

# "IMPRESSIONS of the Kennel Club"

## The KC decision to suspend CC's for German Shepherd Dogs in 2012

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The Kennel Club have suspended the Challenge Certificates (CC's) from German Shepherd Dogs (GSD) for the year 2012. CC's are used for achieving the title of Champion in the UK, a dog needs 3 CC's under three different Judges to be awarded the title of Champion.

This is an unprecedented act against a breed, so the possible reasons for this decision by the Kennel Club certainly need to be carefully examined. The crux of the Kennel Clubs issues with the GSD Breed is supposedly and primarily concerned with the Health & Welfare of the GSD Breed. An admirable and laudable cause for sure, until you examine the facts of the Kennel Clubs refusals over many years to accept numerous proposals directly addressed at significantly improving the Health of the GSD and ALL Pedigree Dogs in the UK, put to them by, you've guessed it! THE GSD BREED.

The Kennel Club have placed three issues at the centre of their reasons for suspension of GSD CC's, as follows: "topline of the GSD", "looseness in the hocks" (bottom of rear legs) and "double handling".

None of these issues are KNOWN causes of health problems with the GSD, and most importantly NONE of these issues have an established health screening system in place with the British Veterinary Profession for measuring the 'problem'.

One issue the KC has included in their letter to the GSD Breed Clubs is "unsound hocks" – the lower end of the rear legs. I would simply say that this is not a major problem within the GSD or the Alsatian; however current Judging practices do deal with this problem. The problem can occur slightly and to a more serious degree, I have only ever seen one case of severe looseness in the hocks over the last 10+ years. The looseness is not caused by Hip problems and seems to be related to ligaments, there are possible environmental factors involved and possible hereditary factors involved. Whatever the reasons our breed is dealing with it, can we do more? Of course we can, however we would be silly to heavily penalise slight looseness in the hocks on an otherwise outstanding specimen of our breed. Getting the balance right is what really matters, and our GSD/Alsatian breed specialists are the best equipped for doing this.

Another issue the "topline" of the GSD, this is a breed characteristic accepted and established throughout the World, and most importantly established in the GSD Breed Standard by its supreme authority the German GSD Breed Club, the Schäferhunde Verein (SV). Which again is fully accepted as the authoritative Breed Club for GSD by the Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI). The FCI is the World-wide organisation for over 200 National Kennel Clubs. Somehow and for some reason the Kennel Club here in the UK, believe it has the authority, if not the expertise, to insist on major changes in the breed type of the GSD, established by the German SV and underpinned by the FCI.

By now you may be asking yourself WHY? Why is the Kennel Club (KC) pushing so hard for such a change? I can only surmise, and my conclusion "the Alsatian". This was the name given to the GSD by the Kennel Club after the First World War, when an army Captain brought one of these dogs back to England with him, and wanted to register the breed with the Kennel Club. The KC knew at that time the breed name was Deutsche Schäferhunde (German Shepherd Dog). It took another 50 years, until 1973 before the KC would name our breed "German Shepherd Dog (Alsatian)". This year the GSD breed asked for the name (Alsatian) to be dropped. This appears to set off a huge reaction from a minority group, aptly named "Alsatianists", who, although very small in number, appear to have enormous influence within the corridors of power of the Kennel Club. The "Alsatianists" favour a dog which is different in several ways to the German & International GSD Type. The first and most obvious difference the Alsatian type possesses is the level backline, they also have what appears to be a "forward placed shoulder" which gives the upright "swan neck" appearance of its head, although this may also be caused by the "stringing up" of its head with the collar chain behind the ears. Another obvious difference is also the rather flat backline; no doubt the usual overweight of this type contributes to this, and must also contribute to the very common "dip" in their backline. Another difference the Alsatian has, is the rather short front legs, the GSD standard is for a front leg length which is 55% (just over half) of the height of the dog to its backline, actually to its "withers", which is the front part of their backline, where the neck meets the backline. The Alsatians predominantly have front legs that are 45% of the total height to the withers. Perhaps this facilitates the level backline?

Of course the way a dog is stood, and there are many varied ways, can alter the visual appearance quite markedly. This is something that needs to be remembered, always.

The GSD on the other hand has a "topline" which is established by its breed standard and also clearly illustrated at the German Sieger Show annually, which is the German SV Show, similar to CRUFTS which is the Kennel Clubs Show. The German Sieger Show is the largest numerically SINGLE breed Show (GSD) in the World with over 2,000 entries each year, from around the World. The GSD topline correctly consists of a high wither, straight back, gently curving loin into a gently curving croup (the part where the pelvis lies). The whole picture gives the impression of an unbroken line from its ears, down the neck and then gently curving topline through to its tail. Of course this can be altered by the way a dog is stood, and in some cases, probably too many cases, they can be stood "extreme" which can give the impression of a "roached" back. I would simply ask that if a human being was regularly photographed on the starting blocks of a sprint race, in a position waiting for the starting gun to fire, would you conclude that ALL human beings, or human sprinters had a problem with curved spines and "roached" backs, of course not! And this is the "crux" of this issue.

It is important to add here, there are NO known health problems associated with a gently curved topline in GSD or a flat and occasionally dipped topline of an Alsatian.

So why is the Kennel Club making such strenuous efforts to change the topline of GSD towards the topline of the Alsatian? If I were to be kind, I would suggest they are doing it to avoid extremes; unfortunately they have not balanced their 'topline' concerns, in respect of the Alsatians extremes, with fat, flat and dipped toplines. So that leaves me with a few possible alternatives; they are reacting to the TV Film "Pedigree Dogs Exposed" by Jemima Harrison, NOT well known for any degree of expertise of GSD or Alsatians, but obviously have a preference for Alsatians. Her film

was also very obviously “sensationalist” had it NOT been who the hell would have broadcast it? And who the hell would have watched it?

So as far as GSD’s are concerned we have to ask, can we safely ignore what her film had to say about the GSD? Absolutely NOT, we have to watch out for extremes in our breed type, there is a “Breed Standard” and we will always need to be vigilant to extremes of any kind, especially if they are connected to the Health of our breed. There are some extreme topline in our breed, both GSD and Alsatisans, so this needs to be pointed out by our Judges and penalised accordingly. A simple matter to agree on and to implement, one would think!

However that brings me to another possible reason for the Kennel Clubs over-reaction against the GSD breed here in the UK. They have what appear to be more serious health issues with several other breeds, which were highlighted by the film “Pedigree Dogs Exposed”, rightly or wrongly. These concerned alleged oversized brains in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, breathing problems in Pekingese, and Bulldogs, and Epilepsy problems with Boxers, spinal problems with Rhodesian Ridgebacks, which included euthanising healthy puppies born without the ridge, which is apparently associated with Spinal bifida.

Is it possible that for the Kennel Club to take these breeds on, would involve some very well connected and influential Kennel Clubs members? So they decided to go for the GSD breed, because they are one of the least influential breeds within the Kennel Club, and they are a numerically large breed. So for the Kennel Club to “take the GSD breed on” will send a powerful message to these other breeds, without the need to “directly upset them”.

Whatever the Kennel Club reasons, I find it both unnecessary and despicable that they chose to suspend our CC’s when our breed were involved in a series of meetings with them on matters directly related to Health and Welfare of our breed, and the Kennel Clubs refusal to include ANY health screening systems as a condition of KC puppy registrations over many years, YES, you have read that absolutely right! The Kennel Club have, over many years, consistently REFUSED to include Hips Scoring of parents as a condition of KC registration of Litters, and many more Veterinary health screening tests.

Perhaps the Kennel Club are being xenophobic? After all they originally refused to name the German Shepherd Dog by this it’s international name, and named it simply as “Alsatian” for over 50 years.

I now come to “double handling” – The GSD breed is presented in show rings around the world which allow “double handling”, indeed many countries facilitate double handling.

Double handling is where the dogs owner is outside of the show ring, and calls the dog’s name, or whistles, or shouts, to attract the dogs, which makes the dog alert and expressive. It also encourages the dog to walk and gait out at the end of the lead, ahead of its handler. The walking and gaiting of the GSD in the Show ring can take some time, and it is important to test the stamina and fitness of each dog, and its firmness, soundness. A judge can see many aspects of a GSD when it is moving, especially when it is walking.

The GSD breed understands the need to curb double handling when they are at an ALL Breeds Show; it is unfair to distract other breeds being exhibited nearby. So a less than ideal form of judging takes place, of necessity at these shows. However the GSD breed see no reason whatsoever for banning double handling at GSD Breed Shows, where NO other breed is being shown. An outer ring can be facilitated, and static outside attraction can take place, all of which enhances the Judging of our breed, and enhances the presentation of our dogs, and enhances the atmosphere of our GSD Shows. This is a SPORT, can you imagine a rule banning any shouting or other noise by football supporters at matches, even Cricket is raising its supporter involvement. It's about time the Kennel Club realised this is a very important aspect of the GSD Show scene.

The KC mentions Health & Safety in respect of double handling, the risk of injury. I would ask them for statistics to support their claims, I would also point out that driving and walking on our roads presents significant risk of injury and even death, I am sure they wouldn't ban walking and driving on our roads, or would they? If they wish the KC can insist on "outside attraction rings" or "areas" – with notices that those entering and participating do so at their own risk. Other than these facilities, "Static outside attraction" presents NO RISKS. The Kennel Club may say that "outside attraction" may benefit some exhibits over others, if so, then such a notice of the facility of outside attraction could state this, and all entries would enter knowing this. Of course ALL BREED SHOWS would continue to have "no outside attraction rules".

Below are some FACTS which are important to this issue.

- 1) BVA/KC Hip Dysplasia Scheme was introduced by the GSD Breed.
- 2) The Haemophilia testing scheme for 'Males' was introduced by the GSD Breed.
- 3) The Elbow Dysplasia Scheme was introduced by the GSD Breed.
- 4) The Breed Survey Scheme, which included all the above, was introduced by the GSD Breed.
- 5) The GSD Breed has on many occasions requested the Kennel Club to introduce Rules & Regulations to specifically improve the Health and Welfare of GSD. In particular the following:
  - a) Only to Register Litters from Hip Scored Parents. The German SV has done this.
  - b) Only to Register Litters from Parents with a low hip score. The German SV has done this.
  - c) Only Register Litters from a sire that is Haemophilia Tested Clear.
  - d) Include ALL Health Screening Test details of the Parents, on KC Registrations. The German SV has done this.
  - e) Establish a foolproof "IDENTIFICATION" Scheme for ALL Pedigree Dogs, to ensure ALL Health Screening Tests are done on the named Dog, and NOT a

substitute. Also to ensure the Pedigrees of ALL PEDIGREE DOGS are ACCURATE. The German SV has done this.

- f) Introduce a compulsory DNA Parentage Test for ALL Pedigree Dogs. The USA has done this. The SV have done this in Germany for GSD.
- g) A Tattoo and/or Microchip Scheme for ALL Pedigree Dogs. The German SV has done this.
- 6) The GSD Breed introduced a Comprehensive Judges Training Scheme some 20+ years ago, by the GSD League. The German SV has done this.
- 7) The GSD Breed Council now runs the GSD Breed Judges Training Scheme.
- 8) The GSD Breed Council introduced GSD Breed Surveys and GSD Breed Surveyors. The German SV has done this.
- 9) The GSD Breed introduced the FIRST Breed Show within Great Britain which actually includes Health Screening Test information and criteria in order to qualify to ENTER. "The British Sieger Event" which is run under the Breed Club Rules & Regulations of GERMANY. This is a kennel Club 'unlicensed GSD Event, and the KC are threatening to withdraw their 'recognition' of this GSD Event.
- 10) The Kennel Club have NEVER included the Hip Score Results of Pedigree Dogs as criteria for entering Kennel Club Shows. Worse still, they have NEVER shown any intention of doing so. The German SV does so.
- 11) The Kennel Club will register litters from parents which are NOT hip scored. The German SV will NOT.
- 12) The Kennel Club allows pedigree dogs which are NOT hip scored to enter their shows and achieve the "HIGHEST ACCOLADES" up to and including "BEST IN SHOW AT CRUFTS". The German SV will not allow this for any GSD over 2 years of age, or who has failed to achieve an 'a' stamp for hips.
- 13) The Kennel Club clearly have "DOUBLE STANDARDS" - their policies are inconsistent and unfair to the pedigree puppy buying public. They need to listen to the GSD Breed "MUCH MORE" and then they will make real progress with the Health and Welfare of Pedigree Dogs. They CAN take lessons from the German SV, obviously.
- 14) They should cease listening to "sensationalist video directors" and their "personal drivers" and the KC influential "minority Alsatianists" and KC influential minority "middle of the road GSD folk" and "UNCLE TOM COBLEY AND ALL.

**GSD EXPERTISE EXISTS WITHIN THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**THE KENNEL CLUB SHOULD LISTEN TO THEM**