



HSCC Position Statement: Surgeries for Cosmetic Purposes

Position: The Humane Society of Chittenden County (HSCC) opposes tail docking and ear cropping of dogs solely for cosmetic purposes.

Definition: Tail docking, which involves removing several inches of a puppy's tail, typically is done without anesthesia when puppies are between two and five days of age. The procedure may be performed by a veterinarian, but is commonly done by the breeder or guardian. Ear cropping, which involves removing part of the pinna (ear flap), is usually performed under general anesthesia by a veterinarian, when a puppy is between nine and fourteen weeks of age; following the procedure, the ears require a period of bandaging and splinting to make them stand erect.

Consequences: Both tail docking and ear cropping are generally done to meet breed standards or for the guardian's convenience. However, such cosmetic procedures are not medically indicated or physically beneficial to the dog. Not only do such surgeries cause pain and distress for the animals, but, as with all surgical procedures, they are accompanied by risks of anesthesia, blood loss, infection, and other possible complications. In addition, the tail and ears are used extensively as part of a dog's behavioral repertoire, signaling submission, aggression, and alertness among other things.

Consequently, HSCC finds such procedures unacceptable since the potential suffering and disfigurement they cause are not offset by any benefits to the animal.

Resources

American Veterinary Medical Association
Canadian Veterinary Medical Association
World Small Animal Veterinary Association