

Margaret Poindexter

Margaret Poindexter, AKC General Counsel and Director of AKC Inspections, spoke to the NAIA conference regarding *The Development of Higher Standards for Keeping and Breeding Dogs*. Initially, she joined 126-year-old AKC to oversee their Compliance Division, which consists of inspections and investigations, Case Management, DNA Operations, and Compliance Support departments, but she was soon appointed General Counsel in 2008 when predecessor Michael Swick retired.

Margaret grew up involved with both horses and dogs. She's exhibited in conformation, obedience, agility, and herding with her Corgis and Labs, but has also had PBGVs and Aussies. In addition to that, she's very involved in equine rescue efforts.

The Compliance Division is what brought Margaret to AKC. Compliance is charged with ensuring the accuracy of the registry and upholding standards of care and conditions for AKC registered dogs. The AKC is the only registry in the U.S. with an ongoing kennel inspection program, and in 2007, AKC field inspectors conducted more than 5,600 inspections nationwide.

Compliance is viewed as a value system with an educational rather than a regulatory approach. Until 1991, inspections had been complaint-driven. It was not until 1996 that AKC developed their Care and Conditions Policy. That policy requires AKC inspectors to review, report and potentially suspend breeders based on finding AKC registerable dogs living in substandard conditions. Since then, breeders have been held to performance-based standards of care focusing on the health, safety and welfare of the dogs, rather than stipulating specific dimensions for kennels, etc.

The program is a combination of inspections, outreach and education. It also includes the DNA program that encompasses the Frequently Used Sire program as well as other sections that address DNA parentage verification to ensure the accuracy of the registry. There is the Breeder Relations Group as well as the newly instituted Breeder of Merit program. AKC's goal is to promote "the right kind of breeders."