



# National Cocker Spaniel Council (Australia)

## DISCUSSION PAPER

**To:** National Cocker Spaniel Council (Aust)  
**From:** Cocker Spaniel Club of Victoria Inc  
**Topic:** Health Document  
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### PURPOSE

The purpose of this discussion paper is threefold;

1. To consider ways in which Breed Council members can structure an environment where health information affecting the Cocker Spaniel- including current, new and emerging research – can be exchanged and augmented.
2. To consider how we access the most consistent evidentially based information emerging from England, America, and Australia, including the ANKC and our sister clubs, and well as other sources as they might become evident from time to time.
3. To consider the manner in which new research becomes available and can be disseminated.

### RATIONALE:

Some of the most significant Cocker Spaniel breed clubs in the world have links on their website pages to health and welfare issues.

For example, the parent club of the breed, The Cocker Spaniel Club (UK) has the following

- (i) A Health Coordinator
- (ii) Information about the health and welfare of the breed on its webpage
- (iii) A Report of Health Condition Form where health conditions can be reported to the Club in strict confidence.

The English Cocker Spaniel Club of America has one of the oldest continuous Health Committees of all the 150 breed member clubs of the American Kennel Council. The purpose of the Health and Rescue Committee, chaired by Addi Pittman, is, first, to facilitate discussion and information relating to health issues within the breed to members and fanciers. Second, health and related research information is disseminated in their newsletters, And, third, surveys are regularly conducted to formulate an encompassing picture of health issues in the Cocker Spaniel. Currently, the Health and Rescue Committee is conducting research into Addison's Disease.

The reasoning here centres on the belief that by identifying prevalent or protracted problems in the breed action can be taken to research serious or ongoing genetic conditions which can afflict the Cocker Spaniel. Examples of successful action include developing DNA testing for PRA, FN and AON, most predominantly.

## **OUR OBJECTIVE:**

A key objective of the National Cocker Spaniel Council (Aust), as noted on its webpage under Health Testing, is to encourage and promote the quality of breeding, care, training and exhibition of the Cocker Spaniel. Our position is that health testing on all breeding dogs is a key element in improving the quality of the Cocker Spaniel. In its present form this page only lists the various hereditary diseases and the testing that can be obtained from various sources.

However, the National Breed Council has no sub-committee relating to the health and welfare of the breed nor conduit for the sharing of relevant contemporary and developing health information which would facilitate these aims.

## **SUPPORTING REGULATIONS IN THE NCSC (AUST) CONSTITUTION:**

Regulation 2.7: to collect, verify and publish information relating to the Cocker Spaniel, and the breeding and exhibition of the Cocker Spaniel

Regulation 3.1.4: to correspond and become associated with overseas Cocker Spaniel organisations for the purpose of the exchange of viewpoints on matters affecting the welfare of the Cocker Spaniel.

## **DISCUSSION POINTS:**

1. Developing a network to share evidential information concerning new research outcomes and other information that becomes available from time to time relevant to the general well being of the Cocker Spaniel and breeding practices such that we have regular access to the latest developments
2. Implementation could be explored through
  - (i) Correspondence with various organisation such as occurred with The Cocker Club (UK) and the University of Sydney
  - (ii) Instituting more formal arrangements with The Cocker Club (UK) and the English Cocker Club of America
  - (iii) Investigating the processes used and findings existing in other breeds Clubs concerning the management and exchange of health information, for example those applied by the Golden Retriever Club.
  - (iv) Investigate the possibility of conducting a breed survey to determine key health issues and to testing measures.

## **IN CONCLUSION:**

This discussion paper has been written to address some serious omissions and concerns relating to the adhoc health policies of the Breed Council and various sister Clubs. We all agree on the importance of publicising the availability of the tests now easily accessible for a number of genetic conditions germane to the Cocker Spaniel. And, such information is available on most breed club websites. However, consistency of information and the ability to share such information could be improved. We feel that this task could easily be incorporated into the framework of the NCSC (AUST) under the head of a sub-committee. Moreover, the various sister Clubs could then benefit from the aggregation of this informational framework and knowledge.