

## Beware the Serpent

A Breeder's Letter to AKC Judges:

Our father used to tell us that there are people who need to be the groom at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. They are simply people who thrive on controversy, fighting, and control and consistently position themselves at centerfield of the conflict they create. They need attention and power. They will even assume leadership roles of large dog clubs, much like the American Rottweiler Club, and find through such roles, fertile opportunities to meet their needs, even at the expense of trusting members -- and sadly, at the expense of a docked breed's standard, written as such for nearly a century. Imagine a parent club of substantial enrollment whose members take great pride in their work to defend the standard, even voting to retain the "tail docked" language and raising thousands of dollars to maintain awareness across their club of any activity jeopardizing that standard. They elect leaders they trust to defend and promote that standard -- and one day the very president of this membership dares to commence exhibition of an undocked Rottweiler in an AKC ring -- not only an image starkly contrasted against the depiction of the Rottweiler in the breed standard, but also, more poignantly, an act smacking of indifference and unapologetic disregard for the membership who only years before raised over \$6000 to protect and defend the Rottweiler standard from any mixed message about the tail. Members call for his resignation. I am reminded of our father's reference to the prototype -- and doubt there will be any remorse or resignation, instead anticipating a declaration of war. And again, my father was right.

Within weeks, and despite tremendous outrage across the membership of the American Rottweiler Club, an ad appeared in Dog News Magazine, just weeks ago, presented by Blackwood Kennel in which the anonymous author, presumably the wife of the American Rottweiler Club president or the gentleman himself, promoted their undocked AKC exhibit in a full page ad, accompanied by a letter in which they essentially asked each of you to ignore the AKC Rottweiler standard -- which happens to unmistakably state: "Tail docked short, close to body". Consider these two statements: *Do not eat from the forbidden tree. The Rottweiler is a docked breed.* Both leave nothing for misinterpretation. If the serpent had beseeched Eve to judge a tailed Rottweiler rather than to eat from the forbidden tree, I suspect his carefully presented commentary would have sounded very similar to the manipulative opining in this ad. The author provides a professorial and somewhat admonishing lecture about the heritage of our breed followed by what appears to be a left field, highly presumptuous charge for you as an AKC judge: ignore the docked tail language of the standard, and instead, recognize your implicit responsibility to enhance genetic diversity, provide therapeutic opportunities for improving relationships among exhibitors, and reward choice, as if the judging of a breed to an unmistakably clear standard somehow parallels the emotional magnitude and legal ramifications of the pro-life argument. Without momentary reflection, and if it weren't almost humorous,

you might actually be tempted to believe that the author has the best interests of the Rottweiler ahead of his own. The serpent wears many masks.

Of course the Rottweiler standard can be changed to permit undocked Rottweilers and likely will be changed under the current leadership of the American Rottweiler Club. It is commonly known that efforts to promote preservation of our breed standard by earnest and long standing breeders, ARC members and nonmembers, are met with ridicule, insulting personal email messages, and various other forms of retaliation, including efforts to jeopardize the status of breeder judges with the AKC. The ARC has lost substantial membership over the last few years, as many have become discouraged by mean-spirited responses to their communications and concerns. Now as the agenda for revising the standard is coming to light, quality Rottweiler breeders and long standing AKC participants, clearly committed to the "tail docked" language, are applying for membership to the American Rottweiler Club in order to have their vote, yet are finding their membership application denied and without explanation. Meanwhile outspoken pro-tail Rottweiler owners, largely those who have traditionally exhibited in German style venues, are being recruited and accepted, despite letters of protest. ARC membership applications are circulating among them as the legacy and opus of the current leadership unfolds. Sadly, the AKC standard for the Rottweiler will likely be amended as a result of this agenda to incorporate the undocked Rottweiler, and the manner in which the many members in opposition are handled and mistreated upon protest will continue during the current leadership tenure. As a 20+ year member of three of the country's largest Rottweiler clubs and as a 25 year Rottweiler breeder or owner of nearly 70 AKC Rottweiler champions, including multiple top ten Rottweiler dogs and bitches, multiple Best in Show Rottweilers, multiple Best in Specialty Show Rottweilers, two American Rottweiler Club Top Twenty Winners, and a nationally ranked #2 Working Group Rottweiler, I personally assure you that such a revision to the AKC Rottweiler standard to allow for an undocked Rottweiler will have been accomplished tactically, strategically, and skillfully -- but with unconscionable, even contemptuous indifference to the wishes of the majority of AKC Rottweiler breeders and exhibitors in this country who have dedicated patronage at AKC events for decades.

While the 'sins' of this parent club will be visited upon the parent clubs of all docked and cropped breeds who exhibit in the AKC ring, I have confidence in AKC Judges and anticipate that few will be tempted by the serpent -- because a decision for any judge to compromise his/her inviolate duty to judge to the breed standard transcends in impact all other breeds whose standards contemplate a docked tail. Upon what logical framework can any parent club, if challenged, successfully argue the right to crop or dock if the AKC endorses under its Championship stamp of quality undocked exhibits of a breed whose standard unmistakably indicates it is to be docked? The plight of the Rottweiler is significant to all docked and cropped breeds and promises to jeopardize by example. National parent clubs should turn a close eye to the agenda of the

American Rottweiler Club leadership.

In the Blackwood Kennel ad, adjacent to the photo of the undocked Rottweiler is a statement that encourages each of you AKC judges to report to an AKC field representative anyone who essentially attempts to influence you to excuse an undocked Rottweiler. Given the threatening nature of this message to readers of the ad, not inconsistent with the experience of many ARC members and nonmembers under the current parent club leadership -- the serpent removes his mask. His message itself should be contrasted with the years of effort and thousands of dollars in commitment by ARC members to protect their standard. Instead, what is presented appears to be an effort to intimidate, by veiled threat, anyone who asks you to judge according to the standard, appropriately excusing an undocked entry.

We breeders bring you our best, always looking for your best. We don't ask you to provide relationship counseling or to bolster genetic diversity, and most of us don't ask you to revisit the standard to accommodate personal agendas or to display empathy for our European friends who have lost the right to dock. We count on you to honor our AKC Rottweiler standard and our heritage as a docked breed, always remaining vigilant and wary of masked efforts to tempt you to ignore, or by example, rewrite our standard -- or worse, to persuade by intimidation even one of you from doing your good and hard work judging our splendid Rottweiler. Have every confidence that your judging decisions truly define our efforts to maintain our breed standard and communicate your bold integrity in interpreting the standard as written. And please, of course, should an undocked Rottweiler enter your ring, do not hesitate to kindly excuse the dog and mark your judge's book, "Excused, undocked tail not in accordance with the breed standard." This shall remain your prerogative and honor, until such time that even the serpent himself can finally and victoriously say of his own work, "It is finished."

Respectfully yours,  
Suzan Guynn  
Cammcastle Rottweilers

April 11, 2011