

AKC Gazette Column - by Grace Massey

About the AKC Breed Columns:

The Breed columns are a time-honored feature of the AKC Gazette. Each columnist is appointed by a breed's national parent club, which preserves the breed's standard and helps to educate breeders, judges, and the public about the breed's history, function, and possible health issues. A national parent club is comprised of dedicated breeders and fanciers, and it represents many years of collective experience in the breed. Columnists are asked to write about topics of interest to the fancy in general as well as those of specific interest to judges and devotees of the breed.

Australian Terrier Breed Column

February 2019 Issue

The Global Sustainability of the Australian Terrier

Sustainability is the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level. Many breeds have been experiencing a yearly decline in the number of individuals registered with AKC, leading many to question if these breeds are sustainable. The Australian Terrier is one that has been experiencing such a decline for many years (309 registered in 2008 down to 160 in 2017!). The 2017 registrations are only 52% of those registered in 2008. Knowing that there are many pet owners that decide not pay to have their Aussies registered, one might first think that it isn't a big deal. However, the number of litters and the total number of their complement (or the number of puppies identified in each litter by the breeder) are declining at an even more alarming rate. In 2008 there were 178 litters born (a total of 784 puppies) and in 2017 there were only 61 litters (281 puppies). The number of puppies born in 2017 is only 36% of the number of puppies in 2008.

The reduction of Aussie litters registered could be due to a reduction in the number of litters bred each year. Or it could be because breeders that used to register with AKC are now not registering their litters at all, or perhaps breeders are registering them with other registries such as the United Kennel Club (UKC) or the Continental Kennel Club (CKC-USA). In an effort to find an answer to this question, I contacted both registries to get some yearly statistics from them. CKC-USA didn't bother to respond, and UKC responded that they were a privately held company and their registration figures are kept confidential. Therefore, unless someone else can obtain these statistics, we may never know if this is a viable explanation to at least a part of the reduced number of Australian Terrier litters produced each year in the United States.

When we think of sustainability of a breed, we must be careful to not consider only one population of the breed. Thinking of litters produced only in the USA is short-sighted; we must think globally. Therefore, I have reached out to registries around the world and have requested the following statistics (for each year from 2008 through 2017): (1) the number of Australian Terrier litters each year, (2) the total number of pups (complement) in each year's litters, (3) the average number of puppies per litter each year (which could be calculated by dividing the total number of pups each year by the corresponding number of litters), (4) the number of individual Australian Terriers (not including imports) registered each year, and (5) the number of Australian Terriers imported into that country each year. So far, I have received statistics from Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, Germany, and Australia. I also have someone working on the statistics for England, Canada, and Estonia. However, we need statistics from any country where Australian Terriers are bred! I have contacted Denmark, Norway, and New Zealand but have not heard back from them. If there is anyone that has direct contact with the registries in these countries and can help facilitate obtaining the above statistics, I would greatly appreciate it. I have also been told we should contact France, Holland, and Russia. If anyone can help facilitate obtaining statistics from these countries, and any others where Australian Terriers are bred, please contact Grace at firewalkeraussies@gmail.com. The results of this study will be shared globally so we may address the sustainability of the Australian Terrier together!

This global statistics study is only a small part of the mission of a new committee put together by the Australian Terrier Club of America to start to address the sustainability of the Australian Terrier.

More information about the committee and how you can help will be published in our newsletter, the Talkabout.

