

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a registered breeder with the Canine Association of Western Australia and have been breeding Labrador Retrievers since 2000 and I am very passionate about the welfare of dogs and puppies.

I would like to make some comments with regard to the consultation paper on puppy farming. It is a great step forward what this paper proposes. I would like to add some other points of consideration with regards to dogs and puppies.

### **Impulse Buying.**

When domesticated animals are available for purchase from a shop, it is likely to result in someone deciding, on the spur of the moment, to buy a pet. Many of whom may never have had a pet before and/or have not had a young pet before. Both adult dogs and puppies involve a lot of time, effort and cost a lot of money to keep, both in food, as well as vet bills. Puppies are another level of difficulty, as they require training and patience and understanding. Puppies can be extremely destructive and are likely to destroy many precious items, including remote controls, toys, shoes, clothing and furniture, plus are also are likely to dig holes in the garden and destroy plants. I believe that the main reason that dogs become abandoned, is when someone gets a dog or a puppy without thinking or knowing about all the negatives that come with it, and sooner or later, it becomes all too hard and it is easier to just get rid of it.

I very strongly recommend that there be a requirement of anyone selling a dog or puppy to have to go through all the negatives this is likely to involve with the prospective purchaser and get them to sign something to say that they understand what is involved in having a dog or puppy join their family – maybe they have to put a tick next to each possible issue. I believe that this would stop a lot of dogs becoming unwanted and surrendered to rescue organisations.

Anyone who buys a puppy from me has to acknowledge a list of negatives that are involved in having a puppy. It really thrills me when someone thanks me for this and says that by them going through this process, it has helped them to realise that they are not ready for a puppy.

### **Emotional Needs of a Dog/Puppy**

Also, prospective purchasers of dogs and puppies should be advised on their emotional needs. Dogs are pack animals, they are not solitary animals. Dogs do not like being separated from their pack (family) and it can be quite distressing for them when they can see the rest of their pack inside the house, while they are made to stay outside. Some breeds certainly fair better than others in this regard, but it certainly is not natural for dogs to live on their own for most of their lives. Especially, when their family is away from home working for most of the day, and then can't be with them for most of the time when they are home. When this happens it can cause an immense amount of stress in a dog. Then, when a member of the family comes outside to them they are then likely to get overexcited and go a bit crazy for awhile - which can then make the person less likely to want to spend time with the dog, as they don't want to be jumped over. This becomes a vicious circle, where the dog is left for longer and longer, until the family decides they no longer want the dog (I have seen this first hand on a couple of occasions).

### **Kennels**

This brings me to the issue with keeping dogs in kennels. Dogs kept in kennels are in a very

unnatural environment, unlike any a wild dog would ever experience. Not only are they separated from human companionship, they are most often kennelled on their own, next to other dogs in kennels. Many dogs housed this way become very distressed and this distress can affect other dogs in nearby kennels, heightening their stress as well. I strongly am against dogs being housed in kennels, especially for long periods. It is understandable that some people have to do this to their dog when they are going away from home for whatever reason, and usually that is for short periods of time. Yet, when dogs are housed this way permanently, I believe it is cruel and should not be allowed. I know that the main reason people are shocked and upset by puppy farms is because this is the way most of the dogs in those places are housed. Yet I believe that many registered breeders also keep some, if not all, their dogs kennelled for much of the time. Greyhound racing is another area where many dogs are housed in this manner. I would like proper research done in this area to measure the distress this causes to the dog, as well as to ascertain how often and in what circumstances, many dogs are kept for prolonged periods in kennels.

### **Dog Breeding.**

- **Housing**  
Puppies should be whelped (born) in a whelping box inside a person's home (unless they need a Caesarean at the vets). The mother should be allowed to eat the placentas as they contain heaps of nutrients that the mother needs to replenish her energy requirements. It is part of the natural process. The whelping box needs to be designed so that there is something that prevents the mother from lying touching the sides of the box, otherwise puppies can become suffocated by her lying on them. All registered breeders should know this.
- **Supervision**  
Puppies are born blind and deaf and yet they can crawl. This results in them crawling away from mum and siblings, which then causes them to become very distressed. Also, if away from the warmth of their brothers and sisters, they can get cold. If they get too cold, it is something that they are likely to not recover from and is likely to cause them to die. I always stay within earshot of a new born litter for about a week. That way, I am able to quickly pop wandering puppies back with the others. Once they are around five days old, puppies have usually learnt how to smell their way back, though sometimes it can take up to seven days. Not only does being on hand help these puppies to survive, it also helps them not to become stressed. Stress causes a hormone called cortisol, to flood the brain. This is useful for a fight or flight response, but it is not helpful to a newborn pup, and cortisol can be damaging to young brains.
- **Access of mother to her puppies.**  
The bond between the mother and her puppies is extremely strong from when they are born and then this gradually decreases the older the puppies get. Usually the mother likes to stay in the whelping box for most of the time for all of the first week. Then her time away from the pups increases as they get older. This is because the puppies stomachs are growing and are able to eat more at each feed, which takes longer to digest and so lengthens the time intervals between feeds. The mother dog needs to be allowed to choose when and for how long she spends with her pups. The only exception would be when a mother refuses to feed her pups altogether, which sometimes happens with first time mums who become

overwhelmed by the delivery, and needs some help to stay with her puppies until she connects with her pups – usually happens within an hour or two.

- A whelping box is best designed so that the mother can enter and exit easily without the puppies being able to escape.

- Weaning

Usually at around three and a half weeks, the puppies start to be weaned onto solid food. This usually coincides with the puppies being transferred to an area where they have easy access outside, ideally onto lawn as well as a safe secure area under shelter. During the period of weaning, the mother needs to be allowed to have access to her puppies whenever she asks. In my experience, the mother gradually decreases the amount of times she feeds them as well as the length of time she spends with them. Usually by six weeks, she no longer wants to feed them, though sometimes this can take a bit longer. By the time they are eight weeks old, and going to their new families, the mother has chosen to have very little to do with them and does not become distressed when they leave. I am saying this, as I have heard of breeders making the mother dog stay with the pups for long periods, if not all the time for many weeks. There are other breeders who think they know best and they determine when and for how long the mother is with her pups. If the mother dog is left with her puppies for longer than she wants, she can become quite distressed as the puppies can be very demanding and can scratch and bite her underbelly.

I hope that you take my suggestions on board, especially the one titled Impulse Buying. I know that the aim of this consultation paper is to stop puppy farms, but one of the issues, is the amount of unwanted dogs there are. As I said previously, I believe that the main reason for unwanted dogs is because people buy dogs and puppies without understanding or thinking about what is really entailed in having a dog or puppy. As this consultation paper involves pet shops still being able to sell dogs and puppies, there is still the danger of impulse buying from seeing a cute puppy or dog that looks ever so adorable (and innocent) and without a second thought, they buy it. Then reality hits, which they were not at all prepared for, and eventually the dog is no longer wanted. I firmly believe that it is before the point of sale, where something needs to be done. Another idea is to make people wait at least a week before they can take it home with them. Alternatively, give them one or two weeks after purchasing their dog or puppy, to return it, maybe with a refund of 75%. I hope that my recommendations are considered.

Yours sincerely,



Alison Hood

