

The NCA Takes a Stand Against Cyber-Bullying

A prospective owner makes a statement on social media: *"I'm looking to buy a Newfoundland puppy from a Newfoundland breeder named Jane Doe, and I think it would be fun some-day to have puppies."*

The first response to the post come quickly:

"Why would you buy from her?"

More responses pile on—

"What do you know about breeding Newfoundlands?"

"You're not good enough to have a Newf if you're thinking about having puppies."

"You're just looking to be a puppy-miller..."

"You'll never get into our club."

"I'm spreading your name so a reputable breeder will never sell to you ..." —and the dialogue goes on, with others joining in, and escalates to what many view as a negative and harassing conversation.

Cyber-harassment and bullying have permeated all areas of social media, including the dog world. Responses to naïve or sometimes controversial questions or observations are answered with comments that seem intent on fueling negative, hurtful, and distorted conversations. Often the responses come from those who believe they are protecting our Newfoundlands from unworthy owners, but this should not be a justification for negative comments, public harassment, or ridicule.

It is our duty to protect our breed, but we achieve that goal by educating and reaching out to prospective owners and encouraging them to do their research and to ask questions. It is true that someone with firsthand knowledge of an inquiring undesirable owner should speak out, but those comments are best made privately— not through public postings, not through public threats, not with threats of blacklisting, and not with public character-assassination. Whatever the case, emotionally charged and unverified information is never appropriate.

Ironically, bullying or harassment on social media often produce results that are opposite from what is intended. If prospective owners are met with negative, sarcastic, or humiliating comments or read such comments about other owners, breeders, or fanciers within the breed, it can drive them to an irresponsible breeder—the very action we are trying to prevent.

In response to numerous complaints, the Newfoundland Club of America (NCA) has adopted the following cyber-harassment statement:

Your NCA Board of Directors recognizes the value and prevalence of social networking systems, such as Facebook®, e-mail lists, and blogs. Sometimes the rise of this entirely new class of communication has been accompanied by what has come to be viewed as cyber-harassment. Those engaged in cyber-harassment post negative comments and half or fabricated truths, often in a sarcastic manner, about individuals who cannot defend themselves. Members of the Newfoundland Club of America should consider social-networking communication as public and, as such, understand that their comments reflect on themselves and the NCA. Members should consider carefully what and how they write and are encouraged to stress positive aspects of education rather than negative or sarcastic comments about owners, breeders, and/or Newfoundland fanciers."

—Maredith Reggie,

Newfpages@aol.com

Newfoundland Club of America