



Council of Docked Breeds

PRESS RELEASE

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Vets' Docking Report 'A recipe for misunderstanding'

Publication of a veterinary report on docking of dogs' tails has been received with disappointment by dog breeders.

The report of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) working party on docking contains little that will improve relationships between breeders and the veterinary profession. Its recommendations for the review of RCVS guidance to vets on tail docking do no more than tinker with the present wording and are a recipe for misunderstanding and legal wrangling, says Steve Dean, veterinary adviser to the Council of Docked Breeds.

"We have been waiting a year for the publication of this report, in the hope that it would pave the way to an acceptance by the RCVS of the individual vet's right to dock when he or she believes that to do so is in the interest of the dog.

"Instead we have a flimsy report which merely reiterates a number of hoary old quotations and pads them out with an unrepresentative public opinion survey that makes no pretence at objectivity. Any evidence favouring docking is treated dismissively," said Steve Dean.

The report, which was presented on 2nd November to the ruling Council of the RCVS, recommends that the veterinary profession's guidelines on docking should be drafted in appropriate legal terminology. "This is unlikely to clarify the issue for the working veterinary surgeon," commented Steve Dean.

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He added that although docking to prevent future tail injury in working gundogs is grudgingly acknowledged in the report, there is no indication that any new concessions on this point will be made in the revised guide to professional conduct.

The RCVS is urged in the report's final recommendation to press Government for a change in the law, so as to render illegal so-called 'cosmetic' docking. This would open up endless arguments over what is, and what is not, cosmetic, believes Steve Dean.

"The vets who are docking today are not docking for purely cosmetic reasons. Their actions are justified on a variety of grounds, out of genuine concern for the welfare of the dogs in their care. Any attempt at definition is certain to lead to endless legal wrangling, such as we have seen over the Dangerous Dogs Act. I believe that Government would be very unwise to get involved," he said.

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