



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Professor Claire Wade

Chair Computational Biology and Animal Genetics

DATE: 25 June 2012

Gaille Perry
President, Belgian Shepherd Dog Club (Queensland)

Dear Dr Perry,

I understand that the Belgian Shepherd Dog Club of Queensland would like to canvass support to allow club members to perform inter-varietal matings. There are many advantages to allowing Australian National Kennel Club (ANKC) members to carry out such matings.

Inter-varietal matings typically involve crossing dogs from the same breed that have been separated into varieties. Varieties are usually separated for showing purposes based on coat colour or type. A considerable quantity of recent research has shown that the segregation of breeds can be limiting to population diversity, and that this in turn can lead to problems such as increases in the prevalence of Mendelian genetic disorders and reductions in litter size or semen quality. Inter-varietal crossings would enable breeders to benefit from a broader genetic base. Such a broadening not only benefits dog health, but would also give breeders more options for improving breed type and structure.

I have recently returned from Stockholm, Sweden where I attended the Dog Health Workshop sponsored by the Swedish Kennel Club (<http://www.doghealthworkshop.com/>). The workshop was attended by representatives from many Kennel clubs in Europe and the UK as well as geneticists, veterinarians, dog breeders and animal welfare organisation representatives. One workshop topic was related to the concept of allowing inter-varietal breedings in addition to amalgamating breeds with very similar appearance and breed standards but originating in different regions (<http://www.skk.se/in-english/dog-health-workshop-2012/key-issues/recognition-of-breeds/workshop-materials/>). There was broad support at the workshop for the recommendation that inter-varietal matings should be allowed and that the formation of new breeds or breed sub-types should be discouraged.

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It is my understanding the breed standards for the Groenendael, Tervueren, Malinois and Laekenois vary only in relation to the coat type and texture. This would mean that they fall into the class of dogs that might broadly benefit from inter-varietal crossings.

While in the short term off-type animals may occur, the rate of their occurrence is unlikely to present a significant problem for breeders who would be conducting such matings on a voluntary basis. If such crossings were enabled, it might be useful to provide breeders with a booklet or web page that outlines what might be expected from breeding different types together in the short and longer term.

I strongly support the initiative to enable inter-varietal matings not just in this breed but in a significant number of registered breeds in Australia.

I wish you the very best of luck with your endeavours.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Wade'.

Professor Claire Wade