

# Docking of dogs



The law regarding the docking of dogs' tails changed in Wales on 28th March 2007, in England on 6th April 2007, in Scotland on 30th April 2007 and in Northern Ireland on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011. Apart from the fact that the legislation came into effect earlier in England and Wales, the law is the same for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Throughout the UK dogs may only be docked by a veterinary surgeon whatever method of docking is used. Docking for therapeutic reasons, such as injury, may be undertaken by a vet on any dog at any time. Docking for prophylactic reasons (i.e. to prevent disease) may only be performed before the puppy is a week old.

## **England and Wales**

It is legal for a veterinary surgeon to dock a puppy of specified breeds (the breeds are different for England and Wales) from a working bitch. The criteria for 'working' are essentially: working to the gun; as a terrier; or for the police or other government agency. Dogs docked as working dogs must be permanently identified with a microchip and must have a certificate from the veterinary surgeon who docked the puppy. Any dog docked after the legislation came into force must have a certificate. Irrespective of where they were docked, they may not be shown at shows in England and Wales where the public is charged a fee for admission. However if the competition is on the ability of the dogs, such as field trials or agility, docked dogs may compete.

## **Scotland**

It is illegal to dock a puppy or to remove it from the country to have it docked elsewhere; however, if they were docked legally either in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or abroad they may be shown at any show in Scotland.

## **Northern Ireland**

The 2011 Welfare of Animals Act outlaws tail docking to the same extent as in England and Wales.