

Golden Retriever Club of America Position Statement Overview

GRCA cares about the Golden Retriever.

With a membership of approximately 5,000 nationwide, the Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) is the largest AKC-affiliated parent breed club in the United States. Since 1938, GRCA has focused its attention on the breeding, care, health, and training of the Golden Retriever, and the education of its members. Golden Retrievers today excel as family companions, hunting dogs, therapy dogs, service dogs, and search and rescue dogs. On behalf of our members, GRCA opposes legislative efforts to curtail our legitimate rights to own, breed, train, and appreciate our dogs.

GRCA encourages responsible dog ownership

Originally, animal control laws served two purposes: 1) to provide a basis for the protection of the public's health, and 2) to provide a means to prosecute animal cruelty. In recent years, however, animal rights groups have pushed to force the government at every level to micromanage dog ownership, especially via numerical limits. We believe, however, that appropriate care for dogs is not related to the number of dogs one owns, but solely by how well one cares for his/her dogs. Every state has animal cruelty statutes and nuisance laws that are sufficient to deal with the cases that arise, as long as they are enforced. Creating more laws to make up for a lack of enforcement will not improve situations where substandard dog care is occurring, but will only succeed in creating more criminals. As our society becomes more urban, the number of people who have extensive experience in animal husbandry is dwindling. Education and training of individuals on how to be responsible dog owners have done more to improve the lives of animals in this country than any legislation.

GRCA supports reasonable and rational boundaries

Still the demand to fix what is not broken continues, with little positive effect. Few of these proposals actually help animals; instead, they attempt to make animal ownership more expensive, more difficult, and sometimes even impossible. Limit laws and higher license fees for intact dogs have been shown not to work, and generally are most difficult to enforce. People resist attempts to accept financial punishment when they know they have done nothing morally or ethically wrong. Intact dogs do not automatically create puppies unless they are allowed to breed without restraint. Responsible owners do not allow their dogs to indiscriminately reproduce. Reputable hobby breeders of purebred dogs, developed for companionship, recreation, and service, should be able to continue their breeding programs to maintain and improve their chosen breeds, without punitive legislation. USDA licensed commercial kennels, which follow the rules and adhere to USDA and state laws, and local laws and standards, should be able to run their businesses without fear of interference from animal rights extremists or excessive legislative mandate. Dangerous dog laws should never target specific breed type, size, or assumed disposition; instead, they should be crafted so they can be fairly enacted across the gamut of

dog ownership, and with a reasonable understanding of typical dog behavior. Because they have proven to be ineffective in reducing the number of dog bites, many communities that previously enacted breed-specific legislation are currently seeking to rescind them. GRCA supports these efforts.

GRCA believes facts matter

Because many of these proposed policies seek to apply a “one size fits all” strategy to the increasingly complex and technical issues regarding proper dog ownership, which change drastically from breed-to-breed, GRCA believes that most legislative attempts to curtail or control the minutiae of dog breeding are completely ineffective. As local ordinances try to restrict the best of our hobby breeders, and after decades of pressure to reduce the numbers of litters produced, the prospective puppy buyer has less success in finding a local breeder that suits their needs. In some parts of the country, this shortage of puppies has given rise to a thriving yet un-regulated Internet-based free-for-all system of dog sales.

GRCA is a resource for anyone interested in Golden Retrievers

Most of GRCA's products and services are available to members and non-members alike. Its network of local member clubs provides referrals to local breeders and local Golden Retriever Rescue. Its website provides online educational material on all aspects of the breed and links to other sources of information on dog ownership. GRCA also provides contacts for a personal response to questions about the breed and its care. As the leading authority on Golden Retrievers in the United States, GRCA and its member clubs nationwide continue to promote the health and welfare of the breed and the educational efforts by AKC and other AKC parent breed clubs. We seek to enable all dog owners to be responsible members of their communities and to ensure the well-being of their dogs.

Golden Retriever Club of America Position on Breeding Restrictions

The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) strongly supports and actively promotes a wide range of programs to educate the public about responsible breeding practices and responsibilities of dog ownership. We also support reasonable and enforceable laws that protect the welfare and health of dogs and do not restrict the rights of breeders and owners that take their responsibilities seriously. GRCA opposes breeding permits, bans, and mandatory spay/neuter of dogs.

GRCA opposes mandatory spay/neuter legislation because: 1) there is no evidence to suggest that it is effective in achieving its stated goal; 2) it causes well-documented health and developmental problems in some pets, especially when performed before sexual maturity; 3) it pushes responsible breeders out of the licensing system; 4) it reduces the availability of well-bred healthy, home bred and raised puppies; 5) it encourages the importation of puppies and dogs from less acceptable sources, including foreign countries; and 6) because laws that force owners to perform surgery on their pets without a rational basis for

doing so may be unconstitutional.

GRCA recognizes that more must be done to educate the public about responsible dog ownership and responsible breeding practices. GRCA is providing this education through their web site (www.grca.org) , as well as through their public education programs. GRCA also assists other breed clubs in furthering their public education programs and information by sharing the material they have produced.

Golden Retriever Club of America Position on Breed Specific Legislation

The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) believes that dog owners should be responsible for their dogs. GRCA supports reasonable, enforceable, non-discriminatory laws to govern the ownership of dogs. We support laws that: 1) establish a fair process by which specific dogs are identified as “dangerous” based on stated, measurable actions; 2) impose appropriate penalties for reckless or irresponsible actions by owners of such dogs; and 3) establish a well-defined method for dealing with dogs proven to be dangerous. We believe that, if necessary, dogs proven to be “dangerous” may need to be humanely euthanized. GRCA strongly opposes any legislation that determines a dog to be “dangerous” based on its breed or physical appearance.

GRCA opposes breed specific legislation. Although our breed is not typically targeted by such legislation, GRCA recognizes the danger in singling out one breed or another as inherently vicious. Such sweeping generalizations do little to increase public safety; they encourage unwarranted and unrealistic urban myths, and ignore the legions of families who own these targeted animals without incident.

We also support reasonable laws to protect the public from dangerous dogs and oppose breed-specific legislation in any form. GRCA believes that breed-specific laws target good dogs and responsible owners along with the bad. GRCA supports nuisance ordinances and dangerous dog laws to protect the community against unruly or dangerous dogs and irresponsible dog owners. GRCA supports sentences for violation of dog confinement and nuisance laws that include mandatory attendance at a basic obedience training class. AKC dog obedience clubs (www.AKC.org) have provided such classes for the general public for decades and, together with private trainers, they represent a well-established community resource for courts dealing with dog-related offenses.

Below is the Position Statement for Resolution 10-09

Golden Retriever Club of America Position on Lemon Laws

The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) supports reasonable laws and regulations intended to protect the pet-buying public in obtaining a sound dog. Breeders and/or sellers should provide buyers with a written contract prior to the sale which details the responsibilities of both the buyer and seller before and after the sale. This contract should clearly detail any exclusion to refunds, replacements or reimbursements. In addition, this contract should include factual history of the dog, its parents and all health clearances. Breeders and/or sellers should be responsible for providing certain refunds, replacements, or reimbursements should the dog sold become ill or die from a condition

contracted prior to the purchase. Such remedies should be conditioned upon the buyer's adherence to the care and feeding program prescribed by the breeder and/or seller, as well as a timely examination by a state licensed veterinarian.

GRCA supports the concept of pet lemon laws, also known as consumer protection laws, as long as they are enforceable and promote reasonable objectives and pre-sale consumer education. We believe that the public is better protected by lemon laws that educate consumers prior to the sale than by laws that attempt to protect customers from every conceivable possibility after the sale. This enables purchasers to distinguish, before they buy, between responsible breeders and careless breeders or sellers.

GRCA believes that buyers have a responsibility to discover the nature, genetic health issues, temperament, activity level, and the housing, exercise, and grooming needs, etc. of the breed they are purchasing. Information can be obtained through the websites of GRCA (www.GRCA.org), the American Kennel Club (www.AKC.org), and other resources. Below is the Position Statement for Resolution 10-08

Golden Retriever Club of America Position on Limit Laws

The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) strongly endorses the right to own, keep, and breed dogs in a responsible and humane manner. We believe that responsible dog ownership is compatible with most living arrangements. A coercive law that limits the number of dogs an individual may own is an ineffective solution to animal control problems because it fails to address the issue: irresponsible ownership. Limit laws can be easily evaded by irresponsible animal owners who don't license their pets.

GRCA opposes pet limit laws, recognizing that it isn't the number of dogs one owns that determines the quality of care they receive. GRCA agrees that consistent enforcement of existing animal control laws can solve most nuisance complaints in a community.

Limit laws can drive a wedge between animal control agencies and many of the citizens they serve who responsibly keep more than the allowed number of pets. Such laws drive owners underground, lowering license compliance rates.

Instead of limit laws, GRCA supports thoughtfully written nuisance and cruelty laws. Nuisance laws should require pet owners to be considerate of their neighbors. The law should require pets to be confined to their own property, in control, or on leash when off their property; set and describe standards for acceptable levels of barking; mandate how often yards must be picked up and how often dog runs must be cleaned. Approximately 50 percent of all American households keep pets, so it is also imperative that nuisance laws are written using "reasonable man" standards so that unreasonable or hypersensitive individuals cannot hold an entire neighborhood hostage by trying to enforce irrational or overreaching demands.

Golden Retriever Club of America Position Statement on Guardianship

The Golden Retriever Club of America (GRCA) supports the use of the term “owner” rather than “guardian” when referring to the keeping of dogs. GRCA believes that the term guardian may in fact reduce the legal status and value of dogs as property and thereby restrict the rights of owners, veterinarians, and government agencies to protect and care for dogs. It may also subject them to frivolous and expensive litigation.

GRCA opposes the term “guardian” when referring to the keeping of dogs. Although animal rightists claim it improves the bond between human and animal, a recent study says, “Although results did not indicate a negative impact of the term guardian, its use was not associated with an enhanced bond between owner and dog.”* The term “guardian” does nothing to promote more responsible treatment of dogs.

GRCA strongly supports efforts to educate the public about responsible dog ownership to ensure that all dogs receive the care, love, and attention they deserve. For over seventy years, responsible breeders and members of the Golden Retriever Club of America have been dedicated to improving the health and care of the Golden Retriever.

GRCA also opposes the guardianship campaign because it:

- interferes with private contracts between buyers and sellers;
- may result in loss of well-loved animals;
- will do nothing to improve animal care;
- could interfere with biomedical research involving animals, which is already strictly regulated by the federal government;
- could interfere with farmer’s decisions about animal husbandry practices;
- has the potential to clog courts with specious cases;
- will do nothing to get stray animals off the streets; and
- bases all animal care decisions on the preferences of a minority group of activists, not on the experience of animal owners, trainers, and scientists who are part of the majority.

* <http://tinyurl.com/od5q4l>

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19335239?ordinalpos=57&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_DefaultReportPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum