

Part I

A GATHERING STORM

Big things often come from small beginnings

By

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Over the years one can find many examples of an event which at the time seemed small and unimportant only to be later learned that it had grown large with unintended consequences. It was the repeated occurrence of these scenarios that eventually led to the expression, big things often-times come from small beginnings.

In this regard, there is now within the dog world a chain of events that has been defined as more than just an annoyance. These are a series of small events that can be described as a **gathering storm but, unlike those of the past, this storm is being driven by forces that are connected in unusual ways. At its center is the repeated and effective use of several undefined labels. They have become the primary tool that fuels these turbulent winds. The storm is being driven by the fundamental idea that breeders should do the right thing. The motivating argument for this comes from the Animal Rights Movement which**

identifies the expectation that a responsible breeder would analyze his/her pedigrees for problems using DNA technology and the other certifications, tests and protocols that are available (OFA, CERF, PENN HIP etc). The idea, of course, is popular, but for those who study these events and how they are used to influence the future, it seems clear that the conditions are now right for a disaster. Unfortunately, there is no authority in the dog world who can say with any certainty how much damage this storm will cause. What is certain is that it has now reached a level that makes it a clear and present danger.

Storms in a sport, like those in society, are always risky because they usually bring with them unwanted damage. What has gone unnoticed about this storm is how the animal rights movement has used a series of undefined labels to drive the winds that have already altered and changed the dog world. Until now, most of these changes have gathered little national interest. Now however, through the use of well crafted-labels they are able to describe a person, thing or event in either a positive or negative light. Over the years they have learned how to use the power of the undefined label to capture the interests and attention of the public, the clubs and the breeders.

The use of labels to drive ideas is not new in an industrialized society. Advertising agencies and political campaigns use them to influence policy, regulations and elections. The hotter the issue, the more dramatic the pitch and the more clever the strategy. When the issue is ideological, labels are used to energize supporters. They are also used on websites to announce the issues and promote the problems. When combined, they become the important vehicles for influencing opinions and changing perceptions. Sociologists call this the "labeling process". Their studies focus on the groups and organizations that use the labels to exploit a situation, target a group or identify a victim. In this regard, the "labeling process" is best known as an applied method. Studying how they are used to achieve certain goals involves a search for the motive and the desired objective. Many times the goal is subtle and not easily noticeable. Understanding how the change agents use the "labeling process" is key to understanding how they are able to drive their programs. This is important in today's climate because the breeders seem to enjoy using the undefined labels without ever knowing their meaning or purpose and more importantly who will become their next victim.

One of the newest labels gaining in popularity has been designed to make the breeder its victim and their pups the target. It's called the "responsible breeder". What makes this label so dangerous is the attention it calls to the quality of the pups produced. What makes it politically correct is the fact that it has many meanings and interpretations and most importantly, it offers everyone who "does the right thing" the opportunity to label themselves a breeder. Underneath its exterior however, is the special emphasis it brings to the quality of the pups being produced and sold. It assumes that if a pup is of poor quality, unhealthy or has something wrong, it should not be bred. Most breeders agree with this notion and respond by selling their pups without AKC registration papers, or with a limited registration or perhaps a spay/neuter contract. The underlying assumption is that they are being "responsible breeders" and would not want to continue to produce low quality pups given the technology and protocols that are available. The latter point is key to the strategy. The notion that the unsound and unhealthy should not be sold for breeding is fundamental to this label and with that logic the best indicator of whether a breeder is being responsible or not can be tested by what

they produce and how they register it. This method identifies some breeders as better than other breeders. This scenario salutes those who breed to produce better quality. In the background however, there are some important and very fundamental questions. For example, why do so many breeders endorse the use of DNA but have little or no understanding of its uses or benefits and why have only a small fraction of the breeders actually used it? Why are so many breeders not trained in the use of DNA testing or the techniques available for managing the normals, carriers or affected when they occur in their pedigrees? The animal rights strategy sees this as opportunity. Their logic suggests that because there is widespread support for a technology they do not understand or use, the quality of their litters is not likely to improve. Thus, over time, a determination can be made as to whether a breed and its breeders are making progress and thus, being "responsible breeders". Said another way, if quality pups are the goal, a responsible breeder can be measured by how they sell their pups. In retrospect, there is a lesson to be learned from this simple logic and how, through the use of undefined labels, the animal rights movement has been able to create havoc in the world of pure-bred dogs.

In the past, the most popular use of the undefined label was to describe the commercial or high volume breeders as "puppy mills". Other labels were then linked to it. They were called "overpopulation", "vicious dogs", "dangerous dogs", "responsible dog owner", etc. While each of these labels enjoyed wide-spread acceptance, none were ever defined. In each case, the fancy and the public accepted them without any understanding of what they meant or what they were intended to do. Now, after more than ten years of use, they are still undefined. For these reasons, it is important to appreciate who creates the labels (change agents), why they are using them and what affect they are having on the AKC, veterinary schools, dog clubs, registrations (stud book), and ultimately the breeders.

By design, most of these labels are left vague or never defined. This reduces the chances for resistance. When catchy words and phrases are linked to them, many ideas can be pushed to support their agenda. It is not just the general description given them that gathers attention, it the success they have had convincing breeders, their clubs and the writers to use undefined labels. Whether this new label will follow in the footsteps of the others is yet to

be determined. But based on the past, it is safe to say that we should take this opportunity to understand its potential.

History shows that one of the earliest undefined labels targeted breeders by calling them "puppy mills". Catchy phrases were added to describe them as irresponsible individuals who owned dirty kennels and carried out careless breedings. This label was then linked to a negative form of animal husbandry as a way to grow the idea into something bigger. Some of the first uses of this label focused on the breeders in certain states and cities. It resulted in changes in policies, zoning, regulations and even legislation. The strategy being used today closely parallels this scenario. It focuses on issues the Animal Rights Movement believes need to be changed. Their current strategy begins with the fancy (breeders/writers) they push for acceptance in conversation, at meetings and on websites. Follow-up efforts are then used to identify the problem that fits their strategy. This step usually involves their critic groups who are developing court cases that will follow. Their use of the law and the courts has already resulted in a negative and financial impact on hundreds of breeders and their dog clubs. Their efforts

have been effective only because they are able to create labels the community will accept.

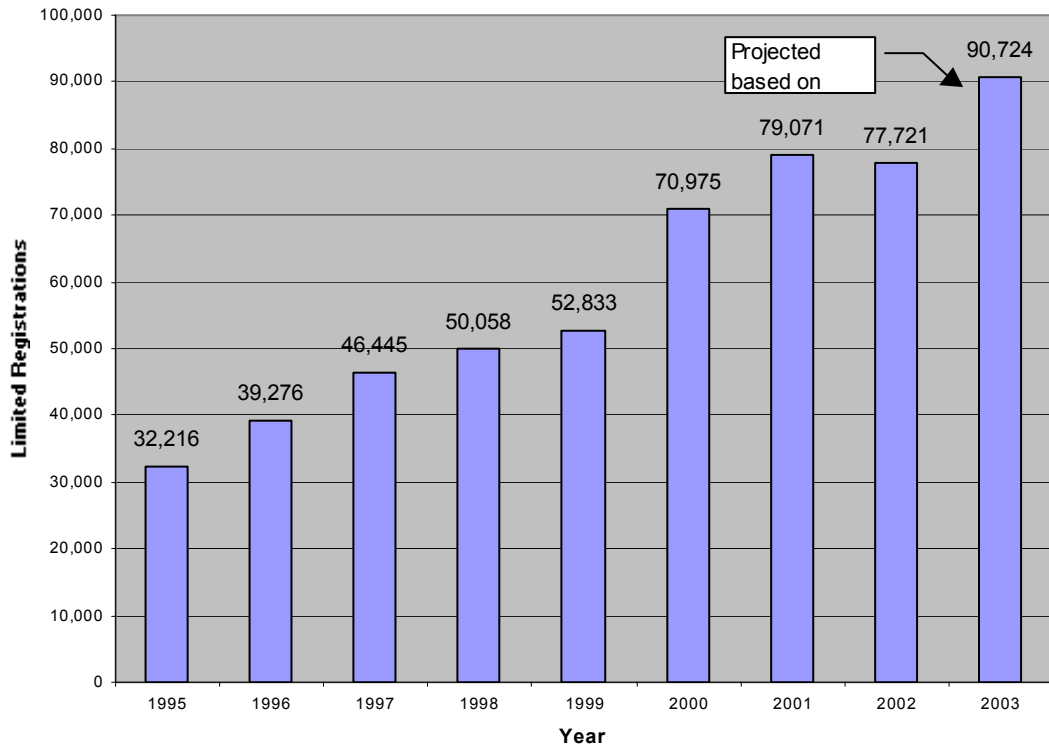
In the past, it was only the like-minded groups within the animal rights movement that were able to function as change agents. In the beginning they were forced to use negative incentives and the courts to push their agendas. But over the past 20 years they have effectively learned how to use legislation and the courts and the breeders to introduce new changes in zoning, ownership, breeding rights, care and conditions etc. Typically they use the argument of "raising the bar". Sometimes they call it "raising the standard". Today, when the term "puppy mill" is used, it quickly arouses a negative and emotional response. More importantly it demonstrates how one undefined label in the hands of a determined group can manipulate the masses.

From the beginning, their goal was to control, limit and reduce the ownership and breeding rights of the breeders and those who exhibit purebred dogs. Thus far, they have successfully done both. What is best known about their efforts is the ripple effect they are having on the gene pools of many breeds. This is one of the most dangerous aspects of this new label. The cumulative effects they are

having on registrations can not be ignored. Related to this problem is the impact they are having on the gene pools of the 35 breeds listed in Table 1. The unintended and cumulative consequence of their efforts continues to gather momentum only because there is acceptance without understanding. What must be learned from these experiences is that most of the undefined labels are used to suggest something good. Later they are used to fit an agenda that will produce a negative effect. The most dangerous part of the process is how well they are able to reach beyond the obvious. In the early stages of acceptance the critic groups remain in the background preparing to use the courts as opportunities present themselves. With this infrastructure in place, the animal rights groups are able to extend their reach. Their success can now be measured through declining registrations and the numbers of pups being sold on limited registrations or on spay/neuter contracts. The "responsible breeder" label is the vehicle being used to establish a new kind of husbandry, one that will eventually be guided by new and tougher quantitative standards. During the initial stages of implementation their strategy only whispers about a better way. They do this by painting a picture of something that is good for everyone. At the center of their storm is the attention

they are giving to DNA technology and health certifications which most breeders and their clubs endorse. In their words, a "responsible breeder" is expected to screen and test all of their stock before breeding. This idea sounds great on the surface but this is only the first step. As the breeders and their clubs continue to embrace this label the animal rights activist slowly begins to lobby for the required use of both DNA and health screening. This follow-up step is called "raising the bar". It is unfolding one step at a time. We already have heard their voices asking that more testing must be used on breeding stock. Next they will push for testing as a condition of breeding and then as a condition to register breeding stock and their pups. In some quarters they already are asking that it become a condition for entry in some AKC venues. As the popularity of the "responsible breeder" spreads they will attempt to further extend their reach into the AKC stud book and the registration system. To this end, the change agents and their critic groups have already taken the first step by raising the level of awareness. Some believe they are ahead of schedule. What is so interesting is how well the breeders have accepted their ideas.

FIGURE 1. LIMITED REGISTRATIONS



Notice in Figure 1 how quickly the breeders responded when they were told that in order to be a "responsible breeder" they should sell their pups on limited registrations or on spay/neuter contracts as a way to control "over-population" a problem that does not exist. Figure 1, also shows that after only nine years well over 100,000 dogs each year continue to be removed from the gene pools of all breeds. Not only have the animal rights movement been able to encourage breeders to reduce the size of the AKC stud book they have identified the "responsible breeder" as their next victim. Unfortunately, the dog world

has not noticed the negative effect limited registrations and spay neuter contracts are having on registrations and the stud book. The strategy thus far has linked two ideas together. The first was to convince the breeders that they could reduce over-population. The second was to separate the breeders and the buyers from the AKC. More than half of all pups sold on limited registrations and spay/neuter contracts were not being registered. Both efforts shrink the number of breeders and litters. Unfortunately, the impact they continue to have on the stud book and particularly the 35 breeds listed in Table 1 should not be ignored. These breeds are now registering fewer than 100 litters per year. The greatest dilemma now comes if this trend continues because it currently is on schedule to collapse the diversity of several gene pools and their ability to maintain breed health (Ostrander).

Table 1. AKC Litter Registrations (1997-2001)

| 2001 Rank | Breeds | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 | 2001 | 2000 | 1999 | 1998 | 1997 |
|-----------|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 112 | Salukis | | | | 84 | 79 | 80 | 63 | 67 |
| 113 | Belgian Tervuren | | | | 84 | 84 | 78 | 89 | 106 |
| 114 | Belgian Sheepdogs | | | | 83 | 80 | 80 | 85 | 101 |
| 115 | Retrievers (Flat-Coated) | | | | 82 | 100 | 75 | 98 | 84 |
| 116 | Petits Bassets Griffons Vendeens | | | | 75 | 83 | 72 | 100 | 92 |
| 117 | Bedlington Terriers | | | | 66 | 54 | 57 | 56 | 57 |
| 118 | Spaniels (Welsh Springer) | | | | 61 | 63 | 58 | 57 | 60 |
| 119 | Wirehaired pointing Griffons | | | | 55 | 66 | 44 | 37 | 41 |
| 120 | Briards | | | | 51 | 61 | 57 | 60 | 58 |
| 121 | Spaniels (American Water) | | | | 49 | 45 | 57 | 62 | 68 |
| 122 | Lowchen | | | | 49 | 44 | 37 | 24 | 35 |
| 123 | Spaniels (Clumber) | | | | 47 | 60 | 43 | 51 | 46 |
| 124 | Black and Tan Coonhounds | | | | 47 | 47 | 48 | 55 | 57 |
| 125 | Anatolian Shepherds | | | | 42 | 48 | 49 | 41 | 45 |
| 126 | Pulik | | | | 40 | 36 | 48 | 36 | 46 |
| 127 | Polish Lowland Sheepdogs | | | | 40 | 38 | 28 | 0 | 0 |
| 128 | Miniature Bull Terriers | | | | 40 | 42 | 49 | 42 | 44 |
| 129 | Kuvaszok | | | | 35 | 48 | 49 | 59 | 84 |
| 130 | Spinone Italiano | | | | 33 | 6 | | | |
| 131 | Finnish Spitz | | | | 30 | 27 | 30 | 27 | 39 |
| 132 | Scottish Deerhounds | | | | 28 | 28 | 27 | 27 | 33 |
| 133 | Retrievers (Curly-Coated) | | | | 27 | 25 | 25 | 31 | 28 |
| 134 | Komondorok | | | | 26 | 23 | 32 | 31 | 40 |
| 135 | Canaan Dogs | | | | 26 | 25 | 20 | 18 | 11 |
| 136 | Spaniels (Field) | | | | 25 | 28 | 28 | 36 | 29 |
| 137 | Spaniels (Irish Water) | | | | 25 | 23 | 33 | 22 | 21 |
| 138 | Greyhounds | | | | 25 | 30 | 24 | 32 | 29 |
| 139 | Sealyham Terriers | | | | 24 | 18 | 21 | 17 | 28 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 140 | Skye Terriers | 24 | 23 | 25 | 38 | 31 |
| 141 | Pharaoh Hounds | 23 | 19 | 16 | 20 | 19 |
| 142 | German Pinschers | 23 | | | | |
| 143 | Spaniels (Sussex) | 20 | 16 | 21 | 22 | 16 |
| 144 | Dandie Dinmont Terriers | 20 | 33 | 38 | 30 | 33 |
| 145 | Ibizan Hounds | 18 | 12 | 13 | 17 | 19 |
| 146 | Plotts | 18 | 35 | 30 | 8 | 0 |
| 147 | Foxhounds (American) | 18 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| 148 | Harriers | 11 | 6 | 6 | 10 | 11 |
| 149 | Otterhounds | 8 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 9 |
| 150 | Foxhounds (English) | 7 2001 | 8 2000 | 5 1999 | 7 1998 | 6 1997 |
| | Total for all 150 breeds | 461,863 | 506,727 | 527,023 | 555,964 | 564,165 |

Conclusion

The strength of the winds that are pushing this storm has been marked and identified. It is heading toward the fancy with an unusual force. They have already unleashed a new kind of husbandry which is likely to have a qualitative and quantitative form of measurement. The plan and the mechanism that is driving this storm is intended to continue on its path of reshaping the dog world piece by piece. While these trends seem to be clear, hardly anyone seems to be noticing. In retrospect, we can now see the true meaning of the phrase, "big things often-times come from small beginnings". More will be said about the plan and the labeling process in the next article (Part II). If

you would care to express your ideas on this subject, forward them to me in care of the editor at K9CHRON@aol.com

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