

Circa late 1800's – A matter of Original Chow colors



CHINESE EDIBLE DOG AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW.

CHOW III – BLACK -THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS 1884



CHINESE EDIBLE DOG AT THE CRYSTAL PALACE SHOW.

CHOW VI -RED -THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS 1884

Discussions regarding what original chow colors were in China have come up many times over the years, so when I ran across this article in my collection today to clarify that only solid colors, with possible shadings on the britches and tail have ever been acceptable in all countries and registration systems, I thought it would be of great benefit to those researching the oldest of the old color theories. The author had extensive conversations with Mr Taunton (Walter Kelsey Taunton 1844 – 1927) who was a pioneer in importing the Chow breed from China. **He owned the first chow to be exhibited at Crystal Palace in England in 1880... a black bitch called CHINESE PUZZLE**

Since the very first CHOW STANDARDS were penned in 1906, both the English and American versions have stated only solid colored chows are acceptable, with the most recent Chow Standard stating only 5 distinct colors can be registered. Those being RED, BLACK, BLUE, CINNAMON (or fawn), AND CREAM. Over the years the breed has seen short lived “fads” of non conforming colors or “uniques” such as parti colored, piebald, black and tan and brindle striped, and blue merle chows being marketed to the public. These colors most often indicate mixed breed heritage and have never been a part of the Official Chow Chow Breed Standard in any country, at any time, and cannot be given a registration number as one of the unorthodox colors in purebred registries.

Additionally, the blue merle gene can carry with it a host of health issues including deafness and blindness buyers, please do your research and talk to multiple breeders, your veterinarian, and your local purebred breed clubs about your potential new addition before purchasing. Also, be aware that NO COLOR IN THE CHOW BREED IS CONSIDERED ANY MORE VALUABLE THAN THE OTHERS.



Mr. Taunton's black chow bitch "Chinese Puzzle"

I would imagine this article reflects pretty accurate reporting as Mr Taunton was an authority of the Chow Breed in his day. I have a few more pre 1900 articles I will add to this page when I find them again that state the same color ideas so one can view a nice cross section of reports (and opinions)

ARCHIVE NOTES BELOW-BOLD UNDERLINED TEXT CLICKS TO ARTICLES

- Both [CHOW VIII](#) and [BLUE BLOOD](#) mentioned have their own profile pages you can read
 - The mention of the “black tinged or mixed up brown called “bronze” perked my ears up, as I wrote an article about [BROWN CHOWS](#)
 - [BLUE CHOWS](#) also get their share of press in this article, as well as what the author refers to “so called cream” and [WHITE CHOWS](#)
 - Note that the bright red , maybe what we call mahogany red today, is mentioned as becoming rare and hard to find this early on as breeders started “manufacturing” colors
 - Deducting from other articles I have where the term “patched” is used regarding chows, it described a shaded dog, either blue or red for the most part, who bear very distinct lighter shadings on the britches , chest and tail, yet those colors are blended with the main body color. The famous [CHOW VIII](#) as perfect of a chow as could be, was faulted at the turn of the century by many for his lighter patches on his britches .
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which win prizes are more or less patchy, and many of them are much paler in colour in their hind quarters than elsewhere. At a recent show where the Chow-chow classes formed a very important item, a champion prize was awarded to one of the so-called blue dogs, he being placed over several admirable black and red specimens. This caused considerable surprise, and an admirer of the breed stated that in China the "blue" dog is not considered worthy of cultivation, and holds the same position as a black Newfoundland does in this country when tinged with brown. As a fact, the bright, richly red colour, which, at one time comparatively common and always attractive, is becoming rarer and rarer, and very few really first class red specimens are now to be found. There are, as already stated, only these red and black colours acknowledged

Since the Chow-chow Club has got into working order its special variety of dog seems to have increased in public estimation, and obtained quite a fair share of popularity. So far this has not wrought much change in his appearance, but certain colours or shades of colour have been introduced, one supposes, to give variety to the breed. The colours originally known to us were black and red, though Mr. Taunton has told us of a black and tan, and white specimens have been heard of. Now we have so-called "blues," which seem to be a bad slate colour or a more or less washed out black; and there are so-called "creams" or yellows, which are more a pale fawn, or a very bad faded red, than anything else. And another manufactured, or wrongly produced, or irregular, colour, black tinged or mixed up brown, called "bronze," is being cultivated and encouraged by the specialist club, though it is not alluded to as such in its description any more than are the "creams." Still, at the most recent show of the Chow Club, which took place at Westminster, in December, 1898, leading prizes went to so-called "cream" and "bronze" coloured specimens.

A friend of mine bred these cream-coloured or yellow puppies from red parents, and he found that breeding generally from red or black or fawn parents, puppies of any colour or shade of colour might be produced. At present only whole coloured are recognised by the Club, but some of these

and valued in China, and the richer and deeper in hue the better. This is not only my opinion, but that of others, including one who resided in Canton for eighteen years, and had bred numbers of Chow-chows. He says that the “so-called ‘blue’ colour when it does appear is only a freak, and contends that animals of that shade and ‘cream-coloured’ are only produced because the deep, dark, velvety black and the rich red are disappearing, and the latter, the original colours, require encouragement, and not the pale and faded shades.”

It may be mentioned that until quite recently puppies two or three months old, and either red or black in colour, could be purchased in the market at Hong Kong for about 3s. 6d. of our money, and sailors were not averse to bringing one or two over, which they could easily dispose of at a profit. However, now that dogs have to be quarantined on their arrival in this country from a foreign station, the importation of Chows will not be so large as it has been. Doubtless there are plenty with us to sustain the breed without any risk of its degenerating, unless fanciers, as they show an inclination to do, neglect the original colours in favour of novelties.



This famous Chow VIII is one of the dogs mentioned below. [Click to enlarge](#)

The few shillings for which, in some instances, a Chow puppy could be bought in his native country is no criterion of his value here, for not very long ago the well known and excellent red specimen Chow VIII., a red dog, was sold by Mrs. Faber, a great admirer of the breed, for £100, and the same lady, a few days later, paid to Mr. Sprengel £50 for his red bitch Carrots. Both these animals excel in brightness of colour; indeed, the last named gentleman has been particularly successful in having bitches which produced very richly coloured puppies. There are at the present time quite a host of admirers and exhibitors of Chow-chows, foremost of whom must come Mr. W. R. Temple, until lately the secretary of the club, and to whose energy has been due a couple of shows confined to Chow-chows and other foreign dogs. Lady Granville Gordon owns some fine dogs, her Blue Blood, irrespective of colour, being one of the best; and another noteworthy “blue” is Leyswood Blue Bell, bred by Mr. Temple. Mrs. Burgess, Miss Casella, Mrs. Woodcock, Mrs. Janvrin Dickson, Miss Salter, Mr. R. Sprengel, Mr. C. O’Dowd, Miss S. Hayward, Mrs. Garnett-Botfield, Miss A. Gordon, Mr. A. P. King, Miss E. J. Hunt, and others own good specimens. But the best kennel of Chow-chows ever got together is that belonging to Mrs. J. V. Faber, of Shotley Bridge,

Durham, where many of the very best specimens of the day are to be seen, including Chow VIII., Singapore Boy, and others almost equally good.

THE ARTICLE CONTINUES WITH WHAT BECAME THE FIRST [1906 CHOW STANDARD](#) BASED ON [CHOW VIII](#)

It is important to note that in 1925 the references to the various colors was removed from the [1925 STANDARD](#)

The listing of acceptable colors was returned to the [1986 STANDARD](#) for the same reasons the author cites around 100 years earlier

The club's description of the Chow-chow is as follows:

"Head.—Skull flat and broad, with little stop, well filled out under the eyes.

"Muzzle.—Moderate in length, and broad from the eyes to the point (not pointed at the end like a fox).

"Nose.—Black, large, and wide. (In cream or light coloured specimens a pink nose is allowable.)

"Tongue.—Black.

"Eyes.—Dark and small. (In a blue dog light colour is permissible.)

"Ears.—Small, pointed, and carried stiffly erect. They should be placed well forward over the eyes, which gives the dog the peculiar characteristic expression of the breed—viz., a sort of scowl.

"Teeth.—Strong and level.

"Neck.—Strong, full, set well on the shoulders, and slightly arched.

"Shoulders.—Muscular and sloping.

"Chest.—Broad and deep.

"Back.—Short, straight, and strong.

"Loins.—Powerful.

"Tail.—Curled tightly over the back.

"Forelegs.—Perfectly straight, of moderate length, and with great bone.

"Hindlegs.—Same as forelegs, muscular and with hocks well let down.

"Feet.—Small, round, and cat-like, standing well on the toes.

"Coat.—Abundant, dense, straight, and rather coarse in texture, with a soft woolly undercoat.

"Colour.—Whole-coloured black, red, yellow, blue, white, &c., not in patches (the under part of tail and back of thighs frequently of a lighter colour).

"General appearance.—A lively, compact, short coupled dog, well-knit in frame, with tail curled well over the back.

"Disqualifying Points.—Drop ears, red tongue, tail not curled over back, white spots on coat, and red nose, except in yellow or white specimens."

N.B.—Smooth Chows are governed by the same scale of points, except that the coat is smooth.

A Chow-chow is from 40lb. to about 55lb. in weight, and his numerical points may be given as follows:—

	Value.		Value.
Head and expression...	15	Back and forelegs.....	10
Stern or tail	15	Hind legs and loin ...	10
Coat	15	Mouth	10
Colour	10	General character	15
	—		—
	55		45

Grand Total, 100.