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March 11, 2007

PA Department of Agriculture
Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement
2301 N. Cameron Street
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408

Attn: Mary Bender

Dear Ms. Bender:

I am writing this letter in regard to the laws introduced for the dog breeding business. I am thoroughly disgusted with the dog breeding in the State of PA, and with the new dog law that is presently being introduced.

Where did this state ever get the idea that dog breeding belongs in agriculture, other than to accommodate the Amish and Mennonites in this State who wanted to start breeding dogs for a business to offset their farm income?

Dog breeding never belonged in agriculture and has nothing to do with agriculture. Agriculture, in my mind, has to do with the raising of crops, dairy, beef, pork, chicken, goats, etc. which are used for human consumption and feed for animals.

Dog breeding has always been for persons who show dogs and make their living, breeding, showing, and selling puppies. These breeders never had 50 to 300 or more dogs. Those are called mills, let's call it as it is.

Who is going to monitor these puppy mills to be assured that these dogs are left out of their stacked cages for exercises? No one in their right mind is going to believe that it will be done. A person who even has 50 breeders and is trying to farm cannot get around to let all these dogs out for exercise, not to mention the ones who have a hundred to two hundred dogs. There is not enough time in a day. You would surely have to be doing nothing but breeding dogs, and still cannot get around to tend them when there is such a large number of dogs involved.

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Recently there was an Amish farmer from Lancaster County who was cited for kennel problems, but got off through a technicality. He admitted that he does not clean the kennels on Sundays. Well, Oh My! If you have animals of any kind it is a 7 day a week job. These animals I feel sure do not discontinue relieving themselves, just because it is a Sunday.

The law should state that persons are permitted to handle only 25 breeders and their pups. The dogs should not be permitted to be in stacked cages where the feces and urine run into the cages below. The kennels should include runs with each opening from an enclosure that houses the dogs. The run should either be cemented or of material that is suited for a dog's feet and that can be hosed down regularly. In this manner, the dog can run out and get adequate exercise daily.

Maybe our Representative Cox from Berks County believes in free enterprise, but let's face facts. If he thinks, as is stated in a recent news article, that no one breeds dogs so that they can torture them, then Mr. Cox, get real. If you start breeding, and have over 100 dogs, and continue breeding after each litter of pups that is torture; not to mention the conditions under which these animals are housed.

Representative Cox made the comment that consumers should choose a healthy dog, and when he saw what he terms "dispirited" dogs when he purchased his own dog he made a point to choose a healthy one. Mr. Cox, if all those puppies appeared dispirited I would not have chosen any. Something was definitely wrong with the kennel.

Some friends of ours purchased a puppy from a mill in our area of Lancaster County. They took it to their vet in Berks County who stated immediately that "this is a puppy mill pup". He asked them where the pup was purchased in Lancaster County, and he even knew of the mill where the pup was purchased. It is now an adult dog, and still has numerous health problems. The vet informed our friends that the dog would never be a healthy dog. The papers that came with the dog do not even belong to that dog.

Representatives Cox and Mahoney should be doing a lot more regulation in this area. They need to do more about the care of the dogs, and go back to the drawing board. They need to think more about the animals, and not so much about the breeders who are involved in these puppy mills.

Bob Yarnall, Jr. and Ken Brandt who recently testified for the 300 PA Professional Pet Breeders Association both testified that customers from across the country have told them that Pennsylvania puppies are "the healthiest in the United States." I think both these gentlemen should get their heads out of the dog dirt, because we, in Pennsylvania, are known not for healthy breeding practices, but for our unhealthy, dirty puppy mills.

Let's now get the dog breeding out of agriculture and into another area. Anyone who has a 100 or more dogs is not practicing sound breeding and most vets will tell you this. Vets can tell just by examining the puppies if they are healthy or if they came from a puppy mill. Many of the pedigree papers do not even match the breed of the dog that was purchased. Most are mixed breeds even though the papers classify the dog as a pedigree; so let's call it for what it is, puppy mills. These puppy mills are lucrative businesses that are used as a second income for farming.

Furthermore, Representative Keller who also testified, questioned whether it was the consumer who didn't properly care for the dog, and made it sick, and not the breeders. Most consumers who purchase a puppy from a breeder *do* take the puppies to the vets for a vet check and, in most cases, it is not the consumer, it is the breeder. Let's put the blame where it belongs, on the puppy mill owners. If you think there are no bad or mistreated animals in puppy mills in Lancaster County you need to take a tour, unannounced, at these places then you can see many more "dispirited" pups plus adult breeding dogs being housed in extremely poor conditions.

If the law is to be changed please be sure to change it in favor of the dogs and not the breeders. There certainly should be a law against the number of dogs that are permitted in each kennel. Also, when puppies are sold, there should be included with the sale certification signed by a veterinarian stating that the puppy has a clean bill of health.

Sincerely,

Priscilla D. Stover