



FOUNDED 1991

## What is the CDB

Determination by dog breeders and exhibitors to defend our traditionally docked breeds is nothing new. From the mid 1980's docked breed supporters recognised the growing adverse pressure against lay docking from animal welfare and from within the veterinary profession and banded together to form an ad hoc committee under the chairmanship of Larry Elsdon, entitled the Council For Docked Breeds

Over the succeeding months, the Council held discussions with Government over the shaping of proposed legislation on docking and a compromise was finally accepted under which lay docking would cease, but that the procedure would continue to be accessible to breeders through the veterinary profession. An amendment to the Veterinary Surgeons Act was accordingly made by the Home Office in 1991.

Shortly afterwards however, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons announced that it would proceed to consider declaring tail docking by its members not only to be unethical but also prima facie evidence of disgraceful professional conduct. Having given up their own right as lay dockers, breeders in the UK, were now faced with a ban on docking by vets. They were dismayed and angry at what they perceived as double dealing by both Government and the veterinary profession. There followed a strong lobbying campaign by Anne Moore and Ginette Elliott, who attended shows all over the country and galvanised support. Anne and Ginette then initiated a countrywide letter writing campaign.

## New Body

In August 1991 a packed meeting was held near Coventry to which a number of speakers were invited including Larry Elsdon. He formally disbanded his committee and the assets were handed over to a newly constituted body, the Council Of Docked Breeds. The CDB's mission was simple; to defend the docking option.

With a committed secretariat and regional delegates situated around the country, the CDB was active from the start, building up a significant library of information and data from around the world relating to docking. It also launched an immediate campaign of letter writing in order to lobby senior vets and prompted a resolution to the Kennel Club for the retention of the docking option within breed standards and seeking to ensure that breeders were not deprived of this option by legislation or the intervention of the RCVS. The resolution, debated in November 1991 was passed overwhelmingly.

Furthermore, the CDB soon recognised the need to do two things, namely to develop a strong programme of media activity and to build up a large and supportive membership base.



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Media activity took off early 1993 in the run up to the implementation of the new law on 1 July of that year. CDB delegates went through an intensive programme of TV and radio interview techniques training, while work began on a range of promotional material aimed at vets, the media, politicians and dog owners alike. In particular, the CDB set out in a clear concise document which could be mailed to a range of opinion formers, the Case For Docking. By the end of July, the CDB was in a position to capitalise on public interest in the docking debate and a whirlwind of TV and radio interviews followed.

## Climax

A natural climax to the campaign came on 31 June 1993, when the CDB held a press conference in Whitehall and held a photocall for press photographers and TV crews outside the House of Commons. Rarely if ever, have the famous lawns of St Stephen's Green, opposite the Palace of Westminster, seen so many docked dogs together at one time. Certainly the CDB upstaged the anti-docking RSPCA, which had its own conference arranged for the following day.

One of the objects of the press conference was to highlight the results of a survey of veterinary attitudes towards docking. These demonstrated once again that there was a substantial minority of supportive vets who were prepared to continue providing a service to breeders. Before long, the CDB had established a telephone system to ensure that breeders with prospective litters were quickly and efficiently placed into contact with these docking vets.

The success of this system, now operated through a permanent CDB help line service, is demonstrated by the insignificant numbers of long tailed dogs appearing in the show ring or the working arena, even two years after the ban on breeder docking.

Following the summer of 1993, breeders, vets, the CDB and the RSPCA settled down uneasily to the new status quo. Before long it became evident that the RSPCA was actively seeking to press home its anti-docking message by bringing prosecutions before the courts and reports began to emerge of heavy handed investigations of docked breed owners and breeders by RSPCA officials.

When certain of these investigations resulted in court cases, the CDB resolved to provide legal support to members wrongly accused of offences related to docking and soon afterwards, CDB lawyers scored a resounding victory when a Bedfordshire couple were acquitted in a docking case brought to court by the RSPCA. A spirited courtroom battle ensued, involving several more cases over a period of months.

## Effective

Any organisation relies on membership income and by early 1994, CDB having proved it could deliver an effective service, beefed up its recruiting message. It did so



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in particular amongst a group of dog owners which had previously been largely ignored, namely the working Gundog fraternity. The CDB advertised heavily and addressed shooting audiences at Working Tests and Game Fairs and Gundog owners quickly realised that they needed the support of the CDB if they were to avoid tail damage to their working dogs.

Working Spaniel and HPR owners joined the CDB in their droves throughout 1994, boosting the solid support which was now being received from the show fraternity. Membership grew, helped by an aggressive advertising campaign, and by the second anniversary of the change in legislation, the CDB had topped 10,000 members.

## Help Line

1994 saw further expansion and development of the CDB's administration and services, with the advent of full computerisation of membership records and an improved help line service. Whilst the CDB encourages breeders to establish contact with a docking vet well in advance of producing a litter, many people are not aware of the issue until their litter has been born and contact the CDB help line requesting urgent assistance. Meanwhile, as the RCVS's reluctance to take action against its docking members becomes increasingly evident, more vets have started providing a service to dock for breeders. In many cases they will do this only for CDB members and indeed a number of vets are sending donations to the CDB for every litter they dock.

## Fighting Fund

The CDB promises to offer legal assistance to any member wrongfully accused of docking, or any veterinary surgeon who is summons to appear before a RCVS disciplinary hearing in connection with docking. Breed clubs were approached with a request to pledge an affordable amount of money and hold it on behalf of the CDB, should their own funds not be sufficient to offer legal assistance in an emergency.

The CDB defended Marshal Dale MRCVS, a first veterinary surgeon accused of eight counts of professional misconduct concerning docking, by the RCVS. The case lasted four days and could have resulted in him being struck off. He was found not guilty on all counts which was a major victory for common sense.

## Europe

The CDB keeps an active watch on anti-docking developments in Europe, with special emphasis on the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals. It was the CDB who brought the latest Amendment to the notice of the Dog Press, Kennel Club, BFSS and BASC. The CDB is keen to strengthen its awareness of such political movements and is a member of both FACE UK and the Countryside Alliance.



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Tail End

The CDB is in a healthy state with increasing membership and stable finances, providing a service to members for which it has now become famous throughout the world of dogs. However, its eyes are firmly set on the political battles ahead. And battles there will surely be, with moves afoot to tighten the noose through international treaties.

However, the CDB is not an organisation to shirk away from a good fight and with a strong team well experienced in the law, the media and of course the veterinary profession, it aims to serve its members for many years to come.

The CDB sees a Register of Docking Practitioners as the way out of the current impasse, allowing lay people to dock in addition to the veterinary profession. They believe that they will only get one chance for the house to consider a change in legislation, so the timing of such an approach is of paramount importance. Advice will be sought concerning the prospect of success and how support from MP's is best achieved.

The CDB believes that without its intervention, no or very few veterinary surgeons would now be docking in the UK.