

In Defense of Dog Breeders

How Animal Rights Has Twisted Our Language

By: JOHN YATES

American Sporting Dog Alliance

<http://www.americansportingdogalliance.org>

"You're a dog breeder!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

In today's world, that is a very loaded statement. It's more like an accusation.

"I told the television news reporter that I breed dogs," a friend from Dallas told me recently. "He looked at me like he thought I was a harlot."

Dog owners have allowed the animal rights movement to redefine our language in order to paint everything we do in the worst possible light. If we say that we breed dogs, the looks we get ask us if we own a "puppy mill" or if we are a "backyard breeder."

If we reply that we are a "hobby breeder," someone immediately asks how we can consider living creatures a hobby. Some of us try the word "fancier." We fool no one.

The most pathetic response to the question is when we call ourselves "responsible breeders." Responsible to whom? Who defines "responsible" and "irresponsible?" Some bureaucrat? A politician? Animal rights cretins who say there is no such thing as a responsible breeder? Animal rights fanatics would rather kill all animals than see someone love them. In fact, that's their plan.

If we say we are not breeders, it makes us "pet hoarders." We are tarred as mentally ill people in need of psychotherapy.

The entire language about dog ownership has been hijacked by the rhetoric of the animal rights movement.

The worst part is that we have allowed it to happen. We are too fearful and wimpy to stand up for ourselves. We keep searching for inoffensive euphemisms to describe what we do, so that we don't open ourselves up to attack.

By doing that, however, we have engineered our own demise.

The animal rights movement will not go away. Its agenda is to destroy our right to own or raise animals. Animal rights groups have declared war on all animal ownership, and they won't stop until they either win or we finally have the courage to stand up and defeat them.

They have not taken that kind of power over us. We have given it away. We have surrendered our beliefs to the enemy.

We apologize for what we do. We make weak excuses for things like animal shelter euthanasia, accidental matings, dog fighting and dangerous dogs. We take at least part of the responsibility for these problems onto our own shoulders, when in truth we have no responsibility at all for creating them.

None whatsoever!

I am sick and tired of watching dog owners constantly apologize and grovel, and allowing themselves to be put on the defensive.

Enough! It's time to stop sniveling about who we are and what we do.

Let me state clearly and for the record: I am a dog breeder. I breed dogs. I raise puppies. I like it. I'm very proud of it.

If you don't like it, you are free to take a flying leap. I don't care what you think of me or what I do.

I raise two or three litters of English setter puppies a year. I wish I could raise more puppies, but can't figure out how to do it without driving myself into bankruptcy.

My dogs work for a living, just like I do. They have to be good at their jobs, just like I do. If they aren't good at their jobs, I don't keep them and I certainly don't breed them.

They are hunting dogs, and they have to be able to perform to a very demanding standard of excellence to be worthy of breeding. They have to meet the exacting standard of championship-quality performance in the toughest competition.

They are professional athletes.

Most of them don't make the cut. Those dogs make wonderful hunting companions or family members.

I have never had a dog spayed or neutered, except for medical reasons, and I don't intend to start now. If a dog is good enough for me to keep, it is good enough to breed.

Nor have I ever sold a puppy on a spay/neuter contract. With performance dogs, it takes two or three years to know what you have. There is no way that anyone can know the full potential or worthiness of a young puppy. I hope every puppy that I sell will become a great one that is worthy of being bred.

I do not feel bad (and certainly do not feel guilty) if someone decides to breed a dog from my kennel that I did not choose to keep for myself when it was a puppy. It still will be a very nice dog, and I have worked very hard on my breeding program for 35 years to assure that very high quality genetics will be passed along and concentrated in any dog that I sell.

On occasion, I have a puppy that has a serious flaw. I don't sell those puppies, even though they would make many people very happy. I give them away free to good homes, and the definition of a good home is mine because it's my puppy. I own it. You don't.

My responsibility is to the puppy. It is not to you, and it's not to some gelatinous glob called "society." I consider myself to be personally responsible for every puppy I raise, from birth until the day it dies. It always has a home in my kennel, if its new owner can't keep it or no longer wants it.

That's a contract written in blood between the puppy and me. It's a contract written with a handshake with the puppy's new owner.

I laugh cynically when someone from the Humane Society of the United States or People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals ask if I am a responsible breeder. HSUS and PETA are two of the most vicious, bloodthirsty and dishonest snake pits on Earth. Their moral credibility is a negative number. PETA butchers more than 90-percent of the animals it "rescues" every year, and HSUS supports programs and policies that result in the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of animals every year.

By now, I assume that I have pushed all of the buttons of the animal rights crazies. I can hear them snort and see their pin curls flapping in indignation. It makes my day.

Can't you hear them, too? They are calling me an exploiter of animals. They are saying that I ruthlessly cull and manipulate the genetics of my dogs. They say that I make the exploited poor beasts work for a living and live up to impossible standards. They will say that I do this to feed and gratify my own fat ego. They will say that I sell them for money and exploit them for personal gain. Then, of course, they will say that I use them to viciously hunt innocent wild animals.

Terrible, terrible me! My mother should have a son like this! She was such a nice woman.

Well, I plead guilty to all of the charges. Know what else? I don't *feel* guilty, not even a little bit. I do it. I like it. I feel good about it.

Now I will speak in my own defense – as a dog breeder.

I happen to love dogs. I love being around them. I love working with them. I love watching a puppy grow up and discover its potential. I love having the privilege of experiencing a truly great dog in its prime. I love sharing supper with my dogs, wrestling with puppies, and sacking out with them on the couch. I lose sleep when they get sick, and work myself unmercifully to care for them. I spend almost all of the money I have on them, and some money that I don't have. My heart breaks when they grow old and die. I have a dozen lifetimes worth of beautiful memories.

What do the animal rights freaks have? They have their ideology. They look in the mirror and feel smug and self-righteous, as if God has personally anointed them to protect animals from the likes of me.

What they have is nothing at all. Utter sterility. A world devoid of life and love.

They can keep it.

My life is filled with love and joy and beauty, and I owe most of it to my dogs. They have helped to keep me sane when sanity was not a given. They have given me courage on the days when all I wanted to do was lie down and quit. They have given me strength to endure on the days when all I wanted to do is run away and hide.

I owe them my life.

The animal rights folks are right. I ruthlessly cull and manipulate genetics. To make the cut, my breeding dogs have had to live up to the most exacting possible standards and pass the most strenuous tests.

I am very proud of doing that.

The result is that the vast majority of people who buy a puppy from me love it. When I sell a puppy, chances are that it has found a home for the rest of its life. The puppy will have a great chance of leading a wonderful life. I produce puppies that make people happy to own them and want to keep them. That's my job as a breeder.

I have done this through rigorous selection. My puppies today are the result of 35 years of my stubborn insistence about never breeding a dog that does not have a wonderful disposition, perfect conformation, great intelligence, exceptional natural ability, breathtaking style and that mysterious ingredient called genius.

Every puppy born in my kennel has six or eight or 10 generations of my own dogs in its pedigree. All of those ancestors possess a high level of each of those desirable traits. I have raised, trained and grown old with every dog listed in several generations of each puppy's pedigree.

Simply put, my puppies today are a lot nicer than my puppies of 35 years ago. Today, there is a much higher percentage of good ones, a much lower percentage of deficient ones, a much higher average of good qualities, and a much higher percentage of true greatness emerging from my kennel today.

That's what it means to be a breeder.

Does that feed my ego? Yep. I like having my ego stroked. Don't you? If you don't, you are in very deep trouble as a human being.

But I'll tell you what else it does. It makes for happier dogs. It makes for dogs that lead better lives, find permanent families and homes, and get to experience love in many forms.

It also makes for healthier dogs. Generation after generation of perfect functional conformation means that the dogs are less likely to get injured, wear out or develop arthritis. Many generations of selection for vigor, toughness and good health means that they are able to laugh at the extremes of climate, weather and terrain.

I also have virtually eliminated genetic health problems from my strain of dogs. For example, hip dysplasia is the most common genetic problem in English setters, afflicting a reported four-percent of the breed. In the past 20 years, I have had only two questionable hip x-rays, which both would be rated "fair" by the Orthopedic Foundation of America (OFA). The last one was 10 years ago.

Yes, I am very proud of being a breeder. I did that.

I am proud, too, that I am producing dogs that are so intelligent that it's scary, so loyal that they can be your complete partner in the field while also possessing the extreme independence needed to do their job well, so loving that you want them with you every second of the day, so bold and brazen that nothing bothers them, and just plain drop-dead gorgeous to boot.

They make me smile a lot. I think I make them smile, too.

But, the animal rights whackos say I am doing it for the money. They accuse me of exploiting animals for profit.

Yep. Every chance I get. I am very happy when I am able to sell a puppy for cold, hard cash. It makes me feel good.

It makes me feel good because it shows me that someone appreciates the work I am doing. It makes me feel good because I have earned it, and earned it honestly.

My only regret is that I have not made more money as a breeder. With all of the sacrifices I have made and the hard work I have done, I should be rolling in money.

Alas, I am not.

It has been years since I actually have made money on a litter of puppies. Usually, I lose my shirt.

For every puppy I sell, there is another one that I keep to evaluate, and a couple of other ones that I am keeping for two or three years to evaluate for their worthiness to breed. Then there are dogs that are in competition, and that costs bushels of money, not to mention old dogs that are retired and have a home here until they die of old age. Almost a third of the dogs in my kennel are elderly and retired, and it takes a lot of money to care for them.

It takes money for dog food, supplies, veterinary bills, kennel licenses, repairs, vehicle use for training and field trials, advertising, internet, phone bills, and four pairs of good boots a year. It takes money. Lots of money. Bundles of money.

Oh, Lord, please help me to sell some more puppies!

Besides, what's wrong with making money? It is a rather fundamental American value. Making money is something to be proud of, as long as it's done honestly.

Even animal rights bozos have to eat. Someone has to make money to stuff veggies down their gullets, and organic veggies are rather pricey. Most working folks can't afford them.

I also can't help but notice that most animal rights activists over the age of 30 drive pretty fancy cars (we are talking about the Beamer set, folks), live in rather fancy houses and dress very well indeed. I can't help but notice that many of the leaders of animal rights groups have pretty cushy gigs, with high-end six-digit salaries, fancy offices, and all the perks.

I guess they are saying that it's ok for them to make money by the truckload, even if making money turns dog breeders into immoral greed bags. There is no one in America who exploits dogs for as much money as the paid leaders of animal rights groups. Their fat salaries depend on having animal issues to exploit. If there were no animals for them to exploit, they would have to get a real job.

It's a rather perplexing dual standard, don't you think?

Well, maybe it's not perplexing after all. The only thing perplexing about hypocrisy is that so many people can't see through it.

My next sin is making my dogs work for a living. The animal rights people try to paint a picture of whipping dogs beyond endurance, exploiting them, creating misery and causing unhappiness. The poor, downtrodden, huddled masses. You know the tune.

Only problem is, my dogs don't agree. They love to work. They love their jobs. The only time they are sad is when it is not their turn to work. For my dogs, working is sheer joy and passion! They love every second of it.

What animal rights groups live for is creating imaginary victims. Helping victims makes some people feel better about themselves and, of course, it helps them to part with their money so that animal rights leaders can live high on the hog. Oops. I mean high on the carrot. How callous of me. I guess I'm just not a sensitive kind of guy.

Back to the exploited masses of bird dogs. Try an experiment sometime. Read an animal rights essay, and substitute the word "proletariat" for the word "animal." You will find that animal rights philosophy actually is pure and straightforward Marxian doctrine.

I guess my dogs are not natural Marxists. They love their jobs. They are excited about their jobs. Their jobs make them very happy.

Animal rights people can't seem to grasp that people can feel that way about their work, too. It's how I feel about the very hard work of being a dog breeder. It makes me happy.

Another way of putting it is that both my dogs and my own example provide proof that life is not pointless drudgery and exploitation. We provide= living proof that joy, beauty and personal fulfillment are possible in life.

I just don't think of those qualities when I think of the animal rights fanatics I have known. They seem a rather sad and sorry lot to me. I'll take my dogs' company any day.

Oh, but the icing on the cake is that I use these poor exploited creatures to hunt innocent birds. How terrible!

Hunting, of course, is a subject of its own, and I won't attempt to cover it here.

Suffice it to say that opposition to hunting flies in the face of a few million years of human evolution, the entire balance of nature everywhere on Earth, and common sense.

I know one thing for certain. The fact that we have healthy populations of most species of wild birds and animals today is only because hunters have cared enough to support strong conservation measures. We have preserved millions of acres of habitat that is vital to the survival of many species, saved more millions of acres of wilderness from development, supported the protection of endangered species everywhere, and put our money where our mouths are.

Animal rights groupies do nothing but blow hot air, when they aren't too busy destroying the land and the animals that live on it to create vast wastelands of industrialized monoculture.

I am proud to be a hunter, too.

It's time for every dog owner and breeder to stand up proudly and be counted.

Each one of you has done far more to enhance the quality of life of both people and dogs than all of the animal rights activists put together.

So stand up and shout it to the rooftops!

Stop crawling around on your bellies and apologizing. Your dogs deserve better from you. You will just have to get a little tougher if you want to live up to your dogs.

What you are doing is right.

It's just that simple.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance represents owners, breeders and professionals who work with breeds of dogs that are used for hunting. We are a grassroots movement working to protect the rights of dog owners, and to assure that the traditional relationships between dogs and humans maintains its rightful place in American society and life.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance also needs your help so that we can continue to work to protect the rights of dog owners. Your membership, participation and support are truly essential to the success of our mission. We are funded solely by the donations of our members, and maintain strict independence.

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