

GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG - KENNEL CLUB - THE REALITY

by
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The Health & Welfare of Pedigree Dogs – and the Kennel Club Relative to the German Shepherd Dog

The Kennel Club should answer the following question:

Would the Kennel Club register a blind and deaf purebred litter of puppies from parents with severe dysplasia, severe elbow dysplasia, epilepsy and haemophilia?

The PUBLIC has a right to know the answer!

The Kennel Club make income from REGISTRATIONS their top priority, even over the desperate need to introduce fundamental, meaningful and effective measures to considerably improve the health and welfare of pedigree dogs. This is the main reason significant and sustainable improvements in the health and welfare of pedigree dogs will not be attainable through the Kennel Club.

The Kennel Club do not even include strict identification requirements for entry into licensed shows, and possibly worse still, exhibits do not have to meet any satisfactory health screening minimum requirements. Even the CRUFTS best in show winner, never mind any other CRUFTS winner, may suffer from a number of hereditary diseases, which could be, or indeed may have been identified by health screening.

With the current priorities of the Kennel Club the health and welfare of pedigree dogs would definitely be best served outside of the Kennel Club. You only have to carefully consider the manner in which the Kennel Club have dealt with the numerically large and very popular breed, the German Shepherd Dog, over the last year or so, in respect of its health and welfare. Of necessity this is a summary, which I hope will give the reader a clear picture of what the Kennel Club actually fails to do for the health and welfare of German Shepherd Dogs. This can obviously be mirrored across all other breeds.

German Shepherd Dog (GSD)

I have absolutely no doubts the health and welfare of the GSD would be best served by the GSD National Breed Clubs that are World Union of Shepherd Dog Club (WUSV) members, the GSD League and BAGSD, who along with the GSD Breed Council which represents all GSD breed clubs within the United Kingdom.

These respected organisations joined together in 2008 as the GSD Partnership (GSDP) and jointly agreed a Planned Improvement Programme (PIP) – (**appendix 1**). This consists of a list of improvements for the health and welfare of GSD which have been purposefully side stepped by the Kennel Club.

In November 2008 the Kennel Club refused to have the PIP on the agenda at a joint meeting with the GSDP. Despite further meetings with the Kennel Club in April 2009 and August 2009, no progress was made. Public statements by the Kennel Club appeared to

be designed with the objective of derailing the joint discussions, further indicated when the Kennel Club stubbornly failed to jointly agree the minutes of the August 2009 meeting, insisting that their version was correct and stubbornly refusing to compromise on the difference of opinion, so that joint discussions could continue.

All of this culminated in the Kennel Club, completely bypassing the GSDP and returning to their customary dictatorial position with the GSD breed clubs, by discontinuing dialogue with the GSDP and instead issuing a Press Statement in the first week of January 2010. Their original stance to withhold the allocation of Challenge Certificates to the GSD breed for 2012, was now followed by a Kennel Club requirement for individual GSD breed clubs to sign an **"undertaking"** (**appendix 2**) in order for them to be allocated Challenge Certificates. A clear policy of divide and conquer, alongside a clear policy of suppressing the GSDP Planned Improvement Programme (PIP), alongside their blatant determination to continue making REGISTRATION income their TOP PRIORITY. In addition comments within the **"undertaking"** are clearly politically designed to give the impression that the GSD Partnership is not seriously interested in the health and welfare of the GSD. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. The Kennel Club are the real failure in this regard. You only have to read the GSDP Planned improvement Programme (PIP) to fully understand that.

This was still not enough for the Kennel Club, they realised that many of the GSD breed clubs were attracted to the German system of exhibiting their GSD. They also knew of the popularity of the GSD BRITISH SIEGER EVENT which had been held annually for the last five years. They also knew this event was held under the German system, through the WUSV member clubs, **and included identification and health screening criteria within the entry conditions.** Something the Kennel Club shows seriously lack. Fearing a real alternative show scene could and would be developed for the GSD, the Kennel Club included the following clause within the **"undertaking"**.

Clause 9. "The Club confirms that it will act in good faith with the Kennel Club on all matters including confirmation that it will not, without the express permission of the Kennel Club, run any events under the rules or regulations of any organisation other than the Kennel Club."

Why this clause has been included in an undertaking primarily and supposedly aimed at improving the health and welfare of the GSD, is open to speculation.

I believe it has been included to stifle GSD progress within the UK through WUSV events.

The Kennel Club clearly illustrate their failure to use the powerful influence the dog shows can exert on breeders, something which Professor Bateson highlights in his recent report, in their reply to a GSD breeder when they were asked the following question:

"We are currently Exhibiting a GSD with a hip score of 3-47=50 (authors note – this is severe hip dysplasia). We would be very grateful if you could please clarify for us that if a judge is aware of our dog's hip score, should they penalise him in the show ring although he is very sound and displays excellent movement?"

The Kennel Club replied: *"In answer to your query, judges are only required to consider whether a dog is suffering from a visible condition which adversely affects its health or*

welfare. Therefore any knowledge which the judge may have with regard to the health status of the dog, such as its hip score, should not be taken into account when judging, and it would not be appropriate to base any judging decisions on such information."

This Kennel Club answer is very revealing, first of all their use of the word visible clearly illustrates their "out of sight – out of mind" attitude towards health screening information. It also reveals their unwillingness to place health screening results as a condition of entry for Kennel Club licensed shows. Something which is disgraceful and which clearly shows they also place show entries above the health and welfare of pedigree dogs, second only to their first priority of safeguarding their registration income. This is completely the opposite of what they should be doing, and clearly reveals that the Kennel Club, in respect of the health and welfare of pedigree dogs, are "unfit for purpose".

I would ask, what "undertaking" regarding health and welfare, are the Kennel Club requesting from each and every pedigree dog breeder who wants to REGISTER A LITTER with them?

Remember the Kennel Club's effectiveness over implementing significant changes to bring about major improvements in the health and welfare of pedigree dogs is seriously compromised by their clear priority of protecting and maximising their REGISTRATION income and the Kennel Club show entries. This could not be made any clearer than seeing their failure to make any progress with the GSDP and their excellent, health and welfare, Planned Improvement Programme. The PIP would have required the Kennel Club to change its priorities, and it is unwilling, and apparently incapable of doing so.

The GSD Partnership (GSDP), and indeed the World Union of Shepherd Dog Clubs (WUSV), is well aware of a degree of unsoundness in the hindquarters of some German Shepherds. This is neither correct nor welcome, but can only be overcome by an educated judging system being put in place, alongside an awareness campaign throughout the GSD breed.

The reader should be in no doubt that the GSD League of Great Britain (WUSV member); the oldest and most influential GSD Club, will continue to take every step possible to ensure significant improvement in the health and welfare of the GSD, in line with the Planned Improvement Programme (PIP) which was initiated by them. I am also confident they will be strongly supported by many of the other GSD Clubs and the WUSV, who all share a genuine interest in the future health and welfare of our magnificent breed.

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Appendix 1

GSD Partnership (GSDP) Health and Welfare “Planned Improvement Programme” (PIP)

this is the list of improvements which have been purposefully side stepped by the Kennel Club.

- 1) The breed name of German Shepherd Dog (Alsatian) should be brought into line with the rest of the World and changed to German Shepherd Dog. This will also avoid the confusion that exists with the general public who often believe that there are 2 different types/breeds - the German Shepherd Dog and the Alsatian.
- 2) Introduction of a mandatory breed survey before being allowed to be bred from.
- 3) No female under the age of 21 months should be bred from.
- 4) No male under the age of 18 months should be bred from.
- 5) Inbreeding closer than 3, 2 or 2, 3 should not be accepted.
- 6) Mandatory training scheme for Judges with a scrutiny panel of senior breed judges empowered by the KC **and** the Partners who will monitor judge's adherence to the rules, with regular forums for discussion.
- 7) Reduction of the judges list to an **active** register and **qualified** list
- 8) Line breeding to be shown on the KC pedigree in order to differentiate.
- 9) A quick win in differentiating GSDs who have had tests from those who have not would be for the KC to acknowledge international working Health and Working tests on Pedigrees. The standard of a good proportion of GSDs registered with the KC would be raised demonstrably.
- 10) Future breeding standards:-
- 11) Any puppies registered by the Kennel Club must have parents who have both been hip X-rayed and each parent have achieved a total score of 20 or less, (with one side being no higher than 12) or a recognised overseas grade which is similar.
- 12) Any puppies registered by the Kennel Club must have parents who have both been elbow X-rayed and either graded by the BVA or have achieved a recognised overseas status.
- 13) The sire of any puppies registered by the Kennel Club must have passed a haemophilia test if bred in the UK.
- 14) Any puppies registered by the Kennel Club must have parents who have both been either tattooed or micro-chipped for identification purposes, in order for the individual dog to match his/her documentation.
- 15) The parents of every puppy to be registered by the Kennel Club must have had DNA identification recorded with the Kennel Club or a recognised overseas authority.
- 16) Any puppies registered by the Kennel Club should conform to the Breed Standard colour requirement.
- 17) The parents of any puppies registered by the Kennel Club must have passed a Breed Survey (in the year in which the animal attains 2 years of age - or older) either in the U.K. or with a recognised overseas authority.
- 18) The U.K. Breed Survey to be upgraded to include a fitness/endurance test similar to the ' (AD) required by International WUSV authorities.

- 19) The parents of any puppies registered by the Kennel Club should have achieved either a recognised Kennel Club or WUSV working qualification, with the minimum being a Gold Kennel Club Good Citizen Test or a BH qualification.
- 20) The breeder of any puppies registered by the Kennel Club should hold a valid Kennel Club prefix.

Appendix 2

the Kennel Club “undertaking” for the GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG (Alsatian) Breed Clubs

At its meeting on 5th January 2010, the Kennel Club General Committee again looked at the issues surrounding GSDs.

As previously reported, the Kennel Club has been very disappointed with the lack of progress made following meetings held with the GSD Partnership during 2008/9. Failure to agree the Minutes of the meeting of the 18th August 2009 is particularly frustrating, especially as the problem of unsoundness in the hindquarters and hocks of some dogs is widely acknowledged within the breed.

The Kennel Club has been waiting since July 2009 for the GSD community as a whole to suggest a meaningful and practical way forward which addresses those health and welfare issues in the breed which have been legitimately raised by the Kennel Club. This has not happened and the Kennel Club, as it indicated it might three weeks ago, has now chosen to take some proactive steps with those individual breed clubs which are prepared to help. This is an attempt to safeguard the health and welfare of the breed and to secure its future and has been the Kennel Club's sole motivation throughout its discussions with the GSD breed community.

Basically only those eligible clubs which accept that

- there is a degree of unsoundness in the hindquarters of the breed
- that these problems should be penalised at shows and
- that Kennel Club rules on double handling will be adhered to in future

will be allocated 2012 Challenge Certificates. Those who do not accept this will not be given the privilege of Kennel Club Challenge Certificate status.

Therefore, at its meeting this week, the Kennel Club General Committee agreed detailed proposals which set out exactly what steps breed clubs and others need to take in order to start to address the major issues within the GSD breed and thus allow for the 2012 allocation of the Kennel Club's highest award, the Challenge Certificate. That allocation had been deferred pending a proposed resolution to the problems.

In order to be considered for an allocation of Kennel Club Challenge Certificates, all GSD Breed Clubs and General & Group Championship Show Societies, which had previously been allocated Challenge Certificates, and wish to have such Certificates in future, are to be required to sign a formal Undertaking to abide by certain conditions for all future shows **with immediate effect**.

Only those Societies which agree to this Undertaking will be considered for an allocation of Kennel Club Challenge Certificates for GSDs in 2012 and beyond.

The Kennel Club has written to all GSD breed clubs and affected General & Group Championship Show Societies giving full details of the required Undertaking. A deadline of 31st March 2010 for the receipt of signed Undertakings has been set.

Kennel Club Chairman, Ronnie Irving, explained, "The Committee felt it had no choice but to take positive and practical steps now with individual clubs in view of the failure of the GSD community as a whole to respond. Six months have elapsed since the Kennel Club asked for these issues to be addressed and there has been a great deal of talk but not much action. We couldn't allow this situation to continue unresolved on an open-ended basis.

The requirements in the Undertakings are entirely reasonable. I hope that the GSD community will embrace this as an opportunity to take the positive actions necessary to address those breed issues that are apparent to everyone in the world of dogs."

"The Undertaking" that German Shepherd Dog (Alsatian) Breed Clubs are requested to sign, requires acceptance and adherence of the following conditions:

1. The Club recognises that it will not be allocated Kennel Club Challenge Certificates for German Shepherd Dogs (Alsatian) unless it signifies agreement of the conditions set out below and provides written confirmation of such agreement by the Club's Secretary and Chairman.
2. The Club accepts that there is a degree of unsoundness in the hindquarters of the breed and in particular in the hocks of some dogs and that these problems are to be penalised at shows.
3. The Club will arrange education of its judges on the correct conformation and movement of the breed; viz – the above faults should be avoided.
4. The Club will brief judges prior to all its shows on their health and welfare responsibilities particularly in regard to soundness of conformation.
5. The Club will adhere to Kennel Club Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h; "The attracting of the attention of exhibits by any method from outside the ring is prohibited. It is the duty of the Judge, Steward and Show Management noticing such attraction to ask that it cease.
6. The Kennel Club escalation procedure with regard to the practice of Outside Attraction (Double Handling) will be adhered to.
7. The Club will ensure that its judges and stewards are under contract in writing to abide by Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h. and that they will adhere to the escalation procedure. Specific wording (as supplied by the Kennel Club) to this effect must be included in the judges' and stewards' contract letters.
8. The Club confirms that those who do not abide by the above provisions will be reported to the Kennel Club within seven days of the last day of the show.
9. The Club confirms that it will act in good faith with the Kennel Club on all matters including confirmation that it will not, without the express permission of the Kennel Club, run any events under the rules or regulations of any organisation other than the Kennel Club.
10. Upon request, and in any event annually, the Club will provide a report confirming and demonstrating compliance with these conditions to include reports on any required enforcement of Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h. and how this was achieved.

A report on agreement to comply, and compliance with these conditions, will be required during the autumn of 2010 before a review of the Kennel Club Challenge Certificate allocation for 2013 is carried out and it is intended that this requirement will continue on a rolling basis.

A practical demonstration that there are definite plans in place and actions commenced in order to comply with these conditions will be required in an annual report and any evidence and reports of non compliance will be relevant factors when considering the Club's next allocation of Challenge Certificates.