

# media release

## **PEDIGREE DOGS EXPOSED: RSPCA CALLS FOR CHANGE**

Pedigree dog breeders in Australia have a tremendous opportunity to lead by example and fundamentally change the way dogs are bred in this country.

The RSPCA has called on breeders to put the focus back on health, welfare and functionality rather than breeding for appearance and adherence to strict breed standards.

The RSPCA's Chief Scientist, Dr Bidda Jones, said the documentary, *Pedigree Dogs Exposed*, highlighted some serious problems in the pedigree dog breeding world, problems we're not immune from in Australia.

"In the UK, all of the top 50 registered breeds have at least one inherited disorder: 35 of those breeds are in Australia's top 50. Australian breed standards reflect international breed standards so we are certainly dealing with similar issues here.

"Many breed standards have a strong emphasis on physical appearance. Unfortunately, there is a preference for some of the more exaggerated and extreme physical traits such as flat and short faces, excessive skin folds, large bulging eyes, very long backs, very short legs and massive heads.

"As a result we are breeding dogs that have difficulty breathing, difficulty walking, dogs that can't give birth naturally and dogs with chronic ear, back, eye, skin and joint problems.

"Despite all the evidence against inbreeding, the Australian National Kennel Council is still operating a closed studbook system and registering first and second degree matings (mothers with sons, grandfathers with granddaughters), increasing the chances of inherited disorders and making the puppies less resistant to infectious and genetic diseases.

"There are responsible breeders in Australia who are working hard to overcome these problems, but what is needed is a major shift in attitudes to make breeding a healthy, functional pet more important than adherence to an arbitrary set of physical attributes."

The RSPCA says everyone has a role to play, including people who buy pedigree dogs. Without asking the right questions, they may inadvertently be contributing to this problem. Check out the RSPCA's *Smart Puppy Buyer's Guide* for tips on how to find a responsible breeder who puts welfare first - [www.rspca.org.au](http://www.rspca.org.au).