

OUR DOGS newspaper 13 May 2022 (*transcription*)

### **Opinion: Need for international leadership**

For several years we have been suggesting in this column that the insidious development of anti-pedigree dog legislation in various parts of the world has to be tackled head on and in a proactive rather than reactive way. The passing of the totally over the top German legislation recently introduced a further example of a trend which if spread to other countries could well completely eliminate dog shows.

The ironic thing about this entire situation that it is breeders who take part in dog shows and canine competitions that, for the most part, are at the heart of the various breeding and screening initiatives needed to correct problem breeds, and thus eliminate some of the conditions that breeds face.

The independent Bateson report into the dog breeding here in the UK in 2009, concluded that though it was in many cases show issues that had brought some breeds into problems, it is equally the case that show people, if properly led, can be instrumental in steering breeds away from problems as well.

There is a growing concern however that internationally and sometimes even nationally there is a scarcity of leadership working in a coordinated way to confront the issues that need tackling.

The problem is that the animal righters are working together to condemn purebred dogs and, of course, the easiest way for them to do that is to attack the organized and transparent breeders who register their dogs with kennel clubs and exhibit or compete with their dogs at dog events. The back street and uncontrolled breeders are hardly affected by much of the legislation which is introduced. In the case of such legislation, it is very much not those who pay the piper who called the tune.

The biggest problem is knowing how best to work with politicians and civil servants in any country to try to create a movement for better breeding for health by dog breeders without it requiring overbearing and ineffective legislation being imposed. One of the problems is that when kennel clubs nationally take part in joint consultations or working parties looking at animal welfare, they are almost always outnumbered by the vociferous animal charities and veterinary organisations. They are then invariably outvoted when issues affecting serious and responsible breeders are concerned

Surely there needs to be a strong international organization backed financially by all the kennel clubs of the world incapable of going out there singing the praises of responsible breeders and of dog shows, and explaining to the world how they can help to eliminate problems in breeds.

The International Partnership for Dogs (IPFD) has tried to fulfill this role but it has problems. While it has support from the Kennel Club here in the UK and from other major kennel clubs in Europe and to a lesser extent by the American Kennel Club, the FCI has not given it the full international backing that it requires. It is a very good example of how cooperation between kennel clubs and other canine welfare organisations can work together to achieve various aims. However, it too does not really have the promotion of kennel clubs and show dogs as its key aim, and it has never had the incentive or enough financial backing to enable it to go out there advertising the benefits that kennel clubs and show organizers can bring to the future of pedigree dogs.

There is a need for real leadership among kennel clubs to put together a well funded and properly designed public relations plan for the promotion of pedigree dogs and the pedigree dog show fraternity

not just sound bites on social media gathering likes! **The first step however is that international leadership group to agree that it will not always be possible to predict every single breed issue it has to accept that there are some aspects of some breeds that do need changing if the pedigree world is to attain any substantial public credibility.**

A truly defensible strategy for pedigree dogs has to be established - which the world - including the general public and lawmakers - can accept. Once that is achieved, a well-funded and well-designed proactive and continuous public relations campaign needs to be embarked upon with lobbyists counteracting the negative propaganda which the pedigree world endures.

If that cannot be accomplished then the long term future for dog shows is bleak period there will be a growing tide of legislation that ignores the good that is currently being done by responsible show and competitive event breeders.

But where will the required leadership for such a movement be found? It requires a bold move from someone and as yet that someone is sadly absent.

Will the Kennel Club here in the UK take up the cudgels? Will the FCI at last step up to the plate as currently it seems to stand aside waiting for national kennel clubs to "give them a call"? And will the American Kennel Club with its huge financial resources help to find the work that urgently needs to be done?

The world of dogs needs a reality check right here right now.

Silence is not an option.

Traveling the world and ignoring the problems is not an option.

Hoping it will all go away is living in a cloud cuckoo land.

The problems have to be tackled fast and we need an immediate action plan or else we will be looking back at this. In the history of dogs and dog shows and lamenting the fact that we didn't do enough to prevent our own demise.

Only time will tell and time is not on the side of genuine dog breeders and exhibitors.

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