

Appearance Matters: How has Breeding to Kennel Club Standards Affected the Welfare of “Man’s Best Friend”?

Elohozino Oghale Benneth^{1,2*}, Emmanuel Onche¹, Isaac Babatunde Fasipe¹ and Abdulsabur Adebayo Aderemi¹

¹Department of Animal Welfare Science, Food and Agricultural Technology Unit - The Pan African Research Group, Nigeria

²Research Unit, One Health and Development Initiative, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author: Elohozino Oghale Benneth, Department of Animal Welfare Science, Food and Agricultural Technology Unit - The Pan African Research Group, Nigeria.

Received: November 30, 2020

Published: December 21, 2021

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Abstract

Bad reproducing practices of dogs have destructive consequences on dog interest and the well-being of holders. This study explores how breeding to kennel club standards affected the welfare of man’s best companion? Breeders are compelled to discover reliable residences for dogs and puppies they have bred; ensuring new owners are a good match and understand their lifelong duty of care to their new dog. The outward appearance of a dog most of the time largely affects the welfare of the animal. The study recommends that responsibility is placed solely on selection of physiological traits which are injurious to the health of the breed, to ensure adequate compliance with the new rules and regulations in monitoring breeders as well as the use of modern technology.

Keywords: Dog; Best Friend; Pain

Introduction

Studies on canine welfare and breed-specific tendencies to infection that inform credible breeding procedures are ongoing. According to [19], crucial values that impact dog welfare and the rights of companion dog owners remain unregulated. This research focuses on the welfare of breeding dogs and the health and quality of puppies produced by the various groups that breed dogs in Australia. All these compel both veterinarians and qualified administrations to regularly remodel their understanding of dog interest. For example, poor interest arises when a puppy is weak or unable to express a normal attitude, it is highly encouraged to control [8]. It is related to pessimistic feelings such as anxiety, pain, anger, or lethargy. Puppies feel a good quality of life when they are growing [18]. Dogs and puppies have the same need for a good quality of life regardless of breeding context and all breeders are required to act responsibly and with compassion to meet those requirements

[5]. Expert recognizes four common practices of enhancing developments for animals: the innovation and enforcement of active law and legislation; boosting instruction and training; improving scientific study; and overseeing animal husbandry [15].

Where national legislation in a country sets higher criteria than those summarized in these approaches, the national constitution should take preference [15,7]. According [17] the additional factor, which also see Pups as possession, includes those laws and legislations that call for pups to be properly monitored and organized to prevent any injury, and that obligate possessors to guarantee their pups do not become a disturbance. Hopefully, pups’ owners, credible breeders, veterinarians, and animal health scientists can affirm enough pressure to convince the Canadian Kennel Club (CKC), and other breeder associations, to re-evaluate and redefine their breed standard regulations to end the inbreeding that causes so many genetic problems [3].

Discussion

Animal breeding

Indigent mating methods had deep destructive outcomes on dog health and the well-being of possessors [5]. The consequences of inadequate mating practices may lead to a life of rough impoverished fitness and miserable usefulness as pets, emerging in an untimely demise and defection. Breeders, Lawmaker, eligible administrations, veterinarians, and possessors have a credible obligation to work jointly to guarantee dogs live a promising life [22].

According to UK National German Shepherd Dog Helpline [20] the Kennel Club standard for all breeds, the animals must have a similar resemblance to their ancestors. This over the years has elicited diverse breeds but has also increased the rate of diseases genetically, physically or otherwise. Some of these inherited diseases include endocrine dysfunctions, blood disorders, brachycephalic airway syndrome, hip dysplasia, cardiomyopathies, brain diseases, and hundreds of more which eventually affect the longevity of these dogs and the value of existence they occupy. Thus, it has become detrimental to many families who own one or more crossed breeds as pets.

[5] posited that experts in charge of the breeding of the animals should have a responsibility of attention, by keeping all pups in a state of reasonable interest, to ensure puppies have a good start in life. This will enable them to fulfil their potential to live a decent personality of vitality in their new homes. Dog rearers are required to find credible dwellings for pups they have bred; ensuring new possessors are a good match and understand their lifelong duty of sustenance to their recent pups. According to [16] most times the interest of the creature is much jeopardized especially when it has to do with the physical appearance of the animal. For example, the Pug is known for certain characteristics such as their short snouts, prominent skeletal brows. This breed and some others suffer from a mutation called brachycephaly which makes them prone to eye injuries such as entropion, proptosis and scratched corneas. Some have their eyeballs damaged as a result of bumping directly into objects. They are also associated with traits such as difficulty in breathing, low oxygenation, skin fold dermatitis, heart problems, high blood pressure amongst so many other diseases [9].

Crossbreeding as carried out from time past was done, but looking back over the years, that aim was forgotten along the line and

Figure 1: The Pug over the years; Source: Bild; urdogs.com.

was replaced with a selfish desire to create dog with fancied traits that has one way or the other ruled out their fitness for function as well as for health. Arman [1] believes that for dogs to be healthy, functional and steady, equivalent emphasis must be placed on 3 criteria which are equally relevant to them being a canine breed. They include 1) Descending from a particular ancestry or lineage [2] they have used for which they are of service to humans and 3) they have a systematic grouping of traits that certifies a physical appearance that is similar to other members of the breed.

According to Huber [11] humans have put in more work towards altering the physique of dogs more than any other domesticated species. For instance, the purposeful snout possessed by the wild Canidae became broadened to house the powerful jawbones of baiting dogs, while there was a setback of the nostrils to enable the animal to use its nose to breathe while biting simultaneously [21]. Therefore, most of the qualities that underwent selection during the initial days of domestication directly elicited usefulness and the quality of being suited to serve a purpose well. Currently, a lot of the ensuing breeds of dogs are no longer efficient and able in to carrying out the tasks for which they were initially bred, as a result of the structural and/or physiological distortions that have been enforced on them by the kennel clubs.

In the 19th century, dog exhibits and kennel associations administrators were forced for the morphological quality of dog breeds by adhering to the rigid observance of the rules of typology and lineage. However, no prominence was emphasized for the function and wellbeing of purebred dogs. Currently, some show standards now place importance on the physical outlook of dogs rather than on the overall qualities of these dogs. Dog breeders now contend to observe the extent to which they can produce phenotypes having more conformation to a written standard which is

inclusive of traits having questionable welfare benefits. Although the UK Kennel Club which stands on behalf of British dog breeders, has given out fresh rules much earlier this year (2013) that might eventually expel hallmark characteristics of certain dog breeds, on the basis that they are unpleasant and incapacitating for the dogs themselves, it was a different ball game previously. Some of the previous rules by the Kennel Club in respect to different breeds are mentioned below citing examples of how detrimental it had been over the years. According to breed standard [10,12] in respect to the Pug, dogs should possess very large eyes bulbous in shape which as we have mentioned earlier causes animal pain most times and sometimes lead to fatal damages of the eyes as a result of their short snouts. Also, the breed standard (Pre-1987 Kennel Club) concerns the British Bulldog, they should possess very large skulls, which causes dystocia (difficulty in birthing) due to the large head size of the foetus and most times requires medical intervention.

Figure 2: Bulldog changes over the last 100 years; Source: Breeds of all nations by WE Mason.

It is not shocking that sometimes when bulldogs are born, they are found to have a twisted spine as they are also required to possess curved roach backs. Another breed standard (Pre-1987 Kennel Club) as regards Dachshunds has greatly contributed to the occurrence of prolapsed intervertebral discs in them as it requires them to possess whole trunks that are long. In the case of Cocker spaniels, the breed standard [10] preferably requires a rounded skull without exaggeration that does not tend towards flatness, with clearly defined eyebrows having a pronounced stop (this pronounced stop is a joint in the middle of the frontal bone and the nasal planum). This blend has however given rise to harmful skull shape eliciting mild hydrocephalus in cocker spaniels. The reason is that in selecting for skull shape a brain defect was accidentally selected because the skull which houses the brain was reduced so

much thereby preventing the brain from the normal right to expand. In other words, when the breeders were making the cranial alterations, they did not take into cognizance the need for the brain to expand as the cocker spaniels grow, thereby causing the brain to remain trapped in an undersized skull. This has caused painful losses to many families that keep one or more cocker spaniels as pets because an attachment to them being part of the family is suddenly severed especially in cases when the dog has to be put to sleep due to so much pain. According to [13] honestly, no one wants to see a member of their family experiencing such pains and possibly dying because the pain is too much to handle.

Figure 3: The Dachshund over the years; Source: urdogs.com.

There are lots of other examples from the results of breeding which over the years has become an advantage for dog breeders for show but a disadvantage in the welfare of these dogs. For instance, the Miniature Poodle possess fine legs but are vulnerable to fracture which increases the danger that these dogs will hurt themselves in the process of carrying out certain natural behaviors. It has however been pointed out that the existing breeding practices, before the most recent modifications to the rules, had five major challenges. Firstly, it was noticed that some breed standards and selection methods counteract the welfare benefits of dogs. Secondly, slight selection pressure appears to be placed on certain qualities that could improve the welfare of the animals thereby producing dogs that are better adapted to contemporary human living. Thirdly, the prevalence of certain genetic shortcomings in some breeds is excessively high. Fourthly, the number of listed animals of some breeds within specific countries is on the low side making it almost impossible for breeders to sidestep mating closely related individuals. And the fifth issue is the presence of financial factors especially to a disadvantage for veterinarians to minimize the prevalence of diseases that are inherited.

Possible solutions to the challenges mentioned shortly above include the following. It should be ensured as one of their major aims that animals with fewer welfare issues are used for breeding. Also, breed standards should be reviewed, having the goal of eradicating any characteristic that would endanger animal welfare and exchanging such with qualities that emanate the wellbeing of dogs in modern-day environs. Modern expertise for identifying these animals and checking the pedigree should be embraced by breeders’ associations and their umbrella organizations. Major hereditary problems within breeds should be recognized by breeders’ association and in partnership with geneticists make use of DNA markers to control such hereditary disorders [2,6]. The Kennel Club should change the breed societies rule to allow the introduction of fresh genetic traits into a breed. This should be based on rescuing certain breeds by receiving a healthy dose of new genes which in the long run will help to reduce and if possible, eliminate the prevalence of hereditary disorders that are common to such breeds. If Kennel Clubs allow improved genetic diversity amongst dog breeds that are registered, the inbreeding depression that is highly widespread nowadays will finally degenerate. For the breeder’s societies which are few, a hand of encouragement should be extended to them to enable their cooperation on an international level thereby facilitating the transition of genes from one country to another.

With the issuing of the new rules (which includes freedom of animals from hunger, thirst, discomfort, pain, injury etc.) which of course are very sensitive especially considering them from the perspective of animal welfare, alterations will be proposed in a review for each breed of dogs. Judges at dog shows should mark down any characteristics, like those in, the pug, the bulldog, amongst other breeds of dogs is impeding the health and welfare of dogs. Breed standards from now on will not comprise whatsoever in any way could be deduced as encouraging qualities that might inhibit a dog from walking, breathing, and seeing freely. That is what the new rules say. These modifications are the most recent part of the Kennel Club’s “Fit for function, fit for life” campaign. Which cautions that “in evaluating dogs, judges must reprimand any characteristics or exaggerations that they contemplate would be injurious to the soundness, health or welfare of the dog”.

Conclusion

The selection of certain physiological traits which are injurious to the health of dog breeds is unacceptable and discouraged. Cer-

tain changes of breed standards must be ensured to improve the welfare of man’s best friend: Priority must be placed on the utility, function, and type of breeds. Changes to be made should include the following: [1] Breed registries should be obtained to present in all breeds new genes [2]. Adequate compliance with the new rules and regulations in monitoring breeders should be ensured [3]. The use of modern technology is highly recommended in breeding activities. Considering all that has been said not only would man’s best friend be grateful for such changes that allow them to once again be fit for function and fit for health, but also the families who have taken in one or more breeds as a member of their family would certainly be glad knowing that future generations of their pets would not have to suffer such cruelty as regards their function, utility and total welfare due to human selfishness for exaggerated physiological traits. It is good to know that the Kennel Club finally took that major decision to uphold “Fit for function and fit for health”.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge “The Pan African Research Group” PARG, its founder and director - Hampo Chima Cyril, as well as the Food and Agricultural Technology Unit of PARG for providing the platform for the conduct of this research. We also appreciate the strong support of all the members of the Animal Welfare Science Department of FATPARG.

Conflict of Interest

The authors all declare that they have no conflict of interest or whatsoever as regards this article.

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