

Cryptic vs Minimal merle

In the early days of Aussie breeding, dogs with small patches of merle (minimal merle) were referred to as "cryptic merles." It was the term, and many of the breeders from those times still use it to describe a dog marked that way.

Since then, a lot of new research has come out! We can now differentiate the different merle alleles. We also know that a minimal merle is caused by the harlequin merle allele. (One of three ways it can be expressed). The actual term "Cryptic merle" is almost the exact opposite of a minimal merle. A cryptic merle has such a short merle length that it does not delete pigment to white, looks like a tri, and is safely bred like a tri.

When a cryptic merle (Mc/m) is bred to a merle (M/m) this statistically results in the 25% tweed pattern, 25% regular merles, and 50% tris (half are m/m, and half are Mc/m). They do not produce "Double merles" as far as blindness, deafness, neurological problems go. The puppies do have two "merle" alleles, but this does not increase any risk to these puppies.

In other words, breeding a cryptic merle is perfectly fine and 100% different from breeding two actual merles together!