

“OUR BREEDS FUTURE IN OUR HANDS”

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Here in the United Kingdom, the Kennel Club (KC) and our newly formed GSD Partnership (made up of the GSD Breed Council, BAGSD & GSD League) have considered our breeds future development and progress may be best served within the Kennel Clubs “accredited breeders scheme”. Even by any cursory examination of this KC scheme, all it offers is an opportunity to condemn our breed to apathy and stagnation for the foreseeable future.

On the other hand our breed organisations could and should adopt the “accredited GSD scheme” and make genuine and meaningful progress for our breed. The “accredited GSD scheme” is targeted at our DOGS and its solid foundation is our GSD Breed Survey. This is a scheme that is measureable, checkable, and sustainable, and will bring continuous benefits for our GSD breed.

Is it any coincidence that the “key” to breeding GSD in Germany is the Körung (breed survey)? The breed survey is a measure of a GSD for suitability for breeding, measured against the most relevant and the most important criteria for our breed. The criteria includes health screening results, and physical and mental assessments by a specialist GSD breed surveyor, approved and selected by our GSD Breed Council.

The “accredited GSD scheme” is NOT a scheme that is like sand or water running through your fingers, for our breed to be left with very little or nothing of any lasting benefits. Breeders come and breeders go, our GSD surveys must become rooted in our breeds development and future progress. Our “accredited GSD scheme” will also become rooted in the same manner.

It is clearly important for me to explain why the Kennel Club scheme is so wrong for our breed, and for that matter other pedigree dog breeds. For the KC to establish the “accredited breeders scheme” for pedigree dog breeders is fine, if they keep the rules and regulations of the scheme targeted at the pedigree dog breeders.

Targeting pedigree dog breeder’s obligations and responsibilities to minimum breeding practices which the Kennel Club can police effectively. It is important to improve the standards of all pedigree dog breeders, more in line with “best practice”. It is important to underpin the scheme with clearly defined minimum requirements for breeding pedigree dogs.

The Kennel Club have already set some minimum standards, such as a minimum and maximum age for breeding females, and limiting the number of litters that can be bred from a female, and the frequency of those litters. These requirements are well within the Kennel Clubs ability to CHECK ON, each and every time a litter is registered with them. That is the KEY element around which the Kennel Club should have designed and built their existing “accredited breeder’s scheme” on. The Kennel Club should now make amendments to their existing “accredited breeders scheme” in line

with this principle making it significantly important for pedigree dogs registered with the Kennel Club.

All elements within a Kennel Club “accredited breeder’s scheme” MUST be checkable when a litter is registered with the Kennel Club.

Similarly **all elements of the “accredited GSD scheme” MUST be checkable when a GSD is presented for a GSD breed survey.**

It is crucially important to ensure, in a meaningful and measurable way, that all breeders who sign up to the Kennel Club “accredited breeder’s scheme” are checked effectively and regularly. If this is not done, the scheme will quickly fall into disrepute, and be seen as a failure. This is apparently already happening to the “accredited breeders’ scheme”.

Under this scheme certain requirements are not what they appear to be, for instance, the requirement to have your breeding dogs, health tested for certain named hereditary diseases. You would think this would mean all dogs used for breeding by an accredited breeder, having all the listed health screening tests, oh no! It appears these are recommended NOT compulsory. Now where have I heard that one before?

Therefore these valuable and important health tests are not checked effectively, and it is even possible to become an accredited breeder before even breeding a litter, as long as the applicant signs in the appropriate places, on the appropriate forms, which gives the Kennel Club its required assurances.

Assurances which are checked and policed in a wholly unsatisfactory manner, and can never be effectively policed. Trust is something that is certainly ‘overcooked’ within the precincts of Clarges Street. It is nonsense to rely on volunteers to effectively check the thousands of existing accredited breeder’s premises and dogs, never mind many thousands more, against requirements which are largely voluntary. These kinds of voluntary requirements, and virtually meaningless checking systems, apparently run through the Kennel Clubs accredited breeder’s scheme, like a holiday resort name runs through a stick of rock. Such flippancy has no place anywhere near the breeding of pedigree dogs.

The breeding of pedigree dogs in the United Kingdom deserves a much better thought out and much more soundly based scheme, than the existing Kennel Club “accredited breeder’s scheme”. If the Kennel Club accept the principle of **all elements within a Kennel Club “accredited breeder’s scheme” MUST be checkable when a litter is registered with the Kennel Club**

and amend its existing scheme to fully fit this requirement. The Kennel Club could and should fully endorse and support the GSD breed adopting their own “accredited GSD scheme” with the following principle of **all elements of the “accredited GSD scheme” MUST be checkable when a GSD is presented for a GSD breed survey.**

These two schemes would fit perfectly together, and would offer a powerful and beneficial package of measures, which would guarantee significant progress on the

many issues which both the Kennel Club and our GSD breed organisations want progress to be made. A clear WIN - WIN situation.

It does not take extraordinary intelligence to figure out that such a joint scheme agreement with the GSD breed could be extended to other pedigree dog breeds.

With the "accredited GSD scheme" in place, the GSD breed organisations should immediately enter into discussions with the Animal Health Trust (AHT) to agree a DNA parentage scheme, which would hopefully be compatible with the German SV DNA parentage scheme, simply because so many of the German GSD bloodlines are established within our breed here in the UK, and this will most certainly continue. Mutual co-operation between the two schemes would be invaluable.

Once a DNA parentage scheme is in place it should become an essential part of our GSD breed survey. This coupled with the existing tattoo and/or microchip requirements of the GSD breed survey will ensure the most comprehensive and guaranteed identification system we require. All health screening tests on GSD must only be done when the tattoo and or microchip are in place, and these must be included on all health screening documentation.

What about those pedigree dog breeders that do NOT want to join an AMENDED Kennel Club "accredited breeder's scheme"? Well the Kennel Club have expressed concerns about such breeders, and keeping them aboard to maintain some positive influence upon them. The Kennel Club may well consider a "TWO TIER" "accredited breeder's scheme", such a facility would perfectly match a "TWO TIER" registration system. I feel sure the Kennel Club is fully capable of designing such complimentary systems which would offer all pedigree dog breeders and pedigree dogs opportunities for improvement and progression.

What about our GSD breeds future with or without the Kennel Clubs CHALLENGE CERTIFICATES (CC's)? I see the Kennel Club continuing to register our GSD breed here within the UK, and as such our GSD can enter any Kennel Club licensed show or event. However I see great benefits in our breed introducing its own PEDIGREES which could be similar to the SV Pedigree, I feel sure the SV would offer assistance in this matter. We would need to consider our own TWO TIER system; one for "accredited GSD" and one for "non accredited GSD", this would also be similar to the SV system.

What about organising our own GSD Shows and Events? Of course we should do this! Our British Sieger Event clearly illustrates the success and enjoyment to be had from our own events. We can organise and hold Regional Shows/Events, and if necessary or desirable we can develop criteria for attaining the title of "British GSD Champion". There is so much we can do for ourselves, whilst at the same time perhaps also enjoying what the Kennel Club may offer. I see our future as retaining our connection with our Kennel Club, in a mutually beneficial relationship, with mutual respect agreements, and understanding. We should all be able to enjoy the "best of both worlds" and why not? It is the year 2009, and it's about time we all moved on significantly, and we all worked together.

We should obviously consider additional changes, and the most important fundamental change should be the creation of a SINGLE GSD BREED CLUB here within the United Kingdom, "The British GSD Club". The rest of the World, especially our European friends consider our "fragmented GSD Club system" as our biggest single handicap to our GSD breeds future, an even bigger handicap than our Kennel Club.

It may seem a difficult objective, indeed there will be some who will believe it will be an impossible objective, and I would say it is simply an ESSENTIAL objective. From a single "National GSD breed club" will spring substantial benefits, with few if any losses. We can have locally based branches. We can have REGIONALISATION. We can have our NATIONAL COUNCIL. We can have our BREED SURVEYORS. We can have our NATIONAL DATABASE. We can have our NATIONAL MAGAZINE. And we can have well organised and co-ordinated and well attended GSD Shows and Events.

We can ensure consistency and quality and progress, as well as a dramatic increase in our influence both nationally and internationally at all levels. Our breed can and must grab this great opportunity for all its worth, and enjoy all the benefits, our breed genuinely deserves nothing less.

Our "British GSD Club" can establish sections for "Breeders" "Exhibitors" "Working" "Agility" "Socialisation & Training" "Database" "Pedigrees" "Publications" "Pet Owners" and others as required. We can be UNITED rather than DIVIDED, and that is the ultimate goal, worthy of all our efforts.

David Payne