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## Animal Protection Dog Ordinance

# The new show ban hits the wrong people and misses the target

Towards the end of the legislative period of the previous federal government, the then Federal Minister of Agriculture Julia Klöckner introduced an amended version of the Animal Welfare Dog Ordinance (TierSchHuV). This initially caused a stir and protests among dog owners because of the so-called "walking duty". The intention was to regulate exactly what is part of the dog owner's daily routine. After all, dogs need exercise, and for many people this is an important reason why they get a dog by their side. It's a way to get moving yourself. The "Gassi-Paragraph" finally disappeared in the version passed by the Federal Council.

The ban on showing so-called "torture breeds" is also new. This refers to dogs that show hereditary pain, suffering or behavioral disorders. The intention behind this was to remove the incentive for such breeds by no longer seeing them in public at shows or sports competitions, as Julia Klöckner emphasized at the time.



### **Elaborate and burdensome examinations**

The first events this year show that the local veterinary authorities responsible for implementation are sometimes very zealous and confront even blameless dog owners and breeders with enormous requirements. These provide for the blanket ordering of complex, cost-intensive examinations that are stressful for the animals. For example, owners of a Labrador Retriever who want to participate in a dog show have to pay up to 200 EUR to the vet for a corresponding certificate, even though the animal is in perfect health. These examinations are also required for mixed breeds participating in sports tournaments. It's like saying to every dog owner: "You have a sick dog!"

In some cases, the orders issued by the authorities are not limited to a simple clinical examination by the veterinarian, but provide for elaborate examinations for many breeds, some of which involve anesthesia. While targeted health examinations would be a suitable means to improve the health of our dogs, these generalizing and exaggerated interpretations of the new regulation lead to the exact opposite: healthy dogs are subjected to unnecessary and burdensome examinations.

### **Serious dog owners and breeders are punished**

"For decades, we have stood for the breeding of healthy and socially compatible dogs. We therefore welcome every effective measure that serves animal welfare and helps to avoid genetically caused diseases in dog breeding. However, the rights of responsible animal owners must not be violated in the process," says Prof. Dr. Peter Friedrich, President of the VDH.



Show visitors who, after the long Corona break, were looking forward to meeting other dog enthusiasts again, feel that they have been put in the wrong by the conditions imposed by the authorities and react with incomprehension to what they perceive as unjustified disciplinary measures. They have to have extensive veterinary examinations carried out on their dogs before a visit to a show, which on top of that costs a lot of money. And even those who are prepared to pay this price may knock on their vet's door in vain: many practices refuse to carry out these examinations, as unnecessarily ordered invasive examinations are contrary to animal welfare.

**A ban on shows to prevent "torture breeding" is a good wish. However, good wishes do not prevent animal suffering.**

In addition to the question of the proportionality of the measures taken, there is also the question of their effectiveness: How ineffective an show ban will be could already be well observed in the last two years - i.e. already during the development of the regulation. For during the fight against the Corona pandemic, almost no shows took place. Almost all large - and thus highly publicized - events could not be held.

Although, contrary to the great demand, controlled breeding of the current trend breeds, such as the Pug or the French Bulldog, was on the decline during this time, more and more people decided to have just such a dog. While the pet registry Tasso assumes that more than 15,000 puppies will be born and registered in 2021 for these two breeds, barely 500 puppies of these breeds were bred by VDH breeders in the same period. This comparatively low number is directly related to the strict VDH breeding regulations, where the health of the animals is of particular importance.



The VDH and its breeders have long supported the targeted promotion of breeding healthy dogs. Within its area of responsibility, the VDH promotes corresponding research projects, such as heart and eye examinations, DNA analyses or the fitness test for pugs and co. However, the strict breeding regulations only apply in the member clubs of the association. Anyone outside can breed or reproduce dogs more or less uncontrolled. Here we need a home animal breeding law, as the VDH has been demanding for a long time together with the major animal welfare organizations. In this way, the veterinary authorities can be put in a position to control where the suffering occurs.

#### **Objective: Combating the illegal puppy trade**

The implementation of the show ban with partly disproportionate controls hits the wrong people in large numbers. For it is precisely the breeders within the VDH who are interested in improving the health of the dogs of their breed and who are subject to extensive breeding requirements. If these breeders cannot pursue their hobby or can only do so with great difficulty, the demand for puppies will be met from other sources, such as financially oriented dog breeders and the illegal puppy trade.

A really sensible measure would be to regulate the online trade in puppies. The vast majority of dogs kept in Germany now come from abroad. Among them are many that are brought into the country illegally, bypassing the legal requirements. And since the trade in trendy breeds is particularly lucrative, these also top the hit list in the puppy trade.



In their coalition agreement, the parties of the "traffic light" coalition have agreed on the regulation and control of the online pet trade as well as the obligation to label and register dogs. "We welcome these plans of the coalition partners of the federal government. They provide efficient conditions to combat the illegal trade in sick puppies. This will improve the health of all dogs in our country," says VDH President Peter Friedrich, who hopes that the planned changes will be implemented soon.