

January 17, 2007

Ms. Mary Bender
Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408

Re: Public Comment on Draft Dog Law Regulations

Dear Ms. Bender:

I would like to take this opportunity to commend Governor Ed Rendell, his staff and all those involved in the revamping of Pennsylvania's dog laws. As a professional pet sitter, dog owner and foster home for unwanted and abandoned dogs, I have a full appreciation and unique perspective on the issue.

As a dog owner, I too have made the mistake of buying "that puppy in the window". This dog is now 10 years old and has been healthy, but I know I've been extremely lucky. I know of dozens of people who have had huge health expenses for a new puppy, including surgeries to correct unseen deformities. Others that cannot afford these costs simply may return the dog to the pet store (thereby sealing its fate) or turn it over to a shelter or rescue. For others, the puppy simply cannot survive its origin and dies.

INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

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As a foster home and rescuer for Keeshonden, I have seen first hand the horrors that result from puppy mills – not just the breeding process, but the horrific conditions and treatment of the breeding pairs. I also have first hand knowledge of what a miller will do with a dog that no longer produces large enough litters – some are drown in the farms' ponds, others have their necks snapped – and their bodies are left to rot. I have had over 30 rescue dogs in my home in the past nine years and not a single one has been from a reputable breeder because if they had, the breeder would surely have taken the dog back to be rehomed. There is rampant inbreeding resulting in health issues that are not readily known at the time of purchase from a pet store or backyard breeder. Puppies that may appear healthy will have health issues the new family may not want to handle, or cannot afford to treat. The major causes of these health issues are lack of genetic testing of the breeding pair, tracking of breeding pairs, breeding at every heat, poor nutrition, health care and living conditions for the breeding pair, and the removal of the litter from its mother too early. These are the dogs that end up in rescues, shelters, or just abandoned and left to die. One foster I had, Babe, was dumped at a shelter by a backyard breeder because she became ill. This dog had three different C-Section scars and had bladder cancer. She was with us for four months before she died – she was just 5 years old and spent her entire life having puppies. Luckily, the Keeshonden breed is not very popular among puppy millers due to their small litters and inability to sell a "high maintenance" dog in a pet store.

As a professional pet sitter, I see all breeds of dogs from all types of situations every day. I can always tell a quality breeder dog from a miller or backyard breeder. I have counseled clients who have made the mistake of purchasing a miller dog and are faced with tough decisions about the dog's care and future, as well as handling the expenses involved in getting the dog healthy, if that is even possible – and sometimes it is not.

I have read the entire proposed document and sincerely hope it is approved. I only wish it contained something that would prevent pet stores from selling live animals. If the market collapses for puppy millers and backyard breeders, we would see less animals end up in rescues and shelters. These proposed changes are a huge step in the right direction, not only for the dogs it directly affects, but the public who needs to be educated and protected.

I must stress the importance of not only approving these changes, but the constant enforcement and punishment that will be imperative to its success - to protect and improve the lives of so many who are unable to help themselves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynda Bedford".

Lynda Bedford
470 Amherst Court
Harleysville, PA 19438
(215) 393-9703

cc: Jessie Smith
Special Deputy Secretary
Dog Law Enforcement
Department of Agriculture
Agriculture Office Building, Room 210
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408