

THE POODLE SOCIETY OF WA (INC)



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

Submission by the Poodle Society of Western Australia Stop Puppy Farming Project

The Poodle Society of WA (PSOWA) was incorporated in 1999, we are affiliated with Dogs West (since 1998) and are a member of the National Poodle Council (since 1999). The main objective of the Society is to encourage members, breeders and owners of poodles to do all things for the good, welfare and improvement of the breed. The Poodle Society of WA represents all three sizes of the breed, Toy, Miniature and Standard. The Society also provides a rescue service for all pure bred poodles that come to our attention, we also provide information to members of the public seeking to find out more about the breed and a list of registered breeders.

Our members include Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC) registered breeders of poodles, who 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 Dogs West.

All our breeders are members of Dogs West and must register all progeny whether pets or kept for breeding. They must provide comprehensive information to each puppy buyer for the care, welfare, appropriate housing, training and socialisation of every puppy sold. Each puppy must 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

We strongly 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:

- a) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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.
- d) Scientific research shows that male dogs that are permanently 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.

Mandatory desexing will remove from the gene pool healthy dogs free of such conditions; which in a state such as WA with a small population it 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.

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 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, should be exempt from mandatory desexing – they are part of the wider Dogs West 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 Dogs West 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. Our registered breeders occasionally place dogs in pet homes where they retain the breeding rights to the dog. These dogs should be linked to the breeder's registration number, so their records can be maintained in relation to breeding and desexing.

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

We urge the State Government to EXEMPT Dogs West 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 Code of Ethics for breeding and selling puppies with an after sale service strictly enforced by Dogs West; while Local Government 'approved' registered breeders will only be required to 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.

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

We strongly oppose the proposal to transition pet shops to adoption centres to sell rescue dogs and puppies. We 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 puppies 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 thoroughly vet and ‘interrogate’ potential purchasers of their puppies long before they 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 puppy won’t be sold to them.

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.

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



Andrea Tongue
President
on behalf of the Poodle Society of WA