

**Position statement:  
Welfare of breeding dogs**

The American College of Theriogenologists and Society for Theriogenology promote the breeding of healthy, genetically superior dogs to maintain a diverse canine population that meets the needs of society for companion dogs and working dogs. The College and Society support practices to promote optimal health of all breeding dogs. Purpose-bred dogs are maintained subject to regulation by institutional and government agencies, while similar guidelines for non-institutional breeders are lacking. This position statement refers to care and management of breeding of dogs intended for personal ownership. It is the position of the ACT and SFT that:

- Animals must be provided water, food, proper handling, health care, and environments appropriate to their species and use, and should be cared for in ways that prevent and minimize fear, pain, distress, and suffering.
- Specifically, all breeding animals should be housed in clean, properly sized facilities that permit them to express normal behavior, include environmental enrichment, and are appropriate for stage of life. Male and female dogs may be co-housed in social units except for those times when bitches are in estrus. Specific attention to individual temperament to avoid inter animal aggression is required. Regular observation of and interaction with dogs by handlers must occur.
- Dogs should have access to a balanced diet that is appropriate for their life stage and fed to them in a manner that will permit them to maintain a body condition score (BCS) of 4 or 5 out of 9, excepting certain breeds of dogs such as sight hounds that are naturally lean in body type. Fresh water should be available. Dogs should have routine health care and disease prophylaxis including regular veterinary examination, vaccination, internal and external parasite control, dental care and coat care when applicable.
- Dogs intended for breeding should be evaluated for hereditary disorders before being bred. Owners of breeding dogs should develop a breeding plan with a veterinarian to minimize or eliminate production of puppies with hereditary defects.
- All dogs intended for breeding should be appropriately tested for canine brucellosis to prevent spread of this disease. At a minimum, both members of a breeding pair should be tested prior to each breeding. All dogs intended for breeding should be regularly tested for canine brucellosis, either at the time of breeding or every six months.
- Intact male dogs should be regularly evaluated by a veterinarian for prostate and testicular disease. Bitches should be regularly evaluated by a veterinarian for pyometra and mammary neoplasia. Decisions about when to spay or castrate individual dogs and bitches no longer intended for breeding should be made with the counsel of a veterinarian.
- Bitches should not be bred before they are physically mature and should not be bred on the first estrous cycle without the advice of a veterinarian. Bitches may be bred on consecutive estrous cycles if they maintain or regain their breed appropriate body condition and are deemed healthy on the basis of veterinarian examination prior to the onset of the next proestrus.
- Bitches approaching or exceeding the critical age at which reproductive efficiency for their breed or type declines and pregnancy-associated risks increase should not be bred without the counsel and advice of a veterinarian.

