

## AVMA Opposes Dog Ear Cropping, Tail Docking

**Vet association affirms opposition to such procedures for purely cosmetic reasons.**

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The American Veterinary Medical Association Executive Board issued a revised policy on Wednesday clarifying its stance on ear cropping and tail docking.

The revised policy states: "The AVMA opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes. The AVMA encourages the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards."

"For many years the AVMA has acknowledged that ear cropping and tail docking of dogs for cosmetic purposes are not medically indicated nor of benefit to our canine patients," said Ron DeHaven, DVM, chief executive officer of the AVMA. "Our latest policy revision doesn't represent a change in perspective, but, rather, makes that perspective clear with a stronger statement."

The decision to strengthen the association's policy resulted from a scheduled review of the existing policy.

"Why we perform certain procedures is one of the first questions we ask," said Gail Golab, DVM, director of the AVMA Animal Welfare Division. "'Cosmetic' implies the basis for these procedures is to alter the dog's appearance. Welfare risks identified included those associated with surgical procedures, i.e., anesthetic complications, pain, blood loss, and infection. In the committee's opinion, the risk-benefit analysis supports professional opposition to performing these procedures for purely cosmetic reasons."

However, AVMA points out that if the surgery is needed to protect the health and welfare of the dog — for therapeutic or preventive purposes — then it would support the appropriate surgery.

The American Kennel Club responded to the AVMA's newly amended policy on ear cropping and tail docking, and stated that mislabeling these procedures as cosmetic was a "severe mischaracterization that connotes a lack of respect and knowledge of history and the function of purebred dogs." The AKC also stated that breed standards are established and maintained by AKC parent clubs (each of the AKC-registered breeds is stewarded by a breed-specific parent club) keeping foremost in mind the welfare of the breed and the function it was bred to perform.