



Established 1962

Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Dr. Gail Golab
Director, Animal Welfare Division
American Veterinarian Medical Association
1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360

Dear Dr. Golab:

On behalf of the Giant Schnauzer Club of America (GSCA) officers and members I am requesting that the American Veterinarian Medical Association's policy statement on dock/crop be immediately rescinded.

It would be redundant to reemphasize what other breed groups have already sent you:

- Weimaraner Club of America's reference to an Australian study that presents data which shows that those breeds that have been historically docked when left undocked have a greater incident of tail injury when compared to those breed that historically were never docked.
- Staffordshire Terrier Club of America reference to two studies that "Dogs with erect ears, regardless of the amount of ear canal hair, had less risk of the disease (otitis external)..."
- Kerry Blue Terrier Club of America reference to the many animal rights myths that the AVMA new wording to the dock/crop policy will perpetuate.
- Field Spaniel Society of America and the United States Australian Shepherd Association's observation that "it will put the animals at risk, as these procedures will not be performed often enough be qualified veterinarians, but rather will often be done by those who are neither qualified nor practiced."
- German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America's observation that "trauma, pain and suffering with subsequent surgery and incurred expense (*done to an injured tail of a mature dog*) could have been prevented if the tail had been docked safely and humanly at 3 days of age."

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- American Fox Terrier Club highlighted the fact that there are two types of newborns; either precocial or altricial. Precocial infants are born neurologically developed to fend for themselves immediately at birth. Altricial infants (i.e. puppies) are born with an incomplete nervous system with ears closed eyes shut; “In other words, at this age and biological condition, it would have no absolute meaning to talk about pain.”
- American Miniature Schnauzer Club questioning the AVMA’s vague response in *Canine Tail Docking frequently asked questions* to “whether these procedures are truly harmful to our pets. There does not seem to be any studies that have been done concerning these procedures.”
- Doberman Pincher Club of America’s position on the utilitarian purposes for ear cropping and tail docking, the breed’s historical contribution to the nation at times of war and the clubs pledge to assist the Department of Homeland Security in developing programs to provide American dogs for America’s future safety and security.

What is worth emphasizing is:

First; what is consistent with each of the aforementioned breed groups is the soundness of the scientific research and empirical evidence presented. What is lacking is any similar information, scientific or pragmatic, that supports the AVMA policy.

Second; through the American Kennel Club’s (AKC) Canine Health Foundation **22 million dollars** has been provided to over 74 veterinarian colleges and research institutions sponsoring over 214 research grants promoting the health and welfare of dogs. Much of the money that supports this research comes from the AKC’s 158 breed groups. The irony is that while we, as responsible owners of pure bred dogs, many with docked tails and cropped ears, support the efforts to further veterinarian medicine the AVMA has chosen to unilaterally ostracize the very group that is promoting the AVMA’s efforts.

Third; the AVMA policies are inconsistent. A review of the AVMA’s policies for domestic animals relative to elective surgery shows that in all policies, with the exception of dock/crop, it is the position of the AVMA that the animal owner collaborate with their veterinarian to determine the best healthcare practice (i.e. see Canine Devocalization, Declawing of Domestic Cats, Pediatric Spay/Neuter of Dogs and Cats). In each of the cited policies the elective surgery described is much more invasive than dock/crop, tremendously more painful to the animal than dock/crop, and until recently had no pain management and rehabilitation (PMnR) follow up.

Fourth; the attempt to add credibility to an ill conceived policy after-the-fact through the *History of Policy on Ear Cropping and Tail Docking of Dogs* and *Canine Tail Docking frequently asked questions*, found on the AVMA’s web site, only serves to mislead a public that looks to the AVMA for guidance. Truth be told, no animal in the wild has ears that hang over their ear canal.

Finally; the timing and motivation of your AVMA Welfare Division policy on dock/crop has to be called in to question. It has been conservatively estimated that 34 states have animal welfare legislation on their dockets in the current legislative session. There is a concerted effort on the part of animal rights groups to eliminate the right of ownership and enjoyment of dogs. The divisive nature of the dock/crop policy only serves to allow animal rights lobbyist to use the AVMA as a resource to their end game; the elimination of what we know as domestic and agriculture pets and livestock.

Last; it appears that your organization may be more interested in complying with outside philosophy rather than maintain the fundamentals of your organization’s Mission Statement and Objective. It is an unfortunate truth that one outspoken animal rights (you may see the term animal protection instead of animal rights as these organizations try to reinvent themselves) organization neither operates any shelters nor contributes to local shelters or rescues. Another major animal rights organization euthanizes 90% of the adoptable domestic animals they take in to their “shelter” rather than finding those animals homes.

In these rough economic times when locally run humane society shelters and AKC breed group rescue's resources are being stretched to the limit, the AVMA must embrace those groups with policies that celebrates the rich heritage of dog in society/dogs in history; not alienate those groups that are working hard to provide for the health, safety and welfare of our distinctive breeds of family and working dogs.

It is the request of the Giant Schnauzer Club of America for the American Veterinarian Medical Association to rescind their current policy on docking and cropping. Subsequent policy regarding docking of tails and cropping of ears must eliminate the term "cosmetic" and references to "therapeutic" opinion where no scientific data exists. Rather, policies on elective surgery must emphasize the rich human canine bond and reflect a willingness for the owner and their veterinarian to work together to establish best practices for the healthcare of their dogs.

Sincerely,



Edward Fojtik
President,
Giant Schnauzer Club of America



Robert K. Darden, II
American Kennel Club Legislative Liaison,
Giant Schnauzer Club of America

cc: AVMA Officers
AVMA Executive Board
AVMA House of Delegates