



Tail Docking: An Australian Breeder's Perspective

By Susan Shrigley

For those who don't know me I have been involved with Weimaraners for the best part of 40 years and have bred successfully under the GHOSTWIND prefix in Australia. I am an International All Breeds Judge approved to judge All Breeds under all countries rules and regulations including grading under FCI Regulations.

In the early 2000s the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and the AVA (Australian Veterinary Association) joined forces with the intent of preventing tail docking in Australia. These two bodies canvassed the Australian government and garnered support in their quest and soon we saw several states in Australia succumbing to a tail docking ban. Because all states in Australia have their own independent government, legislation in the states varied. When the issue was first brought to the attention of the dog fraternity, many of us were of the belief that the ban would never get through.

However, as there were some dog people who supported this action, the movement gained impetus, and ultimately resulted in the total ban of tail docking in all states in Australia, with the only exception being docking for therapeutic reasons.

Prior to the total ban, the state of Western Australia still allowed breederstodocktailsforprophylactic purposes, as long the procedure was done by a registered vet. This option was available to anyone in Australia who wanted to dock, but required the pups to be born in WA and have the docking performed there.

If you don't stop the movement now you may live to regret it.

This was not an option for most breeders. Hence, the majority of breeders either didn't dock, or only tipped (removing just the top few

vertebrae) the tails and hoped that they got away with it. For those who did dock in WA, (myself being one), we were vulnerable to complaints by those in favor of the ban, which were lodged with the RSPCA. The resulting action was RSPCA Officers visiting our property and the property of other breeders to investigate allegations of cruelty to animals. These complaints were NOT founded as we had the supporting documentation from the vet to legalise the docking procedure.

Unfortunately, this situation brought out the bad sports in our chosen hobby. If they couldn't beat you in the ring then lodge a complaint with the RSPCA and you might get rid of the opposition.

IF YOU DON'T STOP THE MOVEMENT NOW YOU MAY LIVE TO REGRET IT.

I understand there has been some dialogue by members of the WCA requesting that dogs with undocked tails be allowed to be exhibited without penalty of fault. To do this they want the Weimaraner Standard changed to state that an undocked tail is not a fault. If you allow these changes to go through you will see it is the tip of the iceberg that may well lead to a total docking ban in your country. PETA and other animal rights groups will view this action as a division in the Weimaraner community and act to take advantage of a perceived weakness on the WCA tail docking position. The total ban on tail docking in Europe began in just this way.

YOU MUST ALL STICK TOGETHER and fight this movement!

In New Zealand, the dog exhibitors had witnessed what happened in Australia, and they rallied the farmers for support. The farmers

feared that that crutching of sheep and mulsing would be the next procedures to be banned after tail docking. With the support of the farming community, and its numbers, the NZ Government backed down, and tail docking remains legal in New Zealand.

(We) have now paid the price, a total ban on tail docking.

You must remain vigilant; we weren't vocal enough in Australia and have now paid the price, a total ban on tail docking.

Note: the majority of breeders in Australia and Europe are extremely unhappy with the docking ban. Natural Weimaraner tails are thin and weak, and subject to frequent and painful injury. The fancy is also very unhappy with the departure from historic breed type, and in addition, some pedigrees produce tails which are carried high and when undocked, curl over the dog's back. Please think long and hard about your position on this important issue. Remember that exhibiting a Weimaraner with a natural tail is allowed, although subject to a fault. There are only 3 disqualifications in the standard; height, coat color and coat length.