

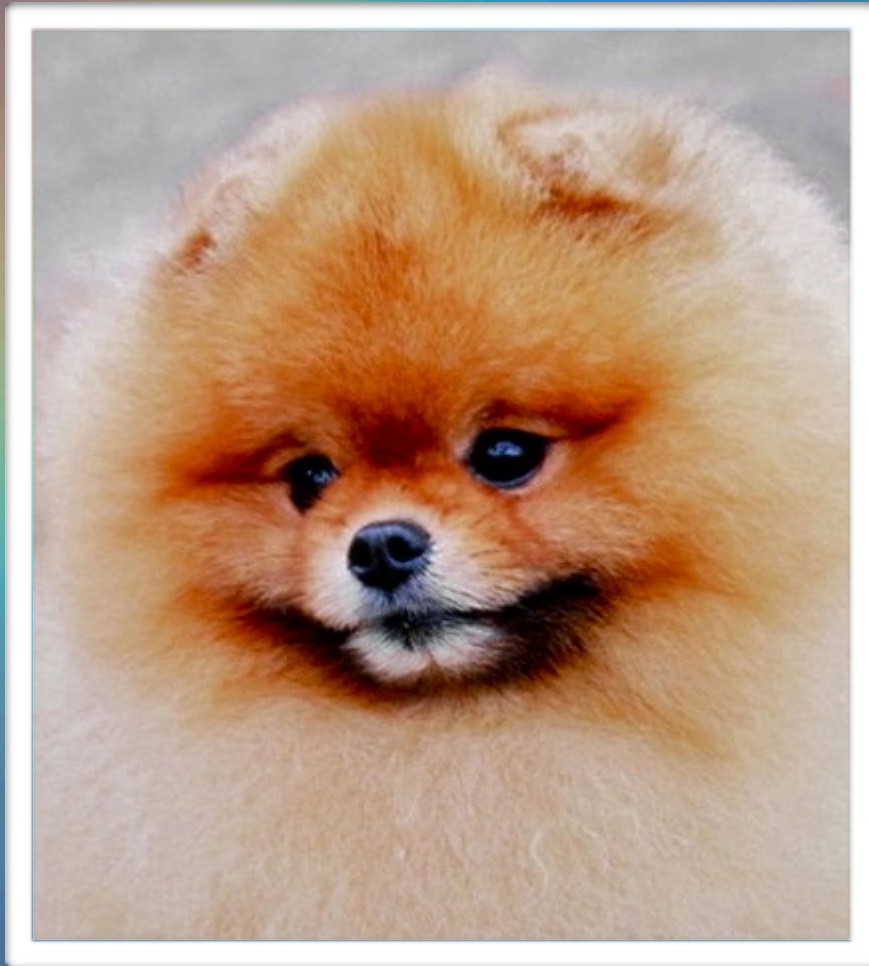
BSD in Pomeranians

An Identification Guide

In Loving Memory and in Tribute to

Multi BIS/BISS Ch. Starfire's Wicked Mean N Nasty

“Luther”



The Pom that WOULD have, COULD have and SHOULD have had it all...
if his career, and life were not tragically cut short by BSD

One of the Many Faces of BSD



This breeders make the decisions...
but the Pomeranians pay the price

BSD in Pomeranians

An Identification Guide



WE CANNOT SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS WITH THE SAME
THINKING THAT WE USED WHEN WE CREATED THEM

ALBERT EINSTEIN



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BSD The Pomeranian Plague



What is BSD?

A Brief Overview of the Plague of the Pomeranian Breed

Alopecia X is a condition that has become increasingly prevalent in the Pomeranian breed. Alopecia X is a skin condition that is seen in a handful of breeds but has, over time, become increasingly prevalent in the Pomeranian breed. It has many names, including hair cycle arrest, coat funk, but the vast majority of Pomeranian breeders refer to it as Black Skin Disease, also known as BSD.

BSD causes abnormal shedding that shows in change in hair color, texture and a gradual, symmetrical, nonpruritic, and non-inflammatory hair loss on the trunk, tail, thighs, and neck which spares the head and front legs. Hair loss initially involves the guard hairs, leaving a woolly puppy coat. Exposed skin may become darkened and scaly. on either side of the body hence the name Black Skin Disease. Some breeders have described the coat as feeling dead. What is interesting about BSD, is that it is a diagnosis of exclusion. The veterinarian will rule other causes of hair loss such as hypothyroidism, Cushing's disease, or elevated sex hormones from testicular or ovarian sources. If your dog has been tested for low thyroid, Cushing's Disease and a variety of skin disorders etc. and nothing has been found, but your dog has coat loss and blackened skin that cannot otherwise be explained, you will probably receive a diagnosis of BSD.

It is very hard to speak definitively about Alopecia X or Black Skin Disease. Why? Because it has been hidden, denied, and outright lied about since it first reared its ugly head decades ago. Pomeranians breeders have been frightened of the stigma attached to such an unsightly and devastating condition. Some breeders lie about the true BSD status of their dogs. In doing so, they have brought fellow breeders with BSD clear dogs into the equation. Dogs with BSD can take months to years to show signs of the disease *It has been both viewed, and treated, as dirty little secret of the Pomeranian world.* To be frank, it really is not the condition that is threatening this breed, but rather it is the *lying about the condition* that has brought the entire breed to the edge of a precipice. There is no shame in producing an animal with BSD provided you have not bred affected parents. Breeding Poms who are BSD affected is seen as unethical by those who are working hard against the eradication of the disease.

It is said that BSD is now behind every show line in North American. What is even more frightening is that because a handful of breeders have disseminated BSD genes around the world by knowingly selling dogs that they knew would eventually be affected with BSD. This is now a global epidemic.

BSD can be eradicated, but only if the breeders get into integrity and stop breeding affected dogs and known carriers. The judge's also have a role to play in saving this breed and that is by learning to identify incorrect coats and stop rewarding these coats in the ring. The key, however, lies in education and putting the welfare of the breed first and foremost. Puppy honors are over in a matter of months. Breeders and judges must work together to ensure normal coated Poms are exhibited and awarding honors to dogs that will still be able to be shown in the veteran's class. It will take discipline and forbearance, but it can be done.

What a Non BSD AFFECTED Pom puppy should look like at 5 Months of Age



We Have the BSD Marker...

It is Pomeranian Puppy Coat at 5 Months of Age!

Alert the purebred dog media—we have the marker for BSD—it is the coat of 5 month-old Pomeranian puppies. The hair of a 5 month-old Pom puppy is the absolute indicator and precursor for BSD. It is the first hurdle to overcome on the path to correct Pomeranian coat. BSD clear Poms will go down to their guard hairs by 5 months of age. The ones that will go on to have correct coat that will last a lifetime will grow in a thick stripe of harsh, almost brush textured coat that shows in a thick and increasing stripe on their topline.



This is exactly what you want to see in a 5 month-old BSD CLEAR Pom. They have completely lost their puppy coat, and they have a thick brush of hair growing up along the spine. If they do not look like L.C. Chihuahuas, the dog will be an affected or a carrier for BSD.

Other than a touch around their mane, there should be no grey fuzz or cotton coats on Pom babies. Pom puppies that roll their coat—defined by an incomplete shed, where the dogs does not completely shed the puppy coat and has new coat growing into the old hair will be affected with BSD if they are male, and carriers for BSD if they are females. PERIOD.

To put a finer point on this matter, if you see a 6 or 7 month old fuzzy grey puppy, you are looking BSD in the face. They may or may not go bald, but they will, for sure, be carriers. To use ANY puppy, for breeding, that does not go through the proper coat change, is to choose to perpetuate disease for yet another generation.

Show me a cotton coated Pom puppy, and I will show you a dog that HAS to be retired young because their coat will not continue to bloom and mature throughout its life. Poms, like Maltese, and many other toy breeds, SHOULD IMPROVE with age. A 6-year-old Pom should be resplendent in full coat. Seeing a dog over 3 years of age in the ring is now the exception, rather than the rule. As long as judges keep rewarding the glorious BSD puppies of the future, the breed's welfare will suffer.

Rolling Puppy Coats



Rolling Coats

The Hallmark of a BSD Carrier

The biggest threat to the Pomeranian breed is not the BSD AFFECTED Pom, it is the BSD CARRIER. Unless breeders behave with absolute integrity, and are honest, first and foremost with themselves, then this breed will be lost.

Breeders must pay absolute attention to the coat development of their puppies. The 5 month old Pomeranian puppy's coat does not lie. The male puppies that remain cotton coated, or roll their coat will become the affected males in the months and years to come. The bitches that either remain cotton coated or roll their coats will, for the most part become the carriers of this disease. Yes, some bitches are BSD affected and as this condition becomes more prevalent we are seeing many females become affected, but for the most part, the females roll their coats. What is even scarier still is that some will eventually shed out and will have coats that do appear normal, but these bitches will be the dams of the BSD affected/carrier puppies of tomorrow.

What is a rolling coat in Pomeranians? In basic terms, a rolling coat is one that does not shed out completely. The new hair grows in amongst the old growth in a plug-like fashion into the emerging adult coat.



A Rolling Coat Side View and Topline Growth

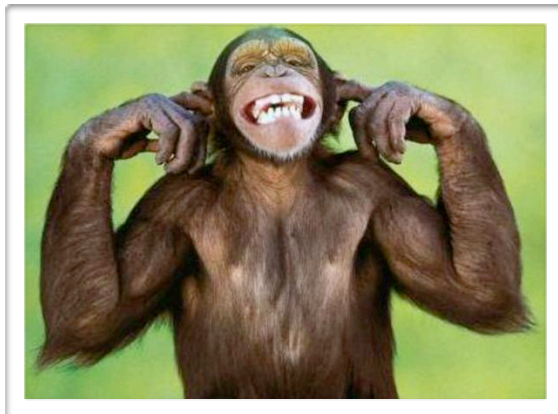


A Proper Coat Side View and Topline Growth

Both Puppies Are 5 Months of Age



A Rolling Coat does not shed out completely. The new hair grows in amongst the puppy coat.



The Monkeys

Don't believe everything you see, hear or speak!



Most breeders feel that Poms that go through the “monkeys” or “uglies” are BSD clear. There is absolutely no correlation between that “awkward stage” of Pomeranian development and BSD. BSD status is indicated by the process of shedding down to the guards hairs at 5 months of age, along with a change in the color and texture of the new coat growth. Period.

People need to divorce the concept of gangly period of a Pomeranian puppy's life with the idea that it is a safeguard against BSD—because it is not. Just like the vast majority of children go through an awkward stage between childhood and the teenage years, so do most Pomeranian puppies. Almost every Pomeranian puppy will get ugly between 3-6 months of age. “Ugly” per se, means nothing in terms of BSD. Losing some coat and looking awkward is a normal developmental stage in a Pom puppy's life. Doing a coat change indicative of BSD status in the years to come is an entirely different process that, sadly, not many Pom puppies go through these days. Far too often some breeders see some coat loss and assume that to be a safeguard against BSD. In order for a puppy coat to indicate increased safety against BSD, the puppy coat should almost completely fall and be replaced by new and properly textured coats. It is clear that many breeders need more and clearer information on proper coat development. I hope that as many as possible will heed this warning. Moving beyond BSD will require breeders to redefine what the “ugly stage” (4-6 months of age) means. It is not how awkward the puppies look—their awkwardness has no bearing on their future coats. If you reward those cotton coated Pom puppies of 6 and 7 months, you are awarding honors on dogs that will bring this breed down in the months and years to come.

Identifying Pom Puppies with Coat Problems



Don't Keep Cotton-Coated Puppies



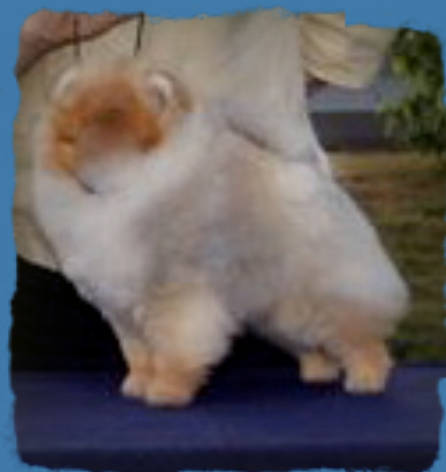
Don't breed Poms that do not lose coat at 5 months



Eliminate Poms with Grey Bodies and Orange heads



Dull hair lacking shine is a sign of BSD



Don't breed to studs with Grey Puppy Coats

The TAIL often tells... the TALE



TAIL HAIR should be LONG and THICK



With enough volume to spread on top of back

Cotton Coated Puppy at Maturity



Diagnosed with BSD
at 26 Months ...

4 months after
winning a National
Specialty



This Pom Was Represented as having had the proper coat change

This is NOT what you want a 6-month-old puppy to look like

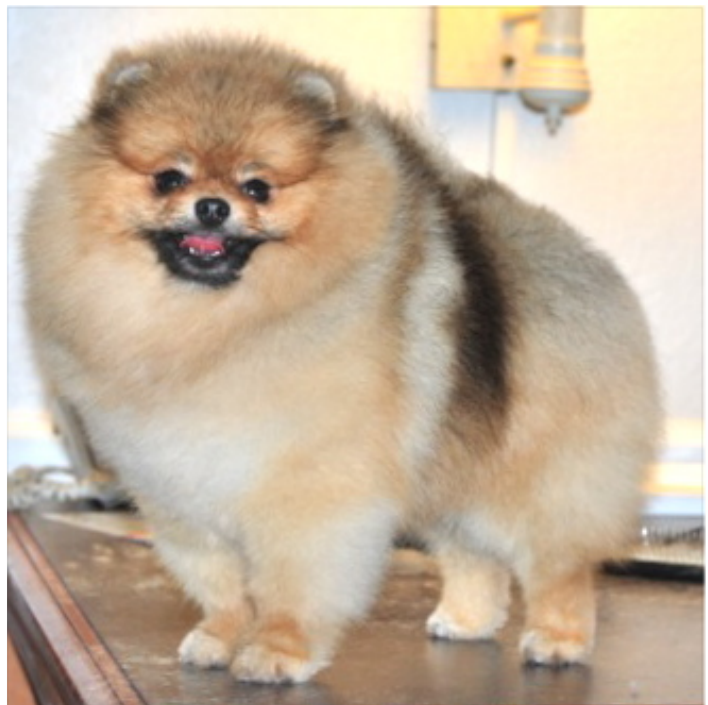


This is what you do NOT want to see in a 5-6 month old puppy. Note the profuse cotton coat and lack of color. Dog is pictured mature on left with a normal “looking” coat.

This dog was represented to the buyer as being free from BSD. Both his parents were said to be BSD clear. He was said to have had the proper coat change. He won a National Specialty and was sold for \$20,000 cash. Four months after sale, the dog was diagnosed with BSD. The purchaser found out the the dog’s sire had also been diagnosed with BSD. The breeder lied to the prospective client to make the sale. The purchaser bred to the dog and had a single puppy litter of one male. The male puppy was neutered and placed as a pet by the purchaser. The purchaser never again used this dog for breeding.

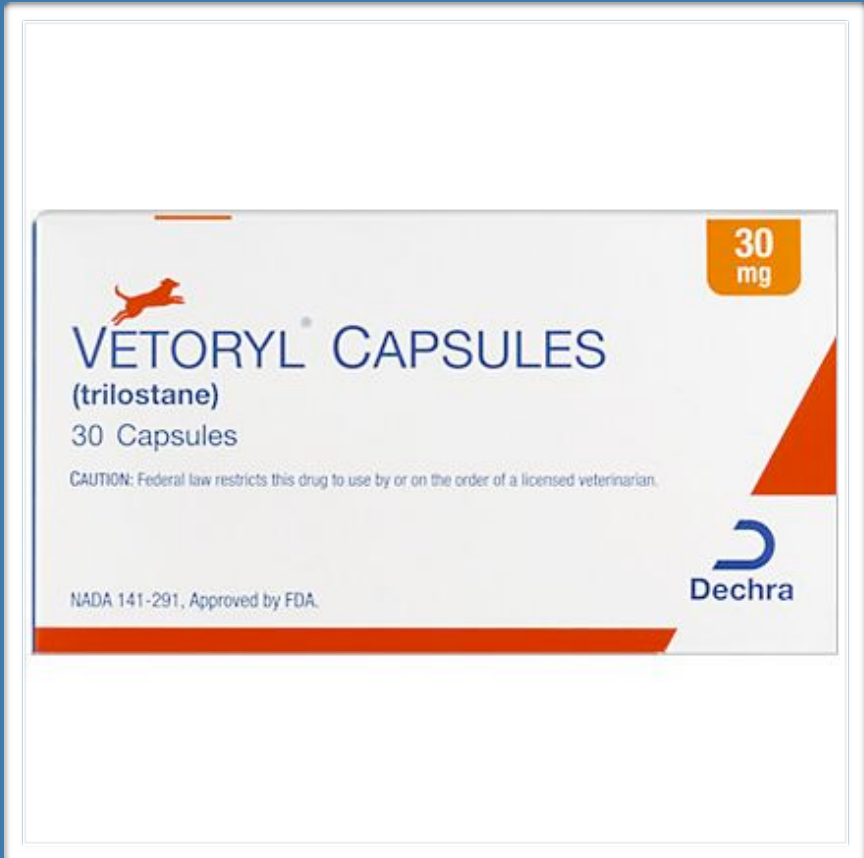
Incorrect Adult Coats

What NOT to Reward



Correct Adult Coats





Spotting Medicated/Regrown Coats

Melatonin, Vetoryl and the Mysterious Russian Vaccine

Fooling the Judges... and Everyone Else

When a Pom is diagnosed with BSD is a cosmetic disorder which often does not warrant aggressive treatment. Neutering of intact dogs is recommended and often causes temporary or permanent hair regrowth due to alteration of hormonal levels. Medical treatment options which can cause hair regrowth in some animals include: melatonin, trilostane, and lysodren. Less commonly used drugs include: growth hormone, methyltestosterone, prednisone, and lupron. Many of these drugs can have adverse side effects and should be used under careful supervision of a veterinarian.

There is also, apparently, a Russian vaccine. While the use of medication has, according to a long-standing North American Pomeranian breeder who has been exporting dogs with BSD around the world. Breeders who knowingly breed and sell BSD affected Pomeranians, believe in smoke, mirrors and medication. Their strategy is to drug dogs, put them back in the ring and offer them at public stud. The leader went in search of the Holy Grail of BSD BIBLE—the vaccines in Russia that can restore coat on Poms. This person shared the protocol which is to shave the dogs down (except for the heads) give them a couple of well timed vaccines, and the dogs coat up in short order. They also can use this effectively on puppies who show signs of going into the disease. How is this known for certain? Via the emails from the breeding, who is a lifetime member of the American Pomeranian Club. So, there are a number of options, for those who would rather fool the judges and their fellow breeders rather than eliminate these dogs as showing and breeding animals. The vaccine has been said to be close to 100% effective. Of course the vaccine does not affect the genetics of the dogs. The affected and carrier Poms will go on to produce offspring affected with the same problem as their sire and dam.

The prognosis for hair growth is unpredictable. How effective is Melatonin? Well, depending on which dermatologist you speak with, Melatonin works on about 40%-60% of dogs. It is a naturally occurring substance and most dogs experience few, if any, side effects. For the most part, it works well—if it works. For others it is a band-aid solution that may work for a few short months and then seems to be rendered ineffective.

Some breeders who do not have success with Melatonin, up the ante and proceed to For those that find Melatonin ineffective, there is trilostane, manufactured under the name of Vetoryl. Vetoryl was first used for the treatment of Cushing's disease, a condition in which excessive levels of the hormone cortisol are produced. Cortisol is normally released from the adrenal gland into the bloodstream at times of stress. Excessive levels of cortisol can have very serious consequences for a dog.

The most dramatic case, thus far, has been with a former Maltese breeder who switched into Poms. Her Pom went into full BSD at 4 years of age. After having the dog diagnosed by a renowned veterinary dermatologist, the dog was given a specific dose of Melatonin. The results were dramatic. Within a week the improvement could be seen. The dog was on Melatonin for 8 weeks. The hair after 8 weeks was so fully recovered that Melatonin was discontinued. Now, two years after finishing Melatonin, the dog remains fully coated. Sadly, not many Pomeranians respond as well as this dog did.

How Effective Can Melatonin Be?

VERY!



18 months after Melatonin stopped – dog remains fully coated

A Most Dramatic and Permanent Recovery - Rarely Seen in Poms



But Don't Be Fooled—This Poms Still Has BSD—and is NOT used for Breeding

VETORYL

Dramatic Recovery... but at what COST?



Before Vetoryl



After Vetoryl

This dog was taken off Vetoryl because of brain seizures, secondary to Vetoryl use.

This dog recently passed away at just a couple of years of age.

Yet another Pom gone too soon

If Melatonin does not work, there is Vetoryl. Does it recover coat? Yes, but the price that the dog pays is astronomical.

Vomiting, diarrhea and general gastrointestinal signs were most commonly observed. Lethargy, inappetence/anorexia, heart murmur or cardiopulmonary signs, inappropriate urination/incontinence, urinary tract infections or genitourinary disease, and neurological signs were reported. Included in the US follow-up study were 14 deaths, three of which were possibly related to Vetoryl. Eleven dogs died or were euthanized during the study, for a variety of conditions considered to be unrelated to, or to have an unknown relationship with, the administration of Vetoryl.

Will the Pom recover enough hair to win BIS's? Probably, but the price that the dog pays in terms of health is far too high a price to pay because you are, literally, risking the life of the dog.

The Proper Evolution of Normal Coat

Following A Pomeranian from Pup to Maturity



10 Weeks



3 Months



5 Months



6 Months



7 Months



8 Months



10 Months



12 Months



18 Months



2 Years



30 Months



3 Years



The same dog winning under esteemed Pomeranian expert judge, Fabián Arienti, at 3 1/2 years of age

Starfire Poms BSD Experience



El Hottie as a Puppy



El Hottie Today

Starfire's BSD Experience

A story that can only be written in tears

When the top winning Pomeranian kennel in breed history, run by partners in dogs, and in life—Tony Cabrera and Fabian Arienti, was brought to its knees by BSD that should ring the bell of concern around the globe. By 2007, Tony Cabrera had been so pushed behind his ability to cope with the heartbreak of BSD that he realized that he either had to find a way to eradicate BSD or retire from breeding Pomeranian. This is the story of how he got to that moment in time and why he chose to take a stand, both personal, and public and work towards the elimination of BSD from his line.

For the first fifteen year this kennel really went from win to win—each successive generation seemingly stronger—with the Starfire Pomeranian—a harmony of structure, movement and exquisite breed type—type being cemented into the Starfire gene pool. By the time of the new millennium, however, this kennel began to see a problem in their coats. While these problems were, at first, rarely seen, there was an occasional dog would lose its coat at maturity. Had they had any idea of where this path was leading, Tony Cabrera maintains that their concern would have escalated into panic. The alarm bells, however, were soft and rarely rung, so Mr. Cabrera and Mr. Arienti continued on the path that would eventually bring them, and their breeding program, to its knees.

At first, we attributed the coat loss development to bad luck and rogue genes. As the incidences slowly started to rise, so did their concern and anxiety. Tony and Fabian had heard of other breeders facing coat loss issues, but they felt that their kennel had escaped the trap that so many had been ensnaring their competition for decades. BSD has always been the dirty little secret of the Pomeranian world—until Tony Cabrera brought it from out of the dark and into the cold light of dawn.

Tony acknowledges that when BSD first reared its ugly head in his breeding program, the alarm bells did not ring as loudly as they should. So, he ignored them for a while. Unlike many other kennels, Starfire, from the very outset, did not use BSD affected dogs for breeding. They may have bred a Pom prior to its showing signs of the coat loss condition, but any Starfire dog that showed signs of the disease was instantly retired from the breeding program. Tony and Fabian also have never lied, or concealed the BSD status of their dogs. In short, they are breeders who live in reality. They make a conscious decision to see things in the clear light of day and never through rose-colored glasses.

In Tony Cabrera's legendary article on coat BSD that was published in the December 2010/January 2011 issue of The Pomeranian Review, he divides the Pomeranian community into three separate groups. The first group adopts what can only be described as a fatalistic view. According to them, there have always been BSD affected Pomeranians, and this condition is a static and unchanging problem that will never be eliminated. The second group maintains that

Starfire's Wall Of Tears



BISS Ch.
Starfire's Here Comes Trouble
"Wolfie"
AFFECTED



BISS Ch.
Starfire's Hello It's El Hottie
"El Hottie"
AFFECTED



Multi BIS/BISS Ch.
Starfire's Wicked Mean N Nasty
"Luther"
AFFECTED



Ch. Starfire's Mary Lou
"Mary Lou"
AFFECTED



Ch. Starfire's Totally Tempting

CARRIER



Multi BIS
Ch. Starfire's Odiamé Mas

"Enzo"
AFFECTED

Ch. Starfire's Hello It's El Papi

"El Papi"
AFFECTED



Tony Cabrera and Fabian Arienti AKC Toy Breeders of the Year 2006

nothing can be done unless and until the BSD gene(s) is/are isolated, identified, and a test developed that will identify affected/carrier Poms. Then, there is the third group, who believe that the incidences of BSD have increased at an alarming rate, and that this condition is so pervasive that breeders cannot afford to sit and wait for a gene, a test, or a

cure that may never come. These breeders, Tony Cabrera is among them, feel that if nothing is done to eradicate, or significantly reduce this condition, that the Pomeranian breed will become like the Chinese Crested – with most of them bald—and a few with hair.

Although Starfire's biggest blow was, of course, their beloved "Luther" many outstanding Starfire Poms have succumbed to BSD. Unlike many kennels, however, Starfire Poms has not, to date, euthanized any dog, nor have they placed their BSD dogs with others. Their commitment to their animals is second to none. All of their dogs, BSD dogs and non BSD dogs have a home for life with Tony and Fabian. Their love for and commitment to the dogs is not based on their commercial value. They are as devoted to their dogs with BSD in the same way that they are devoted to their most recent BIS winner. What more can be said beyond we had the dream dog, the dream handler, the dream backer. Luther went was the dog that would have, could have, and should have but for BSD. We all saw Luther in his glory—what people did not see was when I picked him up from Bill's kennel—looking all the world like a canine chemo patient.

If you think that it was Luther that did us in—you are wrong. It was Luther. Then, it was El Hottie. Then, it was Wolfie, and a number of other truly outstanding dogs in between. After our last National win under Edd Biven, with Wolfie, I had reached my limit. I could no longer put my love, my time, *my life* into dogs whose dreams began and died within a year or two of each other. I could no longer push my heart beyond its heartbreak limits. I knew one thing, I had to find a solution or retire from Poms. That were the only two choices that were possible. Thankfully, I am not a quitter. How do you get out of a mess like BSD? You think your way out.

I am not here to point the finger of blame at anyone in particular. We have a problem that many people are ignoring, and I believe—no—I am certain that this is a mistake. When we began in Poms, we had the occasional puppy that was affected. Over the years, the percentage of puppies showing signs of BSD substantially increased. We spent more than two decades waiting for scientists and/or researchers to rescue this breed. The Great Indian Philosopher, Mahatma Gandhi urged us all to "Be the change you want to see in the world." So, that is what Fabián and I have done—despite the scorn and ridicule of others.

What The Poms Might Say If They Could Speak...

“PLEASE do not breed us if we are BSD affected. We want to live full lives. We want to live happy lives. We want to live healthy lives. We want to live long lives. We don’t want to be unhealthy, or the subject of ridicule by those who neither love, nor understand us. We don’t want to die young because someone cares only for our outsides—especially when what is real, true and most profound—lies within. Having hair has no effect on our ability to feel, to see, to hear, to love, or to trust.”

“PLEASE don’t breed us if we are BSD affected—especially if you intend to euthanize our babies that are born with, or develop shortly thereafter, the same condition, BSD, that we have. We love, nurture and attach to our babies. We don’t want to survive our puppies, anymore than you want to survive your children. We don’t want to carry, shelter and produce life only for some of you to decide to end these lives prematurely because you deem them unworthy, based solely on their lack of commercial value.”

“We did not make any of the breeding decisions. You made all of the decisions for us. Please accept responsibility for the actions that you took and made on our behalf. We don’t want to be subjected to suffering, or early deaths because we have no economic value. You have no economic value to us, but we still adore you. Everyone wants the lives of their babies to be better than their own. We don’t want to bring puppies into the world who have so little value that some will be killed because they cannot be sold. Would you want that for your children? Isn’t life, in and of itself, valuable? Please make decisions that take into account our best interests. We are counting on you to put our welfare first.”

“You know that if we were in charge, we would never knowingly do anything to hurt you because we truly love you—now and always. We don’t care if you are young or old, healthy or sick, or whether you have hair or are bald. We love you,

regardless, because we understand that what is really important comes from the inside.”

“PLEASE treat us with the compassion, empathy, sacrifice and love that we treat you with every single day of our lives. You are first in our lives. We don’t expect to be first in your lives, but we do deserve to, at least, be on your list of things that you value and love. We want to feel important in your world because you mean everything to us.”

“Our lives have VALUE—
with or without BSD!
Please, understand that
we want to leave leave a
legacy of love, and
paw prints
that make lifetime
impressions
on your hearts.”



“BE THE CHANGE
YOU WANT TO SEE
IN THE WORLD.”

MAHATMA GANDHI

The Judge's Role in the BSD Battle

Here we are—40 years post BSD and the situation is worse than ever. Most breeders can agree on only one thing when it comes to BSD: **that is that it is now so prevalent that it has infiltrated every single Pomeranian line in North America.** There is so much BSD in Asia, courtesy of certain lines, that during the World Show, in the summer of 2010, several breeders and handlers from the Asian countries were joking about how they had to sell their dogs before 2 years of age, so that they can get rid of them before they lose their coats. The coat of a Pomeranian is their crowning glory. **A Pom without hair it simply is not a Pomeranian.**

Poms have always been described as the *heartbreak breed* because of the high mortality rate of the puppies. There is still a high mortality rate in neonates, but we have another mortality rate to be concerned about. That is because some of the most longstanding and *supposedly reputable* breeders, have an equally high mortality rate for male dogs that show signs of juvenile onset BSD. There are emails that prove, beyond all doubt, that some pillars of the Pomeranian world, euthanize puppies that cannot be sold. “Euthanize” is a rather sanitized word, isn't it? Let's speak plainly and say that some breeders will choose to breed affected parents, and then when the puppies show signs of juvenile BSD, (if you use affected Poms, you will get BSD), they kill the puppies because they have no commercial value. So, the breeder makes the decision—and the dogs pay the price. Does that sound moral, ethical, or compassionate to you? Can you imagine what will happen if organizations like PETA find out about the dirty little secret of certain Pomeranian kennels? The AKC was, apparently, inundated with calls when *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* had a BSD Pomeranian that the breeder suggested euthanizing. It is not a question of **if** the animal rights people find out—but rather **when** they find out.

What can the dog show judges do to help end the never ending circle of breeding affected Poms, and showing these cotton coated puppies before they lose their coats? **Stop rewarding Poms with incorrect coats in the ring.** It is as simple, or as complex, as that. Learn to spot incorrect coats in the ring and do put these dogs up. That clearly is the only thing to do to bring these breeders into reality.

The puppies are the big problem. Those adorable cotton coated puppies, with the heavy leg furnishings, are the BSD affected Pomeranians of tomorrow. Breeders have shown that they have no compunction about breeding Poms solely for puppy honors. Some dogs will be medicated, shaved and have their coats regrown. That happened this past year. One kennel that has been euthanizing juvenile affected male puppies saw the coat recovery on the Melatonin re-coat seen previously in this guide. This lifetime member of the American Pomeranian Club had told the breeder that they had intended to euthanize one affected, but winning puppy. She gave them the protocol recommended by the specialist because she wanted to save the life of the dog. The dog's life was spared. Then, he was re-coated, shown in the U.S. and put on the cover of the two major breed publications, at public stud. People sending bitches were not told about his coat history. The person who gave the kennel the protocol was furious that she had inadvertently been involved in this kind of subterfuge. She made it known that if the breeder/co-owners were not honest about the BSD status of the dog, that she would release the emails that showed that this dog was slated for euthanasia. Only because he was put in the Melatonin regime, shaved, and had his coat re-grown was his life spared. She gave a January 2011 deadline. The kennel admitted to the dog having “puppy coat concerns” in December.

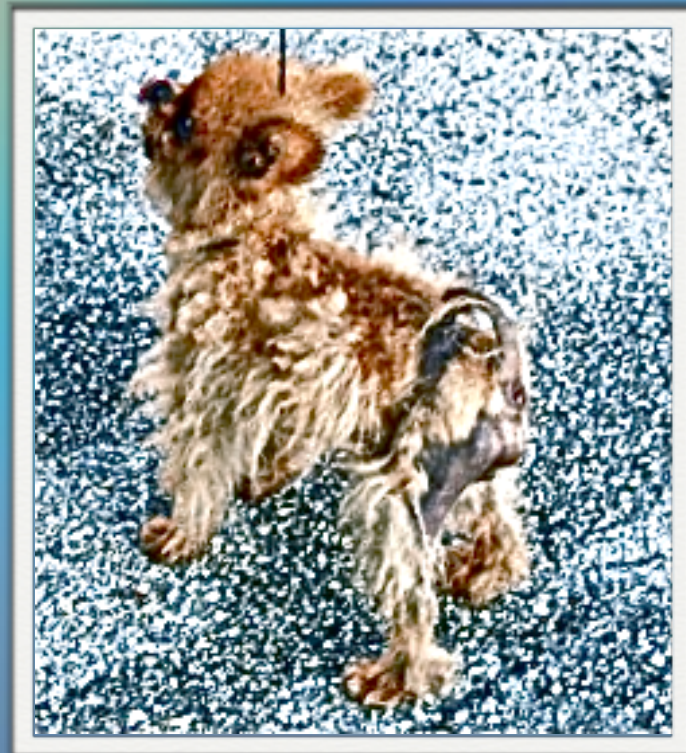
If you think that you can wait for the breeders, or the parent club, to come to their senses and ban the breeding and euthanasia of affected Poms, you will wait in vain. It doesn't matter whether the label applied is group hypnosis, Stockholm Syndrome, low level intelligence and/or morality, or pure greed. The important thing to note is that this practice has been going on for decades—with no end in sight.

Tony Cabrera has stepped up and been willing to put a name and face on BSD. He has publicly named and published the names of all of his affected/carrier Poms. As result he has been disrespected and marginalized by some of his fellow breeders for exercising his legally protected right to free speech. Ugliest of all, a segment of the Pom breeding community tried to have the judging assignments of Tony and Fabian rescinded for the 2012 National. There seems to be no limit as to how low some people will go to protect the revenue generated from dogs—whether moral or not. Please inform yourselves and act according to your conscience. That is all that can or should be said.

BSD..The Dream Killer



“Luther” BEFORE BSD



“Luther” AFTER BSD

A Love Letter For “Luther”

It seems fitting that this once-in-a-lifetime Pom, Multi BIS/BISS Ch. Starfire’s Wicked Mean N Nasty, or as he was more informally known, “Luther”, was a singleton puppy. From the time that he first stood up on his legs, “Luther” personified the old adage that “A Pomeranian with vanity, is simply not a Pomeranian.” I recognized a canine superstar when I saw one. I knew that this boy, who captured my heart, would also be winning both hearts and ribbons, in and out of the ring, in the years to come.

“Luther” was not the best Pom that Fabián and I have ever bred. Yet, he was, and will always remain, the most extraordinary Pom that I have ever known. Although I bred him, he, in many ways, MADE ME. “Luther” was the rarest of finds, a natural born show dog, with that undefinable canine superstar quality that quickly catapults a very good dog into legendary status. From the minute he entered the show ring, “Luther” never let me down. I didn’t train “Luther”—he trained me. He was a law unto himself, and he always gave his best. I learned more from this one dog than from all the rest—combined. All I was required to do was watch him do his dang—which was to stand and stare down the judge—daring them not to choose to him. When the judge moved, “Luther” followed him with his defiant Pomeranian stare that said, “I am the King of this Ring. Who are you?” I was there only as his companion and leash holder—“Luther” ran the show. From that first day, where he took the breed over eleven Specials—from the puppy class—to his unparalleled career record of two National Specialties, 2 wins at Westminster and 34 All Breed BIS’s, “Luther” was, at his very essence, a champion in the every sense of the word.

After twenty years of pouring our heart and souls into breeding Pomeranians, this one dog put Starfire Pomeranians on the international all-breed map. I had the Pom of my dreams, the finest handler, and co-owners with the profile and pockets to take this dog to the top. With his dream team in place, “Luther’s” future seemed limitless.

Sadly, it didn’t last. “Luther’s” career was cut short by BSD—the killer of dreams. I had put everything into our Poms, who had, in many ways, become the children that Fabián and I never had. After twenty years of work, I had finally produced a dog that I felt closely resembled the

breed standard. I had the best handler in the country in Bill McFadden, and the campaign was financed by the comedy legend Bill Cosby. When BSD reared its ugly head, after decades of hard work, our hopes and dreams fell down around us in a pool of tears. I hope to spare you the same fate. That, and the welfare and survival of this breed are, truly, my only motivation.

A BSD affected dog is not a healthy dog. Poms are dying prematurely because of this gene. Some, sadly, are euthanized as puppies. Their crime? Being born with the same condition that affected their parents—BSD. The practice of breeding and euthanizing BSD affected Poms **MUST STOP**. “Luther” was only 8 years old. He is not the first Pom, nor will he be the last Pom, to die far too young.

There is a lesson in “Luther’s” life, and also in his premature death—don’t use BSD affected Poms in your breeding program. We had requests for stud service, purchase, and lease over the entire spectrum of “Luther’s” life. We never used the him at stud after diagnosis. Can you imagine the damage this breed would have sustained if we had we been motivated by money, kennel blind, or lacked integrity?

“Luther” changed our lives in so many positive ways. This one dog, quite literally, gave Starfire Pomeranians wings and put us on the map as an internationally renowned kennel. He made a positive impression on all who knew him. I will continue my work against BSD in his honor and memory.

“Luther” died as he had been born—in our care, surrounded by our love and heartfelt appreciation. He may have been born a dog, but he died, in our eyes, a true gentleman. Thank you, “Luther,” for all that you were and for enriching our lives beyond all measure.

May God bless you and keep you until we meet again over the Rainbow Bridge.

Besos,

Tony

In Loving Memory of

Multi BIS/BISS Ch. Starfire's Wicked Mean N Nasty

“Luther”

October 19th, 2002 - May 1, 2011

WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFT OF HIS LIFE



A LIFE THAT TOUCHES OTHERS GOES ON FOREVER