



Chinook Owners Association Inc.

U.K.C. National Breed Club

Dear Chinook Friends;

I believe in the power of a committed group of people.

It was a small band of rescuers that salvaged this near extinct Chinook breed, producing and placing litters with focused determination. They relate to us how challenging it was to find homes for puppies in those days. This band protected the Chinook by establishment of the Chinook Owners Association, securing registry within the United Kennel Club, co-creating the COA CrossBreeding Program with the UKC in order to break the genetic bottleneck and beginning the next generation of Chinook accomplishments.

The seasons of the 1980s and 1990s saw no trips to Antarctica, no training of military sled teams, no Presidential proclamation of the most typical boy and dog. Instead we saw increasing numbers of breeders and Chinooks, the inception of important genetic studies, Chinook accomplishments in the show ring, and a renewed canine commitment to hold down the family couch.

We stand on the shoulders of this band of rescuers with gratitude. We are fortunate that we are also able to stand along side of many of these folks to whom the breed owes a debt. They are our mentors, the breeders of our dogs and our friends. They are the longest term members of the COA.

Today's challenges are not in finding placements for puppies. We eagerly anticipate the latest on-line edition of puppy photos from coast-to-coast. Breeders coordinate efforts and share knowledge through an electronic medium that has created a really big neighborhood. The Breeder's List has hosted dialogue between Chinook breeders affiliated with various clubs for over 3 years. These efforts have brought fanciers around the table for long overdue discussion and planning for the breed.

We all know that there are clubs working toward AKC recognition of the Chinook breed. The COA is clear in its role to promote the UKC Chinook and as an organization is not involved with these efforts. It is not the COA's role to endorse any particular club, yet COA members are individually involved with some of these efforts (as is their right). Though fabled, COA members are not prohibited to join other clubs since the breed is better off to have an integrated community.

The COA would be failing in our responsibility to the breed if we were to ignore the implications of the activities and positions of these clubs. History will judge our efforts for the breed and we should consistently be questioning our goals, efforts, motives, and accomplishments.

The American Chinook Club (ACC) and the Chinook Dog Club of America (CDCA) representatives have engaged in discussions to ensure that there is consistency in any breed standard that is adopted by clubs vying for parent club status. It is an example of taking broad interest in the breed rather than self interest of their individual clubs. It has meant that people who haven't spoken for a long time have come together learning lessons from past successes and failures. This is encouraging.

The Chinook Club of America (CCA) has not joined this dialogue and has taken a position that purebreds from the CrossBreeding Program do not have a place in the AKC registry. That's like ignoring that your right arm is part of your body. The CrossBreeding Program is not only part of the breed history; it is an important part of today's current breed. To abandon the CrossBreeding Program in order to better one's chance of becoming the parent club shows a compromised commitment to be a faithful steward to the breed. Their position has led to a great outcry from breeders and owners of crossbred and purebred Chinooks.



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I know and I like folks in this club and so I have tried to understand what might be their reasoning behind these positions. I read their “answers” on the FAQs section of their website and it grieved my heart. The “answers” contain speculation; unquestioning compliance with perceived AKC requirements and insinuation that the COA is behind efforts of the ACC. Their introduction to their FAQs describe that the vigorous discussion on Chinook lists has been “public bashing” and uses this as rationale for not fully engaging. I expect more from a club that aspires to be a parent club of the breed. I challenge the CCA to re-examine their role and the positions that they are adopting. Any aspiring parent club needs to be involved, to present their positions and to listen to the Chinook community.

Bargaining away purebreds from the CrossBreeding Program and broadening the divide in the community provides loud caution that the direction being taken has too high a cost. If AKC recognition requires abandonment of purebreds from the Cross program and increasing the division within the Chinook community, how can AKC recognition be beneficial to the breed? At this cost, AKC recognition seems only damaging to the breed that we love. Efforts toward AKC recognition easily can be and should be suspended until greater collaborative efforts can be achieved.

The breed has come so far to arrive at this latest crossroad where the Chinook stands. The Chinook needs and deserves that we stand together as a committed group to meet the world of challenges that threaten their health and well-being. We must not fool ourselves to think that any one faction can champion these challenges alone. We have learned the hard way that no one person can adequately steward the long term needs of the breed. History illustrates that this mistaken notion nearly cost the breed its very existence and the breed’s survival is incumbent upon the broad commitment of the Chinook community. It is to the breed’s peril if we ignore what history has taught us. There is continuity and momentum we can capture from history toward a healthier future for the breed.

In this spirit, I put forth the following challenges:

- To all groups aspiring to be the parent club with AKC, I urge you to join forces. The Chinook breed needs an inclusive community. In particular, ACC and CDCA while working on the breed standard should continue attempts to engage the CCA. CCA needs to involve itself in these discussions if they wish to have any credibility with the Chinook community.
- The COA calls for a breed wide discussion of breed standards and the role of the CrossBreeding Program between breeders and other interested parties.
- Postpone the pursuit of AKC recognition or closing of the AKC stud book until the AKC accepts purebreds from COA CrossBreeding lines (whether it is 1st generation or 3rd generation purebreds). This may mean a long wait, yet it is the only action that makes any sense in the current circumstance. Achieving AKC recognition only to allow fanciers another venue to “show” their dogs is shallow rationale – it’s just not a good enough reason and it does not address the best interest of the breed. And if you tell me that AKC won’t accept those pedigrees, I just don’t buy it. We must stand together and define the terms that are best for the breed.

I believe in the power of a committed group of people.

Let us be those people.

Sincerely,

Pentheas Burns
President
Chinook Owners Association

