



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB®

**Dennis B. Sprung**  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer

September 27, 2012

Dr. Gail C. Golab  
Director, Animal Welfare Division  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
1931 North Meacham Rd., Suite 100  
Schaumburg, IL 20173

Re: AVMA Ear Cropping and Tail Docking Policy

Dear Dr. Golab,

The American Kennel Club understands that the American Veterinary Medical Association's Animal Welfare Committee will review current cropping and docking policy at its meeting on September 28-29, 2012. We urge you to take this opportunity to reconsider current policy that opposes ear cropping and tail docking and encourages the elimination of these procedures from breed standards.

As a not-for-profit organization that has been devoted to the advancement and welfare of dogs for more than 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. Further, responsible dog owners, in consultation with their veterinarian, have the civil right to make decisions regarding appropriate care and treatment of their pets and working dogs.

The AKC recognizes that ear cropping and tail docking, as prescribed in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to enhancing good health, preventing injuries, and defining and preserving breed characteristics. Appropriate veterinary care should be provided. These breed characteristics are procedures that ensure the safety of dogs that perform a variety of working functions, serve heroically with the U.S. Military, Homeland Security and at Police Departments nationwide protecting tens of thousands of communities throughout our nation, as well as those that compete in the field.

We believe that mislabeling these procedures as "cosmetic" is a severe mischaracterization that connotes a lack of firsthand knowledge and respect of history and the function of purebred dogs. Breed standards are established and maintained by AKC Parent Clubs (each of the more than 160 AKC registered breeds is stewarded by a breed-specific national organization) keeping foremost in mind the welfare of the breed and the predictable and dependable functions it was bred to perform.

The decision to crop or dock a dog is a right that belongs to the owner of a dog in consultation with a veterinarian who fully understands the benefits and risks of any such procedures.

Veterinarians who do not wish to perform cropping or docking procedures are under no obligation to do so.

The AKC is justifiably concerned that those veterinarians who choose to 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 would deny dogs the medical care that AKC believes should be provided by caring veterinarians and that dogs deserve. We believe it is in the best interest of dogs and their owners to keep the practice of cropping and docking safe and legal and to ensure veterinary oversight of these procedures.

We urge the AVMA to revise current policy to reflect these concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis B. Sprung". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dennis B. Sprung

cc: Dr. Ron DeHaven