**GRCA POSITION STATEMENT ON RESCUE IMPORTATION**

The GRCA has long been an advocate of rescuing purebred Golden Retrievers. When formal breed rescues developed, the hope was always that someday rescue would no longer be necessary. Due to the promotion of responsible breeding practices and the efficiency of breed-specific rescue, the last decade has seen a steady decline in Goldens in need of rescue.

Faced with not enough dogs for available homes, Golden rescues began admitting Golden Retriever crosses and dogs from other parts of the country. As the number of Goldens requiring rescue continued to dwindle, some of the rescue groups operating under the auspices of GRCA's National Rescue Committee began actively importing dogs from countries with health standards not equivalent to our own. This is a trend among many rescue groups, not just those focused on Goldens.

Rabies, brucellosis, canine influenza, leptospirosis and other diseases have all entered the U.S. as a result of incomplete vetting, questionable documentation, lack of quarantine and acceptance of dogs with unknown histories. In addition, some dogs with poor temperaments have been imported. These practices place our resident dogs and volunteers at risk.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has released a key report finding that over a million dogs are imported into the U.S. each year. **Less than one percent** are subject to thorough health screenings that ensure they are healthy and free of disease before entering the U.S. This report represents a critical first step in the process to update the current statutory and regulatory framework for dog imports to ensure animal and public health is protected.

Diseased dogs post multiple threats:

to the imported dog

to the volunteers and veterinarians who come into contact with those infected dog

to the other dogs currently at the facility

to the other dogs in the community

to the public in the community

to the other animals in the ecosystem

The GRCA views this as a public health concern that is quickly turning into a public health crisis for both dogs and people. We cannot condone these irresponsible and dangerous practices. The current federal laws applicable to importation are archaic and easily evaded with practices calculated to circumvent them. The GRCA supports stringent vetting and quarantine procedures as well as federal legislation to protect the canine, human and wildlife populations that are placed at risk by the current importation practices.

Golden Retrievers are popular because people fell in love with dogs from responsible breeders who breed to the standard, including the famous Golden temperament. The dedication of good breeders is responsible for both reducing the incidence of disease and preserving the breed qualities the public treasures. Populating our country with imported dogs that may look like Goldens, but do not display the characteristics responsible breeders try so hard to maintain is in conflict with the mission of the GRCA and the future of our breed.

Until standards and safeguards are in place to prevent the spread of disease and protect our animal and human populations, the GRCA will oppose importation from at-risk countries by rescue groups. Traditional rescue groups that work as a safety net for domestic Goldens in need and do not engage in international importation will do so with the GRCA's endorsement and gratitude.

**FURTHER READING:**

USDA report on volume of dog importation:

<http://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/USDA_DogImportReport6-25-2019.pdf>

Overviews of the rescue importation problem:

<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-us-has-become-a-dumping-ground-for-foreign-puppy-mill-and-rescue-dogs-heres-what-needs-to-change>

<http://veterinarynews.dvm360.com/are-rescues-wrong-transport-these-pets?fbclid=IwAR2xOtOmaiElG9DTIl7w_qTX_n7_JZSXOns0zk1jgFxBrKJ7pCXnJHnPVNA>

<http://naiaonline.org/blog/shelter-rescue/careless-rescue-importation-exposes-people-to-zoonotic-disease/#.XX-iwi5Kjcv>

Golden Retriever from South Korea brings deadly canine flu to California:

<https://news.vin.com/VINNews.aspx?articleId=48933>

Brucellosis arrived in Wisconsin through dogs imported from Korea:

<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/health/canine-brucellosis-on-the-rise/>

Rabid dogs entered the United States from Egypt:

<https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/Egypt-dogs-temp-suspension.html>

A new strain of canine distemper was introduced to North America by a puppy imported from Korea:

<https://www.vet.cornell.edu/animal-health-diagnostic-center/news/canine-distemper-virus-update>

Of note in this report:

"While we have been most concerned with the importation of canine influenza virus from Asia to North America by improper procedures by various "rescue" groups, the importation of CDV may be more significant in that CDV once it enters an ecosystem cannot be eradicated even with effective vaccines. Once again the North American dog population is being put at risk by those who have no regard for the importation of foreign animal diseases."

Illegal puppy importations are on the rise:

<https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/operation-dog-catcher.html>