

**Hellmuth Wachtel kuuluu Wienissä sijaitsevan Schönbrunnin eläintarhan eläintieteen ja ekologian neuvontaryhmään (the Advisory Board for Zoobiology, Zoology and Ecology). Hän on kirjoittanut paljon kirjoituksia koirarotujen geneettisestä monimuotoisuudesta, mm. kirjan 'Hundezucht 2000'. Tässä hänen ajatuksiaan kennelliittojen roolista koiranjalostuksessa. Myös Suomen Kennelliitto mainitaan tässä kirjoituksessa, jonka Wachtel postitti huhtikuussa 2002 englanninkieliselle koira-aiheiselle postituslistalle CANGEN-L.**

"Originally Kennel Clubs [KC] are registries that also organize shows. An auxiliary organisation of the pedigree dog producing industry. Some of these were until most recently mainly limited to these objectives, like the KC and the AKC [Kennel Club Englannissa ja American Kennel Club USA:ssa]. But times change, so inevitably new tasks arise with new challenges and dangers, the CHF [Canine Health Foundation] of AKC is an example."

"Owing to public and often governmental pressure and growing health problems, an increasing number of KCs start enlarging their services. One, like the much discussed Dutch KC, even introduce now central breeding rules. Others limit themselves to formulate general rules without detailed regulations and just exert moral influence. The AKC who longest stuck to the "just registry" conception, now spends a sizeable sum for canine health research (and e.g. BSL matters [breed specific legislation], too!). Incidentally, (continental) European KCs always were more health - and less inbreeding - minded than their insular counterpart. I remember a discussion on inherited teeth loss between Austrian canine scientist Dr. Haupt and a British breeder half a century ago, the latter asking "Well, do you breed dogs or teeth?" Perhaps this was why the British were more successful in creating popular breeds but now we have the mess..

Now let me formulate my idea on it. I think KCs cannot escape taking more responsibility for canine health. A dog breed is a living organism in its own right. It can be endangered and even be doomed if not cared for. Breed clubs mostly cannot afford genetic counseling or scientific breed analyses alone. A central genetic counseling service is indispensable.

Picking out dangerous diseases like rotten potatoes and trying to fix the problem by finding markers for carriers is most necessary but not enough. Ways to ensure better breeding in future to prevent new problems must be found. Coming back to roots, this will mean that dog shows, originally created to find the best breeding dogs, future shows will have to disqualify not only cryptorchids and the like but also dogs that do not pass a rigid health and function control. And stud books will have to reject litters with too high COIs [coefficient of inbreeding, sukusiitoskerroin] or overused parents, as Finland's KC proposed as early as in the nineties! It was rejected by the breeders then, but what a difference in the understanding of a KC's role with KCs like KC or AKC! Health is the foremost challenge of all dog breeding, and health is not just trying to control defects but also fighting against inbreeding depression and defect gene spreading by top studs. BTW, this fight costs much less than DNA tests and is double effective (against inherited diseases -and- inbreeding depression). Certainly, it is not an alternative, but a supplementary strategy.

The dog fancy will have to understand that healthier dogs mean a better image of the purebred and thus a greater market, less problems at breeding, with customers, ARs (Animal Rightists; extreme animal protection people that even postulate banning any pet keeping etc., in USA and elsewhere), governments and more money for the KC... I think no KC can escape this perspective. The big

problem: breeders mostly don't wish a "dog government" above them... Today, most wish to be left alone to do whatever they like. But years ago, the Danish KC president said analogously "you breeders are not any more working in a closed workshop. Society is looking over your shoulder.." So breeders will have to show understanding that a more cooperative way of thinking and acting will be indispensable in future, as the uprising beginnings (Kennel Clubs of Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and even AKC) show. Only a cooperative but democratic dog fancy can thrive in future...

And, yes, some KCs even contemplate taking on all canine aspects, sport, legislation, mixed breeds, negotiating as partners with authorities on canine matters, etc. At any rate, the dog fancy is in transformation."

Hellmuth Wachtel