

## The KC and the GSD Community are at a Crossroads

A statement by the GSD Partnership representing the GSD Breed Council and the two largest Breed Clubs, the GSD League and the BAGSD.

The GSD Partnership was formed in October 2008 for the first time ever to represent **all** the GSD Breed Clubs and present "one voice, one aim" to the KC on Health and Welfare issues of the GSD and present the GSD Planned Improvement Programme (PIP) for discussion. The GSD Partnership further received an overwhelming mandate from the Breed Council and the two largest Breed Clubs to work together to work with the KC and encourage the KC to gradually implement Mandatory Health requirements for all KC registered GSDs.

**The fact that a KC registered GSD does not need to have any Health qualification at all in order to breed and for the KC to register the subsequent 12000 puppies every year is what the Breed Clubs through the GSD Partnership wanted the KC to fundamentally address in our first meeting in October 2008.**

The threat to not allocate CCs in 2012 came without any prior discussion with the GSD Community or the GSD Partnership. This misguided attack on the GSD Breed Clubs has brought, what was a period of constructive dialogue with the KC through the specifically formed GSD Partnership on Health and Welfare to a highly charged situation of huge conflict between the parties. There was no need for the KC to have acted the way they have as both parties had been actively talking to the KC specifically on Health issues via the Planned Improvement Plan and the KC ABS Scheme for GSDs for 6 months prior.

The GSD Partnership continues to be extremely concerned with the current conduct and attitude of the KC particularly with recent quotes attributed to the KC Chairman Ronald Irving such as **"if the GSD Breed Clubs don't get their house in order they may be thrown out of the KC"** being made recently in the Canine Press.

In August 2009 after a very frosty meeting to discuss the attack on the Breed Clubs the KC and the GSD Partnership had agreed a joint press statement so as to inform the general public of the position whilst we got on with working out a response to the KC.

The flagrantly confrontational content and timing of his alleged statement in Dogs Today of this week not only lets the GSD Community know where he sits in this conflict but has broken the agreement made at the August meeting. Any trust or indeed professional protocol that existed between the parties has now been lost as a consequence of this action.

We promise that at all times the GSD Partnership will continue to act professionally and with integrity in all that we do with the KC on behalf of the founding organisation members.

Clearly the GSD Partnership and the Breed Clubs have a mountain to climb in persuading the KC to implement any Mandatory Health Improvements whilst we are in this conflict position. As long as this "guilty until proven innocent" attitude prevails with the KC seemingly already having made up their minds via some kind of Kangaroo Court then the conflict situation will be tough to resolve.

If the KC unprovoked attack on the GSD Breed Clubs is a premeditated attempt to pander to the pressure from the BBC producer and their programme of last year or to influence the current Bateson enquiry on dog breeding then it may work. The subsequent collateral damage to relationships with the KC and GSD Breed Clubs and Community however may be irreversible, with the KC seemingly being prepared to "throw out" the Breed Clubs. A price we can only assume they are prepared to pay. We are!

In July this year, midway through the constructive series of meetings between the GSD Partnership and the vice Chairman and the Health and Breeder Service Manager, the all

powerful KC General Committee decided to ride rough shod over the initiative and go on the offensive with the GSD Community via the only power they have and that is to threaten the Breed Clubs with losing their CCs if they do not deal with their "Health" issues such as outside attraction!!!, the GSD back and rear angulation. We have said officially to the KC at our meeting in August that no GSD has ever suffered bad health from outside attraction and there is no evidence whatsoever that type affects the health of the GSD, indeed when pressed in the same meeting in August to provide any evidence of the health issues associated with their allegations the KC could not produce one piece of evidence....

Some people suggest that the KC attack on the Breed Clubs regarding Health issues such as outside attraction and type is a thinly veiled attempt to deflect attention away from the real issue, which is the fact that **the KC continue to register any and all GSDs, even when the parents of puppies put forward for KC registration are from known, proven epileptic and haemophilic lines, without any test at all on hips and elbows etc.**

**The GSD Partnership and the GSD Breed Clubs believe this is the single biggest threat to the Health and Welfare of the GSD in the UK today not the items which the KC are attacking the Breed Clubs on.**

I will leave it to the reader to work out why this current unwarranted offensive by the KC started 6 months after the GSD Partnership commenced, at our instigation, a dialogue with the KC which formally requested that the KC implement gradual and sustainable mandatory health steps (PIP) before registering the 12000 GSDs each year.

The General Public need to wake up to the fact that the KC is just a registration database which the KC themselves liken to Somerset House! And apply real pressure to them to restrict the number of GSDs being registered to only those that conform to incremental mandatory Health and Welfare requirements. It will take time but it has been done elsewhere. We gave them a Blue print in October 2008 which they have ignored without even responding officially to a twelve page dossier issued to every member of the General Council by hand.

Despite the contemptuous way we have been treated the GSD Community have responded to issues by allowing the breed standard to be changed and by pledging full and unfettered assistance to the KC with any health issues which they are aware of and can be proven. The GSD Partnership has only ever been shown photographs of one dog at Crufts with two complaints by the general Public as the KCs justification to launch this attack on the GSD Breed Clubs. The KC has never produced any evidence to back up their allegations of Health issues associated with their current allegations and threat to the Breed Clubs.

The irony of this current situation is that without question the good breeders and the GSD Breed Clubs and their members have done everything to improve the Health of the GSD in the UK being the foremost breed within the KC in implementing voluntarily health checks and promoting working qualifications for their member's dogs and the KC have done nothing. To single out the GSD Breed Clubs in this way is wrong, but to be fair we have always been seen as trouble within the KC for our challenging and campaigning attitude to effect change within the KC, therefore the current treatment may be seen as payback.

For the KC to attack the Breed Clubs on superficial Health allegations is simply outrageous. They should look at why only 10-15% of the 12000 KC registered dogs every year have any form of Health test and those are ostensibly from good breeders and Breed Club members and why they continue to register all and any other GSD without anything health qualification at all.

How does this "*make a difference for Dogs*" and how does this fit into the "*Fitness for Purpose: Fitness for life campaign*? The double standards that the GSD Partnership has been faced with are simply staggering. The KC argue that the **voluntary** KC Accredited Breeder

Scheme (which we were actively tailoring for GSDs before the threat of CCs being taken away) is the way forward and that by bringing in incremental mandatory requirements will only drive breeders underground and they will lose them from their sphere of influence.

The KC is misjudging the public's intelligence and ability to find out what is real value for money when wanting a Pedigree Dog. An organisation like the KC which suggests that KC registered dogs is better than others is simply misleading the public.

Ironically the KC **have** implemented mandatory standards, they have stopped incest matings, they have stopped breeding from females over the age of 8, why don't they continue and incrementally register only GSDs who are from parents that have good hips and elbows, are free of epileptic lines are not Haemophilia carriers, are uniquely identified and have a basic working qualification?

The KC are the only current organisation that can make a real difference and should apply themselves to a change management programme that will see them evolve into an exclusive club for Healthy Dogs that will truly "*make a difference for Dogs*" and stop worrying about the numbers. Quality does not cost it Pays.

## **Summary**

The Breed Council, GSD League and BAGSD through the GSD Partnership will be organising a forum for all Breed Clubs to represent their views on the current situation followed by a Champ show judges meeting to discuss the way in which we should all democratically respond to the current conflict situation with the KC in late October/November 2009.

Please consider your own part in the future of the GSD and make representations to your Breed Clubs and the KC regarding mandatory health improvements for the GSD .The GSD Partnership want to respond democratically to the KC and make the correct turn. Don't leave it to the vociferous few, we need grass root support to come up with the correct decision or the KC will make it for us.

The GSDs future is in our hands, not the Kennel Clubs.

Joe Summerhill

GSD Partnership Co-ordinator  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

## **The GSD Partnership:**

**GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG BREED COUNCIL**

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN SHEPHERD DOGS (BAGSD)**

**GERMAN SHEPHERD DOG LEAGUE OF GREAT BRITAIN (GSDL)**