



IRISH SETTER CLUB WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC

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

Submission to 'Stop Puppy Farming' by the Irish Setter Club of Western Australia (Inc).

Introduction to the Irish Setter

The Irish Setter was known and noted in the late 1700's and they were bred to hunt game birds over boggy moorland. Hand written pedigrees of Irish Setters date well back into the 1800's. Hutchinson's Bob born in 1859 was the first recorded important stud dog. Irish Setters were officially described by their own Breed Standard in 1886. The traditional Irish Setter is a practical, intelligent sporting dog. The breed enjoys a great reputation as a wonderful family companion.

Background to the Irish Setter Club of WA (Inc.)

The Irish Setter Club of WA (Inc) (ISCWA) was established in 2011 and is the biggest Irish Setter Club in the Southern Hemisphere. We currently have one hundred and twelve (112) members and all members are owners of Irish Setter dogs. Our members are singles and couples whose extended families also take part in ISCWA activities and media.

ISCWA aims to foster and promote in depth knowledge about the Irish Setter breed, its history, development, care and training. We are working to build a strong network of Irish Setter owners in Western Australia with view to the best continuance of the breed into the future. We value the function, form and heritage of this truly wonderful breed. Our focus is on the Irish Setter as a functional gundog that is free from 'valueless exaggeration and unsound anatomies'. (David Hancock – Gundogs, Their Past, Their Performance and Their Prospects)

Our club is an affiliate of the Canine Association of Western Australia (Dogs West) and the Australian National Kennel Council (ANKC). Our members include ANKC registered breeders of Irish Setters with two (2) breeders being amongst Australia's oldest, established in the 1970s. We have people from all walks of life in our club that are interested in the breed for their field working traits and competition in field trials and conformation shows. We also have people who are 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





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that includes a Code of Conduct and agree to the Code of Ethics. These codes are enforceable by Dogs West.

All of our breeders are members of Dogs West and are required to register all progeny whether they are sold as pets or intended to be kept for breeding stock. 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.

Breeders within our club offer to rehome any dogs that are returned to them if the circumstances of the owners change and they can no longer keep their dog.

Issues with the Government Proposal

Mandatory de-sexing

We strongly oppose the mandatory sterilisation of pure breed dogs, at any age, except where required for medical reasons. Our opposition is based on the wealth of scientific evidence that shows the permanent de-sexing has adverse consequences for dogs. Research has demonstrated:

- a) A reduced lifespan in dogs that have been permanently de-sexed. This is contrary to the Government view that states that permanent de-sexing will increase a dog's longevity.
- b) Increased risk of cancer in dogs that have been permanently de-sexed, particularly in bitches. The Government view states that permanent de-sexing will improve the health of dogs.
- c) De-sexing at any age increases the risk of urinary incontinence in both dogs and bitches. To manage this issue, dogs need to be medicated for the rest of their lives.
- d) Scientific research shows that male dogs that are permanently de-sexed at a young age, are likely to develop increased fear aggression and anxiety later in life. This can increase the risk that they will become unmanageable as family pets increasing the possibility of unwanted dogs being placed with rescue organisations and/or euthanised.
- e) For 'large' or 'giant' breeds that are de-sexed prior to maturity (at around the age of 2 to 3 years) there are adverse health outcomes for joints. For example, it can impact on the development of the hips and elbows leading to premature arthritis significantly



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increasing the risk of damage and tearing of cruciate ligaments requiring costly surgery and a difficult and painful rehabilitation.

- f) There is insufficient evidence to support the current proposal that mandatory de-sexing of dogs will decrease the number of unwanted dogs. Most scientific research supports the contrary view.

Our pure breed is the product of generations of selective breeding to produce a dog 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). It can take a number of years to fully assess the abilities of a dog with regard to its conformation, characteristics and in respect to its potential as a working dog in field trials. If mandatory de-sexing was introduced the opportunity to pass on these traits would be lost.

While some people prefer a cross bred dog, many others love their pure breeds for their consistent temperament, character, working functions, size and conformation. In a small State such as Western Australia, mandatory de-sexing 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 breeders already offer incentives to purchasers of dogs sold as pets. Dogs sold as pets are placed on the limited register or are co-owned by the breeder which requires the consent of that breeder to any mating and production of litters.

We agree 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 that the members the ANKC and Dogs West should be exempt from mandatory de-sexing of dogs. We also believe that the current Code of Ethics and Constitutional requirements already support the Government's current aims in relation to stopping the 'puppy farms'.

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

We strongly oppose any requirement for ANKC and Dogs West registered Breeders to also be required to be registered by their Local Government as Breeders.





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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 Dogs West Members and ANKC Registered Breeders will provide a clear point of difference between breeders of pure bred dogs that are already subject to the strictest standards of animal welfare and other breeders that may be involved in breeding dogs for monetary gain only. Breeders of pure bred dogs are obligated to breed and raise dogs to the highest standards of welfare and raise pure breed puppies with a pedigree guaranteeing their lineage. We are also subject to Regulations and the Code of Ethics which provide an after sale service strictly enforced by Dogs West. The requirements of breeders under the proposed legislation does nothing to stop the abhorrent puppy farming industry.

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

The ISCWA strongly opposes 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.

A glass box in a shop window is not an environment that is conducive to raising and socialising a puppy. Having puppies in a pet shop window is similar to having confectionery at the checkout in a supermarket. Both are designed to capture the 'impulse buy'. We believe that many dogs purchased under these circumstances become the subject of the rotation of dogs from the pet shop to the rescue organisations. Pet Shops are the major outlet for 'puppy farmers'!

Purchasing a dog from a shop assistant is not the most appropriate way to purchase a dog. The shop assistant most likely knows nothing about the dog, its background, environmental influences, hereditary traits, physical or temperamental aspects or its health. The purpose of a shop is to make money. Financial gain and animal welfare does not necessarily 'go hand in hand'.

Puppies sold in pet shops are sourced from commercial producers and back yard breeders who are focussed on personal financial benefit. These suppliers to pet shops are not accountable for the health, parentage, breeding environment and registration of the puppies they produce.

As ANKC/Dogs West Registered breeders the ISCWA members often have a waiting list of people wanting to purchase a puppy or a dog. Some of the sale contracts require the return of the puppy to the breeder if it is no longer wanted to ensure the puppy is not on sold or given away by the purchaser.





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Our members also provide puppy information packs that inform and educate purchasers to assist the new dog owner and to minimise the number of puppies being abandoned or surrendered.

Our members also thoroughly assess potential purchasers of their pups long before pups leave for their new homes. We do not sell our pups or dogs to people we are not happy with.

Pet shops do not undertake any assessment to match the pup/dog to the purchaser.

Transitioning pet shops to sell only rescue dogs is not appropriate for the same reasons that we have outlined in relation to the sale of puppies. Outcomes for rescue dogs will not be improved by selling them in pet shops. The rehoming of dogs must be undertaken by competent persons and organisations. These organisations must undertake a full assessment of the dog and the prospective owner to minimise the risk of future issues.

In Summary

The membership of the ISCWA believes that the most practical and effective way to stop the indiscriminate breeding of dogs for profit, known as 'puppy farming', to improve the quality of life for dogs and to reduce the number of unwanted dogs is to:

1. Firstly, and the most important action, is to ban pet shops from selling dogs and puppies, including rescue dogs. If the demand is removed the supply will cease.
2. Exempt, ANKC and Dogs West members from the mandatory requirement to sterilise dogs they own. The current Regulations and Code of Ethics already promote responsible breeding and supports the proposed legislation without having to apply another layer of bureaucracy.
3. Exempt, ANKC and Dogs West registered breeders from the mandatory requirement to register as a breeder with a local council. To register as a breeder ANKC and Dogs West members must undertake a strict process of registration and a knowledge examination to be issued with a breeding prefix. The Regulations and Code of Ethics are rigorously applied to breeders.

The Irish Setter Club of WA (Inc.) looks forward to your favourable consideration of the points we have raised.

Your faithfully
The Committee
ISCWA

