AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB®

Summary
Position Statements

Animal Terrorism

The American Kennel Club® abhors acts of violence, bullying and intimidation committed against dog owners, breeders, kennels, pet stores and research facilities by those who object to the keeping and use of animals. The AKC® respects the right of all individuals to express and advocate personal opinions in lawful ways. We support full enforcement of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act and we strongly condemn illegal actions such as the "liberation" of dogs or destruction of property. The AKC supports the right of people to own, train, interact with and exhibit their dogs without interference.

Breeding Regulations and Restrictions

The American Kennel Club strongly supports and actively promotes a wide range of programs to educate the public about responsible purebred breeding practices and the responsibilities of dog ownership. The AKC supports reasonable and enforceable laws that protect the welfare and health of dogs and do not restrict the rights of breeders and owners who meet their responsibilities. The AKC opposes the concept of breeding permits, breeding bans or mandatory spay/neuter of purebred dogs, specifically those based on the number of dogs owned or maintained. The AKC expects responsible dog owners and breeders to know, understand and obey laws that apply to them.

Canine Population Issues

AKC commends experienced breed enthusiasts who are educating the public and other breeders about the need for long term commitments and responsibilities. We encourage them to help new owners address issues that could result in the relinquishment of pets. National research organizations have reported that the majority of unwanted dogs in the United States come from owners who are unable or unwilling to train, socialize, and care for their dog. The American Kennel Club also encourages pet owners to consider spaying or neutering their dogs at an appropriate age if they do not want to participate in AKC conformation events or engage in responsible breeding programs. The American Kennel Club further supports programs dedicated to teaching the pet-buying public how to find a responsible breeder and how to make well-informed decisions when buying a dog rather than buying on impulse. Such programs help to ensure that pet purchasers find a puppy or dog that is a good match for their lifestyle, at an appropriate time in their lives, thereby increasing the likelihood that the animal will stay with the owner for its entire life. The AKC encourages owners and potential dog owners to visit our website at www.akc.org to locate AKC Parent Clubs which are the national organizations that represent breeds recognized by the AKC. The American Kennel Club believes euthanasia should be employed only as a last resort when all reasonable efforts to place adoptable dogs have failed. At the same time, AKC recognizes that not all dogs are adoptable due to temperament and health issues.

Civil Damages in Cases Involving Injury to Pets

The American Kennel Club supports the appropriate awarding of traditional economic damages in cases involving negligent injury to an animal. Together with criminal laws that prohibit animal cruelty and dog fighting, and civil laws that address both intentional and negligent injury or death of an animal, traditional economic damages in cases involving the negligent injury or death to an animal helps create a stable legal system that promotes responsible animal ownership, deters animal abuse, and promotes innovative, affordable, and quality animal care. The AKC opposes the awarding of non-economic damages in cases involving the negligent injury to an animal.

"Dangerous Dog" Control Legislation

The American Kennel Club supports reasonable, enforceable, non-discriminatory laws to govern the ownership of dogs. The AKC believes that dog owners should be responsible for their dogs. We support laws that: establish a fair process by which specific dogs are identified as "dangerous" based on stated, measurable actions; impose appropriate penalties on irresponsible owners; and establish a well-defined method for dealing with dogs proven to be dangerous. We believe that, if necessary, dogs proven to be "dangerous" may need to be humanely destroyed. The AKC strongly opposes any legislation that determines a dog to be "dangerous" based on specific breeds or phenotypic classes of dogs.

Debarking

Debarking is a viable veterinary procedure that may allow a dog owner to keep a dog that barks excessively in its loving home rather than to be forced to surrender it to a shelter. Debarking should only be performed by a qualified, licensed veterinarian after other behavioral modification efforts to correct excessive barking have failed. As with other veterinary medical decisions, the decision to debark a dog is best left to individual owners and their veterinarians.

Dog Auctions

The American Kennel Club considers auctions and raffles not to be reasonable and appropriate methods to obtain or transfer dogs. AKC's current inspection program shall include kennels/individuals offering dogs for sale at auctions. Any dog sold at auction that is under 8 weeks of age or without microchip identification will be ineligible for AKC registration and shall be placed on permanent referral. The AKC discourages Parent Club rescue groups from purchasing dogs at auctions. Although Parent Clubs may be doing good things for individual dogs purchased at auctions, it perpetuates the problem and tends to create a seller's market. Reciprocally, auctioneers seek more dogs of those breeds to offer at auctions. AKC applauds the work of Parent Club rescue groups on many fronts. However, AKC believes that the purchasing of dogs at auctions is not overall in the best interest of purebred dogs.

Dog Fighting

The American Kennel Club supports state laws making participation in organized dog fights a felony. The AKC unequivocally opposes dog fighting and the breeding and/or training of dogs for fighting. The AKC opposes the training of dogs for uncontrolled aggressive behavior toward other dogs and people.

Dog Training

Training in appropriate behavior is an important part of responsible dog ownership and enables a dog to be a respected and cherished part of family and community life. Appropriate training can help prevent dogs from being relinquished for behavioral issues and can deepen the bond between owners and their dogs. Individual dogs respond differently to a variety of approaches. AKC recognizes that there are numerous effective approaches to training that produce desirable results such as obedience, Canine Good Citizen®, performance and working/service dog designations. Government entities should not arbitrarily restrict accepted, appropriate and effective dog training practices.

Due Process Protections for Dog Owners

The American Kennel Club believes that governments must protect constitutional rights and privileges of dog owners under American law. Owners must be afforded substantive and procedural due process protections, and must not be permanently or unreasonably deprived of the property interests they have in their animals without first pleading guilty to, being found guilty of, or pleading "no contest" to, animal-related criminal charges. In cases involving seized animals in which an owner does not voluntarily surrender ownership, "bond for care" or "cost of care" laws that provide for the assessment of care costs upon a finding of probable cause of criminal activity must: limit such assessments to amounts that are reasonable, substantiated costs directly related to care of the seized animals; allow courts to waive such fees in cases involving an indigent defendant; provide for full refund of fees and interest in any case not resulting in a final adjudication of guilt or pleading no contest; and, absent the owner's written consent, shall prohibit the spaying or neutering of, or performance of other elective non-therapeutic surgery on, any seized animal during pendency of a case.

Ear Cropping, Tail Docking and Dewclaw Removal

The American Kennel Club recognizes that ear cropping, tail docking, and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or enhancing good health. Appropriate veterinary care should be provided.

Enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act

The Federal Animal Welfare Act administered by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is intended to regulate wholesale breeders, dealers and caretakers of dogs. The USDA has regularly strengthened the standards for humane care and treatment of dogs and other animals by persons regulated under the Act. The American Kennel Club supports increasing the number of USDA enforcement personnel dealing with wholesale dog operations and strong enforcement of the requirements of the Animal Welfare Act.

Groomer Safety and Licensing

Appropriate grooming to ensure health and wellbeing is part of responsible dog ownership. The time an owner spends grooming a dog helps to build the bond between dog and owner. Health and safety should always be primary considerations when grooming a dog. In addition to other appropriate training, AKC recommends that professional groomers should pass a course and exam on basic health and safety standards, such as AKC Salon Safety or a similar program, prior to being licensed as a professional groomer. Grooming that is incidental to preparing a dog for a dog show or other exhibition should be conducted with similar care but should not be subject to licensing or professional grooming regulations.

"Guardian" v. Owner

The American Kennel Club supports the use of the term "owner" rather than "guardian" when referring to the keeping of dogs. The AKC believes that the term guardian may in fact reduce the legal status and value of dogs as property and thereby restrict the rights of owners, veterinarians, and government agencies to protect and care for dogs. It may also subject them to frivolous

and expensive litigation. The term guardian does nothing to promote more responsible treatment of dogs. We strongly support efforts to educate the public about responsible dog ownership to ensure that all dogs receive the care, love, and attention they deserve.

Homeowners' Insurance and Dangerous Dogs

The American Kennel Club believes that insurance companies should determine coverage of a dog-owning household based on the dog's deeds, not the dog's breed. If a dog is a well-behaved member of the household and the community, there is no reason to deny or cancel coverage. In fact, insurance companies should consider a dog an asset, a natural alarm system whose bark may deter intruders and prevent potential theft.

Misuse of Service Dogs

Service dogs are defined as those that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The AKC strongly supports public accommodations that allow individuals with disabilities to use service dogs. The AKC strongly condemns characterizing dogs as service animals when they are not, or attempting to benefit from a dog's service dog status when the individual using the dog is not a person with a disability.

Pet Choice

The American Kennel Club emphatically supports freedom of choice in selecting a pet. AKC actively promotes efforts to ensure that people are educated, understand the demands of responsible ownership and have access to a pet that is right for them. AKC strongly opposes any measure that restricts choice by compelling people and/or retailers to obtain pets solely from shelter or rescue distributors.

Pet Imports: Protecting Pet and Public Health

The American Kennel Club recognizes the value of importing breeding stock from overseas, and ensuring that people may travel with their pets with a minimum of disruption. The AKC is also greatly concerned about increasing documented incidences of the importation of unhealthy, random-source pets into the United States, particularly for transfer, where public and pet health may be inadequately protected. AKC supports efforts to better understand the impact of large quantities of dogs being imported into the United States. AKC further supports strengthening efforts to ensure that all dogs imported into the United States are fully immunized, free of infection, parasites and contagious diseases, and are individually certified as such by a qualified veterinarian. No pet should be imported without an individual examination, valid veterinary certificate, and documentation regarding the source of the dog and the party responsible for it upon arrival into the United States.

Proper Care and Humane Treatment of Dogs

Dog owners bear a special responsibility to their canine companions to provide proper care and humane treatment at all times. Proper care and humane treatment include an adequate and nutritious diet, clean water, safe and clean living and travel conditions, regular veterinary care, kind and responsive human companionship, and training in appropriate behavior. The American Kennel Club® believes that dogs should not be kept in circumstances or numbers where these needs cannot be adequately fulfilled. No dog should be left in a vehicle if its comfort, health, and safety is in question. "Good Samaritan" legislation must provide a balanced approach that protects both the health and safety of dogs and the interests of responsible dog owners.

Protections for Pets under State Domestic Violence Acts

The American Kennel Club supports additions to states' domestic violence statutes that allow for the issuance of protective orders that seek to guard pets from harm, risk of harm or alienation. Such protections should include prohibiting alleged abusers from contact with pets and permitting grants of temporary exclusive care or control of a pet to a petitioning alleged victim. Statutes may also provide appropriate financial remedies for the petitioner to provide for the care of the animals subject to a protective order. These provisions should not impact the legal status of animals as property.

Protection for Puppy Purchasers

The American Kennel Club supports reasonable laws and regulations intended to protect the pet-buying public in obtaining a sound dog of the breed represented. AKC supports a ban on predatory pet leasing schemes that victimize potential owners, undermine a lifetime commitment to a pet, and do not confer the rights and responsibilities associated with legal ownership of a pet. Breeders and/or sellers should be responsible for providing certain refunds, replacements, or reimbursements should the dog sold become ill or die from a condition contracted prior to the purchase. Such remedies should be conditioned upon the buyer's scrupulous adherence to the care and feeding program prescribed by the breeder and/or seller, as well as a timely examination by a state licensed veterinarian. Breeders and/or sellers should provide buyers with a written bill of sale detailing

the responsibilities of both the buyer and seller. This bill of sale should also detail any exclusions to refunds, replacements, or reimbursements.

Public Transportation for Dogs

To ensure the safest possible air and rail travel, the American Kennel Club strongly supports thorough training of transportation staff in the careful and appropriate handling of dogs, adequate environment controls in cargo spaces, and careful attention to record keeping. The ability to ship dogs by air as excess baggage, cargo, or in the cabin is vital to dog owners, breeders, handlers, and exhibitors who want to travel on the same flights as their dogs. We encourage airlines to serve their customers by continuing to offer these necessary services**.** We also encourage national train services to offer similar transportation options to their customers. During the times of natural disasters, evacuations and other emergency situations, we encourage public transportation services (such as local buses and public commuter trains) to allow passengers to travel with their pets under specific guidelines and circumstances. Passengers are expected to comply with all applicable laws and carrier policies regarding travel with animals.

Purebred Dog Breeding

The American Kennel Club is dedicated to preserving the future of purebred dogs. AKC honors purebred dog breeders whose commitment, vision and high standards have developed, sustain and continue to advance purebred dogs as unequaled family and working companions. Purebred dogs exhibit consistency in size, appearance, temperament and instincts. This enables prospective owners to choose a puppy that fits their particular lifestyle and increases the likelihood of a long, successful lifetime in that home. AKC is proud to advocate for purebred dogs, breeding for type and function, the sport of purebred dogs and for breeders who are committed to the health and wellbeing of dogs and preserving their unique breeds.

Purebred Dog Rescue

The American Kennel Club supports and encourages the efforts of clubs, organizations, and individuals to rescue adoptable purebred dogs. These dogs may originate from animal shelters, or from owners who can no longer care for their dogs in a responsible manner. The American Kennel Club encourages all such groups and individuals, after exhausting all possible means to contact the breeder of such animals, to spay or neuter rescue dogs prior to placing them with a responsible owner.

Rehoming of Dogs Previously Used in Research

The American Kennel Club® (AKC) recognizes that protecting biomedical research practices is crucial to developing new ways to identify, prevent, treat, or eradicate disease, and to improve human and animal health. Where appropriate, retired healthy research and teaching animals should be rehomed, either through rehoming programs at the university/research facility, by groups with special expertise in rehoming research animals, or by qualified outside groups selected by the animals' owner.

Responsible Breeding Practices

The American Kennel Club believes that breeding programs should be undertaken responsibly for the purpose of preserving breed characteristics and producing healthy, well-socialized purebred puppies. Responsible breeders are expected to give careful consideration to health issues, temperament, and genetic screening, as well as to the individual care and placement of puppies in responsible homes. AKC supports and promotes these and other responsible breeding practices through breeders' education programs, and commends those who offer similar guidance. The AKC strongly opposes the breeding of dogs by those who do so without regard for the dogs' welfare. We support scrupulous enforcement of the federal Animal Welfare Act, and state and local regulations governing the humane care of animals. We further believe that USDA and other enforcement agencies should be given appropriate resources to ensure that regulations are met. In addition, the AKC Investigations and Inspections department conducts thousands of kennel inspections each year. When AKC inspectors find kennels that do not meet our minimum care and conditions requirements, they educate and encourage those breeders to raise their standards or face suspension of their AKC registration privileges. Proper authorities are also alerted to any cases of animal neglect.

Responsible Dog Ownership

The American Kennel Club believes that owning a dog is a rewarding experience that brings great joy and happiness to any household. With dog ownership comes long-term emotional and financial commitment and a variety of responsibilities. Accordingly, we encourage potential owners to closely evaluate their lifestyle before deciding to obtain a dog and to give careful consideration to what breed will best suit them. They are encouraged to visit the AKC website, www.akc.org, to do their research. AKC strongly urges puppy purchasers to seek responsible, ethical breeders as resources for their dogs. We further encourage owners to provide proper care, training and socialization to ensure that their pets remain happy members of their family, respectable members of the community and well-mannered canine good citizens. AKC and its affiliated clubs offer a wide range of educational programs and materials to teach dog owners how to reach these goals while enjoying their dogs for many years to come.

Spaying and Neutering

The American Kennel Club opposes laws that mandate the spaying/neutering of dogs. Spaying/Neutering are major surgeries and the decision to spay or neuter a dog should be made by the dog's owner in conjunction with their veterinarian. Recent scientific studies demonstrate that spaying/neutering, particularly before a dog is fully mature, may result in detrimental long-term health impacts. In light of this information, AKC encourages breeders, owners and veterinarians to consult on the appropriateness and timing of spaying or neutering an individual dog.

Tethering

The American Kennel Club recognizes that tethering is a practical and humane method for training and restraining dogs in a variety of circumstances. Dogs should never be tethered in a manner that could cause harm to them. Tethering is a common and responsible way to restrain dogs that do not respond well to other restraints (such as escape artists), or participate in activities that require acclimatization such as hunting, sledding and/or other obedience and performance events. Tethering may also be a responsible and appropriate option for handling dogs that are service dogs such as seeing eye dogs, dogs in training, and dogs that are being groomed or examined on a table. AKC opposes arbitrary restrictions on tethering, which can undermine the wellbeing of dogs, responsible dog ownership, and safe training and recreational activities.

The Advantages of Purebred Dogs

Responsible breeders breed dogs with desired characteristics, abilities and instincts. The offspring of their breeding programs are predictable in appearance, temperament and instinct. Purebred dogs are true to type when mated. The American Kennel Club currently recognizes and includes more than 160 breeds in its stud book, and various dog registries throughout the world recognize more than 400 breeds. Some of the breeds are of relatively recent origin, while other breeds have existed since civilization began. The choice of a purebred dog permits the prospective dog owner to select the desired size, appearance, disposition and instincts with assurance that a puppy purchased from a responsible breeder will possess those defined characteristics.

The Right to Keep and Enjoy Dogs

The human-canine bond predates history. Since the dawn of civilization, people have enjoyed the companionship and assistance of dogs. Dog ownership has existed in all cultures, races, climates and economic situations - by monarchs, monks, nomads, and peasants. The American Kennel Club strongly endorses the right to own, keep and breed dogs in a responsible and humane manner. We believe that responsible dog ownership is compatible with most living arrangements. The AKC opposes laws that limit the number of dogs a responsible owner may own as well as unreasonable limitations on pet ownership, such as the prohibition of dogs for residents of senior citizen and government subsidized housing facilities. The AKC recognizes the special obligation of dog owners, not only to their pets but also to their neighbors. The AKC supports "curbing" and clean-up ordinances, leash laws, nuisance laws, and other reasonable regulations designed to ensure dogs and their owners remain respected members of their communities.

Use of Dogs in Research

The American Kennel Club recognizes the invaluable contributions to both human and veterinary medical knowledge that have resulted from medical research on animal subjects, including dogs. The AKC believes that all efficacious alternatives to the use of dogs should be explored before using dogs, that the research should clearly necessitate the use of dogs and that standards of humane care and treatment of such dogs should be scrupulously observed. Also, the AKC strongly believes that individuals who utilize dogs in research should bear full responsibility for ascertaining the source of their dogs and for assuring that suppliers comply with federal, state and local regulations.

Use of Dogs in Sporting, Working and Competition Activities

The American Kennel Club encourages and strongly supports the interaction and mutual enjoyment of owners and dogs in sporting activities such as hunting and field trials; in working circumstances such as herding, tracking, and pulling; and in competition events such as dog shows, obedience trials, agility trials, and other performance events and tests. The AKC believes that dogs should be properly cared for, humanely trained, and not pushed beyond reasonable limits for which they were bred.

Use of Working, Assistance and Service Dogs

The American Kennel Club strongly supports the training and use of dogs by humans, whose lives are enriched by dogs' performing essential services. Dogs provide a wide variety of valuable services including: handicapped assistance dogs; drug, bomb, and arson detection dogs; and tracking dogs to locate missing persons and fugitives. The AKC opposes those who seek to define the assistance and service that dogs provide to humans as exploitative. The AKC encourages the continuation and

further development of the use of dogs for these and similar purposes. The AKC supports the right of persons who require a dog to perform essential services to be permitted to keep a dog without regard to the dog's size, phenotype or breed.

Working and Detection Dogs

The American Kennel Club values the contribution that working and detection dogs make to national security and the extraordinary role that these dogs play in protecting the peace and security of individuals, communities and nations against extremist threats. The AKC honors the breeders, trainers and handlers of these dogs, and supports expanded scientific research and breeding programs to ensure that sufficient high quality domestically-bred dogs are available to ensure public safety and national security, and that specialized care is provided to assure the wellbeing of these dogs.

Updated January 18, 2022 GDLGB2 (03/20)