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**BREED POPULARITY**

A good indication of a breed's popularity is the number of purebreds it has registered each year by the AKC

Since the law of supply and demand also applies to dogs, it is reasonable to assume that breeders will try to satisfy increased demand by producing greater numbers of the most popular breeds. That is what is happening with the Bulldog. Statistics published earlier this year by the AKC clearly indicate that Bulldogs have never been more popular and numerous than they are today.

According to the AKC, Bulldogs ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in individual registrations in 1998 of the 146 breeds listed. A total of 13,836 Bulldogs were registered last year, compared with 13,673 in the previous year. This increase moved Bulldogs up three notches from the breed's 26<sup>th</sup> place 1997 ranking. (This is especially interesting in light of an overall decrease in total AKC registrations; there were 86,411 fewer purebreds registered last year than the year before.)

To further demonstrate how the popularity of the breed has grown during the last two decades, my research shows that the Bulldog has moved up a surprising 15 places since 1971, when the breed ranked 38<sup>th</sup>. At this rate, the Bulldog could rank as high as 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> in 20 years. Such a lofty ranking for the Bulldog will probably remain only hypothetical. Not even in England, where the Bulldog is a national symbol of British courage and perseverance, is it ranked among the most popular breeds.

The recent use of Bulldogs in America motion pictures, television shows and commercials has had a positive effect on the public's perception of the breed. Such exposure can tremendously increase a breed's popularity – as the startling upswing in the popularity of the Chihuahua attests, where the breed's recent presence in mass-media advertising has vaulted it from 12<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> place in the rankings. Other breeds have experienced similar surges in popularity. Thanks to a popular comic strip, the Beagle was boosted several years ago into the top 10, where the breed remains today.

Breed popularity can also be a curse, Dalmatians, once far more popular and numerous than they are now, fell to 30<sup>th</sup> place last year after ranking 17<sup>th</sup> previous year. Chow Chows, now ranked 39<sup>th</sup>, have suffered a similar decline, due to part perhaps to overproduction. Indiscriminate breeding practices spurred by breed popularity can increase the incidence of life-threatening genetic defects in the breed and unacceptable health risks. When health problems become too widespread, the breed suffers, and its members decline along with its popularity.

Bulldog breeders can take pride in the growing popularity of the breed. The question is, how popular and how numerous will the breed become before it begins to deteriorate?

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