

ASK OUR VETERINARIANS



Dear Dr. Schmidt, Why does my dog Bella have blue eyes? Chuck

Dear Chuck,

First of all, blue eye color in dogs is caused by a lack of pigment within the iris. The more pigment a dog has, the darker the eyes will be. If less pigment is present, the eyes will appear bluer. There are several different reasons that this may happen. One cause is albinism; however, this is rare in dogs. Another has to do with the amount of white hair around the face. Since white hair is caused by lack of pigment in the hair, this can also extend to the nose and eyes, leaving fewer pigment cells which will leave the eyes looking blue. More commonly, blue eye color is a side effect from the gene responsible for hair color, called the Merle Gene, which also can affect eye color. This gene not only dilutes the pigment in the hair and nose, but it can also dilute the pigment in the eye, thus again, leaving the blue color. And, last but not least, Bella may simply have a separate gene for blue eyes where hair color makes no difference at all. Some breeds are famous for their blue eyes, and others are just plain lucky to have them, like yours truly, Dr. S. Some eyes get all mixed up and have one of each color...these are called "wall eyes." If an individual eye has a mix of 2 colors in one iris, it's called a "split eye." An interesting trait in dogs with blue eyes, is that they lack a special reflective layer in the back of the eye, so that if you shine a light in their eyes, the back of the eye will reflect RED, and darker eyes will reflect a shade of green or gold (I'll save the reason for that for another article). I'm not sure which category Bella falls into, but I'll bet she's a looker. Have a Great day,

Submitted by: Dr. Doug



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