

## FIELD



## Bred beyond the point of virtue

The increase in congenital deformities in dogs raises urgent questions

**I**t is nothing new for congenital deformities to occur in the various breeds of domestic dog. Fifty years ago the list was already considerable—hare-lip, cleft palate, pig jaw, inverted eyelids, ingrowing eyelashes, displaced patella.

The more extreme examples, including puppies being born without eyes and the sternum turning in instead of out (thereby pressing on the heart or lungs), contrast with those of puppies being born tailless and with an apparently 'desirable' deformity such as the screw tail in the bulldog. Cases of unnaturally small eyes, which used to occur frequently in fox-terrier puppies, often improved without cosmetic



ers and poodles suffer from progressive retinal atrophy (PRA).

Tibetan terriers and wire-haired fox terriers are prone to luxation of the eye lens (lens slipping out of place). Bulldogs, Pekingese and boxers can suffer from prolonged soft palate. King Charles spaniels and Irish setters get eczema of the lips. Pekingese suffer from premature loosening of the teeth and toy spaniels are prone to juvenile cataract.

These breeds have been subject to over-breeding and exaggeration in pursuit of breed fad points. The number of registrations in each of the pedigree breeds of dog with the Kennel Club between 1970 and the 1980's shows that some breeds