

**Report of the *Ad Hoc* Task Force on Little-ee Red  
to the Board of Directors of the CWCCA**

At the 2014 National Specialty, Best of Breed was a red bitch known to be little-ee red (clear red). Her nose color generated considerable discussion and disagreement on the Internet, and a request was forwarded to the BOD asking for an *ad hoc* task force to study the question of little-ee red dogs. The BOD appointed a task force which received an open-ended mandate to investigate the current state of knowledge about little-ee red and to report back to the Board with recommendations.

**BACKGROUND:**

**Issues:**

1. Little-ee red (clear red) dogs cannot be distinguished from normal red dogs by phenotype (what you see) except in the cases of dogs whose nose and/or eye-rim pigment has been affected.

**Under color, the AKC Standard says: "all shades of red, sable and brindle ..."**

2. In little-ee red dogs, the nose color pigment may vary from apparent black through various shades of grey to self-colored. In some dogs, this also appears as a "snow nose" issue, i.e. it changes on a cyclical pattern. Some noses may not be completely "filled in" with pigment.

**Under muzzle, the AKC Standard says: "Nose - black, except in blue merles where black noses are preferred but butterfly noses are tolerated. A nose other than solid black in any other color is a disqualification."**

**History:**

Only the AKC Standard has a disqualification for nose color. This disqualification was not in the original Standard nor was it in the first several revisions. It was introduced in the third quarter of the 20th century as a way of controlling the showing of other-than-blue merles (off-color merles).

Thanks to the thorough research of Sandi Hutchins, we surmise that this particular variant of red (little-ee red/clear red) has been present in the breed from early in the 20th century. This now provides explanations for some of the heretofore incomprehensible breeding results in terms of color of several early breeders and gives us a scientific explanation for the "rediscovery" of the blue merles.

More recently, we know that this allele resurfaced in North America through the importation of several dogs from the UK who exerted significant influence on the breed and who contributed to the wide-spread increased incidence of the allele through "popular sire" and "popular dam" effects.

### **Health:**

We have found no documented deleterious health effects of this allele in this breed, nor in any other breed that we reviewed.

### **Color:**

**Coat:** Little-ee red (clear re) looks like any other "shade of red" and is thus a "legal" color.

Little-ee red affects all other colors in the breed by masking their expression. So while a clear red dog will appear red to the eye, it may be any other color or pattern genetically. This now provides a scientific explanation for the dreaded mythic "hidden merle."

Previous attempts at explaining this possibility made no scientific sense. There is indeed a possibility for a hidden merle (no quotation marks) that is attributable to the masking effect of the clear red allele.

This raises a concern about the unwitting breeding of two hidden merles (Mm x Mm) which could yield a percentage of double merles (MM) in a given litter along with a high possibility of the documented adverse health effects of MM on both hearing and vision.

### **Nose Color:**

Unfortunately, we have not been able to establish a clear link or explanation in terms of the inheritance of nose color in clear reds. As previously stated, nose color can vary from appearing solid black through various shades of gray to self-color. And, various amounts of nose pigmentation and fill are also seen.

**This is an area that requires further study.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the CWCCA distribute this report as widely and openly as possible to the membership and to any other interested parties.
2. That the CWCCA fund further investigation into the inheritance of nose color and pigment distribution, and further investigate if there is any linkage between coat and nose color.
3. Given that there are no health concerns with this allele, there is a historical basis for the existence of this allele in the breed, and that there are genetic tests to indicate the

presence of this allele, we suggest that there are no bases for serious concern in these areas.

Given that the current mode of inheritance of nose color is not yet fully understood or documented and the masking effect of this allele on other coat colors, we suggest that there is a serious basis for concern in this area and thus recommend that certain steps (outlined below) be taken to deal with this.

- a) As we did with PRA (a health concern) in terms of testing and keeping records, we strongly suggest that we should do the same with clear red/little-ee red (not a health concern). In other words, we should test as broadly as possible as many breeding dogs and bitches as possible and keep a record of each animal's little-ee red status. Dogs can then be certified as ee-red clear by test or by pedigree. All animals not cleared by test or pedigree should be considered potential carriers and that presumption should be factored into breeding decisions.
- b) Clear guidelines should be established in the COE for breeding little-ee reds and/or carriers. For example, when using either a carrier or a clear red, all puppies should be tested and registered with the database.
- c) We most strongly encourage good genetics education for breeders both in general and specifically for color to be available at the National and Regional Specialties.

4. In terms of showing, we are not of one mind as to recommendations, so we will present the arguments and ask the Board to take them seriously into consideration. The options are as follows:

**Do Nothing:**

- i. This would mean no change to the current Standard. Nose colors other than solid black in any color other than blue merle would continue to be a disqualification. Butterfly noses in any color other than blue merle would continue to be a disqualification.
- ii. Although this is not a change in the Standard, if it is going to mean anything given what we now know, we will have to add this to judges' education and be clear about why we are leaving it in.
- iii. **This is the minority opinion on the Task Force.**

**Do Something:**

- i. We can make a decision as a breed club to attempt to eradicate this allele from the gene pool.

Unless this is a decision made world-wide, it is doomed to failure. Even if we do it only in North America, statistically it is almost impossible to reduce the incidence of a recessive allele to zero.

**While this opinion has been suggested on the Internet, it has no support on the Task Force.**

- ii. We make the Standard line up with the world-wide Standard.

We can choose to change the Standard and remove the disqualification. This would make both the nose color and the complete pigmentation no longer a major hurdle to either showing or breeding. It is a debatable question of whether we should continue to require fully pigmented black nose except in blue merles even though we would eliminate the disqualification. This would turn back the clock on a change that was made originally for the sake of some inter-breeder rivalries, and bring us back in line with the world-wide Standard.

**This is the majority opinion of the Task Force.**

The often-cited drawback to this would be that it might open up the Standard to more revision than just the nose. This is factually incorrect. The decision as to what issues will be presented to the Fancy (club membership) is under the control of the BOD of the CWCCA. However, factually it is AKC policy to not reopen a Standard after a change has been made for several years afterwards. Thus, opening a Standard for one change requires careful thought as to whether any other issues should be addressed (see below) but does not open a standard willy-nilly to any change.

- iii. On the other hand, perhaps it is time to review the Standard and remove all disqualifications and substitute the British wording:

FAULTS

Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault. The seriousness with which the fault should be regarded in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog.

Submitted with the unanimous approval of the *Ad hoc* Task Force to the BOD of the CWCCA.  
May 7, 2015.