

As a farm worker and land holder I feel I must protest about the proposed new dog laws.

Livestock working dogs are a completely different category to any other breed of dog as they are bred primarily for the purpose of tending or gathering stock.

Almost every farmer in WA relies on his dog to assist him in mustering, yard and truck work. A working dog is a much cheaper alternative to hiring a farm hand to do these jobs, not to mention cheaper and more enthusiastic.

Many farmers only breed the occasional litter to replace the dogs that have faithfully served them for many years and the advantage of using their own bloodlines is that they know the lines and are breeding to suit they work that they do on farm.

Many dogs do not show their worth until they are perhaps 3 to 4 years old, and then the decision is made to breed from them. Sterilizing them before this occurs is detrimental to good lines of working dogs.

Farmers who breed a few pups will then make available to other farmers the leftover pups as some farmers would prefer not to breed and so this service is very good for them.

Breeding dogs in this way has resulted in a healthy gene pool with few problems, unlike pure breeds that experience many genetic issues, a cruelty in itself. Working dogs are happiest when raised, trained, and bred in a farm environment and selected to suit their purpose.

I breed maybe a litter every 2 or 3 years so I have young dogs coming on all the time and to keep my valuable bloodlines strong. I will sell on dogs that do not suit. Without the availability of good working dogs what on earth will farmers do.

You may have read in the media about the Casterton auction, where the top priced dog sold for \$22, 000, highlighting the value of a good working dog that will give years of its life serving a farmer.

Livestock could suffer stress and possible injury if they are herded by dogs inaccurately selected and unable to be trained to the highest standards.

Insisting on concrete runs for working dogs is not only expensive but unhealthy. Any vet can tell you concrete is cold, hard and as far from the dogs natural living conditions as you could get. A dog loves nothing better than to dig in the dirt, which is natural for him, as long as he has good shelter and a warm bed he is happy. People do not understand how much a dog loves to work stock, they would rather work than do anything else in their life.

I am unaware of any farmer in WA who could be classed as a puppy farmer. Farmers value their dogs, that are often also their best mates. With the recent issues regarding depression and suicide many farmers rely on their dogs to help them through tough times, they are their mates as much as a working partner. This has been the case for a very long time why change it now simply because people are overbreeding for the pet market. This has no relation to working dogs and they should not be included in the pet dog category.

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