

# A Veterinarian's Role in the Ethics and Welfare of Breeding Dogs

Kelly Arthur, Colorado State University Veterinary Student  
In collaboration with: Jane Shaw, DVM, PhD, Colorado State University  
Brenda Bonnett, BSc, DVM, PhD, International Partnership for Dogs,  
and Patricia Olson, DVM, PhD, DACT, DACAW



## Student Project Goals



Explore the complex, multidisciplinary, multistakeholder aspects of welfare and ethical issues in breeding dogs.



Interact with various stakeholders to gather information on the topic and gain an appreciation of their perspective.



Increase understanding of factors that challenge or support effective communication and good relationships between veterinarians and breeders.



Explore aspects of optimal information transfer for this material to various audiences.

## Student Perspective

This project expanded my understanding of breeding dog welfare beyond what is taught in the current veterinary curriculum. Veterinarians are an integral part in the improvement of dog health. Through one-on-one interactions with clients, work in policy, and education of young veterinary students, veterinarians can influence dog health and welfare. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with leading veterinarians and other stakeholders in this important field.

## Project Outcomes

1. Catalogued 150 resources, including journal articles, online resources, and reports, on the ethics and welfare of breeding dogs; used these in the project and for future development on the topic.
2. Created an ongoing blog on interesting findings and thought-provoking questions that developed through project research. Some blogs topics include veterinary welfare education in the United States and resources for finding the right canine match.
3. Wrote two DogWellNet articles describing One Welfare, an international resource for veterinary welfare education.
4. Developed two innovative, interactive training modules for breeders, veterinarians, and veterinary students for use as educational resources encouraging collaboration between purebred stakeholders. See descriptions below.

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## Module 1

### What is Your Role in Addressing Inherited Disease in Purebred Dogs?

#### Module Goals:

- Raise awareness of difficult ethical questions regarding inherited disease in purebred dogs as they relate to veterinarians, breeders, welfare, and health.
- Reflect on your own clinical practice, breeding, and/or educational experiences and relate it to what is presented in the module for applicable learning.
- Think critically about ways veterinarians and other stakeholders can address inherited disease welfare issues in purebred dogs.

#### Module Highlights:

- Begins with a multiple choice question on which diseases are inherited in dogs.
- Survey of participant's understanding of inherited disease in purebred dogs.
- Explains that most diseases have an inherited component beyond the commonly known inherited diseases.
- Includes 10 discussion questions to encourage conversations on tough topics such as how veterinarians can balance the conflict of interest of protecting dog welfare versus the veterinarian's economic self-interest in treating dogs with inherited disease.
- Imbedded with 39 sources for further information on module topics.
- Raises awareness about a lack of documentation and need for better recordkeeping, analysis and communication on the incidence of inherited disease in purebred dogs.

## Module 2

### How Can You Promote Informed Decision-Making in Acquiring a Purebred Dog?

#### Module Goals:

- Identify factors that influence decisions to acquire a purebred dog.
- Learn how these factors impact the health and welfare of dogs and human-dog interactions.
- Critically evaluate how to guide informed decisions related to acquiring purebred dogs.

#### Module Highlights:

- Survey of participant's opinions of purebred dogs.
- Introduces the importance of the human animal bond in contrast to the challenges associated with dog ownership, such as dog behavioral problems.
- Imbedded with 31 sources for additional information on module topics including resources for finding a reputable breeder and for determining what type of dog best matches a person's lifestyle.
- Includes 20 discussion questions to encourage dialogue on what percentage of clients/puppy buyers seek advice from professionals prior to acquiring a dog and ways to encourage this.
- Discusses estimates for dog acquisition sources (shelter, breeder, rescue, etc.) in the United States and the lack of primary data on dog ownership numbers.
- Describes the popularity of dog breeds, use of purebred dogs in advertisements and the media, and how this influences people's desire to select certain dog breeds.