

KAREN WALTMAN

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INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

January 10, 2007

Mary Bender, Director of the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement
2301 N. Cameron Street Room 102
Harrisburg, PA 17110

Dear Ms. Bender

I am writing to you to comment on the proposed changes to the PA Dog Law Regulations.

I have a fairly extensive background working with animals, and dogs in particular, having been the Director of Education for the Humane League of Lancaster County for four years, and serving as a Director on the Board of Directors. I was also an active member of the Humane League Auxiliary for many years, and on the puppy mill committee. I was the president of an animal shelter in Japan, and have spent many years involved in animal welfare work.

The puppy mills in Pennsylvania have become a shame to the State of PA, and a nightmare for many of the animals living in them. I have been to one puppy mill in the Ephrata area, that raised Dachshunds, which lived outdoors in rabbit hutch type cages, in all types of weather, despite their extremely short coats. I have also adopted a dog that was taken by the Humane League from a puppy mill in Mt. Joy. When we first adopted Shelby, she was filthy and matted, and had ear mites and a yeast infection in both ears. She was extremely timid, and frightened by everything. Seven years later, Shelby is our pampered family pet. She is still frightened of strangers, and her ears have so much scar tissue that she suffers from constant ear infections. We are so thankful we were able to save her, because she is a wonderful, loving, dog.

I applaud all of the changes that may be implemented in the new dog laws. I am concerned, though, that some of the changes may be difficult to enforce. The need for exercise for each dog, each day, is incredibly important. However, won't many puppy mill owners just say they have exercised each dog, when in reality, no one will be there to check whether or not that happens. If each dog had a much larger run, where they were able to go outside, as well as come in to a warm dry area, the dogs would probably fare better. There is no way that a puppy mill owner is going to exercise 200 dogs each day, although I am sure that their ledgers will indicate that they did.

A warm, dry place to sleep is also extremely important. How will this be enforced, and what kind of bedding will be allowed?? I think bedding types, such as straw, need to be stated, so kennel owners don't put down inadequate bedding. If towels or blankets are allowed, as most Humane Leagues use, it should be specified that the bedding needs to be washed and dried thoroughly a few times each week, at least, to ensure that animals aren't sleeping on soiled, wet bedding.

The temperature regulations are also extremely important. I have heard of short coated dogs that have died from exposure, inside of dog houses or shelters, because they could not maintain their body heat in the kennel. This happened to a State Police dog a few years ago, and I know that it happens at puppy mills all of the time. Dogs must be kept in the new temperatures that the proposal recommends. Allowing them to

exist in extreme temperatures is nothing short of outright cruelty.

Besides the temperature needing to be regulated, the dogs definitely need sturdy, warm, houses or kennels. I would actually require them to have flaps on the doors, otherwise precious heat goes out of the doorway.

If puppy mill owners were required to provide each of their dogs with a kennel large enough to receive adequate exercise, with warm, dry secure shelter with bedding, and had to heat and cool their kennels to keep the dogs comfortable, I believe most of them would not be able to stay in business. These puppy mills have been allowed to operate too long in the state they are in, and changes have to be made. I applaud the new proposals, and hope that they can be fine-tuned in order to provide the dogs with the fair treatment that they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Waltman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".