were not common nor purposefully bred.

The internet has changed dog breeding in many ways. “Designer dogs” showed how profitable breeding non-standard dogs could be if marketed well. The same is true with “designer” colors. These non-standard color breeders know well how to use social media and they have built a large market for their dogs.

How big is this problem? It is large and continues to grow! This chart shows a portion of the colors that have been registered for the past seven years. Blue, lilac, merle and others are simply called a different color when applying for AKC registration.

Alternate Colors	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Black & White	65	89	141	218	329	464	510	1816
Black, Fawn & White	56	69	122	142	226	330	365	1310
Gray & White	17	16	56	95	143	256	332	915
Bronze	25	35	38	76	119	153	206	652
Black, Red & White	24	38	68	84	84	142	133	573
Black	12	14	26	31	54	97	109	343
Gray	3	7	10	10	33	61	88	212
Black & Fawn	10	22	35	34	38	45	56	240
Total	212	290	496	690	1026	1548	1799	6061

Unfortunately, these off-color dogs are now being shown; a black and tan Bulldog, a merle Pembroke Welsh Corgi, and silver Labrador Retrievers. Some color breeder websites are **encouraging** their buyers to exhibit these dogs to force acceptance of the fad colors in the show ring.

Currently we cannot prevent these dogs from being shown. Under AKC judging guidelines, judges who award ribbons/points will not be reprimanded if the standard is not clear that these colors are unacceptable. The only way to make it clear is to disqualify non-standard colors. For example, a judge who gives a ribbon to a black and tan Bulldog or a merle Pembroke Welsh Corgi will not be reprimanded. However, a judge who gives a ribbon to a silver Labrador Retriever will be, and has been, disciplined for failure to respect a disqualification.

The Bulldog standard, although clear to us Bulldoggers, is not actually clear or definite on color. Color of coat is a total of four (4) points. Other parts of the Bulldog are given greater weight (6 for nose and 5 each for proportion and symmetry, skull, ears, wrinkle, jaws, shoulders, and back). Current standard language gives the impression that color is not as important as many other parts of the Bulldog.

What we understood was that as long as the dog had the listed colors, colors like muddy brindles, asymmetrical piebalds, or defective solid colors were only of lesser importance. But, what are the proper colors if we only read the Standard? The only color listed as undesirable is “solid black.” That leaves room for interpretation that any other color is acceptable, just not preferred.

Other breeds believed that the non-standard colors simply wouldn't enter the show ring. This was short-sighted. There are now champions and even national specialty winners in breeds without color disqualifications of the off-colors.

At the November 2015 Nationals, the BCA councilors voted unanimously to present the following change to the standard for a membership vote to make these colors a disqualification.

Color of Coat. The color of coat should be uniform, pure of its kind and brilliant. Colors are red, white, fawn, fallow, or any combination of the foregoing. Patterns and markings may include brindle, piebald, ticking, black masks, black tipping, and a minimal amount of solid black in piebalds. All other colors or markings are a disqualification. The merle pattern is a disqualification.

The BCA Councilors approved, with one nay vote, a standard revision relating to eye color. An additional sentence will be inserted in the **Head** section of the standard. It will be placed after the third sentence. ***Blue or green eye(s) or parti-colored eyes are a disqualification.***

In December 2015 these proposed changes were sent to the AKC Board of Directors for their review and to ensure that the changes comply with AKC policies. It is expected that the AKC Board will vote in February to approve these changes. When we receive notice that these proposed changes are in an acceptable format/language, a ballot will be mailed to the BCA membership for their approval.

I urge each of you to vote to approve both of these changes. These color disqualifications are the only way to ensure that no non-standard dogs achieve championship points.