

Coats and Color

By Laura Reeves, member Judges Education Committee

Author's note: *What follows is a re-print of a WireNews article first published in 2006. Since that time, the GWPCA membership has voted on a new standard. The language regarding coat color in the revised standard **remains the same**, as does the position of the GWPCA Judges Education Committee, reiterated below.*

Let's look at the issues surrounding GWP coats and color, starting with the solid liver dogs, perhaps the least understood and appreciated of several iterations of the GWP. Solid liver dogs are one of the breed's foundation types of dog. The mother line for most solid liver dogs traces back to Pudelpointers in Germany and Italy. There are excellent solid liver dogs to be found in the country today. They have the correct coat asked for in the standard. They have correct conformation. But many judges pass them over because they aren't "typical" or they are considered sort of "plain Jane" -- no flash. Neither of these is a correct decision. Good solid liver dogs should be adjudicated equally with good ticked dogs.

Part of the myth of solid liver dogs is that they all have short coats. Let's recall that a one-inch long coat that is "straight, harsh, wiry and flat-lying" with minimal furnishings -- of whatever color -- is very acceptable and preferable to a soft, open coat with profuse furnishings -- whether on a ticked, white or solid liver dog. We are prioritizing by function. A correct tight coat of any color will be more protective for the dog in a hunting situation than a soft, open coat, also of any color.

White dogs have achieved much more acceptance in this country than the solid liver dogs. Though in Germany white dogs are not allowed, the AKC standard says "The coat is liver and white; usually either liver and white spotted; liver roan; liver and white spotted with ticking and roaning; or solid

liver. The head is liver, sometimes with a white blaze. The ears are liver."

The coats on white dogs also run the gamut from too short, to correct, to too long, soft and open. The myth that white dogs by definition have softer coats is inaccurate. They can be flashier in the show ring than a ticked or solid liver dog, but again correct coat and functional structure need to lead the judging priorities in this breed, not color or flash.



A dog with a naturally very dark liver color will have a better coat than a dog with a lighter liver color. Typically, when I see a dog with a sort of light chocolate color to its head and liver patches, I see a softer, more open coat. The liver color that is so dark as to be mistaken for black, seems to correspond almost inevitably with the coarse, dense, correct coat we are all striving to

produce.

As regards the line in the standard which states "Any black in the coat is to be severely penalized," it needs to be read in context with the rest of the standard. Our standard describes a liver dog -- liver head, liver ears, liver nose, liver and white coat. With that in mind, this line would indicate that any black in the coat (*of an otherwise liver dog*) is to be severely penalized. This would be a highly improbable situation. While some judges may mistake a very dark liver dog for black, they can always verify the coat color by checking the nose color. Without exception, a liver dog will have a brown nose and a black dog will have a black nose.

Addendum, 2012:

The standard calls for four areas of severe penalty. One is explained above, regarding color. It is important to note that all areas of the standard should be respected. We recognize judges can only

judge what they are presented, but please keep in mind our club's desire to maintain an active, functional, dual-purpose dog by heeding ALL elements of our standard.



The additional listed severe penalties are:

"...dogs that are either over or under the specified height (24-26" for dogs, smaller but not under 22" for bitches) must be severely penalized."

"A short, smooth coat; a soft wooly coat; or an excessively long coat is to be severely penalized."

And, a very direct corollary,
"Extreme or excessive grooming to present a dog artificial in appearance should be severely penalized."

This is no different than other breeds with which you might be familiar that restrict or outlaw trimming in order to preserve the breed's character. "A dog must have correct coat to be of correct type." That means the dog needs to have correct coat by **breeding** rather than **manufacture** in order to reproduce that quality. While we can agree it is a dog SHOW, it also is a judgment of breeding stock, not a grooming competition. The judges, breeders and exhibitors must work together in this area.

There is no question Wirehairs are a low-entry, low-number breed. Type and style vary radically from region to region. In spite of this, or perhaps

because of it, quality dogs which meet the standard should be valued and rewarded accordingly. This enables our breeders to continue moving toward the goal of creating "versatile hunter(s) built for agility and endurance in the field."



Photo Caption(s):

The photo illustrations show GWP's in the show ring, the field and the home. These are dogs presented in correct, natural coat with minimal grooming. Several also illustrate the dark liver pigment which is generally associated with desired coat texture.