

Points on Pets: Vets loath to clip pups' heads or tails

by R.G. Elmore, D.V.M.

Q: Have most veterinarians changed their opinions regarding ear cropping and tail docking in very young puppies? We have raised schnauzers for years. Since our veterinarian retired a couple of years ago, we are having difficulty finding a new veterinarian to do our ear crops for us. We have found that most young veterinarians have not been taught how to do this procedure.

Although we do not feel strongly about whether or not to have our puppies' ears cropped, our customers generally want their dogs to have cropped ears. We do not see that this procedure is much different than humans being pierced in every conceivable place.

A: For many years, tail docking and ear cropping strictly for cosmetic purposes have been very controversial subjects among many groups owning and interested in animals. Most knowledgeable animal authorities have stated that routine ear cropping and tail docking are only cosmetic procedures and do not benefit the animals on which they are performed. These procedures do cause pain and suffering, particularly when not done by skilled and knowledgeable individuals using pain-control drugs during and after the procedures.

The American Veterinary Medical Association, which represents most of the practicing veterinarians throughout the United States, continues to support the following statement regarding ear cropping and tail docking:

"Ear cropping and tail docking in dogs for cosmetic reasons are not medically indicated nor of benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss and infection. Therefore veterinarians should counsel dog owners about these matters before agreeing to perform these surgeries."

Although whether or not to have an animal's ears cropped or its tail docked is still a decision given to the owners in most jurisdictions, many veterinarians do not do these procedures on the basis they do cause unnecessary pain and suffering and do not benefit the animal. Hopefully, dog owners of the future will appreciate full ears and tails.

Q: After our dog was involved in an accident in which he had to receive blood transfusions, I began to wonder if there are commercially available blood substitutes for dogs. I am concerned about the safety of blood transfusions. Are veterinarians trained to screen blood for diseases that might be transmitted between dogs?

A: Commercially prepared products are available for veterinarians to use instead of whole blood transfusions

in dogs. However, these are not always helpful in every case in which a blood transfusion might be required.

Most veterinarians maintain a group of disease-free blood donors. These are often clinic pets that live great lives and do not resist donating blood occasionally. These dogs get pampered and are greatly appreciated for their donations to help save other dogs. Generally, you should not worry about your dog being exposed to diseases because of needing a transfusion.

Â© Copley News Service

Points on Pets: Vets loath to clip pups' heads or tails by R.G. Elmore, D.V.M.