

VETERINARY OUTREACH FOR KENNEL CLUBS

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AKC NEWS & CLUBS

This article has been approved by the AKC Delegates' Health Committee and its distribution is encouraged.

The AKC's Veterinary Outreach program is designed to share information regarding the AKC and purebred dogs with veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and veterinary students. A strong relationship between the AKC and the veterinary community is essential to further understanding among veterinary groups and purebred dog fanciers.

Particular emphasis has been placed on educating and familiarizing today's veterinary students with the AKC, the variety of competitive venues, its involvement in canine health research through the AKC Canine Health Foundation, initiatives such as DNA profiling, and the AKC's message to veterinarians about their role in educating clients about responsible dog ownership.

While the AKC has built student relationships through scholarships, presentations at vet schools, and distribution of the AKC's Complete Dog Book, these relationships are the most successful and fulfilling when initiated at the local level. Here are some ideas and programs that have been implemented by local kennel clubs around the country to foster these relationships.

Scholarships

The AKC awards more than \$175,000 in scholarships each year to outstanding veterinary students and students in vet tech programs. It is estimated that an additional \$250,000 in scholarships are made available each year through direct

awards from AKC licensed and member kennel clubs. Scholarships can go a long way in building the kennel club/vet school relationship. Don't just offer the funds. Take full advantage of the publicity opportunities. Include in your premium lists the information that a portion of the proceeds from the show will be donated to the scholarship fund. Ask to be invited to ceremonies (if any) where the scholarships are awarded. Be there to present the award and use the opportunity to generate interest in your club. Contact the local media. Many smaller communities are happy to profile local individuals of special interest. Lastly, contact the AKC Vet Outreach department. They can assist you in crafting a scholarship that meets your kennel club's objectives, whether it's awarding a local student, a student interested in a certain area of specialty or research, creating an endowment, or simply naming the scholarship.

Health Clinics

With an increasing number of kennel clubs sponsoring health clinics, this presents an outstanding opportunity to involve the veterinary students as staffing volunteers. They can assist in holding dogs, handling paperwork, managing the patient flow, and in some cases even giving shots or drawing blood. This provides the students with exposure to breeds unfamiliar to them, and begins to familiarize them with the special needs of their future breeder clientele. While many students may be willing to do this as a learning experience, or simply to

spend a day with the dogs, you can always encourage participation by offering lunch, or giving a donation back to their local veterinary student club or organization.

Facilities

Facilities are an area where local clubs can benefit from the veterinary school. Often, the school's facilities can be made available to the club for meetings, seminars, or classes. Most veterinary schools host open houses. Ask if your kennel club can participate with an information table on club activities and classes offered to the community. In exchange, allow the veterinary school to set up an informational table at your shows or community events.

Joint Sponsorship of Community Events

Whether sponsoring a full-fledged health clinic, a microchipping clinic, obedience demonstration, CGC testing, or any event oriented at educating the community regarding responsible dog ownership, contact the school and ask them to be involved.

Student or Associate Memberships

Create a non-voting, non dues-paying student or associate membership and invite the students to become club members. Most vet students are there because they have an innate love and interest in animals. Many of them have never been exposed at all to the world of purebred dogs. Who knows, you may not only gain some working members, but you may create a

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new lifelong participant in one of the AKC's many sports.

Student Volunteers at Dog Shows / Classes

Many clubs utilize Boy Scout troops or other civic organizations to help staff their shows. Consider using vet student volunteers. For a small donation back to their student clubs, or perhaps even in gratitude for scholarship offerings, they may represent a ready and able workforce. Students can easily be trained to ring steward or assist in many of the other activities involved in putting on a show or trial.

Libraries

Most dog owners have built a base of dog related books and videos. When the membership of an entire kennel club is inventoried, the collection is liable to be substantial. Create a list. Share your books amongst other members, and make the materials available to the student base for borrowing.

Presentations

Presentations offer another great opportunity to promote the

relationship between the club and the veterinary school and students. They are especially ideal because there is the opportunity for two-way learning. Clubs often have a difficult time in putting together programs for their meetings. The student and faculty base provides a great source for presenting canine health related information to the club. Conversely, the kennel club membership is a great source to present information back to the students on the sport of purebred dogs, legislative issues, and responsible dog ownership.

Whelp-Watch

One of the most innovative programs is a local kennel club's whelp-watch initiative with its local vet school. Remember, many of the students may not come from any type of animal husbandry background and may have never seen a live animal delivery. The whelp watch program matches interested students with kennel club members who have bitches in whelp. When the whelping takes place, the student is on call and invited to come and

learn from the experience. While the whelp-watch program is a particularly pertinent example, there are any number of other unique canine health related issues a breeder might deal with that may be of interest to a group of students.

So, if your kennel club is within reasonable distance of a vet school or even a vet tech program, take advantage of it. Make friends, build relationships, tap into a new source of talent, and promote your kennel club, its events, and responsible dog ownership. In doing so, everyone wins—most importantly, the dogs.

For more information on how you or your club can become more involved, or for assistance in contacting your local veterinary school, please visit the AKC's Veterinary Outreach website at www.akc.org/vetoutreach or contact them directly at (919) 816-3717 or via email at vetoutreach@akc.org.

