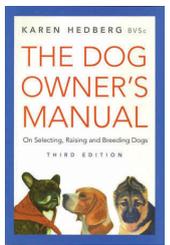




VET CHAT

An extract from *The Dog Owners Manual* by Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc

Available for purchase from Dogs NSW for \$63.60 + p/h



Pigmentation of Newborn Puppies

by Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc



Many people have misleading conceptions about the appearance of newborn puppies of a particular breed. To the dismay of their owners, most puppies are born with pink noses and pink pads. This is quite normal and the pigmentation of the offending areas will usually start to change within a week. Breeds that have pink skin on and around the nose take longer.



Puppies Born White

Some breeds which are not white as adults, are born white all over, notably the Dalmatian, the Australian Cattle Dog and the Australian Stumpy Tailed Cattle Dog. These breeds can have patches, but are otherwise born totally white. The puppies will start 'colouring up' at around 1-2 weeks and look like perfectly normal puppies of their breed by three weeks of age. Patches of solid colour are present at birth. Unfortunately, puppies have sometimes been put down at birth when owners (and occasionally the vet) were ignorant of the 'normal' birth colour of the puppies of these breeds.

Other breeds that are born predominantly white and change colour after birth are generally those that have heavy flecking or ticking through their coats, eg. English Setters, English Springer Spaniels, English Cocker Spaniels. Similar to the breeds above, the white areas will start ticking up within 10-14 days.

In some breeds, white puppies are a major fault and these puppies are usually put down at birth, especially white Boxers who are particularly prone to skin disorders and cancers when older.

Deafness and White puppies

Breeds where puppies are born white are prone to **deafness** as the genes involved are closely linked. These breeds include Dalmatians, Cattle Dogs and Bull Terriers. The Merle gene can carry deafness and eye defects if the gene is present in two doses (a double Merle); so for this reason Merle to Merle breeding is banned. In a single dose this gene does not cause any issues. Old English Sheepdogs occasionally have a deaf puppy, this time associated with the blue eye gene.

Very Small white patches

Many breeds which should not have white on the adult dog, can often produce a puppy with small patches of white, generally only on the chest and the toes. Nearly 80-90% of the white area of these types of patches will disappear by three months of age. If there is white skin under the patch, then an area of white will remain - but it is usually small.

Pigment Spots on tongues

Puppies occasionally have dark pigment spots on their tongues, looking like a smutty ink spot. This is quite common and causes no problems whatsoever. These spots are occasionally looked for as an indicator of strong pigmentation in the adult dog but it is not certain whether this has any direct connection to the strength of genetic pigmentation.

Black tongues/mouths

Shar Pei's, Chow Chows and their cross bred offspring with other breeds have excessive black pigmentation of the tongue, gums and skin. These breeds and their crosses are born with bluish tongues and gums which can be very off putting to total novices. These will darken to a blue-black, Blue-black tongues are also a trial for the vet when these animals are anaesthetised.