

A Guide to Identifying Alaskan Malamute Coat Colors

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This guide is intended to help you identify the most correct coat color with which to register your Alaskan Malamute. It is offered with the understanding that there is considerable variation in Malamute coat color. An extreme example of one color may be difficult to differentiate from another color. In addition, all descriptions are given in the absence of white spotting, which can alter the appearance of masking and the placement of color. All dogs pictured are examples of the color they represent. However, there is no such thing as “correct” color in the Alaskan Malamute and lighter or darker variations are equally desirable. The standard for the Alaskan Malamute states “The usual colors range from light gray through intermediate shadings to black, sable, and shadings of sable to red. Color combinations are acceptable in undercoats, points, and trimmings. The only solid color allowable is all white. White is always the predominant color on underbody, parts of legs, feet, and part of face markings.”

Agouti & White

Puppy: Muddy colored coat and colored, sooty face with tiny white or cream-colored eyebrows. Many agouti pups appear all black or very dark gray at birth with only hints of white. White markings increase as they age.

Adult: Heavily banded* coat and full mask and bar with light circles around the eyes. Not all agouti malamutes keep the muddy appearance they have as puppies. It can be difficult to distinguish some agouti adults from gray and white as the dark color, particularly on the face, can fade with time.

(*Banding - colored tipping on the hair giving the coat a non-solid appearance.)



A dark agouti.



A lighter agouti, as an adult (at left) and as a puppy — 8 weeks, 4 weeks, 2 weeks.
Note the sootiness at younger ages; when older, light agouti can be difficult to distinguish from gray.

Gray & White

Puppy: Clearly banded coat, often with dark stripe down the back and white face, often with clearly defined mask and large white eyebrows. (Below, at right, 3 months old.)

Adult: Clearly banded coat and white face, sometimes with masking or other markings.



Silver & White

Puppy: White with cream or minor banding in the areas of the coat that are usually colored. (Below, at right, 2 weeks old.)

Adult: White with minimal black tipping in the colored areas of the coat.



Black & White

Puppy: Black coat and solid-colored face with tiny white or cream-colored eyebrows. (Below, at right, 8 weeks old.)

Adult: Solid black coat to the skin throughout the entire coat and extreme mask. Black often extends partway down the legs.



Seal & White

Puppy: Black coat and white face with clearly defined mask and large white eyebrows.

Adult: Black with at least part of the coat showing a white band at the base and with a clearly defined mask with large white eyebrows. Undercoat is white, gray or cream-colored.



White

Puppy: White or cream.

Adult: White or cream, often with biscuit-colored shadings on the ears and topline.



Red & White

Any of the above (except White) where the colored portions of the coat and skin appear brown instead of black, including pigmentation on nose, lips and eye rims.



Blue & White

Any of the above except white where the colored portions of the coat and skin appear gray instead of black, including pigmentation on nose, lips and eye rims. (This dog is marked with a distinct blaze up the center of the face.)



Sable & White

A Gray & White dog on whom the white or light areas of the coat appear red/orange/peach. This reddish coloration is distinct, includes the undercoat throughout the entire colored area of the coat, and often extends onto the face and legs.



A note on Sable & White

Theoretically, when any of the colors listed above other than White have a distinct red/orange/peach undercolor they are considered to be sabled. However, it is generally accepted to apply the term "Sable & White" only to a Gray & White with this sabled coloration. Other sabled colors are generally registered excluding the sable designation; however, owners will often refer to them using the term sable in place of the "and white" portion of their color description. For example, "Seal Sable," "Red Sable," etc.



This dog is a vibrantly colored "seal sable." Note the reddish shadings in the light parts of the coat. A dog this color should be registered as a seal.

Examples of various colors at various ages:



A team of dogs of multiple colors — gray, seal and sable. The dog at right lead is a vibrant seal sable.



A group of puppies of various colors — seal, sable, gray and solid white. Note the variety of marking patterns, as well as the biscuit coloring on the white puppy's ears.



Here is a seal puppy with a full collar marking. Full white collars, blazes on the face, and a spot on the withers or nape of the neck are common in the breed and are described in the AKC breed standard as “attractive and acceptable.”



An all-sable litter of puppies — note that the sable coloring varies in intensity from pup to pup.



Young puppies showing a rainbow of color. From left: gray, gray, seal, red. Note that one of the gray puppies does have some beige shadings to the undercoat, but it is not the brilliant red shading seen in a sable.



Same four puppies at 5 weeks old — from left: seal, gray, red, gray. Note the red puppy's brown pigment — the nose, lips and eye rims in red dogs are always brown, never black.



Agouti puppy. Note the sootiness and muddy appearance of the face.



A litter of colorful newborns.

From left: red, sable, gray, sable, gray (on top of sable).



From left: gray, agouti, seal.

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