

features

ANIMAL TALK

New act bans cosmetic surgery

Tail docking, ear cropping, tail nicking and setting for horses prohibited



DIANE YKELENSTAM/SUBMITTED PHOTO

"Peanut" (Diane Ykelenstam's parti girl Friday) with natural tail and ears. Ykelenstam has not tail docked her pups since 2007, and has never cropped the ears of her puppies.

Regulations to accompany P.E.I.'s new Animal Welfare Act are nearly complete and the act will soon be proclaimed.

One area of impact is cosmetic surgery i.e., surgery to change an animal's appearance rather than for health reasons. The new act prohibits tail docking in dogs, horses, and cattle; ear cropping in dogs; and tail nicking and setting for horses. This conforms with the policy of the P.E.I. Veterinary Medical Association, adopted in 2009, which forbids veterinarians from carrying out these procedures. The new act clarifies that it is illegal for anyone to do so.

If you have a rottweiler, cocker spaniel, or a Yorkshire terrier with a short tail, you may be surprised to learn that your dog was not born that way.

In these and other breeds, all or part of the tail has traditionally been amputated when the pup is a few days old ("tail docking").

Besides the initial pain, tail docking can cause infection, and chronic pain if extra nerve cells grow in the stump (neurofibroma).

In some breeds (Doberman

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Animal Talk



At a glance:

For more information, see www.canadianveterinarians.net/documents/cosmetic-alteration

To learn about the standards in a particular breed, go to www.ckc.ca/fr/Events/CKC-Breed-Standards

pinscher, Great Dane, Boston terrier), part of the ears has been traditionally cut off ("ear cropping"), generally between nine and 12 weeks of age. Such surgery requires general anaesthetic and much aftercare. The ears will be painful, there may be infection, and splints and taping are required, with regular bandage changes for many weeks until the ears stand erect. Ear cropping can have a long term effect on a dog's behaviour because this painful handling



SANDRA CORKUM/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Smoky was adopted from the P.E.I. Humane Society by Susan Corkum and her family, who says "Smoky has been an integral part of our family for the past 12 years."

occurs at a sensitive time for socialization.

Ear cropping and tail docking have long been illegal in many European Union and Commonwealth countries.

In Canada, these procedures are illegal in all Atlantic provinces. As of November 2016,

the B.C. College of Veterinarians voted overwhelmingly to ban tail docking, having already banned ear cropping.

In Quebec, the province's order of veterinarians banned ear cropping and tail docking effective January 2017. (None of these bans prohibit surgery by a veterinarian on tails or ears when required for a medical reason.)

What does this mean for show dogs? The Kennel Club (UK) added clauses to cover natural tails before the law banning tail docking came into effect in 2008. (Ear cropping has long been banned in the UK). In Canada, some breed standards have been changed to describe both surgically altered and natural tails and ears. Judges are expected to consider both. The American Kennel Club has made fewer such changes—both cropped and natural ears are generally described, but docked tails are still expected for many breeds.

Some breeders welcome the changes. Diane Ykelenstam, P.E.I. breeder of miniature schnauzers, reports that one of her dogs reached championship

level with intact ears and tail, out competing his father — the No. 1 miniature schnauzer in the country, with cropped ears and a docked tail — for the final win.

What does this mean for pet owners? Basically, we will all become more accustomed to seeing natural tails and ears on the above-mentioned breeds and many others.

Fewer and fewer people, including veterinarians, support subjecting an animal to painful and unnecessary surgery for the sake of tradition.

Next Month in Animal Talk: Other key changes with the P.E.I. Animal Welfare Act.

Dr. Alice Crook is Co-ordinator of the Sir James Dunn Animal Welfare Centre at the Atlantic Veterinary College, one of the member groups of the PEI Companion Animal Welfare Initiative (CAWI), whose goal is to improve the welfare of owned and unowned companion animals on PEI. Other CAWI members are the PEI Humane Society, SpayAid PEI, Cat Action Team, PEI Veterinary Medical Association, PEI Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and 4-H. Readers may send suggestions for topics to askcawi@gmail.com.