



The ANKC Vision for the Health and Welfare of Pedigree Dogs

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"The ANKC vision for the health and welfare of pedigree dogs"

Contents

Preamble

ANKC Policies for Health & Welfare

Breed Standards

Disease Surveillance Programs

Research Support

Breeders

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

Conclusion

Preamble

In 2008 the BBC screened a documentary entitled "Pedigree Dogs Exposed". Despite being aware of the many Health Surveillance programs conducted under the auspices of the Kennel Club (UK), the Investigative Journalist who presented the program gave them very little acknowledgement. Some prominent Animal Welfare Experts felt that the program was more emotional than scientific.

In anticipation of the program being screened in Australia, and the inevitable scrutiny of the health and welfare of pedigree dogs bred by ANKC Members, we have prepared this document which highlights the Health Surveillance Programs, Policies, Codes of Ethics and Regulations that have been adopted by State & Territory Controlling Bodies and Breed Clubs to support our major policy:-

"ANKC considers that the health and physical welfare of dogs is of prime importance and is reviewing and will continue to review Breed Standards to reflect this policy". (Instituted October 2008)

It is important that any Welfare Bodies, Veterinarians, Journalists or other researchers who seek further information on the program, should recognize that not all Pure Breed Dogs come under the control of the Australian National Kennel Council.

A great number of breeders choose not to be members of the Affiliate Bodies of the ANKC so that they are not bound by any Codes of Ethics or Breeding Regulations, and are not accountable to any Regulatory Body in respect of health and welfare.

The ANKC welcomes any discussions that will help improve the health and welfare of dogs.

ANKC Policies for Health & Welfare

Breeders Prefix.

Before being granted a Prefix to register pure bred dogs, prospective breeders must pass an Open Book Examination covering subjects such as Animal Husbandry, Codes of Ethics, Dogs and the Law and Glossary of Canine Terms.

Code of Ethics.

To ensure the welfare of breeding stock ANKC breeders are expected to comply with a number of Codes. Within these codes are health and welfare considerations which are quite extensive, including adequate maturity for first litter, maximum number of litters that can be bred from a bitch and that there must be adequate time to recover between litters.

Policy on Responsible Breeding

The Australian National Kennel Council and its Member Bodies believe that breeding programs should only be undertaken responsibly and for the purpose of improving the breed. Due consideration must be given to recognized hereditary problems in any breeding program. Any resulting surplus stock should only be placed in homes where the owners are committed to responsible dog ownership.

We are opposed to the production of dogs by those people who breed without regard for the quality of the animals that they produce and without accepting responsibility for placing the dogs only in homes where the owners understand, and are prepared to undertake a commitment to, responsible ownership.

We endorse strong enforcement of the laws governing commercial breeders and traffickers in dogs and, where necessary, the strengthening of the laws themselves.

All ANKC Policies and Regulation can be found at www.ankc.org.au

Breed Standards

The main thrust of "Pedigree Dogs Exposed" was that inbreeding was out of control and that there was too much emphasis on looks and not enough on health. It was alleged that the main cause of health problems were the requirements of Breed Standards.

Since the screening of the program, the Kennel Club (UK) has conducted a review of all Breed Standards looking at the conformation of the breed, the prevalence of certain conditions and diseases and the diversity of the breed's gene pool. This has led to changes within Breed Standards that will ensure that the breeds concerned will be "fit for function and fit for life".

Many of the Breed Standards used in Australia are from the Kennel Club (UK) and the ANKC will be mirroring these changes and will continue to monitor Breed Standards.

All Breed Standards are open to interpretation and some certainly lend themselves to the creation of diverse and exaggerated types. The main arbiters of Breed Standards are our Conformation Judges and we are taking steps to ensure that they are aware of the responsibility they bear. A proposal is being considered that all Breed Standards in Australia be prefaced with the following health statement:-

“A breed standard is the guideline which describes the ideal characteristics, temperament and appearance of a breed and ensures that the breed is fit for function. Absolute soundness is essential. Breeders and judges should at all times be careful to avoid obvious conditions or exaggerations which would be detrimental in any way to the health, welfare or soundness of this breed. From time to time certain conditions or exaggerations may be considered to have potential to affect dogs in some breeds adversely, and judges and breeders are requested to consider these conditions or exaggerations before making their decision. If a feature or quality is desirable it should only be present in the right measure”

The UK program inferred that inbreeding was out of control.

To help in further understanding the effect of inbreeding in different breeds the ANKC is making data available to Dr Frank Nicholas of Sydney University for research into this area.

The ANKC will be educating breeders on COI (Coefficient of Inbreeding) and how it can be utilized in their breeding programs.

Disease Surveillance Programs

The Kennel Club (UK) has estimated that the number of healthy pedigree dogs is very high. Comparatively, pedigree dogs are healthier than the human population which suffers from some 40,000 different types of diseases compared to about 400 in the dog population.

Around 90 per cent of pedigree dogs will not suffer from health problems which have a detrimental effect on their quality of life – and that figure is improving thanks to advances in science and the introduction of Disease Surveillance Programs. As well as pedigree dogs and humans, Hereditary Diseases affect crossbreeds, designer dogs and wild animals.

The ANKC has entered into partnership with the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) in two major Disease Surveillance Programs, Canine Hip & Elbow Dysplasia Scheme (CHEDS) and Australian Canine Eye Scheme (ACES). The results from these schemes have enabled breeders to select sound breeding stock.

After wide consultation with breeders the ANKC has introduced a number of Litter Registration Limitations (LRL's). For example in Golden Retrievers, Labradors, German Shepherds and Rottweiler's, ANKC Member Bodies will not register any litters where the sire and dam have not been screened for Hip Dysplasia. Since the introduction of LRL's in the early 2000's there has been a demonstrable lowering of the mean score for these breeds.

Other breed clubs are currently in the process of instituting LRL's for example Irish Setters-CLAD and Bedlington Terriers-Copper Toxicosis, as well other breed clubs are introducing DNA testing requirements for PRA, CL in Border Collies etc. With the growth of DNA disease testing, control schemes are now common place and are helping breeders produce sound, healthy puppies.

Research Support

Australian Pedigree Dog Breeders, who are members of ANKC Affiliated Bodies, fund the Canine Research Foundation with an allocation of one dollar from each puppy registration fee. Over half a million dollars has been granted to University Veterinary Researchers. Some of the Projects include:

Molecular Signaling Mechanisms of Eosinophilia in Rottweiler's.

Global Gene Expression Profiling of Canine Lymphoma.

Long term use of Phenobarbitone in Cane Idiopathic Epilepsy.

Using the Dog Genome Sequence to identify Genetic Disorders.

Detection of Ceroid Lipofuscinosis in Border Collies.

Liver Dysfunction in Tibetan Spaniels.

Vaccination of bitches to prevent Uterine Disease.

Disease Gene Mapping.

The role of Apoptosis in Cardiac Disease.

Progressive Retinal Atrophy in the Irish Setter.

Plasma Products for Transfusion.

Studies on Blood Donor Dogs.

Developing Tests for Progressive Retinal Atrophy

Predictors of Tumour Malignancy

In addition The Canine Control Council Queensland (CCCQ) funds research in conjunction with the University of Queensland.

Many Pedigree Dog Clubs and Societies provide additional funding for research into diseases affecting their Breeds.

Breeders

Breeders can be grouped under four main headings. Firstly, the occasional breeder, who now and again breeds a litter for their friends or to keep as an additional pet in the family.

Secondly there is a group that produces large numbers of puppies merely as a means of making a profit, often for export to Asian markets. The greatest health problems are likely to be found in puppies produced by these commercial breeders, who choose not be members of ANKC Affiliate Bodies, and are not required to address health issues.

Thirdly are breeders who service the demand for Designer Dogs. Appearing on the Kerri-Anne Kennerley Show in February 2007, Don Burke estimated that over 70,000 Designer Dogs had been bred the previous year, over the same period the ANKC registered 61,517 puppies.

Fourthly and most important are the breeders who support shows and competitions and breed mainly to improve their stock for show or competitive events.

To expect the impetus, the will or the funding of canine health initiatives to come from the first three groups is just not realistic. So it is the dedicated breeders who support shows and competitions and are members of ANKC Affiliates who have been, and are going to be, the mainstay of breed improvements.

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS)

Launched by the Federal Government in 2005, (AAWS) has the vision that the welfare of all animals in Australia will be protected, by the development and adoption of sound animal welfare standards and practice.

The Government allocated \$6million over a four year period to fund the Strategy.

A major outcome was the establishment of working groups for the six sectors identified by the strategy.

- livestock/production animals
- animals in research and teaching
- aquatic animals
- companion animals
- animals in the wild
- animals used in work, sport, recreation, or on display.

The ANKC has been involved with the strategy since it's inception and the President, Hugh Gent OAM is a Deputy Chair of the Companion Animals Working Group(CAWG).

Further information on AAWS:

Animal Welfare Branch
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2600

www.animalwelfare.gov.au
animal.welfare@daff.gov.au

Conclusion

The ANKC has been and continues to be pro active in addressing canine health and welfare problems.

Almost all pedigree dogs bred by our members end up in pet homes so, regardless of the desires for the tiny minority who are destined for the show ring, the ANKC recognizes the need to respect and respond to the requirements of society as a whole.

The ANKC has no statutory powers and cannot force people who breed outside our organization to address health problems in their breeding stock.

An outcome of the "Pedigree Dogs Exposed Program" has been the setting up of two United Kingdom inquiries into pedigree breeding

(APGAW) Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare (Working Group) will aim to establish what health and welfare implications are on pedigree dogs bred to certain Standards and the structure of the breeding and showing industry.

Joint Kennel Club/Dogs Trust Review will look at the registration, breeding and showing of dogs. The head of the review is Sir Patrick Bateson Emeritus Professor of Ethology at Cambridge University and President of the Zoological Society of London.

The ANKC will monitor the outcomes of these inquiries to ascertain what action may be needed in Australia.

The ANKC recognizes that as well as their own members, people in animal welfare charities, veterinary and Government organizations and academia have a wealth and breadth of knowledge and expertise on canine health.

As indicated in the Preamble the ANKC welcomes any discussions that will help improve the health and welfare of dogs.

However, it is critical that the breeding of all dogs should be reviewed - not just that of pedigree dogs, since both crossbreeds and mongrels can suffer health problems"

Hugh Gent OAM
President
ANKC

Dr. Karen Hedberg BVSc
Chairman
ANKC Canine Health Committee

Member Bodies of the Australian National Kennel Council

Australian Capital Territory

Australian Capital Territory Canine Association

New South Wales

Dogs New South Wales

Northern Territory

Dogs NT

Queensland

Canine Control Council (Queensland)

South Australia

Dogs SA

Tasmania

Tasmanian Canine Association (Inc)

Victoria

Dogs Victoria

Western Australia

Dogs West

Information:

www.ankc.org.au