

**The prevailing attitude
in dog breeding these days
seems to be “don’t do it.”**

Dog breeders are proud to say “I only breed one litter a year,” or “I only breed when I want something to show.” American Kennel Club registrations in some popular breeds are declining, and dog breeders are breathing a sigh of relief that the decline means a drop in popularity for their beloved breeds and therefore a drop in the number of unreliable breeders. But the sighs are premature; the drop could be a death knell for the well-bred purebred dog in many breeds, including the most popular.

The reasons given for a reduction in breeding are legion: there are too many homeless dogs dying in shelters, purebred dogs have too many structural faults, purebred dogs have too many genetic diseases, even well-bred purebred puppies take homes from shelter dogs, generic dogs are healthier than purebreds because they have “hybrid vigor,” man should not manipulate dogs for his own purposes, etc.

Each of these reasons is easily debunked.

1. There are too many homeless dogs dying in shelters.

In spite of recent attempts to collect the data, there are still no reliable national statistics to quantify the extent of shelter problems. Until shelters keep reliable records to determine how many of the entering dogs are euthanized by owner request or because they are too old, ill, or aggressive for adoption, the numbers of euthanasias mean little.

Patronek and Rowan of the Tufts University Center for Animals and Public Policy compiled statistics in 1996 to show that shelters receive approximately four million dogs each year and kill about 2.4 million dogs. About 300 thousand of the euthanasias are by owner request according to their report in Anthrozoos, leaving 2.1 million dogs euthanized for all other reasons.

The February 1998 report from Colorado State University commissioned by the National Council on Pet Population indicated that just under two million dogs entered shelters in 1996, about 50,000 fewer than in 1994. About 55 percent of these dogs were euthanized, but the report did not categorize the reasons for euthanasia.

Yet although these scientific surveys show fewer total euthanasias, animal rights groups claim 10 million, 12 million, even 22 million dogs euthanized in shelters and advocate breeding restrictions as the only sure cure.

Many people surrender dogs to shelters because somehow, somewhere, the human-animal bond has been severed. Shelters kill many adoptable dogs because they need the kennels for incoming dogs. If shelters implement programs to help people keep the dogs they have, make a good selection of a new pet, and work out the problems associated with pet ownership, the number of dogs entering shelters will drop. If shelters develop marketing strategies to place dogs in homes, build strong relationships with purebred rescue groups to make more room for mixed breed dogs in their facilities, and form productive relationships with area dog clubs, more adoptable dogs will find new homes.

The San Francisco SPCA is a model in each of these areas. Instead of putting its efforts into breeding restrictions, this SPCA has raised money to fund a veterinary clinic, developed

marketing strategies to increase adoptions, and provided education programs for current and prospective pet owners. As a result, this city of 800,000 residents does not euthanize adoptable animals.

But society should not place the burden for solutions only on shelters; community commitment is necessary to spark and implement programs that keep the human-animal bond whole and healthy.

2. Purebred dogs have too many structural faults and genetic diseases.

These claims are intended only to lend credibility to the anti-purebred, anti-breeder agenda. In fact, the structural faults and genetic diseases that plague purebred dogs also affect mixed breed dogs, but no one keeps records of the number of mixes with hip dysplasia, autoimmune diseases, and other structural or genetic conditions.

Those who complain the loudest about these factors are silent when solutions are contemplated. Instead, it is the dog fancy - the coalition of breeders, kennel clubs, breed clubs, and breed rescue groups who promote purebred dogs - that seeks solutions to these problems through application of scientific animal husbandry principles and funding of and participation in disease research that will help all dogs.

3. Even well-bred purebred puppies take homes from shelter dogs.

This oft-repeated justification for breeding restrictions contradicts the universal agreement that people should carefully select the dog that will fit their family. Simply put, one size dog does not fit all owners. Someone who wants an Akita or a Golden Retriever is unlikely to settle for (or be happy with) a mixed breed terrier or hound at the animal shelter; someone who wants a puppy is unlikely to adopt an adult dog because no puppies are available.

4. Man should not manipulate dogs for his own purposes.

It is true that humans have created the canine companion we call “dog.” By doing so, man has modified the animal into a predictable working partner or household companion, a modification that allows people to find a pet that meets their needs.

Because of this “manipulation,” people who live in apartments can have small dogs, people who are allergic can have dogs that do not drop dead hair all over the house, people who are handicapped can have service dogs, people with active lifestyles can have energetic dogs, people with sedentary lifestyles can have quiet companions, etc. When a buyer chooses a purebred puppy from a reputable source, he can be sure that puppy will grow to resemble

the breed that caught his fancy, a breed of a certain size, haircoat, color, temperament, and trainability.

In spite of the easy refutation of the anti-purebred litanies, breeders are on the defensive, especially in those areas where active animal rights proponents are working for laws that penalize owners of intact dogs with large license differentials, special breeding permits, advertising restrictions, litter limits, and even forced sterilization of dogs impounded for running at large. Instead of taking a proactive stand, breeders often opt for self-imposed restrictions in hopes that the anti-purebred extremists will go away. But the power of distortion is deep and broad, and more and more cities, towns, and counties are considering breeding restrictions “to reduce the killing in shelters.”

The answer to this condemnation of breeding is to stand proud of protecting a breed’s integrity, to work with local shelters and rescues to initiate programs that keep dogs in their homes and place adoptable dogs in appropriate homes, and to let the public know of these efforts. Kennel clubs can pre-empt introduction of harmful legislation by

* inviting elected officials to tour their events and perhaps present the Best in Show and High in Trial trophies;

* sending press releases about dog shows, educational events, fund-raising efforts for dog-related charities, etc. to local media;

* working with local schools to teach children about dog care and safety (AKC’s “Best Friends” program is a good start)

* establishing a hotline to handle requests for help ranging from selection of a breed and breeder to help and referrals for training and behavior problems.

Extremist campaigns notwithstanding, responsible breeders are the best chance for improving canine physical and mental soundness, and animal shelters have the greatest opportunity for reducing euthanasia of adoptable animals. Inflammatory rhetoric that vilifies breeders and casts shelters as heroes trying to stem the tide does nothing to find a solution to shelter deaths.

NORMA BENNETT WOOLF

<http://www.naiaonline.org/articles/archives/nobred.htm>

What Animal Rights Leaders DON'T Want You to Know:

PETA

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

- Last year PETA killed 90 percent of the cats and dogs it took in, rather than spending some of its \$26 million budget caring for them. Government records show that PETA has put over 14,400 animals to death since 1998. Two PETA employees are facing felony animal-cruelty charges for killing adoptable pets and tossing their bodies into a trash dumpster.
- PETA president Ingrid Newkirk has admitted her group would oppose medical research using animals “even if it resulted in a cure for AIDS.”
- PETA’s “total animal liberation” philosophy is so extreme that the group is against the use of seeing-eye dogs for the blind.

PCRM

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

- PCRM has received over \$1.3 million from PETA. The two groups are so closely connected that PCRM’s founder is a past president of the PETA Foundation. PETA also owns one of PCRM’s websites.
- Despite the deceptive “Physicians Committee” name, less than 4 percent of PCRM’s members have gone to medical school.
- PCRM discourages Americans from donating to the March of Dimes, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Red Cross, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, and the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, because they support research that requires the use of animals.

HSUS

Humane Society of the United States

- HSUS raises over \$100 million every year. Although this is enough to run successful pet shelters in every state, HSUS doesn’t run a single one anywhere. And it is not affiliated with any local “humane society.”
- Louisiana’s Attorney General is investigating what HSUS did with most of the \$32 million it collected after Hurricane Katrina from Americans who wanted to help reunite pets with their owners.
- At its annual meeting, HSUS has formally voted to pursue “the rights of all animals”—including rats and fish.

Marketing Mutts: Call Them Designer Dogs, Please

Twenty years ago these dogs were called mixed breeds, or mutts, costing \$50. But now the combinations of some breeds are being called Designer Dogs, costing thousands of dollars.

The president of the Little Shelter Animal Adoption Center on Long Island says it’s all in the marketing and making people think the dogs are something they are not.

A Schnauzer and Poodle becomes a schnoodle. A Pug and a Beagle becomes a puggle. A Maltese and Poodle become a maltapoo. A Labrador and Poodle become a -- ready for this -- a labradoodle.

Animal Shelter President Maryann Chernovsky says mixing the breeds is beginning to show medical and behavior problems. The continued inbreeding of the mixed breeds makes some undesirable traits dominant.

Chernovsky says these undesirable traits could be food aggression or a medical problem - which will force owners to give up the dogs to local shelters.

She says Little Shelter has received an incredible number of these so-called “Designer Dogs” over the last few months. The Little Shelter was founded in 1927.

(CBS/AP) HUNTINGTON, NY).