

Are Docking and Cropping Bans Really for Animal Welfare?

by: Joanne Scott - Vice President of RRCD (Canada)

The majority of ethical, responsible breeders in Canada strongly oppose the actions that have been pushed along under the banner of animal welfare, and are at a loss as to why Canadian Veterinarian Association leaders feel justified selecting certain routine procedures out of the many preventative procedures that veterinarians perform and try to deem them as unethical. Cropping ears, docking tails and removing troublesome dew claws from certain breeds are no more inhumane than spay/neuter, removing warts and cysts, cherry eye surgery, debarking, declawing and many other accepted surgeries that veterinarians do.

With so much information coming forward about the damage done to a dog when spay or castration is performed it truly bemuses me that there is still so much push by veterinary associations to alter dogs before puberty while at the same time pushing the idea that docking, cropping or dew claw removal is an act of cruelty unless it is done after damage has occurred. I have seen posters full of misinformation in vet waiting rooms and posted by veterinarian associations online. What is the hidden agenda that is pushing for these bans by using misinformation and propaganda? We vaccinate to prevent disease, we neuter to prevent unwanted pregnancy, we de-claw to prevent furniture damage: but to dock, crop or remove dew claws to prevent injury that has empirical evidence that injury will occur to many of these breeds becomes something that is touted as an act of cruelty and needs to be stopped in the name of animal welfare? Where is the logic?

Refusing access to good veterinary care for breeds that require these routine procedures will inevitably bring harm and pain to many of their futures. European studies in countries that have had the bans in place long enough to gather information have shown that certain breeds of dogs like the GSP need to be docked to spare them the pain and suffering of constant tail injury and amputation at a later age.

“In the autumn of 1990 when the dogs were 1 - 1.5 years old, 27% of the dogs had suffered from tail injuries. The investigated group consisted of 44 litters, 299 individual dogs. In the autumn of 1991 when the dogs were 2 - 2.5 years old, 35% of the dogs had suffered from tail injuries.”

Research also shows that ear cropping, rather than jeopardizing the welfare of the breed, actually prevents future ear problems as well as giving the dog the added ability to do its intended job more proficiently.

“An un-cropped ear is easily wounded, and ear wounds will bleed heavily. If a working dog ends up being dragged down by his own ears, and/or blinded by its own blood from an ear wound, that dog is put at a serious disadvantage, its ability to perform may be compromised, and the dog itself may be endangered.”

Most docked and cropped breeds are working or performance animals. They have the right to exist and flourish and owners have the right to expect professional veterinary care for them. Refusing to provide care for their unique veterinary needs goes against what animal welfare is.

Many countries that have banned their veterinarians from performing these procedures followed by law changes to make these procedures illegal are now looking at reversing these laws. Gov-

ernments are waking up, realizing that disallowing these procedures is not in the interest of the animals that they thought they were ‘protecting’.

“In Belgium the congress of the European Parliament organized a petition/request calling for a legally annul all the countries of the European Union ban on kupirovku tails and ears of dogs kupirovka on terms that will be a professional doctor with general anesthesia and without causing pain to an animal, meaning legally annul the law for the sake of aesthetics and beauty.”

Some countries have exempted service dogs and working breeds clearly demonstrating that these procedures truly do both protect the dog and allow it to do its intended job more proficiently. Since these bans have gone into effect gene pools have shrunk and many breeders have simply quit breeding rather than produce a puppy that is very likely to sustain damage due to the bylaws of their veterinary associations or laws of their country. Some traditionally docked/cropped breeds face the threat of extinction in some countries that have adopted the activist’s opinion of these once-routine procedures.

“In the United Kingdom between 2007 and 2012 registrations decreased drastically, a total loss of 10,767. A staggering 83% of the total losses were traditionally docked or cropped breeds. The three most popular breeds in the working group have suffered the greatest losses: Boxer’s down 43%, Doberman’s down 45% and the Rottweiler is down 64%”.

These breeds didn’t naturally become less popular. This change was forced upon breeders and has caused some breeds that were once very popular to slide right down to the bottom of registration lists, some to the brink of extinction. How does animal welfare include wiping out a complete sub-species?

CVMA has finally posted some reference material for their position statement condemning these procedures as cruel and purely cosmetic. With 13 references listed, one would think they have really researched this. I took the time to read all that could be found and am amazed that professional people can believe that these references are enough to push Canadians to support these bans. Is the CVMA expecting or hoping that no one will actually take the time to read these? All references are listed at the bottom of this article.

- 1) All references pertain to the docking of tails, none address cropping of ears.
- 2) One reference is outdated and is only relevant to 2007.
- 3) Incredibly, the ‘professional’ who wrote this paper seems to inaccurately compare the nervous systems of a neonatal puppy, whose nervous system is not fully developed at birth to a piglet or lamb that is born with all nervous systems intact. He also readily states that there are no studies to back up his opinions.
- 4) Two are merely Breed Standard pages from the Australian Kennel Council and England’s Kennel Club.
- 5) The study that is stated as reference (Risk factors for tail injuries in dogs in Great Britain) even states “The present study suggests that dogs that are docked are less likely to sustain a tail injury. This

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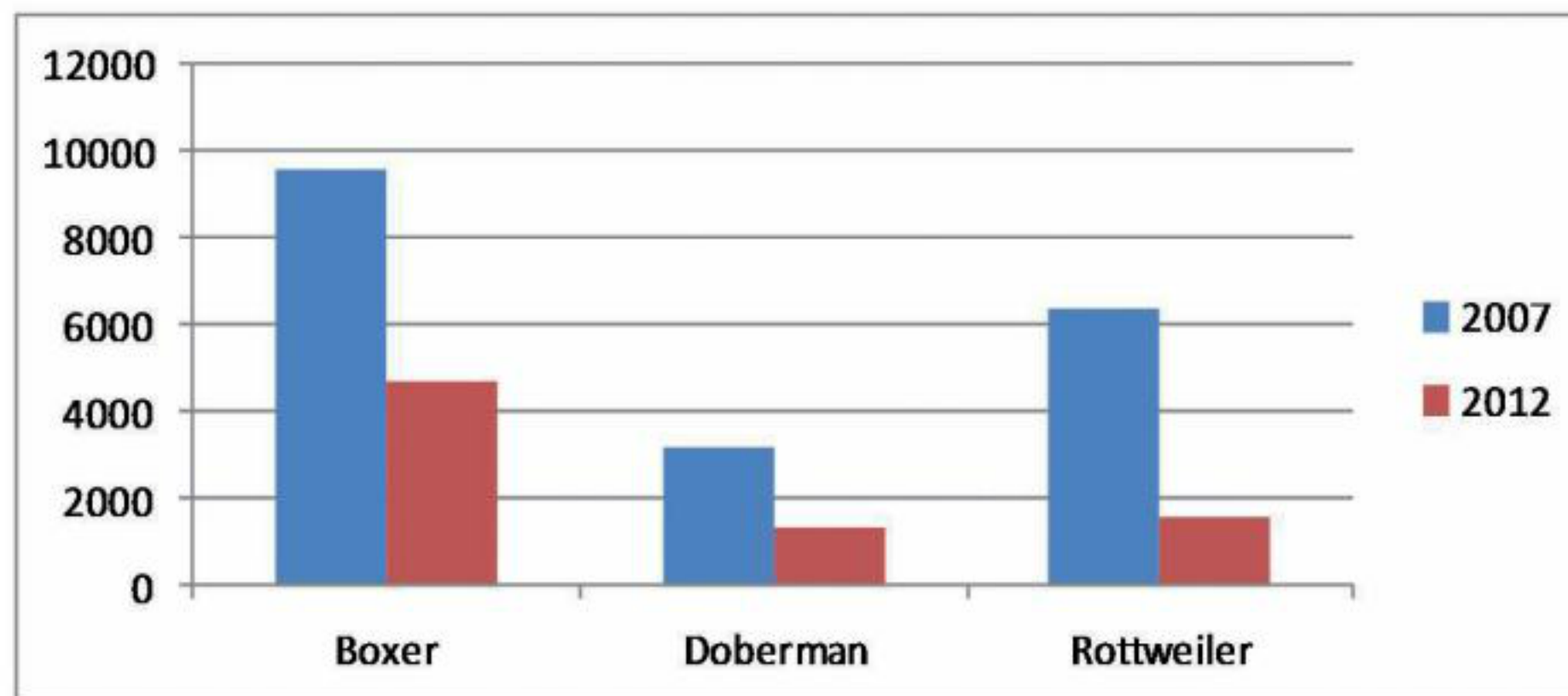
How a ban on tail docking has affected the Working Group registrations in the United Kingdom

In 2007 the United Kingdom introduced a nationwide ban on tail docking. They have recently provided stats on registration numbers; there has been some fluctuation over the entire working group however the numbers remained relatively stable prior to the ban.

COMPARATIVE TABLES OF REGISTRATIONS FOR THE YEARS 2003-2012 INCLUSIVE

WORKING	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Alaskan Malamute	341	586	718	889	1,161	1,245	1,195	1,232	1,295	1,053
Beauceron (Imp)	26	8	24	16	20	8	25	1	31	19
Bernese Mountain Dog	839	812	768	792	631	680	706	613	730	494
Bouvier des Flandres	126	132	159	103	96	87	71	105	98	57
Boxer	9,542	9,689	9,566	9,066	8,191	7,353	5,947	5,699	5,277	4,622
Bullmastiff	1,768	1,896	1,623	1,600	1,594	1,390	1,149	1,169	1,044	948
Canadian Eskimo Dog	8	0	7	4	3	12	11	7	1	15
Dobermann	3,171	3,341	3,316	3,388	2,437	1,871	1,600	1,678	1,457	1,346
Dogue de Bordeaux	1,238	1,593	1,951	2,361	2,543	2,452	2,790	2,841	2,895	2,431
Entlebucher Mountain Dog (Imp)		5	0	1	1	1	6	6	7	11
German Pinscher	20	19	10	14	15	16	1	12	11	13
Giant Schnauzer	259	339	270	313	216	276	196	244	204	237
Great Dane	1,892	1,728	1,688	1,839	1,897	1,419	1,306	1,429	1,323	1,281
Greater Swiss Mountain Dog (Imp)						5	24	23	26	22
Greenland Dog	14	10	17	20	5	2	5	9	1	14
Hovawart	33	12	38	27	41	18	45	4	34	11
Leonberger	315	348	353	438	383	446	306	399	358	298
Mastiff	580	434	476	483	354	299	252	157	173	140
Neapolitan Mastiff	317	295	316	263	255	205	114	109	209	99
Newfoundland	978	838	1,080	1,145	957	1,046	898	1,026	862	921
Portuguese Water Dog	67	39	41	83	46	74	91	139	97	125
Pyrenean Mastiff (Imp)	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Rottweiler	6,369	6,726	6,692	6,575	4,257	2,631	2,156	1,959	1,951	1,554
Russian Black Terrier	91	136	129	129	93	54	35	57	66	75
Siberian Husky	1,491	1,527	1,753	1,993	2,000	2,094	2,072	2,209	1,940	1,684
St Bernard	762	771	797	674	777	714	608	570	592	557
Tibetan Mastiff	28	37	30	60	57	59	48	40	63	75
TOTAL	30,279	31,323	31,823	32,276	28,030	24,457	21,657	21,738	20,745	18,102

Between 2007 and 2012 registrations decreased drastically, a total loss of 10,767; a staggering 83% of the total losses were traditionally docked or cropped breeds. The three most popular breeds in the working group have suffered the greatest losses: Boxer's down 43%, Doberman's down 45% and the Rottweiler is down 64%. The graph below shows what that means in terms of real numbers.



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supports the findings of the study conducted by Houlton (2008)”
6) Another is a study of ‘dog communication’ using a robot dog to make their case. I am pretty sure that most dogs can readily tell the difference between a robot and a real dog and there are so many other factors that go into dog communication that this study is not something that should be cited in support of any canine decision let alone one that is so important to docked dogs.

7) Many of the stated references cannot be read by non-veterinarians or are not available at all.

Breeders and owners of docked and cropped breeds in Canada do not want to wait 10 or more years witnessing the decimation of gene pools, loss of good healthy lines, and loss of great ethical and responsible breeders due to activist driven views for our country to wake up. Canadians need to wake up now and stop being naïve about the realities of the real agenda that is pushing for these bans.

Do some research and rethink your stand on these procedures before we find ourselves in the same boat as those in European countries; with fewer healthy puppies for pet owners from health tested lines. Docking and cropping bans are not a case for animal welfare, but an opinion put forward by animal activists.

Sincerely

Joanne Scott

Vice President of RRCD – *a volunteer organization made up of breed clubs, breeders, pet owners and veterinarians dedicated to retaining rights of breeders and the preservation of purebred dogs.*

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*Wishing you all
(a bit early)
a wonderful
Holiday Season!*

*The cocker puppy in this drawing grew up to be
Ch. Crestrail's Clear Blue Sky - these cards and many
other items available for sale (many breeds) at:*

Deerislandcreations.com

Artist Darcie Olson