

UNITED STATES AUSTRALIAN SHEPHERD ASSOCIATION  
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President

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Dr. Douglas Aspros, DVM, President  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100  
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360

United States Australian Shepherd Association (USASA)  
Opposes AVMA's Ear Cropping and Tail Docking Policy

Dear Dr. Aspros:

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the United States Australian Shepherd Association (USASA), I am writing to express our united and vehement opposition to the AVMA's Ear Cropping and Tail Docking Policy. Not only was this policy developed without reliance on the expertise and resources of such organizations as the American Kennel Club and the many affected national breed clubs, but it lacks any scientific support or citation, seriously undermining the AVMA's credibility as a scientific institution.

The tradition of docking the tails of Australian Shepherds has nothing to do with cosmetics, as uninformed critics of the breed sometimes suggest. Rather it was begun by ranchers and farmers in the American West who wished to avoid injury and infection to their dogs, caused by tails sweeping up burrs and foxtails, or being cut by barbed wire fencing. This sensible and, yes, humane practice continues to this day on working farms and ranches in the U.S. and around the world.

The tailless look of the Australian Shepherd contributes significantly to its

uniqueness and is part of the reason it is such a popular breed. This popularity translates directly into increased interest in dogs, into increased reliance on veterinarians and veterinary science, and finally into increased funding for canine scientific research. The AVMA's policy is not logical and it is a potential detriment to this breed and the breeds like it, all of which offer so much to the canine world generally and veterinarians particularly.

Finally, the breeders of our fancy as often as not have tails docked with the assistance of veterinarians. This policy serves to eliminate that essential resource, forcing breeders to perform this procedure completely on their own, and thereby putting their puppies at unnecessary risk. It hardly seems possible that the AVMA desires such an outcome.

I and the USASA Board of Directors strongly urge the AVMA to revoke this policy which only works to the detriment of the dogs it is supposed to protect.

On behalf of the USASA Board of Directors,

Sharon Fontanini  
President  
United States Australian Shepherd Association

Cc: AKC BOD Chair, Alan Kalter  
AKC President, Dennis Sprung  
Gail Golab, PhD, D.V.M., Division Director, Animal Welfare Division AVMA

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