

Stop Puppy Farming
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
PO Box 8349
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Western Australia 6849

SUBMISSION BY THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK BREED CLUB OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA STOP PUPPY FARMING PROJECT

The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Western Australia (RRCWA Inc.) was founded by a small group of enthusiasts in 1981. The Club became incorporated in 1989 and affiliated with the Canine Association of Western Australia in 1990.

Our small club has a total of 32 members. Full members – 27 , Associate members - 5.

ABOUT THE RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK

The Rhodesian Ridgeback originated in Southern Africa where the early European settlers mated their imported breeds with the small, fierce hunting dogs owned by the Hottentots in order to produce a guard/hunting dog ideally suited to local conditions. The Hottentot Hunting Dog had a ridge of hair along its spine running in a reverse direction to the rest of the coat and this particular characteristic became a feature of the cross matings between the European breeds and the native dogs.

These “Ridgebacks” were used as functional all purpose guard and hunting dogs and it was found that they surpassed any other breed when hunting lions. During the late 19th century the reputation of “Ridgebacks” in this field became established through the exploits of a famous big game hunter in Rhodesia named Cornelius Van Rooyen, who had a pack of these ridged dogs. Van Rooyen’s dogs were very similar to today’s Rhodesian Ridgeback.

The Standard of the breed was drawn up following a meeting of “Ridgeback” owners in Bulawayo in 1922 and this was accepted by the South African Kennel Union (now the Kennel Union of Southern Africa) in 1926. The Standard borrowed much from the Dalmatian Standard and envisages a “strong, muscular and active dog, symmetrical in outline, and capable of great endurance, with a fair amount of speed”.

THE RRCWA PRIMARY ROLE IS:

To serve the welfare and interests of all Rhodesian Ridgebacks - as a breed and individually, in any activity involving ownership, breeding, sale and exhibition of Rhodesian Ridgebacks and expect all members should act with this in mind at all times.

We promote excellence in breeding, showing, trialling, obedience and other canine related activities and the ownership of temperamentally and physically sound pure bred dogs by responsible individuals across Australia.

The RRCWA have recommended health tests on top of the standard hips & elbows with provision to include further tests as determined by the Club, the ANKC Rules and Dogswest.

The RRCWA has a Rehoming Assistance officer that will assist our club members and the general public with advice and help on the rehoming of any pure-bred dog regardless of registered or not. This service is provided free of charge for any **PURE BRED RHODESIAN RIDGEBACK** who is unable to be returned to the breeder for various reasons. eg. where we are unable to establish the identity of the dog (no microchip and or registration papers), where the breeder is unable to accommodate the return of the dog(s), or where the breeder is unregistered ie not a member of DogsWest. The breed rescue service is fully resourced from fundraising through our club members, all of whom are volunteers. The Rhodesian Ridgeback Club of Western Australia breed rescue service provides breed identification, shelter and food, veterinary care, spay / neutering, microchipping, temperament assessment and retraining as necessary prior to rehoming.

The Canine Association of Western Australia (DogsWest) and the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC). Our members include ANKC - registered breeders of Rhodesian Ridgebacks, breed fanciers, trainers, behaviourists, health care/ veterinary professionals and pet owners.

Our ANKC-registered breeders are accountable for the health, parentage, breeding environment and registration of the puppies they produce, and there are a variety of mechanisms to ensure that accountability. They are bound by a comprehensive constitution that includes a Code of Conduct and agree to a Code of Ethics. These codes are enforceable by DogsWest.

All our breeders are members of DogsWest and must register all progeny whether pets or kept for breeding stock. Also, for some breeds specific health testing of prospective breeding dogs prior to mating is mandatory. They must provide comprehensive information to each puppy buyer for the care, welfare, appropriate housing, training and socialisation of every puppy sold. As members of our State controlling body it is compulsory that all breeders must register all puppies born, and it is also compulsory for each puppy to be microchipped prior to going to their new homes. The breeder is also responsible for the transfer of the microchip into the new owner's name.

Mandatory desexing

The RRCWA vehemently oppose the mandatory sterilization of our breed, and in fact of any breed, at any age, except where required for medical reasons because of the wealth of scientific evidence showing permanent desexing has adverse consequences for dogs, including the:

Mandatory sterilisation has not effectively reduced the problem of puppy farmers anywhere in the world where it has been legislated.

This legislation is based on welfare of dogs, yet the mandatory sterilisation of dogs creates its own set of health and welfare issues.

Reduced lifespan of dogs which have been permanently desexed. The Government states that permanent desexing will increase a dog's longevity, but the scientific evidence does not support this position at all, and in fact shows their longevity is reduced,

Increased risk of cancer in dogs that have been permanently desexed, particularly in bitches. The Government states that permanent desexing will improve the health of dogs, but this is not supported by the scientific evidence.

Desexing at any age increases the risk of urinary incontinence in both dogs and bitches and the need to medicate dogs for the rest of their lives to manage this problem

Scientific research shows that male dogs that are permanent desexed at a young age, are likely to develop increased fear aggression and anxiety later in life, increasing the risk that they will become unmanageable as family pets and be dumped in rescues and/or euthanised.

large' or 'giant' breed where desexing prior to maturity (at around the age of 2 to 3 years) has been shown to have adverse health outcomes for joints? Eg results in poor outcomes for hips and elbows leading to dogs suffering prematurely from arthritis and significantly increasing the risk of damage and tearing of cruciate ligaments requiring costly surgery and difficult and painful rehabilitation?

Why is mandatory sterilisation being considered in WA when the major Australian states do not have it – only the ACT and South Australia have this in place.

Why does WA need compulsory sterilisation when biggest States do not?

How can passing a law requiring mandatory sterilisation, which can be seriously detrimental to the health of dogs, is justified while trying to fix another health and welfare issue. Replacing one problem for another does not make sense.

If a dog needs to be sterilised it should be at a time and age suitable for the type of dog and the circumstances, with advice from a Vet and a breeder.

Certain medical conditions in the dog only develop or become apparent with age. Mandatory desexing will remove from the gene pool healthy dogs free of such conditions; which in a small state such as Western Australia is disastrous for our ANKC registered breeders' ongoing pursuit of the eradication of such medical conditions via breeding to dogs free of such conditions and traits.

We are also aware that all the surgical methods of desexing bitches have some downsides, and so many members do not want to desex their bitches once they are no longer at their peak for breeding and showing.

As experienced dog owners we are aware that there are many dogs which are poor candidates for surgical desexing, such as any aged dogs and dogs with heart conditions.

We understand that there are various non – surgical methods of temporarily or permanently sterilising dogs, but these are not fully tested to date to ensure they are effective, and there are no downsides to them.

Conformation showing is principally based on exhibiting entire dogs/bitches from young pups through to fully mature adults and veterans. Mandatory desexing will destroy our sport in Western Australia and throughout Australia.

Our pure breed is the product of generations of selective breeding to produce a dog /bitch suited for a specific purpose living in association with its human family (which includes the mental stability and the physical health and endurance to undertake those designated tasks). While some people prefer a cross bred dog, many others love their pure breeds for their consistent temperament, character, working functions, size and confirmation. In a small State such as Western Australia, mandatory desexing will result in far fewer pure breed dogs being available which we feel is to the detriment of our dog-loving community.

Some of our members already have in place contracts requiring the sterilization of dogs sold as pets including the offer of incentives (monetary reimbursement) for the sterilization of their pets at a more appropriate age on the production of their veterinary sterilization certificate.

We believe that education and incentives are the most effective approach to preventing indiscriminate breeding of dogs.

We agree wholeheartedly with the Government's Consultation Paper which states: Your veterinarian is the best person to discuss the pros and cons of de-sexing your dog, the age the procedure is done, and determine the best strategy for your pet based on breed, lifestyle, longevity expectations, concurrent diseases, cancer risks, and other considerations for intact and de-sexed dogs.

We believe this commonsense and practical approach is the way to go in terms of the issue of desexing dogs, and state again that we are strongly opposed to mandatory desexing of dogs.

Mandatory desexing – Breeder's terms

Dogs held on breeder's terms from a DogsWest breeder, **must be exempt** from mandatory desexing – they are part of the wider DogsWest community of dogs and may be crucial to maintaining a wide gene pool for the breeding of healthy pure breed dogs.

Many dogs live full and happy lives as companion animals in a loving home and are occasionally used by their ANKC Registered Breeder in their breeding program, they should be exempt.

Restrictions under the WA Dog Act make it very difficult for many DogsWest breeders to maintain a breeding program, without the ability to have dogs in their wider community.

Some dogs are also shown from that wider community, with the dog living in a companion home, but shown by the breeder of the dog. **They must be exempt.**

Dogs in pet homes where the breeder retains the breeding rights to the dog. Those dogs should be linked to the breeders registration number, so that they can keep their records up to date in relation to breeding and desexing.

meet (to date unknown) specified minimum standards for housing and selling their puppies – IF and only if these minimum standards are strictly and consistently enforced by the Government.

There is no reason why a **COMMERCIAL LICENCE SHOULD BE INTRODUCED** as this is a legal loop hole for **PUPPY FARMERS** to access.

Transition pet shops to adoption centres sourcing dogs only from accredited rescue organizations and shelters

We vehemently oppose the proposal to transition pet shops to adoption centres to sell rescue dogs and puppies. We strongly believe that pet shops should be legally barred from keeping and selling any puppies and dogs; and from acting as an intermediary in the sale and purchase of puppies and dogs.

Our wealth of experience in raising pups and rearing and socialising young dogs tells us that a shop is not a good environment in which to keep them until they are sold; and is not a good environment in which to sell pups and young dogs. Our reasoning for this is that most puppies are being sourced from commercial producers and back yard breeders who are only after personal financial benefits and do nothing to ensure the betterment of any breed through even basic measures such as health checks or temperament testing prior to puppies being sold to shops.

ANKC Registered breeders generally have waiting lists for people wanting to purchase a puppy and contracts that require the return of the puppy to the breeder if no longer wanted to ensure the puppy is not on sold or given away by the purchaser.

Our members also provide puppy information packs that inform and educate purchasers to help ensure that puppies purchased do not end up abandoned or surrendered due to buyer ignorance about being a companion pet owner.

Our members also thoroughly vet and ‘interrogate’ potential purchasers of their pups long before pups leave the Breeder for their new homes; and if they are not happy about the circumstances of the potential purchasers or feel something is ‘not quite right’, then a pup won’t be sold to them.

However, retail shops selling pups will encourage and promote impulse buying of a cute pup or a sad looking rescue dog, etc. It is a nonsense to suggest that potential purchasers will be adequately vetted and checked by the retailer to match the pup/dog to the purchaser. This in turn we think will lead to more pups/dogs being poorly raised and end up in a dog rescue/shelter situation.

Transitioning pet shops to sell only rescue dogs is a recipe for disaster in our view. Dogs which find themselves in a rescue or shelter facility have arrived there because of being neglected, abused, traumatised in some other way, lost, etc or because their loving owners can no longer care for them. All these dogs have and continue to experience extreme stress, anxiety with many also suffering ongoing medical problems.

Registering owners of entire dogs as a ‘Registered Breeder’ with their Local Government

As ANKC registered breeders our members are required to meet the highest standards in housing, breeding and raising dogs, ensuring that we raise healthy, well adjusted pure-breed pups for a variety of purposes - as pets; as performance and working dogs; to maintain our breeds to be ‘fit for purpose’ and to protect them from extinction; and to enable the Western Australian dog-loving community to take part in our wonderful conformation and other dog sports.

Our concern is that you are lumping all breeders in together, regardless of what they breed and how – and how are you going to police them?

DogsWest has set the bar high when it comes to the breeding of pure breed dogs – and we must be on the DogsWest / ANKC Register.

Why should DogsWest Members have to be on another breeder register, when they must comply with so many rules to become a Member and to remain one?

A DogsWest breeder already meet high standards – why should they have to just be another “breeder” on a government register that will not hold everyone to those same standards AND enforce them – we are accountable every time we act – these “breeders” won’t be but yet they will be ‘approved’ by their Local Government as a Registered Breeder.

Although the RRCWA is not opposed to others breeding **pure bred dogs** in a caring, safe and appropriate environment – DogsWest Members cannot and will not meet the pet market demand **(as this goes against Section H Regulations under Breeding : 2.16 A member shall breed primarily for the purpose of improving the quality and / or working ability of the breed in accordance with the breed standard, and not specifically for the pet or commercial market. A member retains the right of free trade, to advertise directly and sell dogs not kept for line maintenance purposes by that member.)** DogsWest members are already on the ANKC Register, recognised Australia Wide – they do not need to be on another register.

We vehemently oppose any requirement for ANKC – registered Breeders and DogsWest Members to also must be registered by their Local Government as Breeders simply because we do not want to sterilise our dogs.

This is double red tape, an administrative nightmare for the Local Government, more costs for no benefit, and we cannot see any useful purpose in this proposal.

We urge the State Government to **EXEMPT DogsWest Members and ANKC Registered Breeders** from the requirement of also being registered by their Local Government as registered breeders.

Giving an exemption to DogsWest Members and ANKC Registered Breeders will provide a clear point of difference between them and other Breeders ‘approved’ by and registered with their Local Government: we must meet the highest standards of welfare, to breed our dogs and raise pure breed puppies with a pedigree guaranteeing their lineage and breed with these Regulations and COE for breeding and selling puppies with an after sale service strictly enforced by DogsWest; while LG ‘approved’ registered breeders will only be required to

It is a nonsense to suggest that rehoming outcomes for rescue dogs and dogs in shelters will be improved by keeping them and selling them in shops, for the similar reasons given above. We are also highly concerned that those rescue/shelter dogs that have evident aggression or underlying aggressive tendencies because of their poor backgrounds, are at high risk of becoming aggressive to their new owners, with potentially fatal consequences, if not very carefully matched to suitable new owners and if not given ongoing support in the early 'settling in' phase in their new home environments.

Breed rescue services

Members and Clubs who run breed specific rescues must abide by DogsWest Rules and Regulations, so they cannot supply any dog, for any reason, to a pet shop.

DogsWest Clubs and Members offer breed specific advice and rescue to many breeds and should be accredited under any scheme as they operate within the Regulations and Code of Ethics of DogsWest.

Breed specific rescue that is conducted by DogsWest Registered breeders must be exempt as they operate under the Regulations and Code of Ethics of DogsWest who have a proven compliance system in place.

DogsWest could accredit rescue organisations run by their Members and affiliated Clubs as many do offer breed specific rescue and have done for many years.

Many DogsWest breed clubs and breeders run rescue operations for their breed of interest – not only for the dogs bred by a DogsWest breeder, but for dogs of that breed from any source.

Many DogsWest members and Affiliated Clubs use their breed experience and expertise which makes them ideal for providing rescue services, when they can, and some rescues have waiting lists of people who are looking for an older or second dog.

DogsWest has rules and regulations that require a certain level of care, responsibility and ethics in relation to the dogs our members breed. If they wish to 'rescue' or rehome the dogs they have bred, or assist other breeders or the breed in general, then they should be exempt from accreditation by the Government.

On behalf of the RRCWA .
Club Secretary



2/8/2018

Tanya Brooker.

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