



Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Qld Inc

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To the ANKC via Dogs Qld,

Given the changes that have taken place in Europe regarding Intervariety matings, the Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland Inc, through Dogs Queensland, requests that the ANKC considers this proposal to allow breeders to make their own decisions regarding Intervariety matings of Belgian Shepherds.

It is now 5 years since the current policy was put into place and the club requests that the ANKC reconsider it in light of the body of supporting evidence which has come to light in the intervening period.

The current policy is

Normally, inter-variety breeding is forbidden. However, by way of exception, permission can be given for certain variety combinations in special cases, when the request of the breeder is supported by serious and strong arguments. "An improvement of a variety" or "an indispensable broadening of the breeding material" should appear necessary.

A request has to be submitted by the breeder six months in advance of the proposed mating to the ANKC/National Breed Standard Coordinators Group (NBSCG) and has to comprise:

- *a colour photo of each of the breeding partners;*
- *a copy of the pedigrees;*
- *the results, of any gradings ("qualifications") and titles obtained at shows by the breeding partners;*
- *a clearly formulation/written submission stating the purpose of the intended inter-variety breeding, as part of a breeding program.*

Permission will only be given for the following three variety combinations:

1. *Groenendael x Tervueren*
2. *Tervueren x Malinois*
3. *Laekenois x Malinois*

The progeny of the inter-variety mating is registered in the ANKC Stud Book, each puppy according to its variety. Matings later on of such a descendent are only allowed with a breeding partner of the same variety. The progeny of the inter-variety breeding are not to be issued Export Certificates.

The Australian breeders, as surveyed by the BSDCQ, support the variety combinations of Groenendael x Tervueren, Tervueren x Malinois, and Laekenois x Malinois as being acceptable matings. Breedings outside these recommended Intervariety combinations could result in untypical coat texture or colour.

Our most experienced breeders (including, but not limited to, those who are also judges) support Intervariety matings, due to their knowledge that such matings have produced some of the most typical and healthy Belgians in the past and present. We request that the decision to perform such matings be that of the breeder. We do so for the following reasons:

- Although using imported frozen semen is an option which has been taken up by many breeders, this also has limitations, including small litter sizes, many “misses” with no puppies, cost prohibitive for many breeders, and logistical issues for breeders living remotely from AI breeding centres etc. Breeders overseas have very limited access to collection centres and are reluctant to travel to collect their dogs.
- There is a limited gene pool world-wide so the option of importing new dogs/frozen semen to Australia does not widen our local gene pool as there is now so little diversity of bloodlines world-wide in each variety of Belgian Shepherd Dog.
- Importing fresh lines from overseas has become cost prohibitive, with quarantine costs increasing by at least 30% in just 5 years. Airlines now charge by cubic meters not weight, so larger dogs are becoming extremely expensive to ship.
- Intervariety breeding is essential in the Laekenois to maintain the correct coat. Breeders with this variety are fully aware of the responsibility to maintain coat texture by using Malinois. Also due to the limited gene pool, breeders all around the world are doing such Intervariety matings to ensure the quality in their breeding programs. Those breed enthusiasts who do not live in countries where this mating is allowed are forced to import show stock from other countries.
- Issues such as lack of mask, which have been cited as a reason not to allow matings between Groenendael and Tervueren, are now known to be faults carried by the Groenendael but hidden from view. DNA testing can now be done to ensure the Groenendael carries the masking gene prior to mating if necessary. It is also a fault that can usually be seen by 8 weeks of age, and subsequently these puppies can be put onto the Limited Register.
- This would enable breeders to widen the gene pool to
 - minimise the prevalence of Mendelian genetic disorders currently present in the breed, such as hip dysplasia, epilepsy, cancer and cataracts.
 - minimise the current problems of decreased litter size and semen quality which can be associated with inbreeding
 - improve health, breed type and structure.
- In the USA intervariety matings are forbidden as the 4 varieties are not considered the same breed. Unfortunately, this has caused the varieties in this country to “grow

apart” with regard to type, proving that it is important to maintain Intervariety matings to maintain consistent type across all four varieties.

Professor Claire Wade from the University of Sydney recently attended a conference in Sweden which discussed, among other topics, intervariety matings. She has been kind enough to share the findings of the meeting with us (Appendix 1) and to provide a letter of support (Appendix 2).

The current situation worldwide

The FCI encourages interbreeding between varieties when needed for promoting health and genetic diversity (FCI General Assembly 2011) – avoiding breeding long coated to wire coated or risk of untypical coat texture. (Appendix 3)

Subsequent to the 2011 change in FCI policy, Germany has recently approved intervariety breedings with Breed club permission and German breeders have already produced 3 Groenendael x Tervueren litters this year.

Sweden has reinstated intervariety breedings, effective 1st Jan 2013.

Finland allows the three requested intervariety breedings with no restrictions. Groenendael to Malinois matings may be allowed with club permission.

Norway allows the three requested intervariety breedings with club permission.

The UK allows intervariety matings by permission from representatives from each of the 3 breed clubs. Permission has been granted for several Groenendael x Tervueren matings, one Tervueren x Malinois mating and one Laekenois x Malinois mating.

Intervariety matings are allowed in Ireland with consultation with the Breed Club. To date there have been four Intervariety matings of Groenendael x Tervueren.

In France, where the breed is most numerous, the three requested intervariety breedings requested are allowed with Breed club permission.

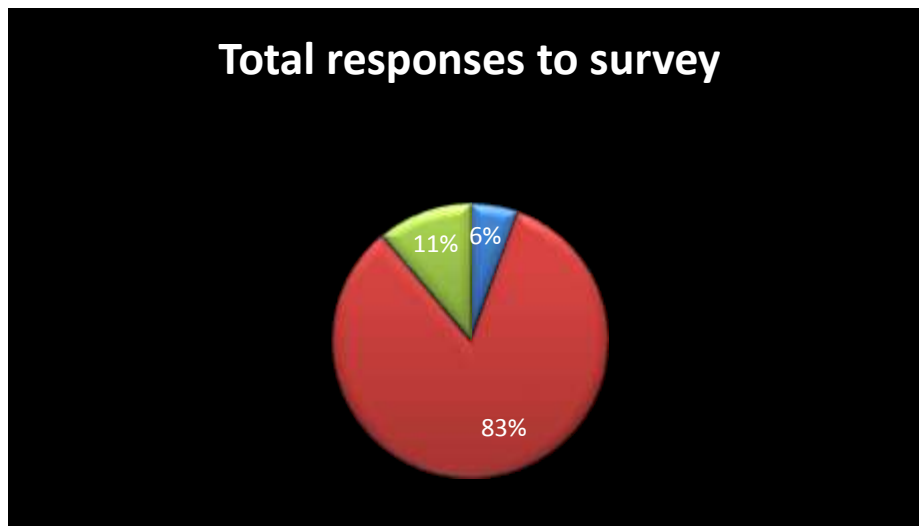
In Italy unrestricted intervariety matings are allowed.

In Canada there are no restrictions as to intervariety matings. This system has not produced irresponsible Intervariety matings and the quality of dogs in Canada is equal to those found elsewhere.

The current situation in Australia

The Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland Inc identified a total of 72 current Belgian Shepherd breeders, owners of stud dogs and exhibitors throughout Australia. These people were canvassed with a breed survey. The possible responses from the survey were “YES I support Intervariety breeding of Groenendael Tervueren, Tervueren x Malinois, Malinois x Laekenois”, or “NO I do not support Intervariety breeding” of Belgian Shepherds.

More than 83% of all known Belgian show breeders have responded to the survey.

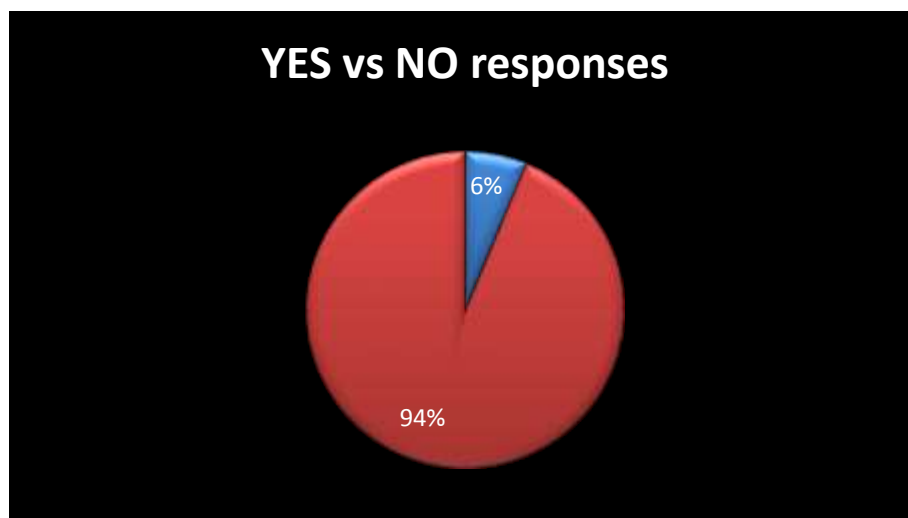


Red – YES to Intervariety 60 breeders

Blue – NO to Intervariety 4 breeders

Green – nil response to survey 8 breeders

A landslide majority of **94%** of responses are in support of this reform.



Red – YES to Intervariety 60 breeders

Blue – NO to Intervariety 4 breeders

Please refer to Appendix 4 for a listing of names, prefixes and state of residence of all 72 breeders/exhibitors identified.

There are three breed clubs in Australia – in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Some breeders, stud dog owners and exhibitors, while maintaining membership of their appropriate state registering body, are not members of a breed club. Others live in a state where there is no breed club. Others are members of all three clubs. It was therefore decided to canvass them individually to obtain a more accurate picture of the current situation than would be gained by asking breed clubs only.

All of those in favour of allowing intervariety matings supported matings at the discretion of the breeder between

1. Groenendael x Tervueren
2. Tervueren x Malinois
3. Laekenois x Malinois

Breeders in Australia are very responsible with the majority performing all of the available health screening tests on their dogs before they enter the breeding program. We believe that these breeders have the knowledge and ability to determine the best matings for their dogs from the gene pool currently available.

Whilst compiling this submission, the BSDCQ has gathered a wealth of statistical data, overseas support letters, supporting articles, genetic research material. It was deemed that this was not to form part of this submission, given the recent changes to FCI policy on widening gene pools, and due to the overwhelming support of Belgian breeders from across Australia. However, if any of these documents are sought for further consideration, we will be happy to provide them.

The BSDCQ, on behalf of all who participated in this survey, trust that this motion be seriously considered and adopted in its entirety.

Regards,

Kathryn Winton

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Secretary – Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Qld Inc

Attachments

Appendix 1 Conference in Sweden inc Intervariety notes

Appendix 2 Letter of support from geneticist Professor Claire Wade

Appendix 3 FCI 09.01.12 Breed specific guidelines re intervariety breedings

Appendix 4 List of votes for and against Intervariety