



July 1, 2009

Jeff Shaver, President  
American Rottweiler Club, Inc.  
16005 Pine Creek Way  
Magnolia, TX 77358

Dear Mr. Shaver:

Thank you for your rational, reasoned, and timely response of June 17, 2009, to the AVMA's reversal of its position on cropping and docking. The Doberman Pinscher Club of America, its Board of Directors, officers, and members, stand firmly aligned with the American Rottweiler Club on this issue.

We are deeply concerned that the agenda of radical Animal Rights groups such as PETA, AVAR, IDA, and the HSUS are being furthered by the AVMA's position banning all cropping and docking on the basis that these are strictly cosmetic procedures. The Doberman Pinscher Breed Standard, adopted February 6, 1982, clearly states that ears are "normally cropped and carried erect"; that a Doberman Pinscher's tail, "docked at approximately the second joint, appears to be a continuation of the spine, and is carried only slightly above the horizontal when the dog is alert." The DPCA has steadfastly maintained, despite attempts from legislators, lobbyists, and AR extremists to change or even void our breed standard, that these procedures are far from cosmetic. We maintain that they are, in fact, integral to both the purpose and appearance of this working breed.

It would appear that the AVMA has proclaimed itself the American Kennel Club's written breed standard police, in attempting to nullify the breed standards for all the AKC cropped and docked breeds. This is beyond ludicrous. The AVMA garners no credibility here, despite its Animal Welfare Committee's claims that all cropping and docking is cosmetic, and, as such, unnecessary. The Parent Clubs for purebred dogs are the ones who determine the standards, not the AVMA. The AVMA has no business dictating to its membership which procedures are cosmetic and which ones are essential.

Does the AVMA consider spaying and neutering unnecessary as well? The case can be made, as you point out, that these procedures are wholly unnecessary, particularly when viewed in the light of responsible pet ownership. Should the removal of unsightly (in the eyes of a dog's

owner) benign tumors be considered cosmetic as well? Just how far does the AVMA presume to go in dictating to its members the definition of cosmetic?

More troubling, though, than this unsubstantiated and subjective pronouncement by the AVMA is the clear intrusion into the privacy of the relationship between veterinarians and their clients. The relationship between veterinarian and client is no less sacrosanct than the one between medical doctor and human patient. Animal owners must be free to make responsible decisions for their animals based on the guidance and professional expertise of their veterinarians. The AVMA's reversal of its position on cropping and docking is so distastefully intrusive as to be unacceptable on any level; we oppose it on every level.

If puppies' ears are to be cropped, veterinarians should be the ones to do it; this is a procedure that should be done with the proper anesthesia and veterinary supervision, along with post-operative guidance and expertise that should be available to puppies' owners. The DPCA endorses ear cropping when it is done by licensed veterinary professionals in appropriate hospital and clinic environments. Proclaiming the procedure cosmetic will not prevent it, nor will such a proclamation by the AVMA do anything to change the breed standards of the myriad AKC-recognized cropped breeds. Instead, the procedure will be relegated to kitchen tables and will be done by "artists" who obtain and administer anesthesia illegally. There will be no heart monitoring equipment in these kitchen table scenarios, nor will there be any anesthesia machines or intubation of puppies.

We concur with you that tail docking and dewclaw removal is safe and simple when properly performed, and that puppies are barely bothered by it. The real travesty here is not that tail docking, dewclaw removal, and ear cropping are being done, but that the AVMA presumes to dictate to its members – licensed, autonomous professionals – that supporting AKC Parent Clubs' Breed Standards is unnecessary cosmetic surgery.

We are committed to retaining each individual Parent Club's right to establish its own Breed Standard, and, as such, stand with you against this outrageous anti cropping and docking proclamation by the AVMA. Let us work together with all Breed Clubs, whether their standards call for cropping or docking or not. Let us work together to solidify the rights of all dog owners to make decisions for their animals based on the advice and guidance of their personal veterinarians, with whom they have relationships and who they trust, rather than the AVMA's position which attempts to nullify these relationships.

Sincerely,



Sam F. Burke, Jr., M.D.  
President, Doberman Pinscher Club of America