



# IN SESSION

AKC'S CONGRESSIONAL NEWSLETTER

The American Kennel Club's Newsletter for Members of Congress and their Staff

## PERSPECTIVES

*We're more than champion dogs...  
We're the dog's champion.*

### Good News for Animal—and Human—Shelters

The past month has brought good news for the future of sheltering issues – both for animal shelters and for shelters that help victims of domestic violence.

On the human front, the PAWS Act (H.R. 1258), picked up a Senate companion (S. 1599) introduced by Senators Ayotte and Peters, and the House version topped 85 co-sponsors. **PAWS provides solutions in response to studies showing that nearly half of domestic violence victims delay leaving an abusive situation out of concern for a pet and 70% report their abuser threatened, injured or killed their pets.** The measure builds on work by organizations such as the AKC Humane Fund to establish programs to assure the safety of victims by providing for the safety of their pets as well (For more, see article, p. 3).

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## Congressional Canine Spotlight- Congressman Filemon Vela and Truman



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President Harry Truman famously once said, “If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.” Shortly after his election to Congress, Congressman Filemon Vela (TX-34) and his wife Rose took this to heart and purchased a French Bulldog (aptly named Truman in honor of the famous quote) from a North Texas breeder.

“Although I did not have a dog growing up, I knew from a very young age that dogs were great companions,” the Congressman explained. “It wasn’t until I met my wife Rose, a big dog lover, that the time became right to get a dog, and now we have plenty of great memories.”

**“When...we face a pressing issue on Capitol Hill, Truman’s dependability helps make life a little easier. He is truly one of my best friends in Washington.”**

Truman has become a constant companion to the Congressman. “We go on walks, hang out with family, and even meet with constituents,” Vela said.

French Bulldogs are known for their fun-loving personalities, and Truman is no exception. The Congressman describes Truman as having “an adventurous spirit”, and when in DC “is the best part of the staff’s day”, taking the time to visit each staff member at their desks.

His outgoing nature and curiosity have resulted in what have become affectionately known as “Truman moments.”

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In addition, a ground-breaking **new study** of data reported by U.S. animal shelters found that **the number of dogs entering shelters has dropped significantly in the past few decades, and the number purebred dogs in shelters has dropped to an all-time low.** The study finds that only about five percent of the dogs available in U.S. shelters are purebred – a significant departure from the 25% figure commonly assumed.

The study is significant because it reveals common misconceptions about purebred dogs in shelters and discredits the myth that the choice of a purebred dog somehow hurts dogs in shelters. It further highlights the need for additional study and oversight of U.S. pet shelters and rescue pets imported from overseas (For more, see article p. 5).

I urge you to explore these and other features inside. As always, the AKC is here to work with you to protect the rights of responsible dog owners and the welfare of our beloved dogs for generations to come. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of assistance.

All the best,



Sheila Goffe  
Director, Government Relations  
shg@akc.org

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**AKC Government Relations Department**  
(919) 816-3720 • doglaw@akc.org  
www.akc.org/government-relations

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Continued from previous page, “Congressional Canine Spotlight - Congressman Filemon Vela and Truman”

“Most of these moments involve Truman searching for something,” Vela explained. “He just snorts around until he finds what he wants... Sometimes he’s looking for food, and other times, he’s trying to remember where he left his favorite toy... Thankfully, the staff is well aware of Truman’s sneaky habits and diligently keeps him out of the trash.”

Truman also loves to be chased and “does his best to get away. Fortunately...[he] is not very fast,” Vela laughed.

Congressman Vela and his wife obtained Truman from a breeder in North Texas after they lost their first dog, Ricky, to cancer during Vela’s first campaign. They had gotten Ricky from a South Texas animal shelter. He was described as “a great companion”, and his loss “struck our family hard.”

When they contacted the breeder before obtaining Truman, they were pleased to find

**“It is essential that we encourage responsible breeding [and] pet ownership, and provide shelter animals with humane conditions and a fair chance of being adopted.”**

that the breeder had “invested so much time and effort to ensure Truman would be a happy pup.” The breeder asked them many questions to ensure that a French Bulldog would be the right fit for their family. “It’s important for breeders to take an ethical and dog-friendly approach towards their profession, [and] most of them do,” Vela added.

Congressman Vela says that having had dogs from both a shelter and a reputable breeder has made him realize that “it’s important to understand that all dogs are capable of being an excellent addition to the family.” He said he believes that it is “essential that we encourage responsible breeding [and] pet ownership, and provide shelter animals with humane conditions and a fair chance of being adopted.”

When you find the right dog for your family, as the Velas have with Truman, the rewards and benefits are enormous. “When times are unusually tough or we face a pressing issue on Capitol Hill, Truman’s dependability helps make life a little easier,” the Congressman explained. “He is truly one of my best friends in Washington.”



©Office of Congressman Vela. Used with permission.



# AKC Urges Support for PAWS Act to Protect Domestic Violence Victims and their Pets



In the most recent of several initiatives to recognize the canine-human bond and to protect pets and their owners, the American Kennel Club is urging support for legislation (H.R. 1258/S. 1559) that would protect the pets of victims of domestic violence.

The 2015 Pet and Women Safety Act (the 2015 “PAWS” act), sponsored by Congresswomen Katherine Clark and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Senators Kelly Ayotte and Gary Peters, would amend current federal domestic violence protections to include pets in protection orders for human victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

Under PAWS, a person who commits an interstate violation of a protection order would be subject to fines and/or imprisonment and restitution for veterinary care of a victim’s pet that was harmed as the result of an offense. It also creates an Emergency and Transitional Pet Shelter and Housing Assistance Grant Program to award grants for programs that provide assistance to victims of crimes related to stalking and domestic violence, and establishes that states should encourage the inclusion of protections against violent or threatening acts against the pet of the person in domestic violence protection orders. Finally, it also encourages states to expand their legal protections for the pets of domestic violence victims.

Numerous studies and feedback from law enforcement officers indicate that a significant percentage of domestic violence situations also involve threats of, and outright abuse of pets. Studies have

shown that nearly half (48%) of women delay leaving an abusive situation out of concern for their pet and 70% of victims report their abuser threatened, injured or killed their pet. Sadly, many abusers often use maltreatment or threats of abuse against pets as leverage to prevent victims from fleeing abusive relationships. In one study, 25% of the participants reported that they returned to an abusive relationship out of concern for their pets.

Despite the frequent occurrence of pets being used as pawns in abusive relationships, few domestic violence shelters have programs to accommodate domestic violence victims who wish to seek shelter for themselves and their pets.

The AKC has been a leader in recognizing the value of protecting victims by also assuring the safety of their pets, and in 2010 es-

tablished the AKC Women’s Shelter Grant Program. This program provides grants from the AKC Humane Fund to domestic violence shelters and related organizations to assist them in setting up programs to accept victims and their pets. To date, the AKC Humane Fund has

distributed nearly 100 grants to assist domestic violence organizations that accommodate victims and their pets.

The AKC is also pleased to advocate and work with shelters to raise awareness about the connection between victims and their pets, and ways that shelters can accommodate victims’ pets. To learn more about the AKC Humane Fund program, visit [www.akchumanefund.org](http://www.akchumanefund.org).

**“Despite the frequent occurrence of pets being used as pawns in abusive relationships, few domestic violence shelters have programs to accommodate domestic violence victims who wish to seek shelter for themselves and their pets.”**





# The AKC Humane Fund supports dogs and the people who love them.

## **Grants for Domestic Violence Shelters that Permit Pets**

The AKC Humane Fund gives grants to shelters that house victims of domestic abuse with their pets. Too often, fear for the safety of a beloved pet is enough to keep a victim of domestic violence suffering in a dangerous situation at home. AKC Humane Fund grants help these pet owners find peace and safety and transform their lives.

## **Rescue Grants**

Our funding for non-profit rescue organizations covers the cost of veterinary care and vital supplies needed to help dogs find their forever homes.

## **Scholarships**

The AKC Humane Fund awards thousands of dollars in scholarships every year to students who are pursuing education focusing on the care of pets and the advancement of responsible pet ownership.

## **Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE Awards)**

The Awards for Canine Excellence celebrate the ways in which dogs contribute to our lives. One award is given every year in each of these categories: Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, Therapy, Service, and Exemplary Companion Dog.

## **AKC Library**

The American Kennel Club maintains one of the world's largest libraries devoted to dogs. Open to the public, the Library serves as a reference collection and archive on dogs and what they mean to mankind.

### **IF YOU'RE A DOG LOVER, JOIN US**

To make a tax deductible contribution or to learn more about what we do, contact us at  
*The AKC Humane Fund, Inc., 260 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016*  
Or visit [www.akchumanefund.org](http://www.akchumanefund.org)

# Survey Reveals Misconceptions about Purebred Dogs in Animal Shelters

A groundbreaking shelter study recently released by the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) reveals that U.S. animal shelters are reporting an all-time low in the number of purebred dogs available.

The study finds that **fewer than five percent of the dogs available in U.S. shelters are purebred, a significant departure from the 25% figure commonly assumed.** If pit bulls (a commonly misidentified dog) and Chihuahuas (which are the leading import dog for relocation programs) are removed from the purebred total the percentage drops to about 3%.

This survey shows “tremendous progress in eradicating dog overpopulation and substantially reducing the number of shelter deaths which occurred in the past due to indiscriminate or accidental breeding,” said Patti Strand, president of NAIA.

Strand credited animal sheltering groups and national dog organizations like the American Kennel Club (AKC) for launching on-going campaigns encouraging pet owners to select their pets more carefully, neuter dogs not intended for breeding programs, and understanding the lifelong commitment that responsible dog ownership requires. She also commended the AKC breed rescue groups that work directly with shelters to save purebred dogs suitable for adoption.

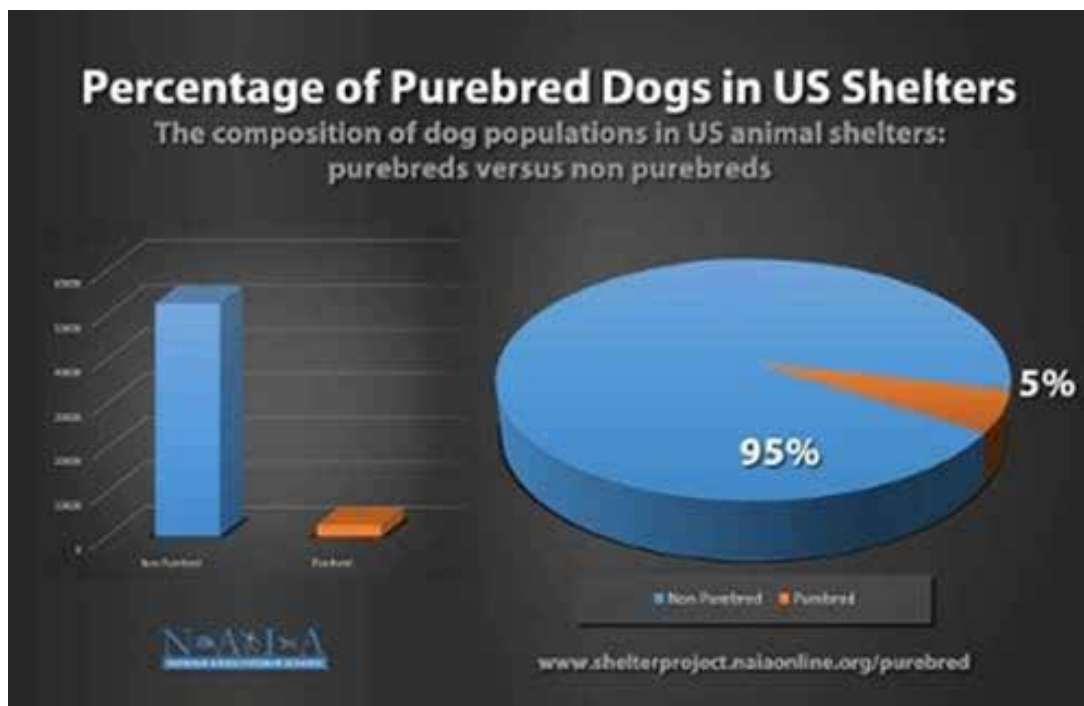
The study is also significant because it reveals common misconceptions about purebred dogs in shelters and exposes the fallacy that pet purchasers who prefer a purebred pet or one from a documented source somehow hurt a dog in a shelter through their choice of pet. “The best way to prevent pets from being in shelters is to be a responsible pet owner,” said Sheila Goffe of the American Kennel Club. “There are a variety of sources from which you can get a great pet. But responsibility starts with carefully selecting the right pet for your lifestyle so that you can care for it appropriately and have a rewarding lifelong relationship.”

The NAIA, a national advocacy group for responsible animal ownership, has long been involved in efforts to reduce the number of adoptable pets that are euthanized in American animal shelters.

Strand notes that the problems surrounding shelter euthanasia and the expansion of shelters in the United States are complex. “To make progress toward effective solutions, we need a clearer understanding of the many issues involved.” To achieve this, NAIA calls for new state and federal laws prohibiting imports of rescue dogs from overseas and expanded oversight and reporting requirements for U.S. shelters.

**“This survey shows tremendous progress in eradicating dog over-population and substantially reducing the number of shelter deaths...”**

To learn more about NAIA’s recent report, contact NAIA at [naia@naiaonline.org](mailto:naia@naiaonline.org) or visit [www.naiaonline.org](http://www.naiaonline.org).





# AKC Goal: Working to Reduce the Need for Animal Shelters

Dog lovers all over the US have reason to celebrate news from the NAA, which recently concluded one of the most in-depth studies of shelter data yet, and found that the number of dogs entering US shelters has dropped to new lows. Digging deeper into the matter, NAA also learned that only about three percent of dogs in our country's shelters are purebreds.

NAA's study paints a new picture of the current state of shelters, often perceived as overcrowded dumping grounds for unwanted and indiscriminately-bred animals. In fact, many of today's shelters must turn to overseas sources to fill a growing demand for rescue dogs, relying on a widespread but little known importation practice called "relocation".

Fortunately, the evidence points to light at the end of the tunnel for homeless U.S. dogs. But how did it happen? Education about responsible dog ownership has been AKC's message for more than 130 years, and it seems the message is getting through. Today, more than 83 percent of pet dogs are neutered and microchipping has become commonplace. Here are just some of AKC's educational initiatives that have laid the foundation for healthy, happy and lifelong relationships with our dogs:

- AKC's Responsible Dog Ownership Days campaign in the month of September guides the public toward choosing the right pet for one's lifestyle and understanding the lifelong commitment of owning a dog. RDO Days are "edutainment" for the whole family. Find an event near you this September at [www.akc.org/events/responsible-dog-ownership-days](http://www.akc.org/events/responsible-dog-ownership-days).
- Every February, New York City "goes to the dogs," when AKC Meet the Breeds® brings together responsible breeders and dog lovers for hands-on learning experiences and advice about how to responsibly choose and own a dog.
- The AKC Canine Good Citizen® program (CGC), now in its 25th year, is the leading behavior-based dog training curriculum in America. The CGC program upholds positive reinforcement methods to help puppies and dogs achieve important skills to make them the best pets they can be. The program has proven that trained dogs have the best chance of staying with their owners and out of shelters. A recent survey showed that one year after CGC training, 99 percent still owned their dogs. To learn how to train your dog to become a Canine Good Citizen, visit [www.akc.org/dog-owners/training/canine-good-citizen](http://www.akc.org/dog-owners/training/canine-good-citizen).
- AKC actively develops and promotes continuing education for purebred dog breeders. Our programs such as Breeder of Merit reward and acknowledge breeders who uphold codes of ethics and



**“Continually innovating programs to educate dog breeders and owners has been our most effective tool in the fight to end pet overpopulation and reduce euthanasia in shelters.”**

routinely perform health tests on their puppies. Read more about Breeder of Merit at [www.akc.org/dog-breeders/breeder-of-merit](http://www.akc.org/dog-breeders/breeder-of-merit).

- Through our compliance department, the AKC inspects kennels to ensure that our standards for care and conditions are met before puppies leave for new homes. AKC's compliance department has been visiting kennels and educating breeders since the 1970's.
- AKC advises new puppy owners about spaying and neutering dogs not intended for breeding programs. Read more about the do's and don'ts at [www.akc.org/learn/dog-health/should-i-breed-my-dog](http://www.akc.org/learn/dog-health/should-i-breed-my-dog).
- AKC Reunite ([www.akcreunite.org](http://www.akcreunite.org)) is dedicated to microchipping as many dogs as possible in order to keep them safely under their owners' care and to help reunite lost pets with their owners. AKC Reunite has donated more than \$6 million in microchip scanners, disaster relief trailers and search and rescue assistance to communities nationwide.
- The AKC Canine Partners program offers opportunities for mixed-breed dogs to participate in a variety of AKC events that promote a healthy and active lifestyle; designation in the program has increased adoption potential for many mixed-breed dogs. Learn more about the program at [www.akc.org/dog-owners/canine-partners](http://www.akc.org/dog-owners/canine-partners).
- AKC's nationwide network of not-for-profit dog clubs provides rescue and rehoming services for dogs in need of forever homes. These active volunteers work to ensure that purebred dogs do not languish in shelters but are fostered responsibly, often with assistance from the AKC Humane Fund. Learn more about the AKC Rescue Network at [www.akc.org/dog-breeds/rescue-network](http://www.akc.org/dog-breeds/rescue-network).

Continually innovating programs to educate dog breeders and owners has been the most effective tool in the fight to end pet overpopulation and reduce euthanasia in shelters. Though evidence points to the preponderance of mixed breed dogs over purebreds in a dwindling shelter population, AKC advocacy is as active as ever, because all dogs — regardless of their source — deserve homes with responsible and dedicated owners.

# AKC Announces Most Popular Breeds in America



Labrador Retriever- ©Mary Bloom for AKC

Labrador Retrievers remain America's most popular dog.

The Labrador Retriever has done it again. The intelligent, family-friendly breed held onto the number one spot on the most popular breeds list for the 24th consecutive year, continuing the longest reign as the nation's top dog in American Kennel Club history.

While the Lab holds strong, the Bulldog has quietly crept up the list, landing this year at number four for the first time. This is the highest ranking in the breed's history. Bulldogs make excellent family companions with a natural tendency to form strong bonds with children, an easy-to-care-for coat, and minimal exercise requirements.

Meanwhile, the popular French Bulldog continues its quest for the number one spot, breaking into the top 10 for the first time in nearly 100 years. This year the Frenchie finds himself at number nine, knocking the Dachshund out of the top 10 for the first time since 1985.

"The Lab truly is America's dog," said AKC Vice President Gina DiNardo, "But the lovable

Bulldog breeds are clamoring to dominate. Watch out for an upset next year."

America's most popular breeds aren't the only movers and shakers this year. The Wire-haired Pointing Griffon made huge strides over the past decade, jumping 38 spots from 112th in 2004 to 74th in 2014.



Bulldogs continue to rise in popularity

Other breeds making double-digit gains over the past decade include the Havanese (from 52nd in 2004 to 25th in 2014), the Border Collie (from 60th in 2004 to 39th in 2014), the Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever (from 118th in 2004 to 96th in 2014), and the Black and Tan Coonhound (from 140th in 2004 to 120th in 2014).

## AMERICA'S TOP TEN BREEDS:

1. Labrador Retriever
2. German Shepherd Dog
3. Golden Retriever
4. Bulldog
5. Beagle
6. Yorkshire Terrier
7. Poodle
8. Boxer
9. French Bulldog
10. Rottweiler

## Learn More

- The Labrador Retriever also ranked as the most popular breed in Washington, DC. The Golden Retriever, Poodle, French Bulldog and German Shepherd round out the top five breeds in the city.
- Where does your favorite breed rank?

Visit [www.akc.org/news/the-most-popular-dog-breeds-in-america](http://www.akc.org/news/the-most-popular-dog-breeds-in-america) to see the full list of rankings for all breeds recognized by the AKC