

# SHOOTING TIMES

## & Country magazine

# BREEDING INSANITY

The gundog world should subscribe to a new parent body rather than the Kennel Club, suggests David Hancock

**F**OR MANY years the Kennel Club's monopoly in the world of dogs has been questioned, resented and occasionally challenged by anxious individuals. For some this has been on the grounds of increased fees — it now costs £6 to register a litter, another £6 to change or transfer a name, £10 a year to maintain an affix (following £35 to register that affix) and £6 for a re-registration. A dog club has to pay £50 to register its title and £15 per year to maintain it, with a further fee for each show it runs.

For others there is anger at the disinclination of the Kennel Club to act over behavioural problems and inherited physical diseases in dogs — the KC is quite prepared to register a pedigree dog which has killed a child and a stud dog which passes on crippling congenital defects. I believe the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has been asked to look at the restraint of trade ensuing from the monopoly exercised by the Kennel Club.

Against this background in Britain, it is worth noting that an incident, which could in time have repercussions here, has made history in Canada. On April 3, 1989, a new registry for pure-bred dogs — the Canine Federation of Canada — was incorporated under their Animal Pedigree Act. The latter is the legislation which licenses the Canadian Kennel Club, until April 1989 the sole voice of the pedigree dog world in Canada. The Livestock Pedigree Act, already on their statute book, permitted the formation of other registry bodies but the new legislation allows the withdrawal of breeds/breed clubs from existing bodies. In other words, competition is permitted. This effectively ends the monopolistic power of the Canadian Kennel Club, which makes itself responsible for 148 breeds.

The Quebec-based Canine Federation of Canada, the new registry, has applied for au-

thorisation, then the situation could change quite significantly. The Canadian KC, however, would not permit the showing of such breeds at shows sanctioned by them.

Already the fur is flying! Predictably, the Canadian KC is yelling for support and shouting about the need for one voice in their pedigree dog world. Whether this is out of self-interest, the interests of the dogs they were set up to serve or just fear of competition is not yet clear.

They would be better advised to respect the law and work constructively with the new registry in the best long-term interests of pure-bred dogs. But I doubt if such magnanimity will prevail.

If the Canadian KC is anything like ours, it will squeal, make snide counter-attacks on each and every critical comment, however well-intentioned they may be and duck all well-founded appeals for much-needed change, even those made on moral grounds.

A typical example of such an absence of magnanimity occurred

a few years ago when June Lait's well-reasoned article in a national newspaper, rightly criticising our Kennel Club for neglecting areas of canine care, was answered by a disgraceful letter from KC secretary General Sinnatt. His words display the insufferable arrogance, the petty petulance and the singular small-mindedness such officials all too often display: "The Club is not prepared, however, to respond to the demands of self-appointed pressure groups on experts' whose efforts, however altruistic, are liable to distort the issues involved."

In Canada, there are 70 associations covered by the Livestock Pedigree Act, involving beef cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and chinchillas as well as dogs. Under the new legislation, to add a new breed to its register, an existing association (such as their KC) must submit all its

parties, whatever the rights and wrongs of that situation, it is surely reasonable for there to be in existence an alternative body to the Kennel Club to which dissident breed clubs can turn.

This Canadian innovation has shown the way ahead for those involved with pedigree dogs in this country. In the gundog world there are many owners who have no wish to show their dogs but need to have their dogs registered and their field trials run under agreed rules. Yet, despite being founded by good gundog men, the KC is now run almost entirely for the show ring fraternity and, mainly through its unwillingness to adapt to contemporary threats to the well-being of dogs, has lost the respect of so many genuine dog-lovers and sportsmen.

How can you command the respect of good men when you can happily continue to register for money psychopathic dogs or dogs transmitting inheritable diseases, while opposing the genuinely motivated desire of animal welfare groups to have a desperately needed national registration scheme? The Kennel Club also endorses the written blueprint for Sporting dogs which ignores their working qualities and physical soundness.

The characteristics of the pedigree gundog breeds, as listed in the KC-approved breed standards, does not, for example, require the five retriever breeds to possess the instinct to retrieve, the pointer and setter breeds to indicate game or most of the spaniel breeds to

*"The KC-approved breed standards do not require the pointer to indicate game."*

***"Come on Sporting fraternity, show some initiative! What are you doing for your dogs away from the field"***

