



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

IN SESSION

AKC'S CONGRESSIONAL NEWSLETTER

The American Kennel Club's Newsletter for Members of Congress and their Staff

PERSPECTIVES

*We're more than champion dogs...
We're the dog's champion.*

American Kennel Club Dog (AKC) Shows are an important part of the holiday season. Millions of families watch the Philadelphia Kennel Club Dog Show on TV on Thanksgiving Day. In Mid-December, the AKC National Championship takes place in Orlando, Florida. Dog shows are one way many Americans learn about and connect with the amazing diversity of nearly 200 different breeds of dogs.

Most people know the American Kennel Club for our dog shows, but dog shows are only the tip of the iceberg of what AKC has to offer.

In this issue of *In Session*, we celebrate the diversity of dogs – the most varied species of land mammal. We also highlight a few of AKC's diverse educational and charitable programs that represent our mission to... *advance canine health and well-being, protect the rights of all dog owners and promote responsible dog ownership.*

For example, *did you know?*

The AKC Government Relations Division

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CONGRESSIONAL CANINE SPOTLIGHT

Congressman **Tim Ryan**



Photos courtesy Congressman Tim Ryan

Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-13) had a few very full days leading up to the election. While fielding phone calls and making media appearances from home, he had the support of two very special, furry members of the Ryan family. Bear and Buckeye Ryan are the congressman's littermate Labrador Retriever/Siberian Husky mixes, who were adopted from the local shelter seven years ago when they were two months old. The pups were affectionately named by the Congressman's children. Bear is white and named after a cuddly polar bear; Buckeye is brown and has the same coloration as his state's peanut butter and chocolate buckeye candy.

Bear and Buckeye are the Congressman's first dogs. His wife is a dog lover who inspired the family to get the dogs, and now Rep. Ryan admits that they are "part of the family," even sleeping in bed with them. When Buckeye started to develop hip issues that prevented him from jumping up on the bed, his wife immediately bought doggie stairs to the bed so Buckeye could continue to join them in his usual spot.

In addition to being lovable members of the family, the dogs are also the family's protectors and alert the family to anyone who approaches their property. This gives the Congressman great peace of mind as he travels back and forth from Washington, DC.

Congressman Ryan notes there are many benefits to owning a dog, especially during the pandemic. Dogs can be there for you even when you cannot be around other people. They offer unconditional love, emotional support,

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is a leading resource for policymakers, with extensive expertise, policy resources and straightforward, science-based information about animal husbandry. In *Breeder Expertise, thoughtful Analysis Demonstrate Dangerous Flaws in 'Feel Good' Dog Laws* (p. 6), we go beyond the headlines to explore how one size fits all public policy and dog laws can undermine responsible dog breeders who use scientific animal husbandry practices to care for their animals.

AKC Canine Health Foundation (*AKC-CHF*) is the world's leading funder of scientific research to prevent treat and cure canine disease. Since 1995, AKC-CHF has funded more than \$58 Million in cutting edge scientific research through more than 1,030 research and education grants to countless universities and scientists. To date, this investment has resulted in more than 825 peer-reviewed publications, more than 31,000 scientific citations, and most importantly, improving the quality and length of countless canine lives. In the canine health highlights section, learn more about recent AKC-funded advances in canine cancer research (p. 3) and puppy cognition studies (p. 4).

AKC offers high quality resources for educators, including rigorous, standards aligned lesson plans for grades kindergarten through twelve in the subjects of math, social studies, language arts and science, that also include lessons in responsible dog ownership. We also offer professional development articles for teachers, as well as hands-on activities for preschool aged children. Visit our article on *Educator Resources* (p. 8) to learn more.

We hope you will let us be your resource for all canine issues too. As always, please don't hesitate to reach out to us and let us know how we can assist you.

All the best,



Sheila Goffe

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CONGRESSMAN TIM RYAN, continued from previous page



and constant cuddles that help stave off social isolation. Dogs can also be good for your health. [Studies suggest that dog owners have lower blood pressure levels and improved responses to stress](#) – All things important to maintain during this unprecedented year.

With all the benefits dogs provide their owners, the Congressman takes very seriously the obligation owners have to be responsible for their pets. He is very concerned about irresponsible animal ownership and dogs ending up in shelters. One of the best ways to ensure a dog does not end up in a shelter is to make sure the dog is a good fit for your family. Making sure the breed you select and the dog's characteristics and personality match up with your family's lifestyle is one way to keep dogs out of shelters.

When researching the right dog for you, [a great resource are AKC's national breed clubs](#). These clubs, also known as "parent club" offer extensive breed expertise and can provide valuable information on the type of care that specific breeds need. AKC Breed clubs are dedicated to protecting and preserving their particular breed. Educating about the breeds and responsible ownership is an important part of their mission. In addition to breeder recommendations, many parent clubs play an important role in breed rescue. Breed clubs are responsible for developing the concept of breed-based rescue, and many have breed rescue affiliates around the nation.

According to a recent [AKC Rescue Network survey, rescue volunteers](#) said the top three reasons cited by owners for surrendering their dog are change of lifestyle, not the right breed for them, and lack of time to spend with the dog. Respondents noted that the biggest issues they face are the lack of foster homes, manpower, and funding.

The AKC Rescue Network is the largest network of dog rescue groups in the country. One hundred sixty unique breeds are currently represented within the network. More than 450 AKC Rescue Network groups are located across the United States. AKC's national breed clubs spearhead the bulk of these rescue groups, and it's often breeders and breed enthusiasts who are at the heart of taking in, rehabbing and rehoming pets that need a helping hand. The AKC Rescue Network's groups are unique in that the fostering/rehabilitation period lasts as long as is necessary before the dog is rehomed.

While there are many ways to bring a dog into your life, it is important to do research on what kind of dog you are getting and where you are getting your dog, to ensure a happy and healthy life for both canine and human family members. By ensuring a right fit and focusing on responsible pet ownership, Bear and Buckeye have become – and continue to be – an integral part of Congressman Ryan's family. ■



Canine Health Foundation Discoveries: *Progress in Canine Lymphoma Research*

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PREVENT TREAT & CURE®

Canine lymphoma is cancer of the immune cells. It is the most common canine cancer and resembles what we call non-Hodgkin lymphoma in people. Lymphoma is usually multicentric, meaning that multiple lymph nodes and organs are affected at the time of diagnosis. If immune cells in the bone marrow or bloodstream are affected, it is called leukemia. While lymphoma has been considered a single disease state, with advancing technology and increased understanding, we now recognize more than thirty different lymphoma sub-types.

Lymphoma is classified based on whether it affects B cells or T cells (two types of immune cells with different jobs) plus other molecular characteristics. Since each lymphoma sub-type is influenced by its unique genetic characteristics and molecular pathways, it makes sense that there is wide variation in the way dogs with lymphoma respond to treatment. Only once we understand the particular features of each lymphoma sub-type can we develop and implement targeted treatments with a better chance for success. Since its founding in 1995, the AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) and its donors have been at the forefront of canine lymphoma research, investing over \$2.6 million in 45 canine health research studies resulting in more than 35 peer-reviewed scientific publications on this disease.

CHF-funded researchers at North Carolina State University greatly improved our understanding of the genetic characteristics of canine lymphoma by studying copy number changes. Normal dog cells have two copies of each gene. However, cancerous cells can have zero to numerous copies of various genes - known as copy number aberrations. Researchers identified specific patterns of copy number aberrations in canine lymphoma that not only correlate with sub-type, but also response to treatment.

At the University of Missouri, Columbia, researchers described the epigenetic characteristics of canine lymphoma in Golden Retrievers. Epigenetics is the study of biochemical processes that alter gene expression without changing the underlying genetic code, such as the addition of methyl groups in a process known as methylation. They identified a methylation pattern unique to diuse large B cell lymphoma in this breed which can be used to

diagnose the disease and predict a dog's risk of developing disease.

CHF-funded researchers have also studied numerous new ways to treat canine lymphoma. Lymphoma stem cells, or tumor-initiating cells, have been described and treatments that kill these cells could prolong remission times or even cure lymphoma. Another promising treatment strategy under investigation for canine and human cancer is adoptive cell therapy. This involves extracting T cells from a patient's blood or tumor tissue, growing large numbers of the T cells in a laboratory (sometimes the T cells are altered to make them more potent or more targeted for a specific type of cancer), and finally injecting them back into the cancer patient.

CHF-funded researchers demonstrated that adoptive cell therapy prolonged survival time in dogs with lymphoma when given in addition to standard chemotherapy and continue to refine the targeting capabilities of these expanded T cells.

Additional treatment targets studied include:

- enzymes that are more numerous inside cancerous lymph nodes compared to healthy lymph nodes,
- aurora kinase – a protein that regulates cell reproduction,
- micro RNA (miRNA) – small pieces of RNA not involved in protein creation that may be unique to the different lymphoma
- sub-types,
- survivin – a protein in cancer cells that makes them resistant to chemotherapy,
- and signaling pathways that cancer cells use to evade the immune system.

Altering any of these molecules or pathways could slow or stop the growth of cancer cells and lead to remission. CHF and its donors will continue to find and fund high quality studies that advance our understanding of canine lymphoma and lead to new and better treatments. As we learn more about the similarities between canine and human lymphoma, discoveries made studying one species may benefit both. Learn more and support canine lymphoma research at akcchf.org/lymphomaRPA

AKC Canine Health Foundation Research Update:

Puppy Cognition – the Making of a Brilliant Canine Mind

Cognition is described as the ability to use perception, memory, attention, and reasoning to assimilate information into knowledge and understanding. Scientists now know that a single construct such as general intelligence does not adequately explain the variation seen in cognitive abilities within and between species such as humans and dogs.

The AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF) and its donors have invested in ground-breaking research to explore the cognitive abilities of our canine companions – particularly those that work closely with us as detection dogs, service dogs, assistance dogs, and more.

With funding from CHF Grant 1995: Understanding the Flexibility and Limitations of How Dogs Acquire Knowledge and Understanding: Application to Service Dog Emotional Health and Selection, investigators examined dogs' temperamental and cognitive traits and how they might be used to predict an individual dog's chance of success as a service or detection dog.¹ Successful service dogs were more likely to engage in eye contact with the human tester when faced with an unsolvable task or when social interaction was interrupted and scored higher on inferential reasoning tasks.

Successful detection dogs scored higher on tests of sensitivity to human gestures and short-term memory. Investigators also showed that existing cognitive and temperament tests can help predict success in these working roles.

For a full description of the Dog Cognitive Development Battery, including task descriptions and detailed results, see Table 1.

Task	Description and Results
Retrieval	This task evaluated a puppy's willingness to cooperatively engage in fetch with a human partner. All puppies had a tendency to chase and pick up the ball, which matches results from previous studies, even those involving a non-retriever breed, the German Shepherd Dog.
Laterality	Investigators tracked paw preference when the puppy was stepping on or off of a platform. This left or right-handedness is believed to reflect lateralization within the brain and has been linked to temperamental reactivity in adult dogs. Half of the tested puppies showed a significant preference for one side, although left and right were not statistically different.
Human interest	This task tested a puppy's desire to attend to a human that spoke to them. Puppies spent approximately 6 seconds looking at the human's face during each 30 second trial and approximately 18 seconds looking at the human's face during each 30 second play break.

This research is critical to improving the training and selection process for working dogs. Which cognitive traits predict success in various working roles? How can we use each dog's cognitive style to maximize their learning? At what age do these cognitive traits first appear and when are they fully developed? Are these traits stable over the dog's lifetime or do they change throughout puppyhood, adolescence, and maturity?

With funding from CHF Grant 02518: The Effects of Early Life Experience on Working Dog Temperament and Cognition, investigators are collaborating with Canine Companions for Independence (CCI) to explore these issues in young puppies.

The latest research results published in Animal Behaviour² describe the cognitive characteristics of 8- to 10-week-old puppies whelped at the CCI headquarters in Santa Rosa, CA, or in volunteer breeder caretaker homes. The puppies stayed with their dam and littermates until approximately 8 weeks of age. At that age, they received veterinary care at the CCI headquarters before going to individual puppy raiser homes. It was at this time that each puppy completed the Dog Cognitive Development Battery – a series of 14 tasks completed over three days in a 45-minute session each day. Results represent the first description of cognitive skills in such a large group of puppies at this young age.

Cylinder	<p>a. Inhibitory control: This task tested a puppy's ability to defer immediate reward and make a choice that would ultimately be more productive. A food reward was placed behind a plastic barrier. To be successful, puppies had to defer the natural choice of moving directly toward the treat and instead go around the barrier to reach the food reward. Both transparent and opaque barriers were tested. Puppies went directly around the barrier approximately half of the repetitions. They were more successful if the barrier was opaque. If the barrier was transparent, they would spend more time bumping into the barrier attempting to get the visible food reward before learning to go around.</p> <p>b. Cognitive flexibility: This task tested a puppy's response when a previously preferred solution was no longer available. The food reward was placed behind an opaque barrier and the side to which each puppy preferentially went around in the inhibitory control task was blocked with clear plastic. To be successful, the puppy had to go to the <i>other</i> side of the barrier. Most tested puppies demonstrated a strong preference to go left versus right. When that side was blocked, they went directly to the open side approximately 33% of the time. Puppies with the strongest side preference performed the worst when that side was blocked.</p> <p>For both of these tests, older puppies solved the problem faster than younger puppies. However, the tests did not discriminate if they were faster at problem solving or if they were simply able to move faster around the barrier once they did realize the solution.</p>
Unsolvable task	This task tested a puppy's inclination to persist at an unsolvable problem versus looking to a nearby human for help. Food reward was placed inside a clear, locked container. During each 30 second trial, tested puppies spent an average of only 1 second looking at the nearby human's face and an average of 13 seconds trying to manipulate the container. This agrees with results from previous studies demonstrating that young puppies do orient to humans for assistance, but not as much as adult dogs.
Gesture use	<p>These tasks tested a puppy's ability to use various communicative cues to find hidden reward. For each task, the examiner showed the puppy a food reward, but the puppy's view was blocked while the food was hidden in one of two possible containers. The puppy was then able to see both containers and was given one of the following cues.</p> <p>a. Communicative marker: The examiner obviously placed a yellow block next to the cup containing a hidden food reward. Tested puppies used this cue approximately 75% of the repetitions, performing better than expected by chance.</p> <p>b. Arm pointing: The examiner obviously looked at and pointed to the cup containing food. Tested puppies again performed better than expected by chance and used the arm pointing gesture in approximately 70% of the repetitions.</p> <p>c. Odor control: No cue was given from the examiner. Tested puppies chose the cup containing food reward as expected by random chance. This indicated that smelling the food reward in the cup did not influence their response to the communicative marker or arm pointing.</p>
Novel object	This task tested a puppy's response to an unfamiliar object – in this case, a motion-activated, motorized stuffed cat. Puppy reactions varied along the spectrum of shy to bold.
Working memory	This task tested a puppy's ability to recall the location of a hidden food reward after various periods of time. Tested puppies performed better than expected by chance at 5 and 10 second intervals. Only one third of the puppies did well enough at these time intervals to attempt 15 and 20 second delays. Again, the puppies tested at these longer intervals performed better than expected by chance.
Discrimination	<p>a. Visual: Puppies chose which of two hidden plates contained a food reward after watching the examiner place kibble on one of them.</p> <p>b. Auditory: Puppies chose which of two hidden metal bowls contained a food reward after hearing the examiner drop kibble into one of them.</p> <p>c. Odor: Puppies chose which of two rubber tubes contained a food reward after sniffing two similar tubes. The ends of the tubes were stuffed with cotton to prevent the kibble from being visible or moving around to create a sound.</p> <p>Tested puppies performed better than expected by chance in each of these tasks. Visual discrimination was the most successful, followed by olfactory, then auditory.</p>
Surprising events	This task evaluated a puppy's reaction to a series of unexpected and potentially startling events: a large trash bag stuffed with shredded paper was tossed in front of the puppy, an umbrella was opened toward the puppy, and a piece of sheet metal was shaken (making sound and pulses of air) near the puppy. Similar to the novel object task, individual responses and recovery rates varied.

Did You Know?

- The Canine Health Foundation has given more than 1,000 grants to universities and scientific research institutions
 - In 2019, CHF awarded \$2.9 million in 48 canine health research grants
- Since 1995, CHF has supported canine health research with over \$58 million in grant funding

References:

1. MacLean EL and Hare BA. (2018) Enhanced Selection of Assistance and Explosive Detection Dogs Using Cognitive Measures. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*. 5:236. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2018.00236>
2. Bray, E. E., Gruen, M. E., Gnanadesikan, G. E., Horschler, D. J., Levy, K. M., Kennedy, B. S., Hare, B. A., & MacLean, E. L. (2020). Cognitive characteristics of 8- to 10-week-old assistance dog puppies. *Animal Behaviour*. 166, 193–206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2020.05.019>



Breeder Expertise, Thoughtful Analysis Demonstrate Dangerous Flaws in ‘Feel Good’ Dog Law

In October, U.S. Senator Richard Durbin introduced the “Puppy Protection Act” ([S. 4757](#)), a companion to U.S. House Bill 2442—measures that the AKC has expressed concerns about.

The proposal establishes federal mandates for animal care for pet breeders subject to USDA licensing and inspections. While many people think of this as the realm “commercial breeders”, it also impacts small specialty and hobby breeders.

Breeders who maintain more than four intact female small pet mammals --a combination of dogs, cats, gerbils, rabbits, hamsters, etc.—and transfers even one pet sight unseen (even for rescue) are subject to USDA licensing.

AKC cares deeply about the wellbeing of all dogs. And many of HR 2442/S 4757's specific requirements can be categorized as good practices for general pet care, so why is AKC concerned about the Puppy Protection Act?

When good general practices are turned into arbitrary one-size fits all federal mandates, they require everyone to abide by a specific requirement, even if it's not in the best interest of their dogs. Arbitrary requirements fail to consider the broad range of breeds and types of dogs, best health and breeding practices, or allow for creative approaches and flexibility that allow expert breeders, veterinarians and owners to provide optimal care for individual dogs and advance the art and science of responsible dog breeding.

Guidelines like those in the Puppy Protection Act can make good general practices, but bad federal mandates. Here are some examples:

- Unfettered access to an outdoor exercise area. This sounds good, but allowing all dogs *unfettered* access to a play yard large enough for running strides may be unsafe and a logistical nightmare. Will each dog go back to its own kennel by itself when finished playing? What if some don't get along? What if there are females in heat? What if there is insufficient space for private yards of this size for each dog?
- Frequency of meals. Few people would disagree that two meals a day are standard practice for canine care (although young puppies are typically better off with four, and older dogs may only need one, or wish to “graze” throughout the day). *Does a federal law mandating two meals a day, in lieu of existing Animal Welfare Act requirements for sufficient and appropriate food, really advance the wellbeing of dogs?* While we're at it, should the federal government also put similar laws in place for humans?
- Flooring. In most cases, solid flooring in a kennel is preferred. However, research by Purdue University^[i] and others find that dogs actually benefit from multiple types of flooring and recognizes the health and sanitation benefits of high quality engineered slatted/perforated flooring. Why then, should a federal law mandate solid flooring only?

- Temperatures. There is no species more diverse than canines. A general prohibition of temperatures below 45 degrees or above 85 degrees makes sense for most, but not all. Northern breeds (such as Alaskan Malamutes or Siberian Huskies) prefer and can easily handle temperatures well below freezing. Other dogs, especially newly-born puppies (who require temps significantly higher than 85 degrees) can thrive in higher temperatures. Dogs that hunt, sled, detect explosives, or do other work must be acclimated to cooler or warmer temperatures for their safety.^[ii]

HSUS Weighs In, Claiming that Breeders Kill Retired “Breeding Dogs”

In a blog supporting the measure, HSUS stated the act would require “additional critical changes to the regulation of (licensed) breeders … (including) requiring that breeders attempt to re-home retired breeding dogs *instead of killing them.*”^[iii]

Breeders are dog owners. In most cases, the dog that is bred is also a personal pet. HSUS’s outrageous accusation that breeders kill their pets is an insult to all responsible dog owners and should be retracted. As with any other owner, if a person needs to find a new home for a pet, the choice belongs to the owner and the owner should have the option of selecting the best home or rehoming process for that pet. The U.S. has such a large demand for pet dogs that Americans import one million pet dogs a year^[iv], and many still have trouble finding the right pet. HSUS’s accusation simply doesn’t pass the sniff test.

The outrageous implication about breeders killing dogs is yet another example of false narratives and policy proposals intended to mislead the public about dog breeders. Given their anti-breeder agenda, it’s no surprise they have little or no breeding expertise or experience.

The truth is, the vast majority of breeders being slandered are dedicated individuals who lovingly persevere in preserving their bloodlines and providing quality pets to families lucky enough to get one -- even as their integrity and expertise comes under constant attack from groups who oppose owning or breeding purpose-bred pets.

Expert dog breeders must have the flexibility to care for their pets in the best and most appropriate manner to ensure each animal receives the care it needs and deserves. They – and the facts – should be consulted when proposing legislation that impacts them. ■

[i] USDA, Purdue University et al., <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5946143/>

[ii] Dogs and Temperatures, One Size Does Not Fit All, 11/19/2019

[iii] HSUS Blog, 9/30/2020, https://hsus.org/blog/2020/09/Congress-takes-steps-curb-pandemic-puppy-mills-during-busy-day-on-Capitol-Hill-yesterday?utm_source=feedblitz&utm_medium=FeedBlitzRss&utm_campaign=hsus

[iv] As reported by the US Centers for Disease Control, *Federal Register* 01/31/19, pp. 724-30.



The Value of Responsible Dog Breeders

There are two issues on which all dog lovers agree. First, dogs deserve a life in a safe, caring, and healthy environment. Second, those who treat dogs in a negligent or cruel manner should be held accountable.

The American Kennel Club (AKC) takes a strong line on animal cruelty, including implementing a policy that suspends AKC privileges for anyone convicted of animal cruelty involving dogs. The AKC is also the only registry that has a significant Investigations and Inspections program to ensure that people who register litters with the AKC raise their dogs in a humane manner.

The AKC works to ensure that the rights of responsible owners and breeders are protected and that anyone –regardless of the number of dogs they own—who treats a dog negligently or cruelly is held responsible for such actions.

What is a Responsible Breeder?

One of the most effective ways to ensure that dogs are placed in safe, loving environments is to support responsible dog breeders. Local communities should consider responsible breeders an asset, as they are in a unique position to mentor new dog owners and provide advice and detailed information about the dogs they own and sell.

Responsible breeders are experts in their breed and know the pedigree of the dogs they sell. They can tell potential buyers about the temperament, health, and other characteristics unique to the puppy they are considering. Many breeders devote their entire lives to developing a line or pedigree of dogs that meet specific temperament, performance, and health standards. Many also breed dogs for specific purposes, such as hunting, search and rescue, therapy, and assistance for the disabled.

When responsible breeders sell a puppy, they ensure these dogs are placed in good homes by implementing a screening process for potential buyers and following up after the purchase. Breeders often take dogs back if they are not in an ideal situation and place them in new homes, as in the case of "Bo", the Obama family's Portuguese Water Dog.

Most of the AKC national breed parent clubs have rescue programs for their breeds. Parent club rescues are often comprised of AKC breeder volunteers who work with local animal control officers or individual owners to ensure dogs are not abandoned in shelters, but rather placed in safe, loving environments.

Being a responsible dog breeder is truly a labor of love that comes with a significant price tag. Responsible dog breeders breed because they love their chosen breed(s) and are willing to dedicate their lives and resources to raising quality dogs.

More than a Numbers Game

Every profession from accountants and lawyers to doctors and teachers has a few "bad apples" that tarnish the reputation of an otherwise respectable profession. Unfortunately, dog breeding is no exception.

Thankfully, these few irresponsible breeders comprise a very small minority of an otherwise unique and special profession. Those who do breed or care for dogs in an irresponsible or cruel manner must be punished under the law, but the term "irresponsible" must be carefully defined.

An unfortunate but common trend is to equate the term "irresponsible" with the number of dogs – particularly females – someone owns. This assumption often occurs among individuals with little knowledge or expertise in animal husbandry, genetics or best practices in animal care. In fact, keeping multiple dogs and maintaining proper care and conditions demonstrates a commitment to proper care and genetic diversity. The number of animals owned has never correlated with the level of care.

Many agriculture groups have partnered with the AKC throughout the United States to fight legislation that places an arbitrary cap on animal ownership. They know that historically as well as today, the great kennels—like the great horse farms or cattle ranches—have maintained and provided excellent care to large numbers of animals. Just as there are excellent owners of 100 dogs, there are negligent owners of one dog.



Simply reducing the number of animals a person or business may own will not automatically make them a better or more humane owner. There is no magic number that will suddenly make someone a better dog owner or breeder. Arbitrary numerical caps completely miss the underlying issue —owner responsibility.

Animal ownership limits can actually create more problems for dogs and the community at large. Such laws are extremely difficult for communities to enforce. Limits can force caring, responsible owners to relinquish dogs to a local shelter simply to comply with an arbitrary ownership cap. These dogs are then housed or euthanized at great expense to local taxpayers.

Additionally, limits on the number of dogs a responsible breeder may own has the potential to cause long-term damage to a breed. Ownership limits restrict breed populations and also the access that responsible breeders need to ensure the genetic diversity necessary for the future health and well-being of the breed.

A Matter of Enforcement

There is no question that those who treat dogs in an inhumane manner should be punished. Each of the 50 states, as well as the United States Code, outlaw animal negligence and cruelty. When tragic stories of animal cruelty and irresponsible breeding come to light, they almost always result in charges under existing law being brought against the individual or business responsible.

The problem is not an absence of laws, but rather a lack of enforcement or the resources to properly enforce existing laws. Many states and local communities simply do not have the manpower or money necessary to adequately enforce existing laws.

There have been many attempts across the country to further regulate dog breeders. These include requiring warrantless inspections of private homes without probable cause, as well as impractical and arbitrary standards of care that may not be in the best interest of dogs. Not only do such provisions violate the rights of responsible, law-abiding citizens, they are also ineffective and unenforceable – and in some cases may even harm dogs. The problem is more complex than simply creating new laws – it requires the ability and will to enforce the laws against negligence and cruelty that are already on the books. A “quick fix” of adding new laws will not change or improve a lack of enforcement and may only divert resources from much-needed enforcement operations.

At the federal level, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has regularly strengthened the standards for humane care and treatment of dogs and other animals owned by those regulated by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The AKC supports the strong enforcement of the AWA, as well as an increase in the personnel and capacity of USDA to enforce the AWA.

An Effective Solution

Breeder and owner responsibility cannot be defined by establishing arbitrary ownership limits or unenforceable breeding requirements. Instead, responsibility should be defined by the quality of care given to the animals. This is why the American Kennel Club works with dog owners, breeders, and community leaders throughout the country to educate the public about responsible dog ownership.

The AKC also encourages responsible breeding practices by supporting educational symposia for breeders and competitive dog shows and other events where top breeders showcase and compete with the best of their breeding programs. The AKC Canine Health Foundation has allocated millions of dollars to research studies focusing on helping dogs live longer, healthier lives.

Where legislative fixes are needed, the AKC is pleased to assist in bringing community leaders and responsible breeders together to create positive, effective solutions. For example, Ohio lawmakers sought over several legislative sessions to close loopholes and clarify breeding and care standards for dogs. The AKC worked with responsible dog owners, breeders, and key legislators and enforcement authorities to identify the real issues. Together, this group finally succeeded in creating a strong, clear law that provided reasonable guidelines and enforcement provisions.



For over 135 years, the AKC has been dedicated to well-being of dogs. We support and value the responsible owners and breeders who breed and raise our cherished pets and beloved working dogs. Responsible breeders are an important asset and educational resource in our communities. Through educational programs and enforcement of existing laws, we can punish those who harm animals while recognizing that responsible breeders who devote their lives to their dogs are part of the solution, not the problem.



Educator Resources

American Kennel Club values educators and the important work they do in the classroom. To assist educators in the classroom, we have created resources for educators. We offer rigorous, standards aligned lesson plans for grades kindergarten through twelve in the subjects of math, social studies, language arts and science. These lessons aim to engage and educate students in the curriculum, while also introducing information about purebred dogs. We also offer professional development articles for teachers, as well as hands-on activities for preschool aged children.

Some lesson plan examples include:

- Activities and Resources for Exceptional Learners—Teachers and parents of exceptional learners are always looking for new activities for their students. One of the best way to engage any learner is by pairing learning with something the student finds interesting. What do kids love more than dogs? AKC Public Education offers many lessons and activities that are ideal for [exceptional learners](#).

- Grades K-2 Lesson Plans—

[Language Arts](#)

[Math](#)

[Science](#)

[Social Studies](#)

- Grades 6-8 Lesson Plans—

[Language Arts](#)

[Math](#)

[Science](#)

[Social Studies](#)

- Grades 3-5 Lesson Plans—

[Language Arts](#)

[Math](#)

[Science](#)

[Social Studies](#)

- Grades 9-12 Lesson Plans—

[Language Arts](#)

[Math](#)

[Science](#)

[Social Studies](#)





AKC Celebrates The 10 Year Anniversary of AKC Canine Partners™



The American Kennel Club is proud to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its Canine Partners program! AKC Canine Partners™ was developed to welcome mixed-breed dogs and their owners to the AKC Family. It promotes the strengthening of the human-canine bond by encouraging training, responsible dog ownership and pet owner education. And for the past ten years, the program has done exactly that and more!

Since its launch in 2010, AKC Canine Partners™ has had a steady and consistent rise in enrollment every year. As of June 2020, the total number of enrollments is over 420,000, with 85,000 enrollments in 2019 alone. AKC Canine Partners have earned more than 21,000 titles in the AKC companion events and programs, like Agility, Tracking, Rally, and Obedience, etc.

Many of the dogs enrolled have capitalized on the various benefits the program offers, including its most popular aspect of dog sport and events eligibility. Since its inception in 2010, there has been a steady increase in Canine Partner Entries across dog sports. Entry records show that since 2019 approximately 10% of participants in AKC Companion Events were Canine Partners.

"We are beyond excited to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Canine Partners Program," said Penny Leigh, Program Manager for Canine Partners. "AKC is for all dogs and the enhancement of the human- canine bond. This program not only promotes responsible dog ownership, but it also allows any dog to be a champion and we are very proud of it."

AKC Canine Partners™ is an enrollment program for mixed breeds and other dogs not eligible for AKC Purebred Registration. Once enrolled, your dog will receive benefits similar to AKC's traditional Registration including:

- AKC Canine Partners ProgramsTM Official Certificate
- Eligibility to participate in Agility, AKC Rally®, Obedience, Tracking, Scent Work, Fast CAT and Coursing Ability Events and more
- Eligibility for AKC Recognition of Titles
- Lifetime enrollment in AKC Reunite Lost & Found Recovery Service with Reunite collar tag
- One-year subscription to AKC Family Dog magazine
- Complimentary office visit with veterinarian in the AKC Veterinary Network
- 30 Days of Pet Insurance Coverage
- Opportunities to connect with other owners of mixed-breed dogs

For more information about the AKC Canine Partners™ program, visit: <https://www.akc.org/register/information/canine-partners/>.



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