



IN SESSION

AKC'S CONGRESSIONAL NEWSLETTER

Spring 2026

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.*

House-Passed Farm Bill Advances Key Animal Welfare Priorities

Passage of the House Farm Bill (HR 7467) last week represents a big victory for advancing animal welfare, science-based approaches to agriculture and animal care, and important protections for dog owners.

The American Kennel Club was proud to support this bill and is grateful for the Congressional leadership that made it possible. House Agriculture Chairman G.T. Thompson and his staff have demonstrated extraordinary bipartisan leadership in developing and shepherding a measure that not only supports crucial U.S. agricultural programs, but also supports important priorities for dog enthusiasts including canine health, welfare and the rights of responsible dog owners and sportsmen."

Dog-related highlights of the bill include:

- **Enhancement of Pet Protections Under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA): Additional resources for USDA to better enforce the AWA,**

continued on next page

INSIDE

Perspectives.....	1
Congressional Spotlight	1
AKC Community Impact	4
Health	8

Congressional Spotlight Congressman Gabe Vasquez (NM-2)



Congressman Vasquez and Suki

*"If you take care of animals,
animals will take care of you."*

—Grandpa Nat in *Molly of Denali*.

From childhood playmates to today's loyal hunting and household companions, dogs have always been part of New Mexico Congressman Gabe Vasquez's story. From Capitán and Daisy when he lived in Mexico and Texas as a child, to Suki and Biscuits today in New Mexico and Washington, D.C., dogs have remained a steady and beloved part of his life.

Some of Representative Vasquez's favorite childhood memories include playing with his brother and their dog, Superman, a German Shorthaired Pointer (GSP). Superman loved to play baseball with them— he'd even retrieve the fly balls!

Rep. Vasquez laughed as he recounted the returned balls having a nice layer of slobber – but it was definitely worth it, he says, and it saved the brothers a lot of running! In those hot summer days in Mexico, Superman's energetic ball retrieving extended playtime and made the family pet an essential member of the team.

Superman created a lasting love for GSPs in Rep. Vasquez. Today, one of the most energetic "teammates" in Vasquez's household is his cur-

continued on page 3

including expanded resources for educational outreach and reporting to Congress on existing enforcement with recommendations for improving enforcement.

- **Enhancement of USDA's electronic health documentation requirements for pets entering the United States to protect pet and public health.** This reflects language in the Healthy Dog Importation Act (HR 3349) by requiring electronic records documentation on dogs prior to their importation that confirms the dog is in good health; microchipped; has received all necessary vaccination and parasite treatments, demonstrated negative test results, and has a health certificate from an accredited veterinarian; and in the case of a dog intended for transfer, is at least 6 months old. Exceptions are provided for dogs that are personal pets of United States origin returning to the United States; United States military working dogs; for research purposes; and coming to the United States solely for veterinary treatment; among several others. AKC believes this is an appropriate alternative to current, across-the-board bans on the import of puppies under the age of 6 months.
- **Protecting Animals with Shelter.** Reauthorizes funding for transitional shelters that allow victims of domestic violence to seek safety without leaving their pets behind.
- **National Detector Dog Training Center.** Authorizes the USDA National Detector Dog Training Center to establish additional training facilities to prepare specially selected dogs and their handlers to detect invasive pests and diseases that threaten American agriculture.

Throughout the legislative process, numerous problematic proposals were also advanced that could impose arbitrary and costly new regulations and licensing standards on responsible breeders and do not benefit all dogs.

This included language from

The Greyhound Protection Act, HR 5017 – Although the stated intent of this measure is to address concerns related to commercial greyhound racing, the language adopted in a House Agriculture Committee amendment was overly broad and risked significant unintended consequences for lawful hunting with dogs, field trials, performance dog events, and widely accepted training practices used by responsible dog owners, sporting dog handlers, and canine professionals across the United States.

Goldie's Act, HR 349, that redefines violations of the AWA to remove the distinction between minor non-compliances such as paperwork errors and animal care violations. AKC believes the goal should be zero non-compliances, but the health and wellbeing of animals should

always remain the priority. Goldie's Act also allows for immediate seizure or euthanasia without due process of any animal an inspector perceives to be suffering from "psychological harm" — a term it does not define.

The Puppy Protection Act, HR 2254, that included inflexible and arbitrary prohibitions on breeding a dog based on size and age; mandated full time "unfettered access to exercise area large enough to allow extension of full stride", arbitrary temperature requirements, and other requirements that become problematic without flexibility to allow for individual animals' needs and requirements.

Previous versions of the **Animal Welfare Enforcement Improvement Act** that propose wholesale changes to the Animal Welfare Act licensing process that would undermine education and opportunities for new responsible breeders to obtain USDA licensing.

AKC is grateful to Chairman Thompson, his staff, and members of The House Agriculture Committee for their emphasis on a science-based approach to agriculture and animal care, and their opposition to amendments promoted by extremist groups that would have restricted responsible dog breeders or hindered widely accepted animal husbandry practices, traditional dog competitions, hunting with dogs, or common dog training methods.

We look forward to supporting a similar measure later this year in the Senate.

All the best,



Sheila Goffe



**AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®**

rent GSP, Suki. Both Suki and the Representative love being outdoors. When in Washington D.C., they love playing fetch in a local park, running on Kingman Island, and playing catch along the Anacostia River.

Once a year, the duo makes the 3-day drive back to New Mexico, where Suki and the Congressman enjoy bird hunting. “Bird hunting is one of the best breaks from the partisan politics of Washington, D.C.,” Vasquez says. He and Suki work with a longtime friend and local dog trainer, Ray, hunting quail on New Mexico’s vast public lands. Vasquez said that training together is a hugely “rewarding process” and one can fully appreciate the fact that “the dogs get a lot out of it.”

The newest four-legged teammate in the Vasquez household is Biscuits, a Miniature Smooth (shorthair) Dachshund. Biscuits joins Suki on walks around Capitol Hill. At home, she loves to show off her natural burrowing skills. Rep. Vasquez says if you can’t find her right away, she’s “never truly missing --- just look under the blankets!” Her personality makes her a great family dog and great addition to the team.

Biscuits is the smallest of the two, but she thinks she’s a big dog. Her big personality leads her to bossing around Suki whenever she can, especially if her favorite toy is out to play with. This pairs well with Suki, who thinks she’s smaller than she really is, Vasquez says. “She loves to forget she has long legs and sharp elbows when she tries to sit on your lap.” No matter where they are, Suki and Biscuits bring a lot of love and joy to their family and everyone they meet.

When it comes to naming dogs in Vasquez’s household, it’s a whole family affair. The name Suki comes from the PBS animated series *Molly of Denali*, which was frequently on their TV when they got her. In the show, Suki is the canine best friend that always helps save the day. Vasquez’s Suki lives up to her namesake by being such a wonderful member of the



Suki

family, he says. When it came time to add a second dog for the family’s little one to call her own, the family fell in love with the small Dachshund, naming her “Biscuits” --- plural!

When asked what he thinks is a top issue facing dog owners, Rep Vasquez said “education.” “Educating yourself starts once you decide to add a dog to your life. In the beginning this looks like researching the best dog breed for your lifestyle and family. The next step is finding a reputable breeder that is knowledgeable and ethical in their breeding programs.” When adding Suki and Biscuits to the family, Rep. Vasquez researched responsible breeders who register their dogs with the American Kennel Club. By educating himself and his family, he says, he was able to find great breeders in New Mexico for Suki and in Virginia for Biscuits.

“Education sets the groundwork that prepares dog owners for success and happiness,” he added.



Suki and Biscuits



Biscuits

Did you know?

- Both the Dachsund (#5) and German Shorthaired Pointer (#9) are in the Top Ten Dog Breeds of 2025!
- The first description of a Dachsund appeared in 1700.
- German Shorthaired Pointers are among the top-winning breeds in competitive hunting events.



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB® IMPACT BY STATE – 2025

For more than 140 years, the American Kennel Club® (AKC®) has been America's leading authority on all things dog and the premier resource for dog lovers.

The AKC is a not-for-profit, non-partisan club of clubs and breed registry dedicated to promoting responsible dog ownership, preserving purebred dogs, advancing the health and well-being of all dogs, and advocating for science-based canine policy that is reasonable, enforceable, and non-discriminatory.

Together with nearly 5,000 AKC dog clubs and AKC-affiliated charitable organizations, we embrace community, canine health, responsible dog ownership, and safety. We share our passion for dogs and we bring significant positive impact to every state. We are passionate about everything related to dogs, and we celebrate the joy they bring to our lives every single day.

Members of local and breed-based dog clubs are active in their communities. AKC clubs sponsor some 28,000 family-friendly educational and competitive events that bring financial and expert resources to their community each year. Clubs offer training classes, provide expertise on canine issues, and engage in their communities. They support local police K9s, educational programs for school children, rescue, disaster relief, and vaccination and microchip clinics.

AKC's affiliated charities are equally impressive:

- The AKC Canine Health Foundation® is the world's largest funder of canine health research (over \$75 million); focusing on all aspects of the physical, mental, and social well-being of dogs.
- AKC Reunite® has reunited more than 700,000 lost dogs with their owners, donated hundreds of microchip scanners to shelters, and donated more than 120 disaster relief trailers to set up temporary shelters for communities impacted by natural disasters. The AKC Reunite K-9 Cop Grant program has funded the purchase of more than 900 K-9s for law enforcement agencies.
- In 2026, more than 80 detection and law enforcement K-9s will be donated to communities needing them.
- AKC Humane Fund supports breed rescue and provides grants to house victims of domestic abuse with their pets.

At the American Kennel Club, **everything we do, we do for dogs** - and for dog-friendly communities too. We urge you to take a few moments and see just a few highlights of what AKC is doing in your state.

The American Kennel Club Everything We Do, We Do For Dogs



The American Kennel Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting responsible dog ownership, preserving purebred dogs, the health and well-being of all dogs, and advocating for science-based canine policy that is reasonable, enforceable and non-discriminatory.

Did you know?

- AKC is the world's largest all-breed dog registry and dog sport organization.
- AKC has approximately 5,000 local and breed-based dog clubs throughout the U.S.
- AKC sanctions over *29,000 dog events per year with more than 3.5 million entries*, including breed conformation, agility, obedience, field trials, and more.
- AKC events can *inject on average more than \$2.15 million into the community during each event*.
- Nationwide, AKC dog events can *generate more than \$2.7 billion a year in local spending*.
- AKC's *Detection Dog Task Force* works to help address the shortage of high-quality U.S. -bred and -trained explosive detection dogs to protect public safety and national security.
- For more than 15 years, AKC Humane Fund has provided *grants to shelters that house victims of domestic abuse with their pets*.
- *The AKC Museum of the Dog preserves, interprets, and celebrates the role of dogs in society and educates the public about the human-canine bond through its 1,700-piece rotating collection and 4,000-volume library.*
- AKC Pet Disaster Relief program helps local Emergency Management *provide animal care services immediately following a disaster*, including a donation of a trailer stocked with essential supplies to *house over 65 pets in the critical first few days following a disaster*. To date, more than 114 emergency relief trailers have been donated to communities around the nation.
- AKC Canine Health Foundation *funds research projects that focus on all aspects of the physical, mental, and social well-being of dogs*. AKC CHF's *more than \$75 million in grants* has resulted in over 1,214 research grants, countless canine health projects, and over 1,033 peer-reviewed publications.
- AKC Reunite has reunited more than *700,000 lost pets with their owners*, *donates microchip scanners to shelters*, and helps reunite pets displaced by storms and other disasters. The Adopt A K9 Cop Program has *donated funding for more than 800 police K-9s*.
- AKC's Rescue Network provides *financial assistance to non-profit rescue groups*. *More than 450 AKC Rescue Network groups* are located across the U.S.; the largest rescue network in America.
- AKC has a dedicated team of field agents who *visit and inspect kennels to educate breeders and ensure proper care and conditions* of AKC-registered dogs and accurate record keeping. Since 2000, AKC field agents have conducted over *83,000 inspections nationwide*.
- AKC created the Canine Good Citizen program - A 10-step test that encourages and certifies dogs who have good manners. *Over 1,287,000 dogs* have earned CGC certification.
- AKC provides teachers nationwide with academically rigorous lesson plans and activities that incorporate core subject areas for grades K-12 and teach about responsible dog ownership.
- AKC, in 2023, created the not-for-profit Purebred Preservation Bank (AKC PPB), an endeavor to assist in the preservation of purebred dogs, maintain genetic materials and continue the breeding of healthy litters.
- And much more!

JE T'AIME ONCE AGAIN! FRENCH BULLDOG REMAINS AMERICA'S MOST POPULAR PUP FOR THE FOURTH YEAR

- Little Dog, Big Shakeup: Dachshund Moves into Top 5 –

The French Bulldog continues to warm hearts in the United States! The American Kennel Club (AKC®), a not-for-profit organization that is the world's largest registry of purebred and mixed-breed dogs, and a leading voice for canine welfare and responsible ownership, announced this morning that the beloved French Bulldog is America's most popular breed for the fourth year in a row, according to AKC registration statistics.

While the playful and adaptable French Bulldog's popularity has cemented itself in the U.S., the iconic Dachshund has shaken up the rankings, landing at number five for the first time since 2003. In its wake, the Poodle drops down to sixth place. The Poodle had been holding steady at number five from 2021 to 2024.

"While the French Bulldog is a wonderful companion for many, it is not a 'one size fits all' breed," said Gina M. DiNardo, AKC President and CEO. "Popularity does not mean it's right for everyone. Another breed to watch this year is the curious, spunky Dachshund. The breed has hovered in the top 10 most popular breeds for many years, and it's no surprise that it's back in the top five. Dachshunds are very intelligent, excellent problem solvers and adorable. As with any breed, we can't stress

enough the importance of doing your research to find the right breed for your lifestyle and to ensure that you're getting a well-bred dog from a responsible breeder."

Additionally, the Cane Corso continues to skyrocket in popularity, landing at #11 in 2025 from #14 in 2024. Other movers and shakers in 2025 include the Great Pyrenees (#74 in 2024 to #66 in 2025), Greater Swiss Mountain Dog (#82 in 2024 to #71 in 2025), Coton de Tulear (#92 in 2024 to #79 in 2025), Lhasa Apso (#94 in 2024 to #83 in 2025), American Hairless Terrier (#125 in 2024 to #108 in 2025) and Neapolitan Mastiff (#128 in 2024 to #119 in 2025).

Making strides over the past decade are the English Cocker Spaniel (#62 in 2015 to #35 in 2025), Russell Terrier (#108 in 2015 to #60 in 2025) and Boykin Spaniel (#111 in 2015 to #64 in 2025).

Enjoy dogs on Instagram? Here's where some of social media's favorites fall on the list: Pembroke Welsh Corgi (#16), Yorkshire Terrier (#13), Siberian Husky (#30) and Pug (#38).

See below for AKC's top 10 most popular breeds in 2025, along with the 2024 comparison:

2025 Most Popular Dogs in the U.S.

French Bulldog
Labrador Retriever
Golden Retriever
German Shepherd Dog
Dachshund
Poodle
Beagle
Rottweiler
German Shorthaired Pointer
Bulldog

2024 Most Popular Dogs in the U.S.

French Bulldog
Labrador Retriever
Golden Retriever
German Shepherd Dog
Poodle
Dachshund
Beagle
Rottweiler
Bulldog
German Shorthaired Pointer

MONUMENTAL NEWS! THE FRENCH BULLDOG KEEPS ITS TOP SPOT AS MOST POPULAR BREED!

Nationally, French Bulldog Holds On To The Top Spot



Once again, the French Bulldog took Washington D.C.'s top spot in the American Kennel Club's (AKC®) 2025 ranking of the most popular AKC-recognized dog breeds in the U.S.

The French Bulldog was also recognized as the #1 pup in West Palm Beach, FL and Philadelphia, PA.

Like the French Bulldog, the Poodles have held their coveted fourth place spot for the sixth year in a row. Meanwhile, the Miniature Schnauzers made a huge leap from the 51st spot to the eighth.

"French Bulldogs have had Washington D.C.'s attention since 2021, and this year is no different," said Gina M. DiNardo, AKC President and CEO. "They are an incredibly adaptable breed and make great family companions."

A breed's popularity does not mean it is the right breed for you. The AKC encourages dog lovers to do their research and find the breed that fits your lifestyle and work with an experienced breeder to begin your journey of responsible dog ownership.

Washington D.C.'s Top 5 Breeds for 2025

1. French Bulldogs
2. Labrador Retrievers
3. Golden Retrievers
4. Poodles
5. Bulldogs

AKC Canine Health Foundation Announces First Ever Guidelines for Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome and Creation of Online Resource Hub

The AKC Canine Health Foundation (CHF), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of all dogs through research and discovery, is excited to announce the first ever published guidelines for diagnosing and monitoring Canine Cognitive Dysfunction Syndrome (CCDS). These guidelines were developed by an international working group of canine cognition experts led by North Carolina State University's Dr. Natasha Olby and were made possible in part by funding from CHF.

"Establishing evidence-based standards is exactly what we need more of in veterinary medicine," said Dr. Stephanie Montgomery, Chief Executive Officer, AKC Canine Health Foundation. "When veterinarians, researchers, and owners use the same language rooted in science, answers come sooner, care improves, discoveries accelerate, and dogs benefit."

Published in the [Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association](#), the guidelines provide veterinarians with a standard definition of the condition, practical diagnostic criteria, and guidance on monitoring progression. They also help owners and families understand CCDS and provide the best care for their senior dog.

"We [the international working group] spent several months holding Zoom meetings, but the funding from AKC CHF allowed us to meet in person and really discuss and hammer out our final guidelines. The meeting was absolutely critical to the process," said Dr. Olby, the Dr. Kady M. Gjessing and Rahna M. Davidson Distinguished Chair in Gerontology at NC State.

CHF is partnering with Dr. Olby to launch a new online resource hub for canine cognitive dysfunction. This centralized, easy-to-navigate website will bring together the latest science, guidance, and practical tools for veterinarians and dog owners. By hosting the hub, CHF is helping translate the latest canine health advancements into real world care. The hub will grow alongside the

CCDS Working Group's groundbreaking work and is expected to launch in February 2026.

"Now that the guidelines are published, we are focusing on our next steps," Dr. Olby continued. "We want to be sure that dog owners and primary veterinarians are familiar with the guidelines and can access the information they need. AKC CHF has kindly agreed to host a website to help us in this endeavor and will be critical to getting our message out. We have several research projects underway and are currently building collaborations with veterinary researchers across the world. The outpouring of interest in our work has been amazing, and we are now doing everything we can to advance the care of our beloved aging dogs."

Dr. Gary Landsberg, a now-retired veterinary behaviorist and member of the working group whom Dr. Olby called pivotal to the field of CCDS, told CHF that the working group's consensus focused not only on guidelines that can be put in place immediately, but also on future priorities, such as the development and validation of improved diagnostic tests to improve veterinarians' accuracy and ability to treat the dogs.

If you're interested in learning more about the guidelines and what they mean for canine health in the future, read [this recent CHF article](#).

Quotes From Members of the CCDS Working Group

Dr. Holger Volk, Head of Department of Small Animal Medicine and Surgery, University of Veterinary Medicine Hanover: "For clinical practice, it is crucial that we now have standardized criteria that allow for earlier and more consistent diagnoses—resulting in direct benefits for animal welfare and for advising the pet parents. At the same time, we are laying the foundation for robust studies, including future blood biomarkers and cognitive test batteries. In this way, we also strengthen the translational bridge to human medicine."

continued on next page

CHF, continued from previous page

Dr. Eniko Kubinyi, Professor and Head of the Department of Ethology at ELTE Eötvös Loránd University: “Dogs share our environments, our lifestyles, and many age-related conditions. These guidelines help veterinarians and owners better understand what they are seeing and how to respond. The international collaboration behind them ensured the recommendations are both scientifically sound and practical for everyday veterinary care. Moreover, systematic research on canine cognitive dysfunction can also help us better understand dementia more broadly, which makes these guidelines relevant beyond veterinary medicine.”

For more information about the AKC Canine Health Foundation, or to join the mission of improving the lives of all dogs, visit www.akcCHF.org.

About CHF

Since 1995, the AKC Canine Health Foundation has leveraged the power of science to address the health needs of all dogs. With more than \$75 million in funding to date, the Foundation provides grants for the highest quality canine health research and shares information on the discoveries that help prevent, treat and cure canine diseases. The Foundation meets and exceeds industry standards for fiscal responsibility, as demonstrated by their highest four-star Charity Navigator rating and Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency. Learn more at www.akcCHF.org.



AKC Government Relations Department
(919) 816-3720 • doglaw@akc.org
www.akcgr.org
