Developer
🍎 Think different.
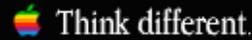
Macintosh
Technical Notes

Developer Technical Support

#31: The Dogcow

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Recently we've been getting a lot of questions about the dogcow in DTS. The purpose of this Technical Note is to clear up any confusion that you may have, and more importantly, to get you to quit bugging me about it.

What is a Dogcow?

I wish I had a nickel for every time I've heard this question--by now I'd have enough money to buy a "Changing the world, one person at a time" bumper sticker. Dogcows, by their nature, are not all dog, nor are they all cow, but they are a special genetic hybrid. They are rarely seen in the wild. Since dogcows are two dimensional, they will stand facing a viewer "on edge" to avoid being seen.

The dogcow has no natural enemies, but the meager population manages to keep itself in check through its own stupidity. They have a nasty tendency to graze off cliffs (in fact, there are no known "cliff-dwelling dogcows" left in existence) and to get lost in the weeds. You've probably noticed that when you cut very high grass, you tend to get a lot of "paper" in the grass clippings; closer examination would show that much of it is actually dogcow. When a mower approaches, dogcows often actually change their hide to resemble newspaper as a final line of defense--hence the famous expression, "black and white and read all over."

But What Does This Have to do With the Macintosh?

There is a life-size picture of a dogcow conveniently located in the Finder. Look under "Page Setup..." Now look under "Options." Walla [sic], there is the dogcow in all it's raging glory. Like any talented dog, it can do flips. Like any talented cow, it can do precision bitmap alignment. The reason that the dogcow can invert has to do with the fact that it's genes have about as much order as the crowd at a Sex Pistols concert.

The dogcow has a name, and it's not Myria. The dogcow's name is Clarus. Several people have said to me, "Mark, you handsome devil, I think I've heard that name, or something similar, somewhere before." I always tell them, "No, you're hallucinating again. You never remember anything." The dogcow's name is Clarus for the same reason you call a table a "table." Make sure to note that Miss Manners says:

Gentle Reader,

*You should only address a dogcow by name, and then only **after** it has spoken to you. Miss Manners would not consider* "Moof!"*a term of affection.*

Whether or not the animal in the Macintosh dialog is just a **picture** of a dogcow or an **actual** dogcow has been widely debated, mostly by people who were procrastinating getting their real work done. I personally would argue that it is just a picture, but I'm sure a large sum of money could change my mind.

A Little History Perhaps?

A picture of the dogcow first appeared in the Cairo font in the original Macintosh. As the font became, dare I say, endangered, the dogcow has moved over into LaserWriter driver 4.0, and no one's been able to get rid of it yet.

At this point, it should be noted that dogcows are notorious for brainwashing people, and it's likely that a dogcow would make someone "think" that they added its picture to a dialog of their own free will, when the dogcow actually had complete control. Moofo the "psychic dogcow" is the best example of dogcows and mind control.[1] This mind control explains behavior like dogcow buttons appearing and disappearing in different copies of the same ad. The weaker a subject's mind, the more power a dogcow will have over that subject.

Scott "ZZ" Zimmerman of MacDTS was the person who actually coined the term "dogcow," on October 15, 1987. Prior to that, it was referred to scientifically by biologists as, "that weird looking thing," and by computer geeks as "the doggie dialog." Just like the space program gave you the advanced technology for teflon, Apple has fathered the research in dogcow biology.
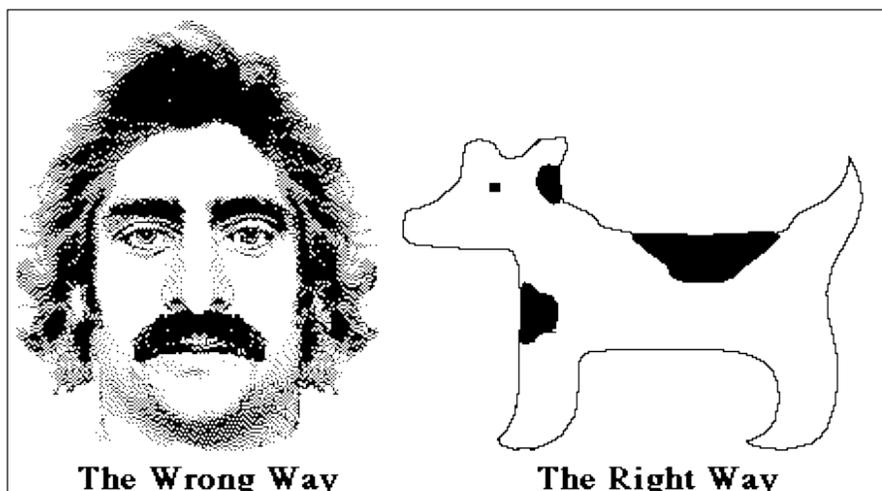
Upon closer examination, I discovered that dogcows actually "speak." In a very excited condition, like being near an open can of Mountain Dew[2], dogcows will say "Boo Woo! Moof!" But it is much more common to hear them just say, "Moof!" [3]

The dogcow is the mascot ("icon" for you gear heads) of DTS. It was not created here, but it was turned loose on the world for us to support. The dogcow was kicked around, laughed at, and virtually orphaned from everyone's memory. We decided that we should take it under our roof. It's a monument to every developer who's ever gone running off through the weeds with an idea or seen their program grazing off the cliff. It represents every member of Developer Technical Support because it has roughly the same IQ.

Of course, now the dogcow is very popular, you may see someone outside of DTS with a dogcow button or shirt. Just ask them, "Where were you when people were picking on the dogcow?" When they lie to you and say they've been a fan of the dogcow for years, tell them, "Sure, and I bet you're going to tell me you voted for McGovern too."

Okay, So How Do I Draw a Dogcow?

There is actually a mathematical way to do it. Any cycloid in the intersection of the Bovine and Canine coordinate systems will give you a dogcow. As you would suspect, the bigger the cycloid, the more personality the dogcow. For those of you that don't have a Ph.D. in mathematics, it's probably better if I give you a picture so you can trace lines.

The Wrong Way   The Right Way

I Was Told There Would be No Math!

Too bad.

Aanal, Enacku Naiimadu Kaanali!

The reason that you can't see the dogcow is probably due to the fact that you are running an Arabic System. The Options dialog in Arabic Systems has a horse instead, sorry.

Are You Finished Yet?

Almost. Really I'm surprised that you've made it this far in life without knowing more about dogcows. I'm even surprised that you've made it this far in the Technical Note without throwing it away. I think it's only appropriate to close with a quote from the Poetry Muse:

A dogcow is what I want to be.

Pictured in dialogs,
Running through the weeds,
In and out of advertisements,
Loving my naughty deeds.

Feeling in black and white.

Over the edge of cliffs,
Out with the tide in the sea.
Living life to the fullest,
Sweet survival in 2 D.

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[1] Apologies to Penn and Teller.

[2] Mountain Dew is a registered trademark of Pepsico, Inc.

[3] See the Technical Note Stack for an example.