

Our guest columnist this month is Brian Cox of Chesacola Chesapeakes. He and his wife, Angie, have been breeding Chesapeakes for eighteen years and exhibit in conformation, obedience, and hunt tests.

Unwarranted Disqualifications
(Unedited)
By: Brian Cox
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In the Chesapeake standard, there are only two reasons to disqualify a dog for color: black colored, and white on any part of the body except the breast, belly, toes, or back of the feet. Several times each year, judges have made unwarranted disqualifications due to color.

Case #1: In the fall of 1998, a male Chesapeake was disqualified for having white on the penis sheath. The judge said that it was his/her opinion that the penis is not located on the belly. This situation is an interesting one. If the penis is not located on the belly, then where is it located? According to books written on Dog Anatomy, the penis sheath is a sub-region of the pubic region of the abdomen, also called the belly. The belly is the undersurface of an animal's body. No dog with white on the penis sheath should ever be disqualified.

Case #2: Also, in 1998, a Chesapeake was disqualified because the judge said that they did not like the color. In this case the dog was brown with lighter and darker shadings, or self-colored. Self-colored is defined as one color, with or without lighter or darker shadings of the same color. There was no black, and there were no white markings involved, therefore this Chesapeake should not have been disqualified.

When referring to color, the standard states "The color of the Chesapeake Bay Retriever must be nearly that of its working surroundings as possible. Any color of brown, sedge, or deadgrass is acceptable, self-colored Chesapeakes being preferred, one

color is not to be preferred over another". As for the lighter or darker shades of the self-colored dogs, who is to say how much lighter, or how much darker the shades should be? If the colors blend well within the coat, there should be no controversy with shadings. Occasionally, other color variations appear in Chesapeakes such as masking on the face, or striping on the body or legs. These variations are not desired, but are acceptable, and are not sufficient reason for disqualification. Most color variations appear on deadgrass or sedge colored Chesapeakes. The deadgrass color is a camouflage color type that blends so well into certain hunting conditions, the dog can be practically invisible. The grasses in marshes and swamps also vary in color and shade.

When judging the Chesapeake, there are other aspects of the breed that are much more important than color, such as structure and balance, coat, head, size, and type. Color is worth four points in the standard. Why are judges disqualifying for perceived color faults? Could it be their lack of knowledge of the breed standard, or dog anatomy? True, the Chesapeake is not an easy breed to judge due to the many variations. But judges must never disqualify for characteristics that are allowed by the standard.

The American Chesapeake Club Judges Education Committee has a good program for presenting materials on this subject, and the breed in general. Judges should attend one of the education seminars, and also our national, or a large supported entry. This type of education is necessary for judges to see and appreciate all the colors, shapes, and sizes in our breed.

Comments are welcome, write to:

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