

The Labrador Retriever Breed Health Committee

Mr W. Lambert

A.B.S. organizer. The Kennel club,

Clarges st, London, W1Y 8AB

03/05/2012

Dear Mr Lambert,

The Labrador Retriever Breed health committee would very much like to draw the attention of the kennel Club to the pilot scheme started in March. This being the promotion of the care and socialisation of puppies from day 3 by your selected Animal Behaviourist.

Whilst there are some positive areas in the booklet and indeed some puppy handling is carried out naturally during good husbandry on the breeders part but in a way that does not stress either the mother or her puppies. There are also many areas of concern particularly the first one that is echoed by a great many breeders of many breeds;- The instruction that from 3 days of age puppies should be handled in a variety of orientations including being held upside down and put on a cooler surface to sensitise them to temperature change (when veterinary science tells us they cannot regulate their own body temperatures at such a young age) is, as far as we can tell, only based on flimsy evidence that we have found to be perpetuated on the internet from as far as we can see from one non published or peer reviewed study carried out on GSDs by the US army. To generalise these "findings" to being a recommended method of socialisation for all breeds and all puppies is, we feel, dangerous.

To film the "proof" that all these activities have been carried out is in fact also potentially worrying. Firstly, film clips made readily available and potentially used or taken out of context at some future date is inappropriate and can lead to children and others believing this to be a simple process to mimic with damaging consequences. Also, few breeders will have consistent access to a handy 3rd party to photograph or film even the later stage and perhaps more appropriate socialisation processes. An individual breeder's inability to provide this "accepted sufficient proof" of puppy socialisation is then likely to reflect poorly on a good breeders reputation by potential buyers who may be less experienced and easily led into thinking this is the accepted norm and indeed

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that filming is a pre buying requirement. When in fact, the suggestion that you should take puppies up and film all of the suggested activities could be a very seriously damaging thing to do unless done by a responsible adult who also has a **very, very** compliant bitch.

We feel the early stage advice needs withdrawing immediately and a review should be conducted of all the material which includes input form from experienced breeders as well as behaviourists but particularly ones with breeding experience. We feel strongly about this as we feel it is not only inappropriate but equally damaging and distressing to the welfare of the bitches that will have to be interfered with. The stress on the lactating bitches, the unreasonable expectation of the different sounds, surfaces and interactions with other animals for these extremely young puppies is possibly the worst kind of interference that could occur. Where there are young children witnessing all of this it is very likely that they will take this as a sign that to handle new born puppies in this way as 'done by the book'!

We are most concerned that your organization sought to fund this damaging advice from a source that may not be well informed on a practical level ie- a breeder of dogs herself, but the valuable funds were allocated to someone with high academic ability only, and not from a practitioner. This, coming from one of the largest and most respected canine organisations in the world, and having access to some of the finest and most practised breeders of all breeds, we do find rather bizarre. Good advice is always going to be sought and needs to be given, especially in this climate of everything being so readily available to everyone – suitable or not, but we as a health committee feel that for one of the most numerically large breeds –therefore one of the most bred, the booklet is at best misguided and misinformed and at worst very damaging.

Yours Sincerely,