

What is a Color Headed White?

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It has been asked many times, "What is a color headed white?" Breeders are asking how can you tell when a dog is a piebald, a mismark or a color headed white? These breeders want to know where the drawing line is and what is the difference between these dogs and a double merle. There are those who say that if the color headed white is allowed to be shown that they will ruin the breed, that mismarks will be shown or worse yet the defective double merle would be shown. All of these arguments are nonsense and are being used as scare tactics for the uninformed breeder. I am positive that once the facts are given the Sheltie breeder today is quite intelligent enough to understand these differences and use it wisely in a breeding program.

There are color headed whites behind every Sheltie in the USA today, there is not one line today that does not have a color headed white behind it. In the book by Maxwell Riddle titled "The New Shetland Sheepdog" on page 24 is an article written by Rev. Oddy in 1908 telling of a very little known breed of dog on the Shetland Isles, the first color mentioned is "WHITE AND SABLE MARKING." It does not appear that the color headed white ruined the Shetland or English Shelties either.

Breeding for the current fad has caused more damage to the breed than the presence of the color headed white. Piebalds, mismarks and double merles are easy to identify by just taking a few minutes to learn these differ-

ences. Piebalds, mismarks and defective double merles are just as undesirable for showing to those breeders wanting the color headed white recognized. Just take a few more minutes and learn how to use color headed whites and white factored dogs in a breeding program.

I have rewritten the description on color that would include the color headed white, known as white factored whites. This new description would narrow down the approximate amount of body spotting a white factored white dog can have and can't have in order to be shown. It also eliminates the double merle from being shown as these dogs are not white factored whites. Since the face markings are a totally different set of genes to the white factoring, the color headed white Sheltie will have a normal color head and face markings that you would otherwise find on the more solid colored dog. This is the main difference between the white factored white and the double merle, along with the double merle having most likely limited sight and/or hearing, which the white factored whites do not. Also a double merle can ONLY be produced by breeding two merles together whether they be sable merle or blue merle. The doubling of the merle gene affects the face markings, leaving these dogs with excess amounts of white and/or all white heads and bodies, plus the diluted sight and hearing.

The rewritten description on color is as follows:

COLOR—Black, blue merle, and sable (ranging from golden through mahogany); marked with varying amounts of white and/or tan. White factored whites, must have normal colored heads, have predominantly white bodies, with or without spotting in any of the colors above, ideally not to exceed approximately 25 percent color spotting (head color excluded), dogs with the blue merle color are to be examined to assure normal sight and hearing.

FAULTS—Rustiness in a black or blue coat. Washed out or degenerate colors, such as pale sable and faded blue. Self-color in the case of blue merle, that is, without any merling or mottling and generally appearing as a faded or diluted tri-color. Conspicuous white body spots on other than white factored whites. White factored whites with over 25 percent color spotting (head color excluded).

DISQUALIFICATION—Brindle.

To give you a better idea of what would be acceptable and unacceptable as far as markings go for the white factored white Sheltie, I have done up some examples of both. Since we cannot walk around to the other side of our dogs, we will consider that they have the exact markings on the other side. To help you to understand how to use white factoring and color headed whites in a breeding program to their full potential, please refer to some of the other articles in this issue.

STALKING THE ELUSIVE WHITE FACTOR continued

If you do not wish to incorporate the white factor into your breeding program, it is best to take the following measure: carefully question the stud dog owners, or anyone from whom you wish to buy a dog. Don't be afraid to ask about white factoring if the issue is important. It is your responsibility to ask; the breeder with whom you are working may consider the white factor to be of no importance. If you ask, it is their responsibility to be as honest as possible concerning your inquiries. Try to acquire a wide knowledge of pedigrees with pictorial research being crucial.

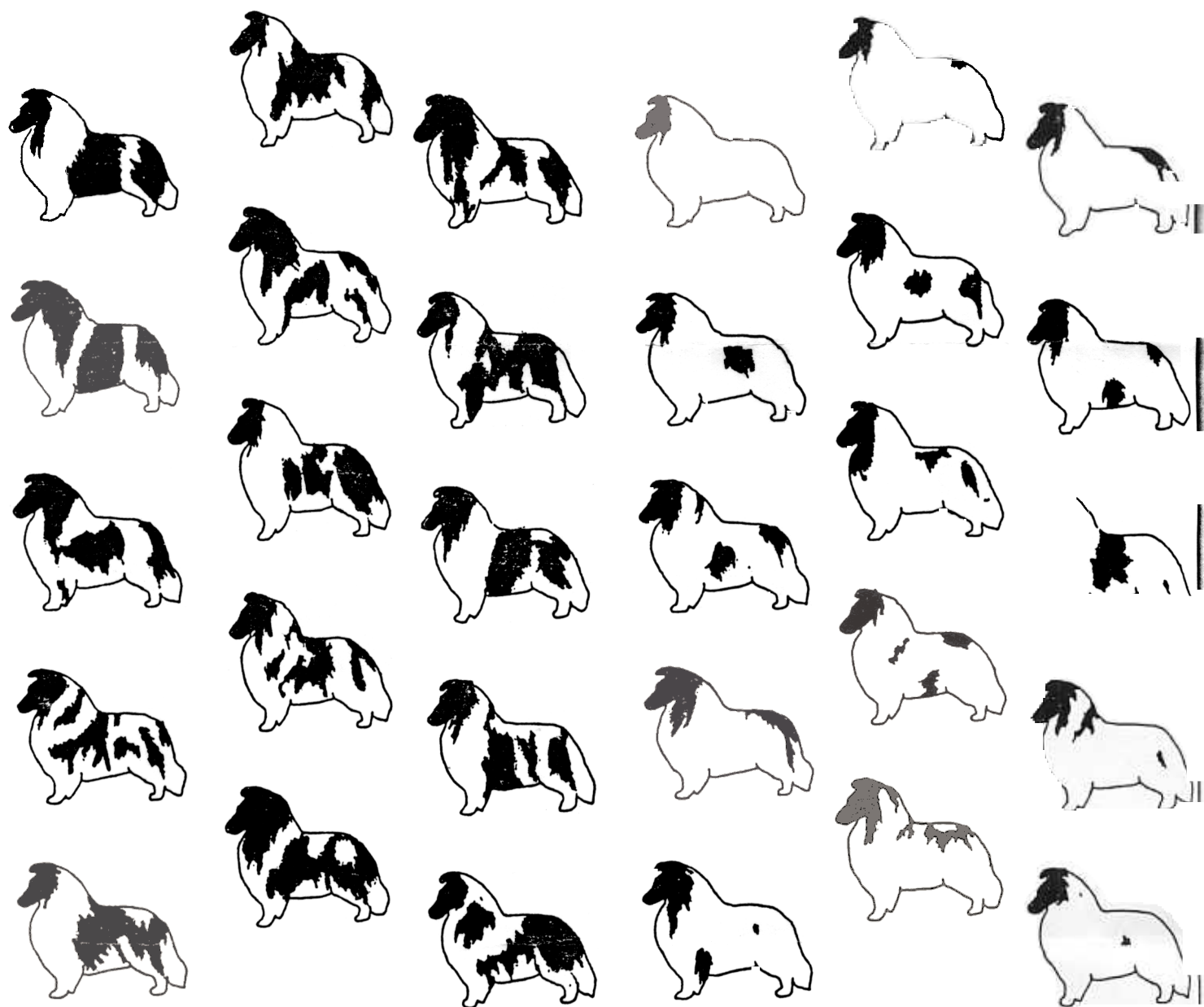
And lastly, if drastically, avoid all dogs who show white stifle markings, or any of the other aforementioned indicators of white factoring. It has been suggested that you use dogs who have no white factoring on either side of their pedigree for three or four generations. This will not positively guarantee the absence of the white factor, but it makes a fairly good bet.

Mere physical examination cannot absolutely ascertain the presence of the white factor. Even breeding a suspected (s^w) allele carrier to another white factored dog may not prove conclusively that both dogs carry the

(s^w) allele. The white factor can be worked with to avoid a color headed white. A breeder only needs to be careful, and know the background of the dogs with whom he or she is working.

It is to be remembered that the white factor is not a fault, nor is it a calamity. The white factor is not something new to the breed. It has been a part of the genetics of the Shetland Sheepdog since the breed's beginnings. And it shows no sign of disappearing.

Next issue: UNDERSTANDING WHITE FACTORING (SIMPLIFIED),
by Joyce Hansen



Piebalds
(Unacceptable)

Color Headed Whites
(Acceptable)