



# THE AMERICAN SPANIEL CLUB, INC.

Office of the President  
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Gail Golab PhD, DVM  
Division Director, Animal Welfare Division  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
1931 N. Meacham Road, Suite 100  
Schaumburg, IL 60173-4360

Dear Dr. Golab:

As the parent breed club of the Cocker Spaniel, The Board of Directors of the American Spaniel Club strongly urges the AVMA to reconsider its position on tail docking. We feel your position is both misguided and counterproductive. As the American Kennel Club and many of its member clubs have already indicated to you, docking of tails is not practiced by breeders for cosmetic purposes.

In the case of the Cocker Spaniel, its function is to flush birds out of heavy cover. 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. 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. It is our belief that these procedures, when performed by a veterinarian, are very safe and virtually pain free. We firmly believe that we, jointly with our veterinarians, should have the right to decide the proper care and treatment of our pets.

What concerns me is that from the information on your website it appears that the AVMA has not done any scientific studies that these procedures are truly harmful to our pets. Speaking for Cocker Spaniels, I would suggest that 100 years in practice would indicate the safety of this procedure when done with veterinary care. Your website only references foreign surveys that were done in countries that do not allow docking (i.e. UK and Australia). Why not survey US veterinarians? While only anecdotal, of the veterinarians in my area I spoke to, none supported the AVMA stance. In fact, as they pointed out to me, if veterinarians, veterinary schools and institutions follow the AVMA's recommendations and refuse to dock tails (and crop ears), it could potentially put animals at risk, as these procedures will then not be performed by qualified veterinarians, but rather by those who are neither qualified nor practiced. This surely cannot be the intent of the AVMA's policy.

I urge you to rethink and rescind this policy.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles P. Born  
President