

## The Basset Hound Club of Wales

Replies to

“Pedigree Dogs Exposed”

Produced by  
Passionate Productions

Which was shown on BBC 1 - 19<sup>th</sup> August 2008

### **HARMFUL**

Many of you are aware of the recent BBC television programme “Pedigree Dogs Exposed” produced by Passionate Productions, if you did not see the programme we are certain you’ve heard about it. It highlighted the problems within the world of pedigree dogs and contained some very disturbing footage showing several breeds with severe problems – on those we cannot comment. However, our beloved Basset Hound was also subjected to criticism in the programme. The BHC of Wales thinks it is time to redress the balance and ask you to take the time to read this article and have a balanced and unbiased defence of our breed and its’ problems as opposed to the emotive content of the programme carried by the BBC.

## BACKGROUND

There have been rumblings in the dog world for many years, about the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals to which the United Kingdom is NOT a signatory and this can be seen on the EU Website which is updated daily; if you would like to check please click on the link – <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=125&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG>. Another group called Advocates for Animals based in Edinburgh, produced a report in 2006 which highlighted many issues contained in the European Convention, their article can be seen by clicking here <http://advocatesforanimals.com/index.php/publications.html>. Their publication raises questions on the health of various breeds and lists diseases which they are predisposed to.

For Basset Hounds they listed the following problems, we will answer these now and get them out of the way!

- *Abnormal size and form of eyes or eyelids (e.g. ectropion in Basset Hound)*
  - Ectropion, unless very pronounced, does not lead to severe diseases of the eye itself. However, the droopy eyelid may collect debris such as dust, pollen and plant material from the environment. This may cause ocular irritation that leads to discharge and a red eye. This is particularly pronounced in hunting dogs or dogs that are outdoors much of the time. Dogs that have ectropion must be watched carefully by their owners for possible foreign bodies in their eyes, and the dogs' eyes must be cleaned and often medicated on a regular basis. Although, without question, there are some who suffer from this condition with painful red eyes, the vast majority of Basset Hounds are free from it.
  
- *Abnormal positions of legs (e.g. bowed legs in Basset Hound)*
  - Bow legs are incorrect in most, if not all breeds of dog including the Basset Hound. Our breed standard calls for the upper arm to incline slightly and for the forechest to fit neatly into crook when viewed from the front. Basset Hounds are required to have a crooked front; the crook enables the weight of the chest and frame to be thoroughly supported, if this were not the case the hound would be incapable of endurance in the field and unable to do the job it was bred for.
  
- *Very long ears (e.g. Basset Hound) to avoid disposition to injuries.*
  - Very long ears? The breed standard calls for the ears to reach well beyond the nose and this could be misinterpreted to mean VERY long. The truth is, if the ears reach well beyond the nose in an adult Basset Hound, the fall or end is approximately at the point of shoulder and/or level with the sternum bone when the dog is stood. When it puts its head forward as on a scent the ears are required to drape the face which enhances the scent, remembering the Basset Hound has a “nose” second only to that of the Blood Hound! While puppies tend to catch their ears with their feet as babies – they soon grow out of it and it is most uncommon to find an adult with damaged ears from being trodden on.
  
- *Markedly folded skin (e.g. Basset Hound) to avoid eczemas and in the case of furrows around the eyes irritation and inflammation of eyes.*
  - The breed standard calls for “a certain amount of loose skin desirable”. Again there is a good reason for this, it’s the theory of the half inflated balloon - as thorns, jagged twigs and the like will not pierce or tear skin that rolls when the Basset is going through undergrowth or thickets. A breeder of Basset Hounds

who also has rescue Greyhounds, has told us she is forever bandaging the Greyhounds legs after they go walking over rough terrain as the skin on their lower legs rip and graze easily, whereas in comparison the Bassets never, ever have any damage to their skin – that proves the point very accurately!

- However, irritation and inflammation to the eyes, Entropion is where the eyelids fold inward. It is very uncomfortable, as the eyelashes rub against the cornea constantly. Entropion is usually caused by genetic factors and may be congenital and usually manifest itself within the first year of a puppy's life. This is much more common in some blood lines than others, again the vast majority are free of this condition.

The substance of the Advocates for Animals report is that all pedigree dogs are in an appalling state and call for the UK Government to sign up to the European Convention to help rectify years of inbreeding and the like. It also lists the cost of annual veterinarian treatment and other treatments for a Basset Hound as £768 and a life expectancy of 12 years – they list their source as K9 Magazine. It does not make for light reading, but this is obviously the starting point for the Passionate Productions documentary.

- At our recent open show we conducted a quick survey around our exhibitors/breeders and asked if they'd ever come close to paying this amount per year to their vet or had anyone they know of? Many of those we asked have many "oldies" ranging in age from 7 to almost 15, their answers were as we thought – they've spent no where near the amount of money that K9 Magazine and Advocates for Dogs state as fact! Many said that apart from annual boosters their dogs weren't regular visitors to the vet.
- The problem seems to be that new Basset owners take a puppy to the vet because they've seen something on the puppy that they're not sure of instead of getting back to their breeder which should be the first and obvious thing to do. We are forever saying reputable breeders want to help – they are always on the end of the telephone, however the same cannot be said for puppy farmers – you pay your money and you're on your own! More about "puppy farmers" later.
- For instance, and this is a true story, a puppy had little yellowish spots on its belly – cause by using neat puppy shampoo straight from the bottle which was obviously too strong and should have been diluted. The vet suggested skin scrapings to see what exactly was causing the problem – the owners decided to ring the breeder before agreeing to the Vet's request. She knew there was nothing wrong with the pup prior to it leaving her premises said – don't do it – go to your chemist and get some hibi-scrub and dilute it into a very light wash and wipe it over the spots – within a few days they were gone and have never re-appeared. Cost £2.59 and peace of mind – vet in excess of £200 and unknown quantities of unnecessary medication!

**Now back to the programme by Passionate Productions:**

#### **HEADLINED IN NATIONAL PRESS**

The first heard of the programme was articles in the national press on the day preceding the broadcast – several had two photographs showing a Basset Hound from 1946 and the other from 2008, (although actually the photograph and film were taken at Southern Counties Championship Show in June 2007 where our chairman was an exhibitor and our Secretary and Treasurer were spectators). We have come to the conclusion this was done for nothing more than sensationalism, the two chosen show two very different extremes and infer that the later is unhealthy and inbred?

Neither of which was proven by the programme, and incidentally Basset was spelt with two "Ts" is a definite no-no for anyone in the breed and is generally used by the ignorant or uninformed.

## DEFORMED AND DISEASED: THE CHANGING LOOK OF OUR TOP DOGS



The modern-day basset hound has shorter legs, a belly that virtually scrapes the ground and droopier ears

Anyone with knowledge of the Basset Hound and its history can easily explain why the difference between the two photographs is so great. The dog from 1946 Ch: Grims Warlock is stood on closely cut grass and the ground is flat, you are able to see his feet and he is free standing. Today's dog is clearly standing in longer grass as his feet are not visible, the ground undulates behind him and he is slightly overstretched. The comparisons made between the dogs are size and structure, absolutely ridiculous! Nutrition today is nothing like it was in 1946 either for dogs or us? Would you seriously compare how, we, as a race have evolved since 1946, remembering food in this country was seriously rationed for the duration of the war and which continued until 1954? The average waist size boasted by women during the 1940s and 50s were 19/20 inches, certainly not the average anymore. Would you compare a 1940s Austin 10 or Standard 8 with today's Vauxhall's, Toyota's and the rest? Certainly not, yet it is quite acceptable to compare these two Basset Hounds? Totally ridiculous!

### AIRED

Passionate Productions "Pedigree Dogs Exposed" aired on BBC 1 on August 19<sup>th</sup> 2008. The programme in itself was disturbing and upsetting, and some of the images shown were very distressing indeed, which raised the obvious questions who would allow their beloved dogs to suffer in this way? What were the vets doing other than keeping these poor creatures alive? Where was the R.S.P.C.A.? However, it is not our intention to cast stones but to concentrate on *just* the Basset Hound.

### SELECTIVE

The programme makers were very selective in their choices and obviously they were made to highlight the diversity between the two Basset Hounds. Why single out a splendid dog and not film the winner of the Dog CC who won Best of Breed? The reason is obvious to anyone who knows him; he was the "biggest" in his class, although his overall balance and soundness is not at question. They chose Warlock from 1946, but they could easily have picked several other Basset Hounds from the 1930/40s who are very similar in size and construction to the Basset Hounds in the ring today, however their choice of Warlock does highlight how the breed was ravaged by the war and how the breed suffered from the lack of good nutrition – today we class such specimens as "puppy farm" bred Bassets, whose nutrition is also very inadequate. Incidentally, all Basset owners, whether breeders or pet owners, owe a great debt of gratitude to Miss Peggy Keevil the owner and breeder of Warlock, it was solely down to her diligence and hard work which kept the Basset Hound as we know it protected and allowed it to survive WWII!

## QUESTIONS

In the transcript of the programme on Basset Hounds the presenter Jemima Harrison said that recently, Ronnie Irving (Kennel Club Chairman) had spoken out about exaggerations and some breed standards have been changed and The Kennel Club has also stepped up training for its judges. Not just anatomy but health and welfare are now part of the judges' curriculum.

Jemima Harrison continued, 'but it won't make any difference if the breeders can't be convinced there's the need for change, or while they continue to interpret the breed standards in any way they see fit. The ears on today's Basset Hound have got much longer, its belly drags along the ground, and it has pronounced skin folds on its legs. Its all a far cry from the Basset of yesteryear'. Like the dachshund, the Basset Hound is a dwarfed breed and it comes at a price, as they age – Bassets commonly suffer from crippling arthritis'. (We will address all of these claims later). Prof James Serpell (University of Pennsylvania), added on behalf of the programme makers: "My feeling is that people are simply not aware of how much suffering is involved here; I think dogs actually are their own worst enemy in this regard because many dogs are very stoical – you know they don't complain, they just carry on, despite the fact they are carrying all these uncomfortable handicaps"

## FALL OUT

After the programme it was obvious there would be serious repercussions and the Kennel Club and their world renowned dog show "Crufts" would bear the brunt, for what was called years of complacency, while pedigree dogs were "falling apart" and the exhibits for their world famous show were described as "disabled mutants in a freakish, garish beauty pageant" by Mark Evans Chief Veterinary Surgeon of the R.S.P.C.A. While the people at the top of the Kennel Club suffered badly at the hands of the presenter, more importantly what did it make us look like, the reputable breeders of the Basset Hound, those involved with the nuts and bolts of the breed? Nothing more than money grabbers, who have no interest in this gentle and loving breed other than to make large quantities of money from poor unsuspecting Joe Public? A suggestion totally refuted by this club, reputable breeders care passionately about our beloved Basset Hound!

## NEWS RELEASE

The Kennel Club has recently issued a news release, a full question and answer document along with a copy of their plans for the future. All together a whopping 26 pages in which they address the points raised by Passionate Productions. They have not just issued this to the dog press or breed clubs, but general open and championship shows and to judges and probably beyond, publicising their future plans for the KC and breeders to work together, for the good of all dogs not just those mentioned. They list the main points which they want us to remember:

- The majority of pedigree dogs are healthy
- The KC and breeders are doing a lot of work in health research and are making good progress
- That puppy buyers should buy from an Accredited Breeder or to go to a breed club for a recommendation of who to buy from.

More information of the above news release, questions and answers and details of the Kennel Clubs future plans can be found on the their website [www.thekennelclub.org.uk](http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk) along with the more specific [www.doggenetichealth.org.uk](http://www.doggenetichealth.org.uk) for anyone who may be interested in the more serious aspects of dog health.

## TAKING ACTION

In the Dog Press week ending 12<sup>th</sup> September, was printed the said future plans for the KC. Under its heading The Kennel Club Breed Health and Welfare Strategy Group (BHWWSG) it states "those

breed clubs and councils which have been consulting and making progress with the Kennel Club can expect to do so – with renewed vigour and determination.

Some breed organisations, especially any which may have been unwilling to co-operate with the Kennel Club's demands benefiting the health of the breed, can expect the Kennel Club to be tougher on them and to take unilateral action to enforce its demands if necessary.

There are already plans underway for members of the BHWSG, to deal with issues regarding the following breeds" – one of those listed is the Basset Hound!

### **WRONG IMPRESSION**

That last statement sounds as though we, Basset Hound folk have been dragging our feet, although in fact representatives of all eight Basset Hounds Clubs met with the Kennel Club's BHWSG on April 23 2008 to begin the process of looking at the implications the European Convention for the Protection for Pet Animals would have on the Basset Hound and how the Breed Standard could be changed to accommodate the Kennel Club's objective for more importance to be placed on movement, activity and avoidance of exaggerations.

### **ACTION**

The Basset Hound Club of Wales Committee met on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> of September where it discussed all of the implications to the breed raised by both the Kennel Club's BHWSG and Pedigree Dogs exposed. It set about the job of removing or altering what it considered "could" be interpreted as asking for exaggerations within the breed standard. Prior to the meeting the Officers decided it was too important a task to leave out the valuable expertise of our President and Vice Presidents, so all were contacted and all were very considerate and gave us their views. Mrs Marianne Nixon - Brackenacre (President) was asked to attend. The Club's Judges Sub Committee consists of Mrs Marion Brown - St Hubert (Chairman), Mrs Ann Roberts -Islwyn (Secretary), Mrs Tina Watkins - Blackvein (Treasurer), Mr John Roberts -Islwyn, Mr Arthur and Mrs Liz Salusbury – Mooroolbark all but the chairman are breeders, all are exhibitors and all are passed by the Kennel Club to award CCs in the breed. Vice President, Mr George Johnston - Sykemoor sent a very informative letter which was a great help to us, as was the information we received from our other Vice Presidents, Mrs Doreen Gilberthorpe - Blaby, Miss Charles Montizambert - Abbeyacres and Mr Jim Nixon - Brackenacre, in all over 400 years of experience at hand to discuss the matter and we thank the senior Officers sincerely for their kindness and help.

### **INFORMATIVE**

Everyone gathered agreed what was highlighted by the programme, in the great scheme of things and compared to some of the breeds Basset Hounds came out very well. Yes, there are one or two problems which we need to address but on the whole the breed is healthy in comparison to some. There were questions about why the dog from 2008 was chosen? There was **NO** permission asked or given for him to be filmed or photographed. We have this first hand as he, Langpool Midsummer Magic of St Hubert and is owned and shown by our Chairman Mrs. Marion Brown. However, it was decided that most the content of Pedigree Dogs Exposed on Basset Hounds was misleading and along with the statement from Advocates for Dogs which implied it cost £768 per year on veterinary fees to keep a Basset Hound needed to be put into perspective, hence this article!

Our Chairman, Marion Brown's reported that she'd sent a letter to the press, which reads:

On page 7 of the Daily Mail 19 August 2008, you feature a basset Hound which I believe to be mine, being shown by me at a Championship Show. The implication is that the Basset Hound (one "T" only in Basset) is in poor health in comparison with the featured Basset of 1946, due to inbreeding.

1. My dog's grandparents are from four different kennels, one continental and three in the UK.
2. As he was imported he had to undergo all of the normal fitness tests to be brought into the UK.

3. In five years he has visited the vet only for injections and nail cutting.

Further

I would be glad to know from whom you obtained the picture as I have never at any time given permission for my dog to be photographed at a show. I do not own a copy of such a picture.

Finally

It's a pity the press and the BBC seek to attack bona fide dog breeders and dog shows, instead of the puppy farms of Ireland and Wales whose weak inbred stock often has to be rehomed by UK Breed Rescues.

Marion Brown.

## HISTORY

Contrary to popular belief Basset Hounds or Basset Type can be traced in Britain for well over four centuries, there is a quote from Dr. Johannes Caius – mentioning “their type” in “*Of English Dogges*” (1576). Short crooked legged hounds were known to exist in Cornwall during the fifteenth century; they were described as heavily built, short-legged, with long ears and deep voices. There is a piece of furniture, a Welsh oak bedstead in Cornwall which dates from the marriage of Katherine, widow of Sir Griffith Ap Rhys to Sir Piers Edgcombe in 1532. The hounds carved into the piece are of Basset type – ‘low-set, long-eared and crooked-legged’ which suggests the basic structure of a Basset Hound. Following on, around 1598 William Shakespeare wrote;

‘My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind  
So flew’d, so sanded; and their heads are hung  
With ears that sweep away the morning dew;  
Crook-knee’d, and dew-lapt like Thessalian Bulls;  
Slow in pursuit, but matcht in mouth like bells,  
Each under each. A cry more turnable  
Was never holla’d to, nor cheered with horn.’

A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Act IV, Scene I.

In addition there are many, many prints and paintings from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century which adds visual evidence to the fact that a dog very similar to the Basset Hound as we know it today, has been around for a very, very long time. More information on the origins of the breed can be seen at [www.bhcofwales.org.uk/information](http://www.bhcofwales.org.uk/information)

## CONGENITAL DEFORMITIES

The statement from the makers of Pedigree Dogs Exposed – in which Basset Hounds are deformed congenital dwarfs, must be addressed. The Oxford Concise Dictionary’s defines ‘Congenital’ as 1) (of a disease or abnormality) present from birth. 2) having a particular trait from or as if from birth:

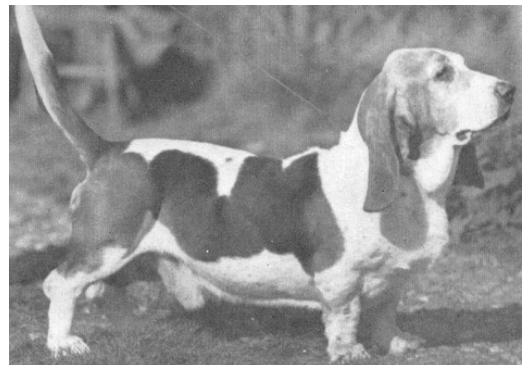
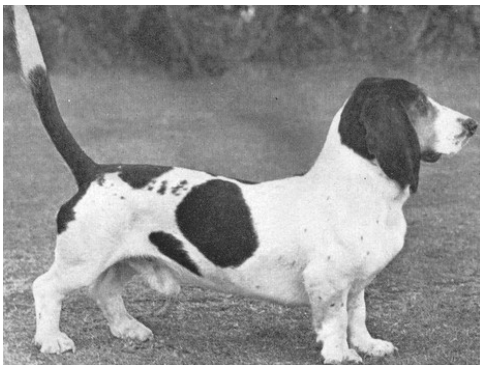
Pedigree Dogs Exposed used as their illustration Warlock from 1946, we have photographs to illustrate the differences between the claims made by them in their biased attack on the Basset Hound.

- “The ears on today’s Basset Hound have got much longer”. – Pedigree Dogs Exposed
  - Anyone who knows a Basset or who has tried to photograph one can see the dog “Warlock” is alert probably being called so that he is looking the way the photographer wanted him too, his ears are pulled up, which gives the impression of them being short but even then pulled forward they would probably reach the end of his nose. However if the dog was relaxed the ear set

would probably be as asked for in the breed standard set below the line of the eye. Like the one centre left Ch: Monkshood of Reynalton from 1935 and the two on the right of recent hounds.



- “Its belly drags along the ground”. – Pedigree Dogs Exposed
  - There is NO Basset Hounds in the ring today whose bellies drag along the ground – sensationalism at its worst! The breed standard calls for Basset Hounds to be between 15 and 13 inches at the withers. This is a good 3 inches higher than the first basset exhibited “Model” owned by Sir Everett Millais.
  - The choice of Warlock was picked as an extreme for obvious reasons which we have previously stated! You can see just how extreme when you see it compared to a photograph of Ch: Monkshood of Reynalton, taken in 1935. The structure of “Monkshood” is very similar to the Basset Hound of today



The dog of “today” was photographed badly, yes he does have more skin than both of the above dogs and if anything this is the “exaggeration” not his construction – his depth of chest is not so much greater than that of Monkshood – as you can see from the photograph below his depth of chest finishes just below his elbow, exactly the same as Monkshood above.



- ‘It has pronounced skin folds on its legs’.
  - Admittedly today’s dogs have obvious wrinkling on their forelegs but this again is called for in the breed standard wrinkles of skin on lower legs. We have already mentioned the Greyhounds who regularly cut and graze their legs and the work of having to bandage and tend them; we have first hand experience of this!



- 'It's all a far cry from the basset of yesteryear'. – Pedigree Dogs Exposed
  - There are many photographs of Basset Hounds prior to the one of Warlock which are larger and more like the hounds of today than Passionate Productions would like to admit to – more photographs can be seen at the end of this document.
- 'Like the dachshund the Basset Hound is a dwarfed breed and it comes at a price, as they age – Bassets commonly suffer from crippling arthritis'. – Pedigree Dogs Exposed
  - Bassets as with ALL dogs are subject to many illnesses associated with old age including arthritis, however it is not proven that it is as common as Passionate Productions would like us to think it is. Again our quick survey suggests that our oldies are not basket cases – riddled with disease - they are senior citizens who sometimes need a little special care, they can no longer do the long walks of the youngsters and sometimes prefer not to get out of bed to be as inquisitive as they once were, after all Basset Hounds are very intelligent and are certainly not as daft as many would assume!
- 'It won't make any difference if the breeders can't be convinced there's the need for change or while they continue to interpret the breed standards in any way they see fit'.
  - Pedigree Dogs Exposed
    - Breeders are not only bound to the breed standard, all clubs and the KC has a Code of Ethics which has to be taken into consideration. The KC as a direct result of the programme has imposed its compulsory NEW Code of Ethics on all breed clubs, us included - we have asked for permission to include our own rules which were included in our original Code and we feel still need to be included as they are very important and are an additional safeguard for the breed:
      - 1 Ensure that all puppies are vaccinated and all hounds are regularly wormed.
      - 2 When your hounds are away from home, ensure that they are under proper control.
      - 3 Acknowledge responsibility to clean up after your hounds in public places.
      - 4 Do not knowingly breed from a bitch, which does not conform to the breed standard a hereditary fault/or in a manner, which is deleterious to her health, e.g. successive seasons. You should not breed from a bitch under 18 months of age and never more than every other season. You should never breed from a bitch of more than 7 years of age. Never mate your bitch to more than one stud dog during any one season.
      - 5 Do not knowingly use your stud dog on a bitch, which does not conform to the breed standard or has a hereditary fault.
      - 6 Do not knowingly use a dog at stud "which does not conform to the breed standard or has a hereditary fault.
      - 7 If you use your stud dog on a suitable bitch owned by a novice, help place the puppies and help with any problems.
      - 8 Never sell puppies younger than 8 weeks old.

Yes the breed standard is open to interpretation but we must remember that being a “reputable breeder” comes with its own restraints. However, there are two additional parts to this equation:

1. Those of us who judge also have a very large part to play in this, and must have the honesty to judge the dog on the day without being swayed by fashion or favour as it were. If we, when we judge put up hounds, who win consistently and/or who are unsound and have glaring faults, breeders will use the same bloodlines to try and get something similar. This certainly increases the probability of and gives weight to 'interpreting the standard as they see fit'.

We accept education of up and coming judges is essential, however, we have to acknowledge that the inexperienced breeders no longer want to sit and learn from the wisdom of breed elders, as they have a 'know it all' attitude. They need to realise that experience comes at a cost and we sometimes see the cost is to the breed. Sadly, today everything is internet based and there are many websites that give information which often varies between bad and indifferent and are run by people who are obviously well read, but do they have the hands-on experience?. It is obviously easier to sit and read from a screen than it is to take a lesson from someone with years of experience who would like nothing better than to pass on and share their vast knowledge.

2. Most emotive must be the puppy farmers! Basset Hounds are always within the highest three registrations within the Hound Group. In every Breed Supplement, the unknown breeders outnumber the "reputable breeders" bound by the breed standard and code of ethics by as many as eight to one – sometimes more which is absolutely staggering! There are no restraints at all for these people who continually turn out puppies; they pay their money to register their puppies with the KC but are totally outside of the KCs remit all together – and the Accredited Breeder Scheme certainly won't stop them, they will pay their money and continue to produce inferior unhealthy and in many cases untypical Basset Hounds many with very serious temperament issues. They are the ones who once the money is in their hands, have no further contact with puppy owners, if they ring back with a query the usual answer they receive, is ring the Basset Club of Wales – they'll help you!

Perhaps its time for the KC to recognise its all very well to wield a big stick at breed clubs since this programme was aired, but surely it is these people they should be trying to reach and change, but sadly, but never will! Why can't the KC keep check of these people who register multiple litters in each Breed Supplement, if they jump off the page at us, why not them? There must be some way to curtail these so called breeders who have no love of the breed; these are the people that Pedigree Dogs Exposed should be harassing not the reputable breeders who care. Alas, we read in the dog press another programme is planned for the future, heaven help us all!