



# THE AMERICAN SPANIEL CLUB, INC.

Office of the President  
Charles P. Born  
[ascpresident@yahoo.com](mailto:ascpresident@yahoo.com)  
March 30, 2009

## Cocker Spaniel Docked Tails a Vital Breed Characteristic

**Club / Breed History** - The American Spaniel Club is the parent club of the Cocker Spaniel and was established in 1881. The Cocker Spaniel is a docked tail breed that can be accurately traced in America to 1879 although Spaniels in America can be traced back to 1620 and the landing of the Mayflower. The Mayflower carried two dogs on the voyage to New England, a Mastiff and a Spaniel. However, it is impossible to trace the ancestry of the blooded dogs of today to these two dogs since pedigrees and stud books were not available prior to the early nineteenth century.

**Why Cocker Spaniels have a docked tail** - The Cocker Spaniel is the smallest of the Spaniel breeds, and the inherent desire to hunt renders him a capable gun dog when judiciously trained. This continues today. The usual method of hunting is to let him quarter the ground ahead of the gun, covering all territory within gun range. This he should do at a fast, snappy pace. Upon flushing the game he should stop or preferably drop to a sitting position so as not to interfere with the shot, after which he should retrieve on command only. He should of course, be so trained that he will be under control at all times. He is likewise valuable for occasional water retrieving and as a rule takes to water readily. Because of this mode of hunting for which the breed was created more than 100 years ago, the Cocker Spaniel is a docked tail, hunting breed. The characteristic incessant, merry action of the tail while working in thick, dense cover which is sometimes deeper than the dog is tall absolutely necessitates docking to prevent injury to the animal.

**The position of the American Spaniel Club** - The recent AVMA labeling of tail docking as cosmetic, or the proposed legislation some states are considering outlawing tail docking, is in the view of the American Spaniel Club a severe mischaracterization of this important breed characteristic. It connotes a lack of respect and/or knowledge of the function of Cocker Spaniels, as well as other docked tail Flushing Spaniels or other docked tail breeds. Keeping in mind the welfare of the Cocker Spaniel breed and the function it was bred to perform, the American Spaniel Club continues to support docked tails for Cocker Spaniels as an important characteristic required by the breed's function as a hunting dog. We firmly believe that we, jointly with our veterinarians, should have the right to decide in the proper care and treatment of our beloved Cocker Spaniels. Of course, the American Spaniel Club advocates that appropriate veterinary care should be provided. When tail docking procedures are done under the direction of a vet at an early age they are virtually pain free and safe.

**An informed public is required to combat misinformation** - Through education and communication such as this letter, the American Spaniel Club hopes to foster a more informed general public that can appreciate and support the continued history of this docked tail breed. The Cocker Spaniel is excellent in Breed, Obedience and Field work, with many having dual and triple titles. As a pet and companion the Cocker Spaniel popularity has been exceptional. He is a great lover of home and family, trustworthy and adaptable – as adaptable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as in the past. More information about Cocker Spaniels and the American Spaniel Club can be found at our website [www.asc-cockerspaniel.org](http://www.asc-cockerspaniel.org).