



## **Introduction to the Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders**

Ethical, Responsible breeders of Healthy, Family Pets

The Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders Inc. (AAPDB) was formed as an Incorporated Association in 2007 and was recognised as a breeder body in New South Wales in 2012. It has national membership and is applying for recognition in other States and Territories.

The AAPDB was formed to introduce standards and ethics in pet dog breeding and to provide a voice for pet dog breeders. It remains a relatively small, but influential voice. Membership is increasing rapidly as a result of increasing demand from consumers for quality assurance in pet dog breeding.

In order to provide quality assurance, the AAPDB, in 2010, was the first dog breeding organisation in Australia (and possibly the world) to require all full members to undergo a mandatory, annual, independent, welfare focused quality assurance audit, carried out by a licensed veterinarian.

Breeders joining the AAPDB have a 3 month probationary period before they must undergo the annual audit. It is not possible for breeders to renew a probationary membership. NSW has the most breeder members. They range from home based breeders with 1-4 dogs to large professional kennels.

The AAPDB is the only breeding organisation in Australia which embrace both purebred and crossbred dog breeders. The AAPDB does not register dogs, only breeders, and does not regulate what members breed, but rather how they breed their dogs, how they sell their dogs, their after sales obligations and whether the dogs they breed are suitable for the families who purchase them.

AAPDB auditing veterinarians are requested to audit on the AAPDB code of ethics, rather than the Code of Practice for Dog Breeders in their jurisdiction, because we are an Australia wide organization and Codes of Practice vary across Australia. We ensure that all members are aware of the Code of Practice in their State or Territory, and relevant legislation affecting dog breeders, before they are able to join the Association as probationary members. This information is also available in the members area of our web site.

The annual AAPDB audit risks a potential conflict of interest as veterinarians usually audit their clients. The association trusts the integrity and professionalism of veterinarians but recognises that an arm's length auditing process has advantages. However it is beyond the resources of our organization to establish an auditing body.

### **The pet dog breeding industry associations.**

Dog breeding is a highly politicised and emotionally charged subject and the pet dog breeding industry is under attack from outside and is deeply divided within the industry. Pet dog breeders are represented by the AAPDB Inc and by Master Dog Breeders<sup>1</sup> who register purebred dogs and do not allow cross breeding except in breed development. Both organisations are regularly criticised by fellow breeders belonging to the Australian National Kennel Club and its State bodies.

The ANKC breed clubs register purebred dogs and show dogs for a hobby and register approximately 70,000 puppies each year<sup>2</sup>. The majority of ANKC registered dogs become pets, however the ethics of these clubs specifically reject the view that breeding pet dogs is an appropriate goal in itself.

These “Hobby” breeders breed dogs to particular standards which relate to conformation and behaviour. The standards relate to the original roles the dogs were bred for, such as hunting, guarding or herding. Once a breed is “recognised” the stud book is closed and animals can only be bred to others of the breed within the stud book. These breeders have been criticised by behaviourists for not making suitable pet temperament a primary consideration<sup>3</sup> and by geneticists for breeding practices which have caused increasing loss of genetic diversity in their dogs, leading to significant loss of health and life expectancy<sup>4</sup>. This has led to acknowledgment that sensible crossbreeding is an appropriate way to produce healthy, appropriate pet dogs<sup>5</sup>.

### **The importance of the pet dog breeding industry**

Animal rights activists typically argue that **all dog breeders** are contributing to dog overpopulation and so to the death of dogs in shelters. They single out professional breeders as the cause of hundreds of thousands of deaths in pounds<sup>6</sup>.

These figures are repeated without any support across the internet, however the research into the issue of euthanasia in pounds and shelters by Queensland University Veterinary School estimates there were 211,655 dog admissions in pounds across Australia. Of these admissions 101,037 were reclaimed, 66,443 rehomed and 43,900 euthanased<sup>7</sup>.

There are currently estimated to be 4.8 million pet dogs living in Australian households<sup>8</sup>. Given a reasonable estimate of the median life expectancy of this dog population as 11 years<sup>9</sup>, maintaining this population requires approximately 436,000 puppies each year. If all dogs in shelters were rehomed there would still be an approximately 393,000 shortfall in the number of puppies required to maintain our pet dog population. While 43,000 is an unfortunate number of lives lost, clearly these figures do not support the view that euthanasia rates relate to overpopulation.

The problem of unwanted dogs is related to random or inappropriate breeding and poor socialisation. This is clear from the research which shows that the dogs predominantly surrendered are cross bred with Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Kelpie and Cattle dog and the reason more than half of all dogs are euthanased is because of aggression<sup>10</sup>. These dogs are not breeds bred by professional pet breeders<sup>11</sup>. Currently half of all pet dogs are obtained from a breeder (36%), a pet store (14%) or an animal shelter (16%) with 30% of dogs, which disproportionately contribute to the pound population, being acquired for free from sources such as neighbours<sup>10</sup>.

Nearly 2 in 5 Australian families own a dog and, as discussed, maintaining this pet dog population requires approximately 436,000 puppies each year. While the economic size and importance of this industry is undeniable it must be remembered that pet dog ownership has repeatedly been shown to have benefits to physical and mental health, particularly in older people<sup>12,13,14</sup>.

Veterinarians, shelter workers, research scientists, groomers, insurance companies, pet supplies companies, dog food companies, dog walkers, pet minders, dog trainers, dog boarding kennels and more, are all dependant on dog breeders to maintain this \$2,500,000.00 pet dog industry<sup>15</sup>.

Clearly there is room for all types of dog breeders in this very large industry. In livestock breeding stud or “seedstock” producers work closely with commercial breeders and these different producers regard each other as complementary within the livestock industry rather than competition.

## **Implications of the proposed change to the ANKC constitution.**

It is against ANKC regulations to deliberately breed “pet only” or crossbred dogs from any ANKC registered purebred. ANKC breeders are required by their code of ethics to breed “for the betterment of the breed”. ANKC breeders describe their less desirable dogs as “only pet quality” and most prefer their dogs to go to “a good show home”. Clearly there is room for all types of dog breeders in this very large industry and most dogs, bred for whatever motives, end up living as pets. In livestock breeding stud or “seedstock” producers work closely with commercial breeders and producers regard each other as complementary within the livestock industry rather than as competition.

Some ANKC, particularly breeders of popular pet breeds such as Cavalier King Charles Spaniels or Poodles own unregistered purebred dogs as well, from which they breed pets: unregistered purebreds or crossbreds such as the highly popular “Cavoodles”. This allows the flow of genetics from the ANKC registered gene pools into the general population. This is obviously a good thing for the pet dog breeding industry and for the pet dog owning public. The proposed changes to the ANKC constitution aims to prevent this aspect of pet dog breeding.

Some ANKC breeders belong to Master Dog Breeders as well as the ANKC. Master Dog Breeders do not compete in conformation shows and recognise the risks that these shows impose on long term breed health. They have a registry which is less stringent and they accept infusions of different breeds if this can be shown to be beneficial to the health of a dog breed. Master Dog Breeders is not, and never will be, recognised by the ANKC and the changes to the ANKC constitution are also clearly aimed to prevent this flow of genetics out of the highly regulated ANKC gene pool.

The AAPDB congratulated the ACCC for recognising that the proposed changes to the ANKC constitution are intended to restrict competition and take advantage of the ANKC’s privileged position in the dog breeding industry. We believe that it is in the best interests of the pet owning public and of pet dogs to maximise the potential for gene flow within the breeding dog population – between purebreds and between breeds. We strongly support the ACCC decision to reject the proposed changes.

1. <https://www.mdba.net.au/>
2. [http://ankc.org.au/media/9303/rego-stats-list\\_2010-2019v4.pdf](http://ankc.org.au/media/9303/rego-stats-list_2010-2019v4.pdf)
3. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2019.00241/full>
4. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233670946\\_Welfare\\_concerns\\_associated\\_with\\_pedigree\\_dog\\_breeding\\_in\\_the\\_UK](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233670946_Welfare_concerns_associated_with_pedigree_dog_breeding_in_the_UK)
5. <https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/ufaw/aw/1999/00000008/00000004/art00004>
6. <https://alq.org.au/adopt-dont-shop>
7. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5532565/>
8. <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/how-many-pets-are-there-in-australia/>
9. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21029096>
10. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/7/9/67/htm>
11. <https://www.aapdb.com.au/full-member-listing/>
12. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2783630/>
13. <https://www.bmj.com/content/331/7527/1252.short>
14. <https://www.seniors.com.au/pet-insurance/discover/seniors-benefit-owning-pets>
15. [http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMA\\_Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2016-Report\\_sml.pdf](http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/AMA_Pet-Ownership-in-Australia-2016-Report_sml.pdf)

16. <https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/PP-A5-Responsible-companion-animal-breeding.pdf>
17. <https://www.aapdb.com.au/about-us/>
18. [https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/299803/Breeding-dogs-and-cats-code-of-practice.pdf](https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/299803/Breeding-dogs-and-cats-code-of-practice.pdf)