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Dr. Gail Golab
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Attn: Animal Welfare Division
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Dr. Golab,

The German Wirehaired Pointer Club of America (GWPCA) was formed in 1959 and is the parent club for the German Wirehaired Pointer. Our mission is to maintain the qualities of the breed. This includes health and welfare and as such we support the Canine Health Foundation research to detect and eliminate genetic disease. As is the AVMA, we are concerned about the welfare of our breed but your position on tail docking is misguided and not in the best interest of the pointing breeds with docked tails. The practice was developed to prevent injury and suffering not for cosmetics. As the current president of the GWPCA, the standard of the German Wirehaired Pointer will remain unchanged regarding docked tails.

As many of the continental hunting breeds were being developed, the practice of tail docking became a common procedure to prevent pain and suffering in the hard working hunting dog. Tail injuries were common and the bloody traumatized tails would frequently become infected and could require amputation. Amputation in an adult dog in the 19th century was a painful and risky procedure. The canine is an altricial species and at three days of age the tail could be docked safely, preventing later pain and suffering. This is still true today. Therapeutic tail amputation in adult dogs requires the risk of anesthesia and surgery. Frequently they chew the surgical site causing re-infection and often require additional surgery and risk. The initial trauma, pain and suffering with subsequent surgery and incurred expense could have been prevented if the tail had been docked safely and humanely at 3 days of age! Tail docking and dew claw removal are not done for cosmetics or to satisfy a standard as the extreme animal rights people would have you believe. The procedures were developed to prevent pain and suffering and have been included in the standards of many breeds because it was recognized as a BENEFICIAL procedure. As a practicing small animal veterinarian and owner of German Wirehaired Pointers, I assure you it is still an essential preventative procedure today. Preventative medicine and surgery is more than health screens and vaccines!

The AVMA position on tail docking will only drive the procedures to be done by untrained individuals with poor understanding of aseptic techniques, causing more pain and suffering. To prevent this, the AVMA should take a stand supporting tail docking. It is preventative medicine. We urge you to reconsider this issue.



Raymond L. Calkins, D.V.M.
GWPCA President