

Study Says Coat Color Affects Dogs' Personalities

But how dogs are raised play a large role in behavior.

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A new study in the current edition of the journal Applied Animal Behavior Science claims that the color of English Cocker Spaniels' coats reflects the dogs' personalities.

The study determined that golden-red English Cocker Spaniels exhibit the most dominant and aggressive behavior, black dogs in this breed were found to be the second most aggressive, and white dogs with patches of color were said to be more mild-mannered.

In Labrador Retrievers, the color rank from most to least aggressive was yellow, black and chocolate.

The behavior-fur color connection is likely due to related genetic coding that takes place during the pup's earliest life stages, according to study's lead author Joaquín Pérez-Guisado, a researcher in the Department of Medicine and Animal Surgery at Spain's University of Cordoba.

Pérez-Guisado and his colleagues measured levels of dominance and aggression in 51 seven-week-old English Cocker Spaniel puppies, looking at how quickly people could capture a puppy's attention, how well puppies followed the individual, how the dogs behaved while restrained, how they exerted their social dominance, and what they did when they were lifted off the floor.

In many cases, the golden-colored dogs resisted human contact, while the multicolored pups often wagged their tails and seemed to enjoy the attention, according to the report.

While genes control coat color and appear to predispose behavior in certain dogs, Pérez-Guisado said that how dogs are raised plays the biggest role in behavior. He determined that environmental factors account for 80 percent of dominant, aggressive personalities, while genes only influence 20 percent of dogs' demeanors.