



Colour Dilution Alopecia - 1897 Squib and Cracker

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When I first wrote this article nearly three years ago it puzzled me why Miss Ives, considered by Mr Hicks to be the 'facile princeps' of the colour blue - having made it her speciality, had so little to say about the subject in her book *Show Pomeranians*. A mere 28 lines of text noting 9 blue Poms with a little additional information in the breeding section. My version of this book was the 4th edition revised by Mrs Thomson in 1929 following the death of Miss Ives.

After buying the 3rd edition (pub.1919) updated by Miss Ives and reading the 1st edition (1911) the mystery was solved. Regrettably no less than 150 lines of text on blue Poms was edited out in 1929.

Needless to say Miss Ives' very important and useful information about CDA was removed!

Miss Ives wrote that blue had 'never been very popular' until she became involved and bred away from lines prone to coat loss 'scarcity of coat had been a drawback to the advancement of this colour' plus it was very difficult to keep the colour clear and produce the desirable pale blue colour - this she blamed on using popular 'sable stud dogs' and the trend to intermix whole colours with sables.

Background information

An article written in 1897 by May Bird for *The Ladies Kennel Journal* reviewed the year's show scene. It was noted that litter brothers Squib and Cracker both suffered from 'blue failing'.

Blue failing was a Victorian term for the condition also known as Blue Dog Disease, Blue Dog Alopecia and Blue Doberman Syndrome. Like Alopecia X this problem has different names from breed to breed. It is more commonly known as Colour Dilution Alopecia (CDA) and also is associated with the colour fawn (removed from the UK Pom Standard in 1909).

left - Here is an extract from the original article.

King of the Blues is the best blue Novice. If he was the happy possessor of a Pomeranian's coat, Cracker would be perfect, but alas his head, legs, and back, have only down upon them. His brother Squib has a better coat, but even he suffers a little from the "blue failing." Leyswood Tom Tit is the only parti-colour of note that has appeared at large shows, though another of this variety, Daisy, has done a good bit of winning in the North of England. Most of the old winners have appeared with success in 1897. The only Pomeranian who has passed for his Championship is King Pippin. Black Prince after a very successful career, retired into private life, and cruel death has removed several dogs who were more to their owners than successful winners.

As you can see the condition was apparently so common that no explanation was given of 'blue failing' - the reader would have known what it meant. Both Squib and Cracker continued to be shown regardless of their coat loss and were also used at stud.

In Mr Hicks' book of 1906 he mentioned that Squib and Cracker were 'of very fine bone but rather scanty coat, especially on the back'.

Miss Leslie Williams' book 'A Manual of Toy Dogs' (1919) first published in 1904 noted 'blues, which, unless large, generally have hairless ears'. So in her opinion the problem still existed in the smaller size - regardless of what Miss Ives had to say in 1911.

Note - 6lb Cracker had a worse case of CDA than his 7¼ lb brother.

Finally Mrs Byron Hoffman the American contributor to Mrs Parkers' book (1937 edition) said that about 1928 some Poms (including her own) produced blues but they were not shown - she does not give a reason for this.

Mrs Thomson noted (1929) 'the colour never became popular ... practically ceased to exist'. She cited breeder Mrs Stratton's recent blue revival as uphill work and 'much ill-luck has been her portion'.

As a general observation German historian Strebél noted in his book 'Der Deutschen Hund' written in 1904 that inbreeding the blue colour leads to baldness. And on this note it is also worth mentioning that alopecia in the tiny Black & Tan Terriers often commented on by Victorian authors was usually attributed to 'in -and- in ' breeding. These viewpoints may well have influenced Miss Ives' thoughts. (See footnote on in and in breeding)