

## **BAN TAIL DOCKING**

Stop dogs becoming fashion victims

Tens of thousands of newborn puppies have their tails cut off every year in the name of a pointless fashion - tail docking. The RSPCA believes that cosmetic tail docking is a painful and totally unnecessary tradition that should no longer be permitted to continue.

### **The First Cut**

Puppies' tails are docked at around 2-5 days of age using a pair of scissors or a very tight rubber band. Tail docking does not have to be carried out by a veterinary surgeon - anyone classed as an 'experienced breeder' can cut off their puppies' tails themselves. No anaesthetic is usually used even though the cut goes through highly sensitive nerves. Many veterinarians now refuse to carry out this procedure on the grounds that it is 'cruel, painful and unnecessary'.

### **Tail Docking is Painful**

Advocates of tail docking claim that it does not cause pain or discomfort, as the nervous system of puppies is not fully developed. This is not the case. The basic nervous system of a dog is fully developed at birth and the available evidence indicates that puppies have similar, if not increased, sensitivity to pain as adult dogs. Docking a puppy's tail involves cutting through muscles, tendons, up to seven pairs of highly sensitive nerves and severing bone and cartilage connections. Tail docking is usually carried out without any anaesthesia. Puppies give repeated intense shrieking vocalisations the moment the tail is cut off and during stitching of the wound, indicating that they experience substantial pain. Inflammation and damage to the tissues also cause ongoing pain while the wound heals.

### **Is it Legal?**

Tail docking is currently legal in Australia except in the ACT, where legislation was recently passed to prevent the docking of puppies' tails for cosmetic purposes. The RSPCA is calling for all states and territories to follow this lead. Cosmetic tail docking has also been banned in a number of countries including Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and Denmark. Several other European countries including Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Austria have also ratified a European Convention that prohibits the cosmetic docking of tails. In the United Kingdom tail docking can only be carried out by a registered veterinary surgeon. The practice is opposed by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons which describes it as an 'unacceptable mutilation'.