

Animals Asia Foundation
Dog Breeding - Position Paper

February 2010



Dog Breeding - Position Paper

Feb 2010: Each year across the world many millions of unowned and unwanted dogs are destroyed due to irresponsible dog breeders and owners. Animals Asia supports the de-sexing of all dogs and cats to reduce the number of unwanted companion animals and also supports the adoption of unowned dogs and cats. We are against the breeding and sale of dogs and cats from dog breeders and pet shops.

Animals Asia is particularly opposed to individuals operating so-called 'puppy farms', where dogs are bred in appalling conditions purely for profit with a total disregard for the health and welfare of both the adult dogs and puppies. Adult bitches are kept in small pens with little or no access to daylight, no social contact with other dogs or other humans and no space to exercise or play. They are bred continuously until they become too old and are then discarded. Puppies bred under such intensive conditions often suffer from genetic abnormalities and other health-related issues. Puppies are frequently removed from their mothers when they are too young, leading to further potential health and behavioural issues. Puppies bred in such intensive conditions are often sold through newspaper adverts, via the internet, at pet shops or in pet superstores.

The general promotion of purebred dogs and the desire to breed animals for specific physical and behavioural traits by many dog breeders has led to significant health and welfare problems in many breeds. In addition to this the emphasis on pure breeds can cause or exacerbate disrespect for mixed breed animals within a community.



The English Bulldog, whose head is too large to birth naturally, also suffers from hip, heart and skin problems.

In 2008, the RSPCA (UK) commissioned an independent scientific report on pedigree dog breeding in the UK. This report states: dogs are regularly bred whose heads are too large to birth naturally (English Bulldog; Moon et al 2000), whose relative risk of inheriting a heart problem (often leading to fatal heart attack), is approximately 88 times that in the general population (Newfoundland; Kienle et al 1994), and whose faces are so flat that they will not be able to breathe or exercise normally (e.g. English Bulldog, Pug and Boston Terrier; Riecks et al 2007).

Many purebreds also have a significantly lower life expectancy than crossbreed dogs (Egenvall et al 2000). All objective studies comparing average age at death have found that crossbreeds, and in particular small crossbreeds (Patronek et al 1997), live longer than individuals of most of the purebreds. This reflects only in part the inverse correlation between body size and life expectancy seen across all dogs, although of course reduced longevity is not synonymous with reduced quality of life. However there is also considerable evidence that crossbreed dogs have smaller veterinary bills (data from Churchill Insurance company cited in K9 Magazine 2007), which suggests that they are generally healthier and less likely to suffer compromised welfare as a consequence.

Inbreeding can result in reduced fertility (both in litter size and sperm viability), developmental disruption, lower birth rate, higher infant mortality, shorter life span, increased expression of inherited disorders and reduction of immune system (Smith et al 2006).

Selective breeding by dog breeders, often encouraged by breed-specific show standards, has encouraged the development of exaggerated anatomical features and inherited diseases - however much of this suffering is unnecessary and can be addressed through revised breeding practices.

The Multilateral Consultation of Parties to the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, (Council of Europe 1995) identified a number of anatomical features in dogs which can lead to welfare problems:

- Overly large or heavy dogs that may suffer from joint problems.
- Dogs with very short legs that may have limited locomotion and be predisposed to disorders of the vertebrae column.
- Short skulls and flat faces (brachycephalic breeds) that may lead to breathing disorders and blockage of the lachrymal (tear) duct.
- Large flat skulls that may result in birth difficulties.
- Abnormal positions of limbs, e.g. bowed or "too steep", that may result in difficulties of movement.
- Abnormal positioning of the teeth that may result in difficulties in feeding and caring for young.
- Abnormal size and position of the eyes that may lead to irritation, inflammation, degeneration and prolapse of the eyes.
- Very long ears that can easily be injured.
- Markedly folded or furrowed skin that may cause eczema or skin complaints, eye irritation or inflammation.
- Hairlessness that may result in an inability to thermo-regulate.

Breed-related diseases are often considered to be genetically driven, as a breed is by definition a genetically restricted subset of a species' gene pool. The indirect effects of selective breeding for appearance include significantly reduced genetic diversity spread unevenly across the genome, resulting in the increased prevalence of specific diseases

within particular breeds. Coupled with ill-advised breeding practices and insufficient selection pressure relating to health and welfare, this has led to certain breeds becoming particularly susceptible to a whole suite of disorders, many of which are acutely painful or chronically debilitating (Rooney N, Sargan D. 2008).

There are many known cases where inherited diseases are found in more inbred representatives of their breeds and in particular where specific common ancestors can be found amongst all animals segregating for the disease.

- Cardigan Welsh Corgis suffering from a blinding eye disease (progressive retinal atrophy) that is caused by a known recessive mutation, can all be traced to a single ancestor (Petersen-Jones et al 1999).
- Epilepsy, either as a possibly monogenic (specified by a single mutant gene) disease in the Keeshond (Hall and Wallace 1996) or in a probably more genetically complex form in the Labrador Retriever, is found in relatively inbred sub-populations within the breed (Jaggy et al 1998).
- Similarly, a clearly polygenic disease (diseases which occur as a result of the cumulative effects of more than one gene) such as hip dysplasia in Labrador Retrievers, is associated with high inbreeding coefficients in affected animals.
- Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are among several toy breeds that can be affected by syringomyelia; the presence of fluid-filled spaces in the spinal cord. These spaces arise as a consequence of a hereditary mismatch between the size of the brain and the skull and compress the hind-brain into the canal through which the spinal cord passes, thus affecting the pressure around the cord. Dogs suffering from syringomyelia show signs of neck and head pain that can be extremely severe and which can begin when the animal is young and persist throughout its life. (<http://www.ufaw.org.uk/UFAWWelfareandBreedingInitiative.php>)



The Boston Terrier experiences breathing difficulties because of its flat face.

In addition to the many inherited diseases caused by inbreeding, an independent inquiry into dog breeding in the UK led by Professor Bateson from the University of Cambridge also concluded that current dog breeding practices impose further welfare costs on individual dogs including: negligent or incompetent management with a particular impact on breeding bitches, failure to socialise puppies appropriately, and the sale of dogs that are unsuited to the conditions in which they will be kept by their owners. This only adds to the problems caused by the use of closely related breeding pairs so that already high levels of inbreeding are worsened, the use of breeding pairs carrying inherited disorders which are transmitted to the offspring, and the artificial selection of extreme characteristics that are directly responsible for a failure to meet the health and welfare needs of individual animals (Bateson 2010).

The RSPCA report produced detailed recommendations for breeders and breed societies, stating that all future initiatives should have the following generic aims:

- Only breed dogs whose anatomy, temperament and genetic predisposition for disease or disorders make them likely to produce offspring which will experience a high quality of life, free from pain and suffering.
- Only breed sufficient dogs to meet current demand so that each puppy can be successfully homed in a suitable and caring environment.

For further details of the extensive list of recommendations required to meet the aims set out above please see the full RSPCA report by clicking here <http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/issuesindepth/pedigreedogs>



The Pug's narrow, restricted nostril puts a strain on its respiratory system and can lead to enlargement of the heart.

The independent inquiry also produced detailed recommendations to address inbreeding and inherited diseases and the selection for extreme morphologies, poor or negligent management and care of breeding dogs, and inadequacies in the ways dogs are bought and sold.

Animals Asia agrees with the recommendations made by the independent inquiry summarised below:

- Establishment of a non-statutory Advisory Council on Dog Breeding to develop evidence-based breeding strategies that address the issues of poor conformation, inherited diseases and inbreeding as appropriate to the specific breed, and to provide advice on the priorities for research and development in these areas.
- Creation of a computer-based system for the collection of anonymised diagnoses from veterinary surgeries in order to provide statistically significant prevalence data for each breed.
- Revisions of breed standards should recognise the need to avoid the selection of extreme morphologies that can damage the health and welfare of the dog.
- An upgrade of the UK Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme or adoption of a new scheme under the Advisory Council on Dog Breeding. The new scheme should guarantee: that all pre-mating tests for inherited diseases appropriate to the breed or breeds are undertaken on both parents, that no mating takes place if the tests indicate that it would be inadvisable, that any prospective purchaser is able to view the puppies and their mother, that every puppy is identified by microchip prior to sale and all pre-sales tests on the puppy that are appropriate to the breed are carried out, and that the duty of care which every dog breeder owes to the parent dogs and puppies for which they are responsible is fully met with regard to both health and welfare.
- The veterinary profession to lead a shift in emphasis towards preventative medicine rather than simply focusing on the correction of problems after they have occurred.
- Local authorities to address all welfare issues covered by the Animal Welfare Act 2006, especially those related to dog behaviour, when inspecting breeding premises.
- Licensed premises should be required to maintain detailed records and these should be inspected to ensure that breed-appropriate pre-mating tests and screening programmes have been carried out and appropriate decisions taken based on the results.
- All breeders should have their puppies microchipped before they are sold.
- Regulations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 should be made requiring: all puppies to be indelibly identified, an obligation on any person breeding dogs to have regard for the health and welfare of both the parents and the offspring, any

regulating body to have regard for the health and welfare of the dogs and the need to avoid breed specific health problems, and the creation of offences with regards to these measures.

- DEFRA should implement a statutory code of practice on the breeding of dogs.
- A public awareness and education campaign should be designed to persuade members of the dog buying public to change their behaviour, and when accredited schemes are in place the public should be pointed in confidence towards accredited breeders.



Cardigan Welsh Corgis can suffer blindness at an early age and back and hip problems.

In 2009, following media exposure of the wide-ranging health issues and subsequent welfare implications which affect many dog breeds, the Kennel Club (UK) completed a review for each of the 209 UK registered pedigree dog breeds and announced revised standards to benefit their health and welfare. The overall aim of these standards is to ensure that all pedigree dogs are fit for function and breeders and judges are requested by the Kennel Club not to reward dogs with obvious conditions or exaggerations, which would be detrimental in any way to their health.

The Kennel Club campaign aims to ensure that the majority of pedigree dogs live without any illness that would be detrimental to their quality of life. This includes halting the trend towards exaggeration in certain breeds, encouraging participation in and funding of research into health testing, the education of judges, and developing the Kennel Club's Accredited Breeder Scheme (ABS). The scheme was established with the primary aim of improving the overall standards of breeding all dogs. According to the Kennel Club, the ABS has over 3000 members, the standards set are rigorously upheld and breeders can be removed from the scheme if they do not meet these standards. Accredited Breeders agree to use health-screening schemes, relevant to their breed, on all breeding stock. If such a scheme was mandatory for all breeders, this would mean that every puppy sold (in the UK) to future dog owners, and indeed, every dog in the show ring (born in the UK) would have to be bred by an accredited breeder, and therefore with health as a priority and with the appropriate health screening tests carried out. The Kennel Club would like to see the principles and standards of the Accredited Breeder Scheme become mandatory for all those breeding dogs in the UK.



A hereditary mismatch between the size of the brain and the skull causes the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel excruciating head and neck pain.

Animals Asia supports steps such as the creation of the Accredited Breeder Scheme which can improve the overall health and welfare of purebred dogs, we encourage the UK Kennel Club to continue to develop the Accredited Breeder Scheme by incorporating the recommendations of the Bateson inquiry to improve the health and welfare of all breeds and a duty of care for all breeders to be responsible for the health and welfare of parent dogs and puppies, and we encourage kennel clubs globally to follow this example and adopt rigorous health and welfare standards for registered breeders.

Animals Asia recognises that many breeders and some breed societies are working hard to improve the health and welfare of their breed and care about the placement of their puppies into good homes, but we also recognise that some breeders continue to emphasise the physical attributes of the breed over their health and welfare, and others care little for the general health and welfare of parent dogs and puppies and their placement into suitable homes.

Animals Asia also encourages kennel clubs, breed societies and breeders to educate the general public on health issues related to specific breeds and to facilitate a shift in attitude away from the desire to own a dog based on its physical attributes to the desire to own a dog which is healthy and suitable for the lifestyle it will be given by the owner.

Ultimately if the public stopped buying breeds that have hereditary disorders or anatomical features that adversely affect their health and welfare, irresponsible breeders would stop breeding these animals and these lines would potentially die out.

Irresponsible dog owners are one of the main causes of the number of unwanted dogs, as well as the number of dog bites and nuisance dog incidents globally. In 1989 The American Kennel Club initiated a Canine Good Citizen scheme to try to address some of these issues. Please see below for information on this scheme taken from the American Kennel Club website:

American Kennel Club (AKC) Canine Good Citizen Program. (CGC)

Started in 1989, CGC is a certification program that is designed to reward dogs who have good manners at home and in the community. The Canine Good Citizen Program is a two-part program that stresses responsible pet ownership for owners and basic good manners for dogs. All dogs who pass the 10-step CGC test may receive a certificate from the American Kennel Club.

Many dog owners choose Canine Good Citizen training as the first step in training their dogs. Dogs who have a solid obedience education are a joy to live with - they respond well to household routines, have good manners in the presence of people and other dogs, and they fully enjoy the company of the owner who took the time to provide training, intellectual stimulation, and a high quality life.

Many other countries (including England, Australia, Japan, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, and Finland) have developed CGC programs based on the AKC's CGC Program. A CGC Neighbourhood Model has been established, police and animal control agencies use CGC for dealing with dog problems in communities, some therapy dog groups use the CGC as a partial screening tool, and some 4-H groups around the country have been using the CGC as a beginning dog training program for children.

Veterinarians have recognized the benefits of well-trained dogs and there are some CGC programs in place in veterinary hospitals. State legislatures began recognizing the CGC program as a means of advocating responsible dog ownership and 34 states now have Canine Good Citizen resolutions.

All dogs, including both purebred and mixed breed dogs are welcome to participate in the AKC's Canine Good Citizen® (CGC) Program ENDS...

Animals Asia supports this scheme and encourages all kennel clubs globally to develop and operate schemes based upon this model, as well as promoting the development of responsible dog ownership for all dogs.



The gentle and friendly Labrador is high-risk for epilepsy, a result of in-breeding.

In China, irresponsible dog breeding and dog ownership has led to a high incidence of unwanted dogs, contributing to cruel practices towards dogs such as brutal mass killings of owned and unowned dogs as a knee-jerk response by the government to outbreaks of rabies (see [Animals Asia Response_Dog Culls in China_sep09](#)).

The National General Kennel Club in China (NGKC) has called upon all citizens, companies and governments in China to address this major welfare issue and to seek humane management solutions to reduce the number of unowned dogs and the incidences of rabies countrywide. To begin to address this issue the NGKC have developed a Global Canine Responsibility Forum. The initial aim of the forum is to implement a humane and effective dog population management pilot program for the municipality of Tianjin. **Animals Asia endorses and supports the efforts of the NGKC in this goal.**

Whilst Animals Asia does not promote or support the general aims of kennel clubs globally, we do support initiatives that are working to develop greater owner responsibility and improve the health and welfare of all dogs within society.

Animals Asia calls upon kennel clubs globally to:

- **Raise awareness of hereditary disorders and health and welfare issues associated with exaggerated anatomical features amongst the general public and to discourage people from purchasing dogs with such problems.**
- **Promote adoption of animals from re-homing centres and breed rescues over the purchase of puppies from breeders.**
- **Develop rigorous breed standards that prioritise the health and welfare of all dogs.**
- **Support the systematic collection of morbidity and mortality data from all registered dogs to help amass reliable data on the prevalence of different disorders in each breed in the domestic dog population.**
- **Develop pedigree registration criteria that prevent the registration of offspring from the mating of first-degree and second-degree relatives.**
- **Develop pedigree registration criteria to limit the number of litters a female can have and the number of offspring a male can sire.**
- **Make registration of pedigree dogs conditional upon both parents undergoing compulsory screening tests for prioritised disorders.**
- **Promote the benefits of neutering/spaying for all dogs.**
- **Encourage all dog owners to neuter/spay their dogs.**
- **Encourage breeders to only breed when the offspring have a high likelihood of being homed and experiencing a high quality of life.**
- **Develop or improve current accredited breeder schemes to prioritise the health and welfare of all breeds and provide a duty of care for all breeders to be responsible for the health and welfare of parent dogs and puppies.**
- **Support the measurement of current homozygosity levels in breeds and to use the results to alter the population structure to benefit the health and welfare of**

all breeds.

- Provide breed specific guidelines for judges that discourage the breeding of exaggerated anatomical features and heredity disorders in all dog breeds and encourage assessment of dogs on their health, welfare and temperament.
- Provide training for and accreditation of judges to prioritise health, welfare and behaviour in the show ring.
- Adopt certification programmes that reward members for responsible dog ownership.
- Work alongside both national and international animal welfare organisations to ensure that the welfare of dogs during breeding, sale, transport and showing is a high priority for all registered breeders and dog show personnel.

In the short term Animals Asia calls upon the NGKC in China to:

- Adopt breed standards for all registered breeders in China that promote the health and welfare of dogs over the desire for physical attributes.
- Provide education initiatives to encourage prospective dog owners to purchase dogs based on their health and suitability to the lifestyle the owner is able to provide.
- Initiate a Canine Good Citizen programme to encourage greater owner responsibility within China.
- Encourage the adoption of mixed breeds and purebred dogs from re-homing centres over the purchase of dogs from dog breeders.

Additional problems which impact the welfare of companion animals in China are a lack of internationally recognised humane drugs to treat animals, and a lack of basic surgical skills in many veterinarians to carry out safe and humane de-sexing techniques. Both issues need to be urgently addressed.

Animals Asia also calls upon the NGKC in China to:

- Support the national government to provide import licenses for essential (internationally recognised) humane drugs and medications to treat companion animals across the country.
- Seek funding to provide Chinese vets with scholarships to attend international veterinary schools to improve their knowledge and training on companion animal health and welfare issues.

Animals Asia will continue to oppose inbreeding and selection for extreme morphologies, and the breeding and sale of dogs over the adoption of homeless and unwanted dogs from rescue homes. Animals Asia will continue to promote the de-sexing of all dogs regardless of breed to further reduce the number of unwanted dogs globally.

References

Bateson P, 2010 Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding

Egenvall A, Bonnett BN, Shoukri M, Olson P, Hedhammar A and Dohoo I. 2000 Age pattern of mortality in eight breeds of insured dogs in Sweden. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine* 46: 1-14. Egenvall A, Bonnett BN, Shoukri M, Olson P, Hedhammar A and Dohoo I. 2000 Age pattern of mortality in eight breeds of insured dogs in Sweden. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine* 46: 1-14.

Hall SJ and Wallace ME. 1996 Canine epilepsy: a genetic counselling programme for keeshonds. *The Veterinary Record* 138(15):358-60.

Jaggy A, Faissler D, Gaillard C, Srenk P and Graber H. 1998 Genetic aspects of idiopathic epilepsy in Labrador Retrievers. *Journal of Small Animal Practice* 39(6): 275-80

Kienle, RD, Thomas WP and Pion PD, 1994 The natural clinical history of canine congenital subaortic stenosis. *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine* 8: 423-431.

McGreevy PD and Nicholas FW. 1999 Some Practical Solutions to Welfare Problems in Dog Breeding. *Animal Welfare* 8: 329-341

Moon PF, Erb HN, Ludders JW, Gleed RD, and Pascoe PJ. 2000 Perioperative risk factors for puppies delivered by caesarean section in the United States and Canada. *Journal of the American Animal Hospital Association* 36(4): 359-368

Patronek GJ, Waters DJ and Glickman LT. 1997 Comparative longevity of pet dogs and humans: Implications for gerontology research. *Journal of Gerontology Series* 52: 3 B171-B178.

Petersen-Jones SM, Entz DD and Sargan DR. 1999 cGMP phosphodiesterase-alpha mutation causes progressive retinal atrophy in the Cardigan Welsh corgi dog. *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science* 40(8):1637-44.

Riecks TW, Birchard SJ and Stephens JA. 2007 Surgical correction of brachycephalic syndrome in dogs: 62 cases (1991-2004). *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 230(9): 1324-1328

Rooney N and Sargan D. 2008 Pedigree dog breeding in the UK: a major welfare concern?

<http://www.ufaw.org.uk/UFAWWelfareandBreedingInitiative.php>