

The Kennel Club “undertaking” for the GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG (Alsatian) Breed Clubs

At its meeting on 5th January 2010, the Kennel Club General Committee again looked at the issues surrounding GSDs.

As previously reported, the Kennel Club has been very disappointed with the lack of progress made following meetings held with the GSD Partnership during 2008/9. Failure to agree the Minutes of the meeting of the 18th August 2009 is particularly frustrating, especially as the problem of unsoundness in the hindquarters and hocks of some dogs is widely acknowledged within the breed.

The Kennel Club has been waiting since July 2009 for the GSD community as a whole to suggest a meaningful and practical way forward which addresses those health and welfare issues in the breed which have been legitimately raised by the Kennel Club. This has not happened and the Kennel Club, as it indicated it might three weeks ago, has now chosen to take some proactive steps with those individual breed clubs which are prepared to help. This is an attempt to safeguard the health and welfare of the breed and to secure its future and has been the Kennel Club's sole motivation throughout its discussions with the GSD breed community.

Basically only those eligible clubs which accept that

- there is a degree of unsoundness in the hindquarters of the breed
- that these problems should be penalised at shows and
- that Kennel Club rules on double handling will be adhered to in future

will be allocated 2012 Challenge Certificates. Those who do not accept this will not be given the privilege of Kennel Club Challenge Certificate status.

Therefore, at its meeting this week, the Kennel Club General Committee agreed detailed proposals which set out exactly what steps breed clubs and others need to take in order to start to address the major issues within the GSD breed and thus allow for the 2012 allocation of the Kennel Club's highest award, the Challenge Certificate. That allocation had been deferred pending a proposed resolution to the problems.

In order to be considered for an allocation of Kennel Club Challenge Certificates, all GSD Breed Clubs and General & Group Championship Show Societies, which had previously been allocated Challenge Certificates, and wish to have such Certificates in future, are to be required to sign a formal Undertaking to abide by certain conditions for all future shows **with immediate effect**.

Only those Societies which agree to this Undertaking will be considered for an allocation of Kennel Club Challenge Certificates for GSDs in 2012 and beyond.

The Kennel Club has written to all GSD breed clubs and affected General & Group Championship Show Societies giving full details of the required Undertaking. A deadline of 31st March 2010 for the receipt of signed Undertakings has been set.

Kennel Club Chairman, Ronnie Irving, explained, “The Committee felt it had no choice but to take positive and practical steps now with individual clubs in view of the failure of the GSD community as a whole to respond. Six months have elapsed since the Kennel Club asked for these issues to be addressed and there has been a great deal of talk but not much action. We couldn't allow this situation to continue unresolved on an open-ended basis.

The requirements in the Undertakings are entirely reasonable. I hope that the GSD community will embrace this as an opportunity to take the positive actions necessary to address those breed issues that are apparent to everyone in the world of dogs.”

“The Undertaking” that German Shepherd Dog (Alsatian) Breed Clubs are requested to sign, requires acceptance and adherence of the following conditions:

1. The Club recognises that it will not be allocated Kennel Club Challenge Certificates for German Shepherd Dogs (Alsatian) unless it signifies agreement of the conditions set out below and provides written confirmation of such agreement by the Club’s Secretary and Chairman.
2. The Club accepts that there is a degree of unsoundness in the hindquarters of the breed and in particular in the hocks of some dogs and that these problems are to be penalised at shows.
3. The Club will arrange education of its judges on the correct conformation and movement of the breed; viz – the above faults should be avoided.
4. The Club will brief judges prior to all its shows on their health and welfare responsibilities particularly in regard to soundness of conformation.
5. The Club will adhere to Kennel Club Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h; “The attracting of the attention of exhibits by any method from outside the ring is prohibited. It is the duty of the Judge, Steward and Show Management noticing such attraction to ask that it cease.
6. The Kennel Club escalation procedure with regard to the practice of Outside Attraction (Double Handling) will be adhered to.
7. The Club will ensure that its judges and stewards are under contract in writing to abide by Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h. and that they will adhere to the escalation procedure. Specific wording (as supplied by the Kennel Club) to this effect must be included in the judges’ and stewards’ contract letters.
8. The Club confirms that those who do not abide by the above provisions will be reported to the Kennel Club within seven days of the last day of the show.
9. The Club confirms that it will act in good faith with the Kennel Club on all matters including confirmation that it will not, without the express permission of the Kennel Club, run any events under the rules or regulations of any organisation other than the Kennel Club.
10. Upon request, and in any event annually, the Club will provide a report confirming and demonstrating compliance with these conditions to include reports on any required enforcement of Regulation F(1) paragraph 17h. and how this was achieved.

A report on agreement to comply, and compliance with these conditions, will be required during the autumn of 2010 before a review of the Kennel Club Challenge Certificate allocation for 2013 is carried out and it is intended that this requirement will continue on a rolling basis.

A practical demonstration that there are definite plans in place and actions commenced in order to comply with these conditions will be required in an annual report and any evidence and reports of non compliance will be relevant factors when considering the Club’s next allocation of Challenge Certificates.