



# Council of Docked Breeds

## PRESS RELEASE

20<sup>th</sup> May 1999

### **Cruelty charges dropped in docking case**

Cruelty charges were dropped yesterday (19<sup>th</sup> May) against two women found guilty of offences related to tail docking.

Karen Turner of Chorley and Jackie Brown of Ramsbottom both admitted in Macclesfield Magistrates Court to performing veterinary surgery whilst unregistered, in contravention of the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. The offences involved the docking of orphaned Boxer puppies from a rescue bitch. It was said on their behalf that they regretted what they had done, but that it was because they feared that the owners would do it badly themselves.

The two were each fined £500 and ordered to pay costs.

It was further alleged that Jackie Brown and Jean Watson, a very experienced and knowledgeable boxer breeder, caused unnecessary suffering by neglecting to provide proper care and attention to the puppies. However, the RSPCA offered no evidence against the defendants and the court dismissed the summonses, awarding costs to Mrs Watson.

Counsel for the defence, Mr David Williams, made reference to the manner in which the RSPCA attempted to identify the defendants and was critical of the demeanour of the officers concerned.

Commenting on the case, Anne Simpson of the Council of Docked Breeds said that she could not condone the actions of Karen Turner and Jackie Brown, even if they were acting in the puppies' interests.

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“The law clearly states that only veterinary surgeons may dock puppies’ tails, and it is essential that all breeders understand that. They must not take the law into their own hands, however much they wish to help.

“However, it must be made quite clear that there is no cruelty involved in docking, provided that it is properly carried out. Where cruelty charges have been laid in the past against breeders who have admitted to docking their own puppies, those charges have failed, and in the Macclesfield case all allegations of causing unnecessary suffering were also dismissed,” said Anne Simpson.

Many concerned breeders have complained that the media coverage of the case has been distorted, putting only the prosecution allegations and making no mention of the defence criticism of the RSPCA or its witnesses. Defence lawyers are now considering defamation proceedings.

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