

# **The Show Must Go.... *Somewhere!***

## **Facts about PETA asking USA Network not to air Westminster**

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You can trace the history of the Westminster Kennel club back to the 1800's. It's show, aired every year in February, has been a favorite among people and dog fanciers alike and many dog lovers look forward to it every year. But now there is controversy over whether the show will go on at all. The group PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), in a letter dated December 26, 2008, has asked the USA Network not to air the Westminster Dog show.

In order to understand this situation clearly one must know the facts surrounding this controversy. This all started when Passionate Productions, released a film titled, Pedigree Dogs Exposed, directed by Jemima Harrison. The show was aired on the BBC in August of 2008. The 60 minute film raises many concerns which focus around two topics: 1. The use of inbreeding in programs and the genetic effects it has on purebred dogs and 2. The fact that the dog show world has become obsessed with using beauty alone to judge dogs, thus causing many breeds to cosmetically change so much over the years that it impairs the dogs overall health and ability to work. After two years of research, the documentary was made with the intention to ask the breeders in the United Kingdom and Brittan's Kennel Club to take a good long look at the genetic disorders that have been tracked in purebred dogs.

The airing caused quite a stir in the United Kingdom and resulted in the BBC decision to pull its airing of the UK's Cruft's Dog Show. According to an article posted on line in The Times (UK), the BBC met with a panel of experts and demanded that the British Kennel Club ban 12 breeds, many of them mentioned in the movie, from being shown on air. The Kennel Club refused so the plug was pulled on the dog show. Upon hearing this news, PETA quickly jumped on the bandwagon, and asked USA Network to follow suit.

News of PETA asking USA Network to pull Westminster is causing just as much of a stir here in the states and has caused producer Jemima Harrison to speak out against PETA, saying that she is horrified that PETA is citing the movie to further their own agendas. In the letter written to Bonnie Hammer, president of USA Network, PETA seems to be using the language and ideas from the movie when they state "Since dog breeders routinely use incestuous inbreeding and genetic manipulation to achieve a certain "desired" trait like a slanted back or a concertina face, its not surprising that as many as one in four purebred dogs is plagued with a serious genetic problem." The letter further goes on to mention last's year Westminster Best In Show winner, UNO, and the genetic disorders that plague the Beagle breed...much like the way the documentary allegedly exposed a King Charles Cavalier Spaniel breeder who supposedly bred her Best In Show winner even though it was suggested she knew the dog had Syringomyelia, a neurological disorder that is wide spread in this breed.

The statements from PETA bring up a lot of questions in dog fanciers minds. Could PETA have enough influence to get USA Network not to air Westminster? Perhaps the underlying question most dog fanciers and breeders alike are asking after reading such news is: Can PETA influence my rights as a dog breeder/owner? Before anyone can answer any of these questions, it is important to educate ourselves as to who the producer, Jamima Harrison is that made the documentary, what the documentary raised as questionable practices, and study PETA the same way.

In my research, it became very clear the Jemima Harrison wanted this film to discuss animal welfare NOT animal rights. She has spoken out boldly against PETA and is very upset that it has used her film as ammunition against Westminster. The LA times Unleashed reports her as stating that she feels pedigreed dogs are of tremendous value to society but that something needs to be done about the genetic disease caused in dogs. As stated before, the film pointed out many genetic disorders that can be linked to tight inbreeding and called for reform in this practice as well as reform to breed standards that are harming rather than helping dogs. Both points I think any breeder with ethics would agree are issues that should be addressed continually in any breeding program. The documentary was very well done and in my opinion everyone should take the hour and watch it. The film did a fine job exposing problems in purebred dogs and pointing out breeding mistakes but they did little more than mention how some breeders are doing things right. So I fault them for not taking enough time to interview breeders who are banning together to try and fix the problems their breeds face. One other thing this film never mentions is if any of the health issues in dogs could be linked to other factors outside of a breeding program; for example, the feeding of poor quality foods, or over vaccination of dogs. Let's face facts though...the media tends to only show one side of a story or at least leans heavily to the side they want represented. So from what I have learned about Jemima Harrison and her film, I genuinely believe that she was trying to better the welfare of purebred dogs so they would always be around for people to enjoy.

I did not, however, get the same feeling when I began to research PETA. For those of you that don't know the organization, their main objective is to take away your right to own animals. In short, they are a well organized group with millions of dollars to spend for their agendas. The group was founded in 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco. Search Google for co-founder Alex Pacheco and you will very quickly stumble onto his biography which highlights the following quote attributed to him from the associated press in January, 1989: "Arson, property destruction, burglary, and theft are 'acceptable crimes' when used for the animal cause." A statement which makes me ask if this man or his organization values any life? PETA is frequently called a radical group and radical they are! They have reported links to two groups: the Animal Liberation Group and the Earth Liberation Group which are reported to be responsible for over 600 crimes since 1996. This is what you will find written on Ingrid Newkirk's bio when you visit PETA site: "Ingrid and PETA believe that animals deserve the most basic rights—in particular, consideration of their own best interests regardless of whether they are useful to humans. Like humans, they are capable of suffering and have interests in living their own lives. Therefore, they are not ours to use—for food, clothing,

entertainment, experimentation, or for any other reason.” Now no one will argue with the fact that animals deserve to be treated humanely but to state that they are not ours to use? Excuse me but when I look in the Bible, The Good Lord Himself states right in Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Is PETA going to argue with God? They may just think they can.

There is a big difference between animal welfare and animal rights. Animal welfare groups work towards ensuring the humane treatment of animals when used for whatever reason. Animal rights groups work towards eliminating all use of all animals by people whether for food, clothing, critical medical research, or the enjoyment of animals. They often use violence and intimidation to achieve their goals. Make no mistake, PETA is an animal rights group and they are working very hard to take away your rights to own animals.

When I was just about finished researching PETA I stumbled upon a web site [www.petakillsanimals.com](http://www.petakillsanimals.com) and found their “Kill Rates” for the last five years...yes you read this right...PETA’s kill rates on shelter dogs and cats. According to PETA’s records they have put down 19,200 dogs, cats, and other companion animals which makes their “kill rate” 90% and their adoption rate 1%. I can honestly say that I was shocked to find this out. I think we can all agree that there is a certain amount of the animal population that cannot be rehabilitated and may be sick to go on, but only finding homes for 1% of companion animals is just a gruesome statistic! No wonder why Jemima Harrison is making it clear that she does not support this group and even goes as far as to call them crackpots who care about nothing but publicity and making money!

So now that we are all acquainted with the issues at hand do we as breeders need to be worried about PETA pulling the plug on Westminster? I think yes. Can they force an issue to the point of forcing a network to crack? It’s not out of the realm of possibility given their organization and funding. But back to the big question...Are they looking to take away your rights as a dog owner, breeder, animal fancier and can unplugging Westminster help their cause? Clearly yes, this is exactly what they are hoping for to further their warped mission.

But do not despair my friends for the power of education will always be on our side. Learn more about PETA and other animal rights organizations agenda’s. Take notes and be prepared to fight for your rights when they come knocking on your city or town councils door. Keep in mind that because of PETA and other animal rights groups there is growing support to ban Pit-Bulls around the country. They know if they can get one breed banned they can work on others. They are working on putting into place mandatory spay and neuter laws so when they die we will no longer have any companion animals, and they are now working on getting laws passed to close puppy mills and commercial breeders that have their animals living in inhumane conditions. We all agree that puppy mills and kennels that treat their animals inhumanely should be shut down but

be careful about what they are proposing because underneath it all is their agenda to take away humans right to own animals.

Keep on breeding and showing your dogs and keep on educating others about our lovely breed. We know what we are doing with the genetic project to better our breed, but let us all keep an eye on these animals rights groups and make sure that we are just as strong and can combat their hidden agendas with clear statistics about what we are doing to breed healthier purebred dogs. Call the USA Network: Phone #: 212-664-4444 ask to leave a message on the USA Network viewer hotline. State your concerns about PETA and tell them **THE SHOW MUST GO ON!**