

## What Does the AKC Do?

In the United States, the American Kennel Club is the leading organization helping dog lovers preserve, improve and enjoy purebred dogs. AKC recognizes more than 170 breeds and varieties and classifies them according to their abilities and historic role, placing them in one of 7 different variety groups: Sporting, Hounds, Working, Terrier, Toys, Non Sporting and Herding.

Pure breeds were developed by purposely crossbreeding dogs with desired traits in order to fix or consolidate those traits in a particular bloodline. Many purebred dogs perform numerous jobs so well that they easily could fit into more than one group, so the group designation should be considered instructive, not limiting. The German Shepherd Dog, which AKC places in the Herding Group, for example, excels in police, rescue, herding and guide dog work. The Golden Retriever's keen retrieving ability places him in the Sporting Group, but he is also highly regarded as a service and therapy dog.

Some dogs still maintain their traditional jobs. Others have acquired new jobs, such as sniffing out contraband, performing search and rescue work, alerting deaf owners to the sound of a crying baby or to a smoke alarm, or comforting a lonely senior in a nursing home. The wonderful thing about dogs is that they are never happier than when they are working side by side with their human companion, and this is true whether assisting in a life-and-death search, on a week end outing with the family or competing in an obedience or agility trial.

To learn more about the American Kennel Club, visit their website at:  
[www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)

## What is the NAIA?

The National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) is a charitable 501(c)(3) educational organization of recreational, business, agricultural, and scientific interests founded in 1991 to support and promote best practices in responsible animal ownership and use while providing a viable alternative to animal rights extremism. NAIA's membership consists of pet owners, dog and cat clubs, rescue groups, veterinarians, scientists, farmers, fishermen, hunters, and wildlife biologists.

NAIA is committed to preserving the human-animal bond, the special bond that exists when people live and work with animals, and supports everyone from beginners to professionals as they strive to learn more about animal care and husbandry.

### What does NAIA do?

NAIA supports animal welfare and the rights of animal owners by:

- Providing factual information to the public about animals and animal welfare issues
- Creating programs to improve the care and welfare of animals
- Helping local animal welfare groups achieve their mission
- Helping local authorities write laws that target irresponsible ownership practices and inhumane treatment of animals while safeguarding the rights of responsible animal owners
- Supporting the enforcement of state and federal laws that mandate the proper treatment of animals and provide penalties for animal abuse.

To join or to learn more about the National Animal Interest Alliance, visit our website at:  
[www.naiaonline.org](http://www.naiaonline.org)



## Why Purebreds?



**The National Animal Interest Alliance**  
*Supporting Pets and the People Who  
Love Them Since 1991*

## Purebred Dogs: A Brief History

Dogs have been working partners and companions to humans for tens of thousands of years. Over time, through selective breeding for specific traits, different breeds of dog emerged. The history and development of distinct dog breeds is a fascinating study and one that modern purebred dog fanciers appreciate and revere.

Today, most dogs are family pets, valued more for their companionship than for any of their other working abilities or historic roles. But it wasn't that long ago that most dogs worked for their keep: herding sheep or reindeer, driving cattle, guarding property, pulling carts or sleds, hunting birds or other game or rooting out pests.

As Americans began leaving the farm for city life in the mid to late 1800's, however, some of the old jobs that dogs had performed vanished or were transformed.



Today's Dalmatians work for fire departments as ambassadors, educating children about the importance of fire safety.

Rural Americans still relied on their dogs for numerous jobs, but landed gentry and urban Americans, just one generation off the farm and with no such jobs to offer, turned to their dogs for leisure pastimes. Dog sports began to flourish.



Bred for intelligence and athleticism, the Jack Russell Terrier is a natural for agility trials—just one of the many canine sports available today.

A critically important chapter in the history of modern purebred dogs began in 1884 when sportsmen from 12 dog clubs met in Philadelphia to form a *club of clubs*. Each of the delegates had hosted dog shows or run field trials in the recent past and believed that the sport of purebred dogs needed a central organization. The result of this meeting was the birth of the **American Kennel Club (AKC)**. Within months the AKC was founded, established a stud book, and began publishing the *AKC Gazette*, a magazine that it still publishes today.



AKC champion Jinny and her puppies in the 1940s

## So Are Purebreds for “Snobs”?

Many of the early purebred fanciers were wealthy, so to this day purebred dogs are often associated with snobbishness. But most of today's purebred dog fanciers don't fit that stereotype — they are simply dog lovers from all walks of life who value the predictable traits that are offered by specific breeds.

They like the fact that their Dalmatian is playful yet quick to focus, and always ready to go for a jog; that their Poodle is so trainable and doesn't shed; that their Whippet is a clean and calm couch dog. They like knowing that their puppy will grow up to be a certain size, have a particular coat, temperament and energy level; that it won't get too big for them to handle; that its energy level won't wear them out; or that its coat won't demand more care than they have time to give it.

These are not snobby reasons for choosing one dog over another. They are essential factors to consider when getting any dog. The predictability of purebred dogs enables people to make the right choice for their family's lifestyle, an important key to successful dog ownership. This is what keeps dogs in homes for life, and out of shelters.



**German Shorthaired Pointer**  
Intelligent, powerful, and not at all snobbish.