

May 1, 1983

To: Breed Standard Committee

From: Betty Nelson

Subject: Breed Standard Revisions

Any attempt to revise the breed standard without a reasonable solid set of guidelines based on facts as we know them today will only lead us farther down the path of the show type and the working type. I would like to propose the following guidelines –

- I. Take a good luck (measurements, photos) at dogs with UD, TD (and our only TDX) and RD & ATD. If the sample isn't large enough, use OTD and CDX dogs – but really look at our performance dogs. Any changes in standard should be made in the direction of their type(s).
- II. What can science tell us about changes we are considering? I for one wonder where our extreme color prejudice is leading. As color genetics chairman, I feel that we must understand which colors are linked with physical defects before any tightening of color standard is permitted.
- III. Some personal comments.

Our strength (as far as a sound, healthy, intelligent breed) at present rests with our comparatively large and varied pool of genes. Absolutely the worst thing we could do would be to establish a breed standard that narrowly delineates physical type while ignoring intelligence, trainability, temperament and physical soundness other than these physical structures that are easy to evaluate.

Temperament faults are numerous. On one hand we have the shy dog that is aware of everything. These dogs often make good working dogs but are a disaster in the breed ring. The opposite to this – a dog that is always the exuberant extrovert who can't concentrate for more than a minute and who either sees none of his environment or doesn't care, this dog is a disaster a performance and a natural for the breed ring.

Reproductive failings are common. Small litters, abnormal or irregular cycles. Dogs dying at 10 years from old age alone is extremely disturbing. If possible, look at the dogs who are still active in performance at 10 years. They have something very desirable. Size seems of concern to many breed ring supporters. In fact, it is the heavy bone plus size that limits a dog's agility and endurance. A dog tall or short in inches can be a useful working dog. I wish you could see all the full time working dogs in this area. The long haired Border Collies and Aussies are all shaved – too much coat to allow them to work. Almost any of our breed ring dogs have too much coat for working dogs in this area. Dogs that work on permanent pasture can carry more coat. As I see the difference between performance dogs here and the show ring dogs – the working dogs have less coat, less bone and less of the highly sought

after show colors. The performance dogs not only have working instinct, but they listen to their handler – their attention span is long – they train easily. Perhaps these last qualities are the most important for the future of a working breed. As far as color – if merle is associated with transposable DNA as suggested by Lamoreux and Whitney in their article in last spring's *Journal of Heredity*, we [should] understand the full extent of this before ANY changes are made in the color [section] of the standard. [ED note: Dr. Sponenberg produced a paper in 1984 with the following abstract, based on Nelson's research: "A homozygous merle Australian shepherd bitch produced two nonmerle offspring and 64 that carried the merle allele. The two nonmerle offspring produced no merles when bred to nonmerles, indicating that the germinal reversion to nonmerle was stable. This occurrence is further evidence that the merle allele is due to a transposable DNA element." In 2005, a study proved that it was.]

We should give Kirk Bend's *The [omitted] Pediatry* a chance to prove itself.

I've got the nucleus of dogs [omitted] (myself and cooperating breeders). [If we] can possibly disprove what has been [omitted] written on the heredity of Aussies [omitted] eye problems.

We don't know enough about [omitted] genetic abnormalities. We should [omitted] and study our varied gene pool [omitted]. Remember the genetic conditions that [omitted] all but destroyed the usefulness of many breeds. Coat color and conformation are easy to measure. Let us not forget MORE IMPORTANT features – so difficult to assess – that make the Aussie what it is: sound intelligent, trainable, and useful.

Let's keep whiskers on dogs, too.