



## **American Boxer Club Position Statements**

These position statements are intended for use by ABC member clubs and by ABC members to address community issues or unfavorable canine legislation at the local level. These statements are in line with the ABC Code of Ethics and with positions supported by the American Kennel Club. Permission is granted by ABC to use these statements and the information contained in these statements with local media or with local politicians to help explain the ABC's position on these important issues.

### **Responsible Dog Ownership**

The American Boxer Club recognizes the long history of the human-canine bond, and supports caring and responsible dog ownership as a celebration of that bond. Dog ownership provides people with both psychological and health benefits, and opens the door to a deeper connection with an understanding of all animals. Responsible dog ownership requires a commitment for the life of the dog. This takes time, patience, and training in order to insure that a puppy will grow up to be a loving companion pet and not a nuisance animal. Dog ownership also requires an emotional and financial investment over the life of the dog, so we strongly urge all potential owners to evaluate their lifestyle and research breeds and breeders before purchasing a puppy.

Being a responsible dog owner means considering not only the needs of the dog, but also those of the community. Responsible dog owners ensure that their dogs are not allowed to become public nuisances, and that they abide by local ordinances and leash laws.

### **Owners versus Guardians**

The American Boxer Club supports caring and responsible pet ownership and opposes the use of the term "guardian" when referring to the care of animals. We believe in the traditional property rights of animal owners to make decisions regarding the care and welfare of their pets, and reject the notion of "animal guardianship" which places these rights and responsibilities in the hands of the government.

Guardianship laws do nothing to improve the lives of animals and in some cases may make it more difficult for breeders, owners, shelters, rescue groups, and veterinarians to provide adequate and humane treatment of animals in their care. These laws may also result in increased animal control expenses and shelter populations, and have the potential to clog the court system with baseless and expensive lawsuits. The American Boxer Club supports the establishment and enforcement of reasonable animal welfare laws that hold animal owners accountable for the health and welfare of their pets.

### **Responsible Dog Breeding**

Humans have been actively breeding dogs for centuries, and thereby shaping and refining traits in individual breeds to meet specific functions. The American Boxer Club supports the right to own, keep, and breed dogs, and recognizes that along with the right to own and breed dogs comes responsibility. Breeders should educate themselves about their breeds, learn about the breed standard, and screen their dogs for health and temperament issues before deciding to breed. Care and socialization of puppies is

also important for their long-term health and well-being. Members of the American Boxer Club are required to adhere to the provisions of the Code of Ethics of the American Boxer Club.

Responsible breeders spend time screening prospective puppy homes, remain a line of support throughout their puppies' lifetimes, and are prepared to take back dogs they've bred at any time, for any reason. The American Boxer Club opposes careless breeding which ignores or perpetuates genetic health issues, structural problems, or poor temperaments. We also strongly oppose those who breed without concern for the welfare of the dogs. We encourage enforcement of existing animal welfare laws.

### **Restrictive Breeding Laws**

The American Boxer Club supports the right to own, keep, and breed dogs, and opposes legislation that restricts that right. We believe that the ability to provide humane care for dogs should be evaluated individually based on the condition of the dogs. Restrictive legislation that makes it burdensome, difficult, or unlawful to breed dogs is contrary to the best interests of dogs in this country.

### **Rescue Programs and Their Role in the Community**

Breed rescue programs are an important adjunct to animal shelter programs, and provide an essential function to the community. These groups rescue purebred dogs from shelters, thus increasing available space for other dogs and decreasing shelter euthanization rates. They also offer options for owners looking to surrender their dogs, so the dogs never enter the shelter system in the first place. The American Boxer Club supports and applauds Boxer rescue groups that provide temporary homes for Boxers in need, provide necessary medical care, socialize dogs prior to placement, screen dogs and new owners for compatibility, and offer transport to new homes. They also provide assistance to current owners to help them retain their dogs, or place them if necessary.

The American Boxer Club does not support so-called "humane rescue" or "animal protection" groups which justify taking animals from their owners – often as theft – based not on violations of established welfare laws, but on their dislike of the lawful owners' practices. We believe that all animal owners are entitled to due process of law, and that seizure of animals prior to conviction of welfare violations should occur only when the animals' lives are in immediate danger.

### **Breed Specific legislation**

The American Boxer Club strongly opposes legislation which restricts or prohibits dangerous dogs based solely on breed or physical characteristics. Proper training and socialization are more important factors than breed characteristics in preventing dangerous dogs. Media coverage often misrepresents the breed(s) involved in canine biting incidents or canine attacks and most members of the public or of animal control groups are unable to accurately identify specific dog breeds on sight.

Breed specific laws punish a majority of responsible dog owners and well-tempered dogs for the actions of a few and often fail to decrease bite statistics in the communities where they are enacted. The American Boxer Club supports reasonable "dangerous dog" laws which are based on the specific actions of the individual dog and which provide a well established system for dealing with dangerous dogs and responsible dog owners. The American Boxer Club urges enforcement of existing, non-breed-specific laws in effect in most states related to "dangerous dogs."

### **Ear Cropping, Tail Docking, and Dewclaw Removal**

Ear cropping, tail docking, and dewclaw removal have been a part of the Boxer breed long before the breed itself was established. These procedures were developed to prevent injury to the dogs as they performed the various functions for which they were bred. The American Boxer Club supports these

procedures, when humanely performed, as appropriate for the breed, to maintain breed character and preserve the history of the breed.

Tails are docked and dewclaws removed at just a few days of age, before the nerve endings are fully developed. Discomfort is minimal and puppies are usually sleeping or nursing within a few minutes of the procedure. Dewclaws left intact are often snagged and ripped off, causing considerable pain and bleeding. Boxers with full tails are at a higher risk of injuring the tail, leading to lengthy, difficult healing times and potential amputation as an adult. The Boxer standard states that an undocked tail should be severely penalized.

Ear cropping is done by a veterinarian under general anesthesia, between six and twelve weeks of age. Most puppies are up and playing later that same day and show no signs of lingering discomfort from the surgery. Uncropped ears are slightly more prone to infections and are more prone to hematomas. The Boxer standard allows exhibitors the choice between cropped or uncropped ears, noting that cropped ears are customary.

### **White Boxers**

There are two coat colors in the Boxer, fawn and brindle, with or without white markings which, in some cases, may cover most or all of the body. These "white" Boxers, while still genetically fawn or brindle, are disqualified by the breed standard, as are those with more than 1/3 of the body covered by white markings. Around 20% to 25% of all Boxers are born with a predominately white coat, making them neither rare nor unusual.

The American Boxer Club Code of Ethics prohibits members and member club from breeding white Boxers and from offering full registration on white puppies. An estimated 18% of white Boxers will be deaf in one or both ears. White Boxers are also prone to sunburn. While excluded from conformation competition, white Boxers are equal to their colored counterparts as obedience, agility, service, therapy, and companion dogs.

### **Black Boxers**

In recent years there have been a growing number of people advertising "black Boxers," or worse "rare black Boxers," usually at inflated prices. The American Boxer Club condemns this practice because the Boxer breed does not carry a gene for a black coat. At one point in the history of the breed, there were some dogs that were solid black. These dogs were acknowledged as descendants of a Schnauzer-Bulldog cross. The extinction of this line is documented in the mid 1920's, at the time when the German breed standard was changed to disallow dogs of any color other than fawn or brindle.

Some brindle Boxers may be so heavily striped as to appear to have a black ground color, especially as puppies. These dogs may be termed "reverse," "seal," or "black brindles," but responsible breeders will never try to pass them off as black. Nor will they use the term "sealed," implying that the fawn color is sealed out by the black. The breed standard states that the fawn background must clearly, if barely, show through the black striping. As a dominant color, a black coat cannot lie hidden for generations. Therefore, any Boxer with a solid black coat must have another breed in the background.

### **The True Mission of Animal Rights Groups**

The American Boxer Club strongly supports the goals of animal welfare, stewardship of animals, humane and responsible care and use of animals, and a celebration of the human-animal bond. We recognize a distinct difference between animal welfare and animal rights and oppose the latter. We support legal protection for animals and oppose legal rights for animals.

Animal rights groups – or as they are starting to call themselves, “animal protection groups” – are opposed to human use of animals in any capacity. Animal rights radicals equate animal ownership with human slavery and claim that a change from “owner” to “guardian” in laws will result in better treatment for animals. This is not true. The ultimate goal of the animal rights industry is total animal liberation, a complete severing of the ties between humans and animals, and enjoyment from a distance. Animal rights groups use any means to achieve these goals, up to and including, in some cases, funding and participating in terrorist activities.

Mainstream animal rights groups spend a significant portion of their annual income to propose and lobby bills that restrict the rights of animal owners. They often distort or sensationalize the worst examples of animal cruelty – issues that are covered by and prosecuted under existing laws as a means to raise funds and misrepresent a need for new, more restrictive laws. Guardianship, breeding restrictions, and mandatory spay/neuter laws all have the net effect of making animal ownership more difficult and more costly. Animal rights groups use broad strokes to paint all animal owners, breeders, farmers, or researchers with the same brush as those who neglect and abuse animals, refusing to acknowledge that these deplorable situations are the rare exception to the hundreds of millions of animals that are well cared for by their owners.

The American Boxer Club rejects the premise of animal rights groups, most of which have no experience in providing hands-on care for animals. We support investigation into the legitimacy of the non-profit status of those groups which participate in extensive lobbying activities, in violation of the Internal Revenue Code. We strongly urge all animal owners to donate to local groups and shelters, and avoid supporting national groups unless they specifically denounce the animal rights agenda, regardless of how slick their marketing propaganda may be or how emotional their financial requests may be.