



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUBSM

Dennis B. Sprung
President and
Chief Executive Officer

Monday, July 6, 2009

The American Veterinary Medical Association House of Delegates
2009 AVMA Convention
C/o Washington State Convention and Trade Center
800 Convention Place
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Support 2009 Resolution 4, as submitted by the Utah Veterinary Medical Association

Dear Delegates:

As a not-for-profit organization that has been devoted to the advancement and welfare of dogs for 125 years, the American Kennel Club (AKC) believes that all dog owners bear a special responsibility to their canine companions to provide proper care and humane treatment at all times and that responsible dog owners, in consultation with their veterinarian, have the right to make decisions regarding appropriate care and treatment of their pets. **As such, the American Kennel Club supports Resolution 4 of 2009, as submitted by the Utah Veterinary Medical Association, and encourages you, the members of the AVMA House of Delegates, to adopt this resolution.**

The AKC recognizes that ear cropping and tail docking, as prescribed in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character, enhancing good health, and preventing injuries; and that appropriate veterinary care should be provided. These breed characteristics are procedures performed to insure the safety of dogs that on a daily basis perform heroic roles with Homeland Security, serve in the U.S. Military and at Police Departments nationwide protecting tens of thousands of communities throughout our nation as well as competing in the field. In fact, the October 2008 *Convention on Cooperation among American Working Dog Organizations in Providing American Dogs for American Security* signified its intent to work with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Institute of Justice, and the Department of Homeland Security in order to benefit local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies by cooperating to improve the overall performance and reliability of detector dogs, many of which are cropped and/or docked.

We believe that mislabeling these procedures as “cosmetic” is a severe mischaracterization that connotes a lack of respect and knowledge of history and the function of purebred dogs. Breed standards are established and maintained by AKC Parent Clubs (each of the 158 AKC registered breeds is stewarded by a breed-specific

Parent Club) keeping foremost in mind the welfare of the breed and the function it was bred to perform.

Historically, the AKC has worked closely with the AVMA to ensure that both the rights of individual dog owners and breed standards remain protected. However, the AKC was advised of the AVMA's amended policy on ear cropping and tail docking only after it was adopted by the AVMA Executive Board last November. The AKC remains disappointed to not have been consulted regarding this latest iteration of the policy.

As submitted by the Utah VMA, we agree that:

The issue for the AVMA is not to decide what surgery pet owners want or do not want for their pets, but rather to be sure all surgical procedures performed by licensed veterinarians are with proper protocol and proper post operative care. [The] Association seems to want pets to be "owned" but then we want to restrict what owners can or cannot do. Veterinarians are not forced to perform the procedures and as with any surgery can elect not to do it or condone its practice.

Should the current AVMA policy remain, the AKC fears that those veterinarians who continue to perform the procedure may be censured by the Association or suffer some other career detriment, and that responsible dog owners will be forced underground to procure these valid veterinary procedures by lay people in contravention of (in some cases) law and the AVMA policy. The latter reality will deny dogs the medical care that AKC believes should be provided by veterinarians and that dogs deserve.

The American Kennel Club believes that, though not perfect, the change to the AVMA's policy on ear cropping and tail docking of dogs, as proposed by the Utah VMA in Resolution 4, is a vital step toward bridging the gap between AKC's traditional policy regarding the valid veterinary procedures of ear cropping and tail docking and the AVMA's recently adopted hard-line policy. By allowing veterinarians and dog owners the freedom to choose the most appropriate medical course of action for dogs, the adoption of Resolution 4 will ensure that cropping and docking will remain a safe and acceptable practice.

The adoption of Resolution 4 will protect the health and welfare of all dogs. As such, the American Kennel Club respectfully encourages the members of the AVMA House of Delegates to adopt the resolution.

Sincerely,



Dennis B. Sprung