

1<sup>st</sup> September 2009

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Via email: [hughgent@bigpond.net.au](mailto:hughgent@bigpond.net.au)

Dear Hugh

Further to our previous letter, we would like to provide you with some detailed feedback outlining the key issues raised at our recent meeting, and to outline what RSPCA Australia sees as the necessary steps required to improve the outcomes of breeding pedigree dogs in Australia.

As these cover a range of fairly complex issues, we have prepared the attached document. We hope these comments are useful to the ANKC and indicate clearly RSPCA Australia's position on these issues of mutual interest.

Since we met the RSPCA Australia Board has adopted Position Paper A5 Responsible Companion Animal Breeding and a copy of this is attached.

We would very much like to continue our dialogue with the ANKC and look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



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## 1. Research programs

RSPCA Australia recognises that health and welfare problems exist in pedigree dog breeds. The full extent of these problems in the Australian population is currently unknown, but there is no evidence to indicate that they are significantly different from those experienced overseas.

RSPCA Australia supports research aimed at establishing the nature and extent of the problem in the hope that this will lead to long-term improvements in the outcomes of pedigree breeding.

We recognise that the ANKC supports a number of initiatives with this aim, including funding research through the Canine Research Foundation, disease surveillance programs such as the Canine Hip and Elbow Dysplasia Scheme and Canine Eye Scheme, litter registration limitations, and reviewing and monitoring breed standards. We also recognise that certain pedigree breeders are taking steps to improve the health and welfare of their animals.

We would like to see the ANKC continue to take a proactive approach to improve the outcomes of breeding pedigree dogs by expanding current initiatives (see below).

## 2. Disease prevalence data collection and analysis

During our meeting we discussed the collection of data on the prevalence of different disorders in each pedigree breed. RSPCA Australia considers this to be an important step in determining the extent of inherited disorders within each breed. Once current baselines are established, the information gathered can then be used to prioritise inherited disorders and to develop detailed control programs to progressively reduce the incidence of (and eventually eliminate) known inherited disorders within the breed. This system would also be useful to monitor the effectiveness of any interventions or initiatives over time.

In Australia, the existing List of Inherited Disorders (LIDA) database provides a suitable system on which prevalence rates for specific disorders may be determined for each ANKC registered pedigree breed. Whilst LIDA would provide invaluable information, it requires ongoing funding. There are also some limitations with the current model. LIDA depends upon veterinarians collecting and forwarding on the information and also relies upon breeders/pet owners paying for diagnostic tests. In some cases they may not be in a position to do this. In other cases, pedigree dogs may be suffering from an inherited disorder, however they may never be presented to a veterinary surgeon or they may die during infancy.

We would encourage the ANKC to adequately fund LIDA to increase its data collection capacity, and instigate breeder reporting of inherited disorders to LIDA to improve the available dataset.

### 3. Pedigree analysis for all ANKC registered breeds

RSPCA Australia considers the collection of other genetic information to be a crucial part of bringing about real improvements in the health and welfare of pedigree dogs and would like to see the ANKC encourage pedigree analysis to be conducted on all ANKC registered breeds. The analysis should determine the effective population size; the effective number of foundation stock; the distribution of the inbreeding coefficient and data on the extent of genetic variation. We are pleased to note that the ANKC is making data available to The University of Sydney to conduct research on inbreeding in pedigree dogs.

### 4. Open pedigree studbooks

RSPCA Australia also suggests that the ANKC encourages and allows the opening of pedigree stud books in order to increase genetic diversity within breeds (where this is shown to be necessary by the prevalence and pedigree analysis research discussed above). In some cases, the habit of using popular sires at stud has led to the wide dissemination of a few animals' genes across breed populations. This means that those animals may pass on any undesirable traits/disorders to a large proportion of the existing population. It also reduces genetic variation and increases the chance of inherited disorders being expressed in the population. Care needs to be taken when introducing new genetic material into populations to ensure that new inherited disorders/undesirable traits are not introduced: this can be managed by performing available screening and genetic tests on any new breeding stock and performing analyses to determine the chances of subsequent offspring inheriting certain disorders.

RSPCA Australia would like to see the ANKC encourage breeds (especially the numerically-small breeds) to facilitate importation of less-related animals' genetic material from the same breeds in other countries. As discussed above, care would need to be taken when introducing new genetic material into populations.

In those breeds where the world population is so small that all of the animals are closely related, programs involving an outcross to another breed, followed by backcrossing (which can be done successfully without compromising the integrity of breeds) will need to be seriously considered. Indeed, the origin of all purebred pedigree dogs was the crossing of different breeds.

### 5. Breed standards

During our recent meeting we also discussed pedigree breed standards. RSPCA Australia is very concerned that breed standards tend to focus primarily on the dog's physical appearance rather than prioritising their health, welfare, behaviour and functionality. In some cases, when breeders attempt to conform to the written breed

standard (to win prizes in the show ring and meet registration requirements) the dog's welfare is seriously compromised.

We note that the terms 'health and welfare' have now been added to most of the breed standard descriptions. While we welcome their inclusion, we are concerned that the contextual wording of the terms may be misinterpreted by the pedigree dog community. The statement 'Any departure from the foregoing points should be considered a fault and the seriousness with which the fault should be regarded should be in exact proportion to its degree and its effect upon the health and welfare of the dog' implies that only when there is a departure from the breed standard could there be a health and welfare problem. RSPCA Australia considers this statement to be misleading as the health and welfare of the animal may be compromised regardless of adherence to the breed standard. We therefore ask that the ANKC to clearly separate the notion of health and welfare from adherence to breed standard.

Including the terms health and welfare in the breed standard description is not sufficient to shift the focus away from physical appearance. We hope that the ANKC will lead a philosophical and cultural change in the attitudes of the Australian pedigree dog community. We would like to see a clear shift towards prioritising health, welfare, behaviour and functionality in the scope and application of breed standards. Part of this would be to proactively review the breed standards for all breeds originating in Australia and, where necessary, make any changes to prioritise health and welfare. These breed standards should be re-examined overtime to ensure breed standards reflect the latest available information about the health and welfare of specific breeds.

Where breed standards are controlled by the kennel council of the breed's country of origin, the ANKC should place pressure on the relevant kennel club to review its breed standards and where necessary make changes to prioritise health and welfare.

We understand that UK Kennel Club has recently 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 and that this has led to changes within breed standards. We also note that as stated in the 'ANKC Vision for the Health and Welfare of Pedigree Dogs' document many of the breed standards used in Australia are from the UK Kennel Club and that the ANKC will be mirroring these changes and will continue to monitor breed standards.

While we note that some breed standard changes have been mirrored on the ANKC website, others do not appear to have been updated. For example, the British Bulldog breed standard on the UK Kennel Council website refers to a 'Skull relatively large...', 'Face, relatively short', 'skin may be slightly wrinkled' and 'shoulders broad' while the ANKC equivalent breed standard continues to state that "The skull should be very large - the larger the better..', 'The face, should be as short as

possible', 'its skin should be deeply and closely wrinkled' and 'very broad shoulders'. While the UK Bulldog breed standard is an interim standard (pending review) we would encourage the ANKC to mirror any changes expeditiously to encourage a move away from exaggerated and extreme traits in the Australian context. The welfare of the British Bulldog is of particular concern as selectively breeding for a very large head and very broad shoulders whilst simultaneously selecting for 'comparatively narrow loins' has resulted in most Bulldogs being unable to give birth naturally with the vast majority requiring veterinary assistance in the form of a caesarean section under general anaesthesia.

We encourage the ANKC to continually analyse breed standards and call for changes where necessary. For certain breeds, links to 'breed extension' documents are also available which contain references to exaggerated traits. We would ask that the ANKC also review breed extension documents to discourage breeding for exaggerated or extreme traits.

We also understand that a proposal is being considered that all breed standards in Australia be prefaced with a health statement about ensuring soundness and that the dogs are 'fit for function'. This would be a positive step forward, however, we would like to see a practical reflection of those terms in the way in which dogs are bred, their conformation and the way in which breed standards are interpreted both by breeders and judges.

#### 6. Conformation judges and pedigree dog shows

We also discussed at some length the relationship between judging, breed standards and dog welfare at pedigree dog shows. RSPCA Australia is concerned that the interpretation of the written breed standard can be subjective and greatly influenced by a judge's personal viewpoint (as acknowledged during our discussion). In some cases judges may have a personal preference for the more exaggerated and extreme form of physical traits described in the breed standard. As breeders attempt to meet the judge's preferences to win prizes and to conform to the requirements of the breed standard, the health and welfare of the dog may become seriously compromised.

We note that for certain breeds, the specific wording in the breed standards has been modified, moving towards a more moderate description of the desired traits. We are pleased with these changes and encourage the ANKC to continue to work on these particular aspects of breed standards.

During our discussions, the issue of training and accreditation of judges was raised. RSPCA Australia believes that educating judges to recognise and award according to health and welfare would be a major driving force behind positive change. We agree that judges have the ability to rapidly change attitudes and motivations within the

wider pedigree breeding community and thus contribute significantly to a cultural shift away from prioritising appearance and towards prioritising health and welfare.

We were interested to hear about the Swedish training program for judges that are based on health and welfare in which judges are trained to recognise and award according to health. This would be a positive direction for the ANKC to move towards. While this would be a good start, the Swedish program is limited to those traits which are visually evident. A further improvement would be to introduce a two-tiered judging system in which a pre-screen was performed by a veterinarian prior to judging conformation in the show ring. This would allow consideration of any underlying inherited medical disorders (which are not visually evident) to form part of the judging process and ensure that health is factored into the judging process in a practical way. Another way would be to inspect the dog's medical records as part of the judging process. In this way, an animal that may appear physically sound but one who has underlying inherited disorders (e.g. blood disorders, heart defects) may not be judged favourably in the show ring which would act as a direct incentive for breeders to work towards health and welfare.

Any animal exhibiting physical traits or inherited disorders that compromise their health and welfare should be prohibited from participating in the show ring. This would emphasise to breeders that health and welfare truly are paramount, but is also important with regard to selecting stud dogs. RSPCA Australia understands that 'best in show' dogs or dogs that are awarded prizes are often sought after to sire multiple litters within the breed. Our concern here is that should any of the prize winners have physical traits or inherited disorders that compromise their own health and welfare these may then be passed on to a wide section of future generations of the breed. An upper limit on the number of litters that can be sired by an individual dog would also help to limit the risk of the spread of problems that have not been picked up by screening tests.

## 7. Detailed management plans for each registered breed

In order to co-ordinate and integrate all of the prevalence/genetic information gathered and the recommendations for change, RSPCA Australia advocates the development of detailed management plans for each specific breed. Plans would include identifying and prioritising inherited disorders, implementing practical methods to eradicate (or greatly reduce the incidence) of inherited disorders that are present in the breed, and a review of the breed standard.

As part of this we recommend that any dog that has been diagnosed with an inherited disease that compromises their health and welfare and/or any dog that has exaggerated physical features that compromises their health and welfare should be excluded from breeding. These animals should be provided with a high standard of housing and care on the breeders' premises or re-homed. They should not be euthanased unless it is deemed necessary and in the best interests of the dog.

As another specific example, for multifactorial disorders in breeds, schemes for calculating estimated breeding values (EBVs) may be required. Any management plans would need to be dynamic with new information constantly fed back into the system to continually improve outcomes.

## 8. Relatedness of mating pairs

During our meeting we also discussed ANKC registration of the offspring of any mating between first-degree and second-degree relatives. According to the scientific literature and observed in practice, mating closely related animals is genetically undesirable. The reason for this is well understood. Inbreeding significantly changes the frequency of genotypes (aggregate of ordered genes received by offspring from both parents). In particular it increases the frequency of homozygotes (possessing two identical forms of a particular gene, one inherited from each parent). When animals possess two identical forms of a deleterious recessive gene, this permits the expression of those harmful genes. The expression of harmful recessive genes is in the form of an inherited disorder. The greater the level of inbreeding - the greater the chance of breeding dogs with inherited defects<sup>1,2,3</sup>.

In the natural environment scientific studies have shown that wild canids employ various strategies to actively avoid inbreeding. Strategies such as the social dispersal of young males/females away from their natal pack, ensures that they do not mate with relatives<sup>4</sup>. This strong instinct to avoid inbreeding has a biological basis and is a way of ensuring the survival of the species. Genetic variation confers a fitness advantage to the offspring. The offspring of unrelated mates are more resistant to both infectious and genetic disease<sup>5,6</sup>. Inbreeding depression may also severely impact upon fertility.

We also note that the Swedish Kennel Club have prohibited the registration of any offspring that are the result of matings between first degree relatives.

For these reasons RSPCA Australia does not support the mating of first degree or second degree relatives and we would ask that the ANKC prohibit the registration of offspring that are the result of such matings. As a general rule, it is best to arrange matings between parents that are as unrelated as possible. In cases where the breed population is so small that animals can only be bred with close relatives, serious consideration must be given to whether the breed should be allowed to continue in its current form. Outcrossing with another breed and then backcrossing may be an alternative in these situations.

## 9. Registration rules

Cultural and philosophical change will take considerable time and effort. In order to ensure real improvements are made RSPCA Australia asks the ANKC to consider the

following revision of its registration rules. Once the information for each breed has been analysed and where screening tests/genetic tests exist for prioritised inherited disorders, registration should be made conditional upon both parents undergoing compulsory screening tests for these disorders. We are pleased to note that the ANKC has already introduced this for certain breeds such as the German Shepherd, Rottweiler and Bedlington Terrier, among others, via the Litter Registration Limitations (LRL) initiative. We would encourage the ANKC to continue to expand compulsory screening and LRL to other pedigree breeds.

In addition, for autosomal-recessive disorders that do not yet have a DNA test for carriers, we would recommend that the KC does not register offspring from matings in which both parents are known have produced affected offspring in previous matings. Another method would be to identify carriers and to ensure that each mating involves at least one animal that has a high chance of not being a carrier. If there is no carrier test, the best strategy is to avoid matings in which both parents trace back to lines that are known to carry the disorder. In any case it is best to arrange matings so that the parents are as unrelated as possible. Where DNA tests do not exist we would encourage the ANKC to support research aimed at developing DNA tests.

#### 10. Expand current initiatives

RSPCA Australia encourages the ANKC to proactively enhance and expand its current breeding/genetics initiatives such as the existing Kennel Club scheme for DNA testing of single-locus disorders. The ANKC should consider funding further research aimed at finding new and improved genetic/screening tests with the aim of improving the health and welfare of pedigree dogs.

#### 11. Inadvertent co-selection of linked genes

In some cases, when breeders select for a particular physical feature they may inadvertently co-select for a linked gene that causes serious health problems. Examples include breeding for a white coat colour and inadvertently selecting for deafness and breeding for the characteristic Dalmatian spots and inadvertently selecting for urinary stone disease and skin problems. We would like to see breeders recognise health problems which are directly linked to breeding for a particular physical feature and breed away from both these physical features and diseases.

#### 12. RSPCA policy

As mentioned at our meeting, RSPCA Australia advocates a compulsory licensing system for all breeders including a mandatory code of practice (which would include breeding aspects) and which would involve regular inspections.

## References

1. Higgins A, Nicholas FW (2008). The breeding of pedigree dogs: Time for strong leadership. *The Veterinary Journal* 178:157-158.
2. McGreevy PD (2007) Breeding for Quality of Life. *Animal Welfare* 16(5):125-128.
3. McGreevy PD, Nicholas FW (1999). Some practical solutions to welfare problems in dog breeding. *Animal Welfare* 8:329-341.
4. Vonholdt B, Stahler D, Smith D, Earl D, Pollinger J, Wayne R (2008). The genealogy and genetic viability of reintroduced Yellowstone grey wolves. *Molecular Ecology* 17:252-274.
5. Slev P, Nelson A, Potts W (2006). Sensory neurons with MHC-like peptide binding properties: disease consequences. *Current Opinion in Immunology* 18:608-616.
6. Penn DK, Damjanovich WK, Potts MHC (2002) Heterozygosity confers a selective advantage against multiple-strain infections. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS)* 99(17):11260-11264.

# Responsible companion animal breeding

(adopted 28/08/09)

## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 RSPCA Australia encourages prospective companion animal owners to consider adopting an animal from the RSPCA or another reputable animal welfare organisation. However, where animals are obtained from other sources, the RSPCA advocates that, wherever possible, they are acquired directly from the place where they were born, i.e. from the breeder of the animal (see Policies A2.2 and A2.3).
- 1.2 RSPCA Australia advocates the compulsory registration and licensing of all companion animal breeders, with the conditions under which animals are bred, kept and presented for sale being detailed in a code of practice, and where compliance with the code of practice is a condition of licensing (see Policy A2.4).
- 1.3 This document outlines RSPCA Australia's position on responsible companion animal breeding through a set of ten key principles, summarised in Box 1. The advice given here applies mainly to breeders of dogs and cats, however the general principles are relevant to breeders of other companion animals, such as rabbits, rats, mice, guinea pigs, ferrets, and birds.
- 1.4 For the purpose of this document, the term 'breeder' refers to any person engaged in breeding and selling companion animals. It includes breeders of purebred (pedigree) companion animals (including those registered with breed associations) as well as breeders of crossbred or non-pedigree animals.
- 1.4 This document must be read in conjunction with the following RSPCA policies:
  - Policy A1 Responsible companion animal ownership
  - Policy A2 Acquiring a companion animal
  - Policy A5 Breeding of companion animals

### Box 1: Key principles for responsible companion animal breeding

A responsible companion animal breeder:

- 1 Conscientiously attempts to match the demand for animals with the supply
- 2 Provides a high standard of care and living conditions for their animals
- 3 Demonstrates knowledge of and a genuine concern for the welfare of the animals in their care
- 4 Is open, transparent and provides a complete history of the animal
- 5 Ensures compatibility between the owner and the animal
- 6 Demonstrates a genuine concern for the welfare of future generations of animals
- 7 Provides ongoing support and information to the new owner
- 8 Provides a guarantee
- 9 Readily provides references on request
- 10 Complies with relevant local and state/territory legislation and codes of practice including any registration and licensing requirements.

- b Key principles for responsible companion animal breeding
  - 2.1 *A responsible breeder conscientiously attempts to match the demand for animals with the supply*
    - a The breeder knows the likely demand for their animals and plans future breeding programs accordingly to reduce the chances of oversupply and consequent euthanasia of healthy animals (see Policy A5.1). Where appropriate, breeders should place prospective owners on a waiting list in order to ensure there is adequate demand prior to breeding.
    - b Where supply exceeds demand, any unsold animals are provided with a high standard of housing and care on the premises either permanently or until they can be re-homed.
  - 2.2 *A responsible breeder provides a high standard of care and living conditions for their animals*
    - a Veterinary health checks are performed on each litter including a full physical examination and health assessment to detect any hereditary or congenital defects or health problems and to ensure medical treatment is provided if required. Routine treatments and preventative medicine programs are practised, e.g. pups or kittens are vaccinated, and treated for worms and fleas. Prospective owners are provided with copies of veterinary certificates and other documentation about health status and any treatments given.
    - b Living conditions are of a high standard - the environment is clean and the animals' physiological and behavioural needs are being met. There is adequate space, shelter, environmental stimulation and the opportunity to exercise.
    - c Animals are provided with a balanced and biologically appropriate diet (including water) based on up-to-date nutritional advice. Information on feeding requirements given to prospective owners is appropriate.
    - d Animals are fit and in good health.
    - e All animals are well socialized to humans and con-specifics, and demonstrate normal behavioural reactions with no overt signs of fear or aggression.
    - f Veterinary care and attention is provided to all animals when necessary.
  - 2.3 *A responsible breeder demonstrates knowledge of and a genuine concern for the welfare of the animals in their care*
    - a The breeder consults with their veterinarian to determine the most appropriate individual breeding program for each breeding animal. Aspects such as the age of breeding commencement; the frequency of pregnancies; the time/age for retirement; the mating procedure and the provision of veterinary care during breeding and on retirement, should be included.
    - b Retired breeding animals, animals that are unable to breed or animals that are unsuitable for breeding, are desexed and either provided with a high standard of housing and care on the premises or re-homed. Animals are not euthanased when they

reach the end of their breeding life unless, following consultation with a vet, it is deemed necessary and in the best interests of the animal.

- c The breeder consults with their veterinarian and other experienced breeders to determine best practice rearing and weaning methods for the offspring in the litter.
- d The breeder does not cull (or have euthanased) healthy offspring simply because they do not conform to a 'breed standard' or because the breeder considers there is an excess number in the litter.
- e The breeder does not subject animals to any surgical modification or intervention unless the procedure is deemed necessary for the welfare of the animal by a veterinarian. In the case of dogs, the breeder does not allow the docking of puppies' tails.
- f The breeder minimises stress to the offspring by ensuring that their animals are offered for sale directly from the place where they were born.
- g The breeder is aware of the importance of socialisation of young animals, especially during critical periods in early development (e.g. 3-17 weeks of age for pups). The breeder takes active steps to adequately socialise animals on the premises prior to their sale. The breeder also ensures breeding animals are well-socialised.
- h Where animals are not required for breeding, they should be desexed prior to sale (where appropriate for the species and age of the animals).
- i Dogs and cats are microchipped prior to sale (other animals where appropriate for the species).
- j Information is provided to prospective owners, such as animal care notes, which cover diet, socialization, registration and identification requirements and any medications given prior to purchase and those required in the future. Notes should include vaccination card, microchip number and previous worming schedule where relevant. Specific information on the need for early desexing is provided with all cats and dogs sold.

2.4 *A responsible breeder is open, transparent and provides a complete history of the animal*

- a The breeder encourages, where possible, prospective owners to see the litter with their mother (dam) and to meet the father (sire) of the litter. Where the sire is not present on site, information is provided on his background, size, breed and temperament.
- b The breeder encourages prospective owners to inspect the breeding facilities and the general environment.
- c The breeder is willing to answer questions and allow inspection of relevant paperwork and records.

2.5 *A responsible breeder ensures compatibility between the owner and animal*

- a The breeder makes every effort to meet with the prospective owner in person to assess the compatibility of the animal with the owner. If a face-to-face meeting is not possible then extensive telephone interviews are carried out.
- b The breeder asks the prospective owner relevant questions to determine the compatibility of the owner and the animal and to ensure the animal will be well cared for. For example, whether there are children or other animals in the household, how the animal will be housed; how it will be cared for during working hours, holidays or if their circumstances change. The breeder may use a questionnaire for prospective owners to assist in the matching process.
- c The breeder ensures prospective owners have a realistic understanding of the characteristics of the breed and their requirements for space and activity. In this way the breeder tries to ensure a good match between the owner and the animal (e.g. matching a working dog with an owner who can provide an appropriate environment and the additional stimulation a working dog generally requires).

2.6 *A responsible breeder demonstrates a genuine concern for the welfare of future generations of animals*

Protecting the welfare of future generations of animals is achieved firstly by breeders acknowledging the presence of any inherited disorders or exaggerated anatomical features that may compromise quality of life in their particular breed and in their own animals. These disorders are then actively addressed by engaging in best practice breeding programs which entail the following:

- a *Screening breeding animals for genetic disorders and excluding animals with negative characteristics from breeding programs*
  - The breeder is aware, through education and consultation with veterinarians, geneticists, other breeders and breed associations, of the common genetic disorders and negative characteristics known for that particular breed or mixture of breeds (see DPIV 2008).
  - The breeder screens their breeding animals using all available tests relevant to the breed. For example, for canine hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia and DNA tests for progressive retinal atrophy in certain dog breeds.
  - Where an animal exhibits or produces offspring with an inherited disorder or characteristic that has been identified as compromising the animal's quality of life, health or welfare, that animal is excluded from breeding and is desexed. These animals may still be able to lead full and healthy lives and should not be euthanased unless it is deemed to be in their best interests, following consultation with a vet (see 2.3d).
  - The breeder readily supplies the prospective owner with copies of certified medical reports and the results of screening tests.
  - If requested, the breeder willingly provides information regarding the incidence of genetic diseases in their animals to veterinarians and researchers to add to existing knowledge of the breed.

b *Not breeding closely related animals to avoid problems associated with inbreeding*

The breeder does not allow closely related animals to breed together, e.g. father to daughter, brother to sister or grandfather to granddaughter. Breeding closely related animals results in a lack of genetic diversity, which can seriously compromise immune system function, may increase the incidence of recessive inherited disorders and can ultimately lead to serious infertility problems.

c *Not breeding for traits that are detrimental to the animal's welfare or quality of life*

A good breeder will select for traits that are compatible with a high quality of life for the animal and not prioritise appearance over functionality. Responsible breeders consider the health, welfare, temperament and the quality of life of both the parents and their offspring as a key priority when selecting breeding stock.

2.7 *A responsible breeder provides ongoing support and information to the new owner*

The breeder provides their full contact details and encourages the new owner to contact them should they require further information on the care of their new animal.

2.8 *A responsible breeder provides a guarantee*

a The breeder offers to accept any returned or unwanted animals within a specified time period (e.g. up to 3 months after sale). Animals may be returned during this period for various reasons, including problems with health, behaviour, compatibility, or providing suitable care. Breeders should accept animals returned as a result of problems arising from an inherited disorder at any time after sale.

b Where possible, the breeder should re-home returned animals. If they cannot be rehomed or sold, the breeder will undertake to house them. Breeders must have the capacity to provide a high standard of living and care for returned animals. Returned animals are not euthanased unless it is deemed necessary and in the best interests of the animal following consultation with a vet.

c Information gained from a returned animal should be used to improve breeding, rearing and socialisation practices in the future.

2.9 *A responsible breeder readily provides references on request*

The breeder readily provides references on request. References may include testimonials from previous or existing owners; letters from the breeder's vet and other professional references from reputable organisations.

2.10 *A responsible breeder complies with relevant local and state/territory legislation and codes of practice*

The breeder complies with all relevant local and state/territory legislation and codes of practice relating to the breeding, care and welfare of companion animals, including any registration and/or licensing requirements.

## References

- Higgins A & Nicholas FW (2008) The breeding of pedigree dogs: Time for strong leadership. *The Veterinary Journal* 178(2):157-158
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- DPIV (2009) Code of Practice for the Responsible Breeding Of Animals with Heritable Defects that cause Disease. Bureau of Animal Welfare, Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries, Melbourne, Australia. Available at: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare)
- Information sources
- Australian Veterinary Association – Elbow and Hip dysplasia available at: <http://avacms.eseries.hengsystems.com.au/Content/NavigationMenu/Community2/HipandElbowDysplasiaAnalysis/default.htm>
- Australian National Kennel Council: <http://www.ankc.org.au/home/default.asp>
- Australian Association of Pet Dog breeders (AAPDB): <http://www.aapdb.com/>
- Listing of Inherited Disorders in Animals (LIDA): <http://www.vetsci.usyd.edu.au/lida/>
- Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) website to provide advice on genetic welfare problems of companion animals: <http://www.ufaw.org.uk/UFAWWelfareandBreedingInitiative.php>
- Victorian Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Establishments: <http://www.new.dpi.vic.gov.au/notes/agg/code-of-practice-for-the-operation-of-breeding-and-rearing-establishments>