

## TERRIER Group



Irish Terriers

### In Defense of Freedom and the Docked Tail!

The Irish Terrier Club of America strives to preserve and protect our breed in every way possible. We fund research; we are active in public education. We have a nationwide rescue program, and our members adhere to a code of ethics.

Since its formation in 1897, the ITCA has owned a breed standard that sets out the characteristics necessary for our dogs to perform the function for which they were created. It adheres strictly to the axiom "Form follows function." The punishing jaw, the red, wiry coat, the recessed eyes, the fairly sprung rib cage—and the docked tail—all combine to safeguard our dogs as they act on their instincts.

Our standard specifically calls for the docking of about one quarter of the tail so that it is "of good strength and substance." The standard has both purpose and meaning, and because we have bred to it for 113 years, the Irish Terrier today is essentially unchanged in appearance, ability, and temperament. To change the standard would change the dog.

Recently the practice of docking tails has come under attack as nothing more than cosmetic and as a result cruel and unnecessary. The abolition of the practice and revisions to breed standards to eliminate docking have been advocated both by legislators influenced by animal-rights activists and by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Legislation has been introduced in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Some bills seek to absolutely prohibit tail docking and would make it illegal to show a dog with a docked tail, while others call for the practice to be performed by a licensed veterinarian. In Pennsylvania, the measure that was signed into law was scaled back to allow docking if performed by a licensed

veterinarian.

The Irish Terrier Club of America believes that the decision to dock tails is best left to responsible breeders who adhere to the club's breed standard. Preservation of the breed means preservation of both the dog and the standard. Both have purpose and meaning, and changes to the standard should be based only on our members' desire for change. It is ours to change. It is not the domain of the casual, the ill-informed, or the politically motivated, non-Irish Terrier-owning public.

The American Kennel Club is a club of clubs, with each parent club owning its own breed standard. Each parent club is charged with the responsibility to preserve and protect its breed. We certainly believe that our Irish Terriers should expect nothing less from us than vigorous and aggressive advocacy. We are carefully monitoring the anti-docking legislation that could adversely affect our breed standard and restrict our rights to breed to it. We have adapted a formal statement in opposition. We urge vigilance and cooperation among all affected clubs. —Robert Clyde and Marianne Kehoe, Plainfield, N.J.; m\_dkehoe@verizon.net ♦



Kerry Blue Terriers

### Do We Need More Judges?

Why would anyone want to be put in the middle of the dog show ring with the prospect of being criticized, no matter what they do? Well, it certainly would not be for the money, since so much time, effort, and personal expense is exhausted completing the required process for obtaining an AKC judge's license. It would not be for the friends you would make, since it is often just the winners who are happy with a judge's choice. I do hope it is for love of the sport of dogs and for an honest desire to make a positive impact on the breed. With that in mind, I personally believe we need more breeder-judges.

Is there a difference in being judged by a breeder-judge as opposed to an "all-rounder"? Although some people have a concern that a breeder-judge may be kennel blind or focus on the one or two particular breed qualities that are most important to him, many feel that this type of judge, who is likely to be extremely knowledgeable about the breed and its subtleties, is ideal. Others feel that an all-rounder is more likely to see the entire dog and will therefore make the better selection.

Obviously both positions have validity. Does an all-rounder select a more generic show dog, while a breeder-judge looks for breed type? A dog possessing the attributes of a great show dog and breed type would be the ideal. If you do not see such a dog in the ring, however, which dog would you select? Which dog would be best for the breed—the one that does not conform to the standard as well, but has showmanship, or the one that has breed type, but is not as flashy in the ring? I am sure we have all seen both scenarios, and this might lead us to expect that there exists a healthy balance in the various selections made. This would only be possible, however, if there were enough breeder-judges in the sport.

Count how many AKC breeder-judges there are in Kerries; I bet you can't think of very many. I realize that all judges must know the standard of the breed they are judging, but I believe the breeder-judge may bring to the ring a more in-depth understanding of his breed, with a sense of the breed's history and a responsibility to its future that may ultimately influence the breed in a positive way. As a breeder-judge, you may know very well the quirks of a Kerry puppy and allow for youthful enthusiasm, or you make adjustments for a puppy's shy period, when he needs a reassuring and gentle hand while being judged. As a breeder yourself you have seen the variations in the process the Kerry's coat goes through before reaching maturity, so you would not puzzle over a puppy's brown or dulling black coat. While judging adults, you may be strongly reminded of the breed's purpose and