

2559

Bender, Mary

From: Mark Ungemach [marku@ungemach.com]
Sent: Monday, March 12, 2007 6:31 PM
To: mabender@state.pa.us
Cc: 'MaryLou Hughes'; loiskay@terenelf.com; 'Gwen Arthur'
Subject: The proposed dog breeding and kennel regulations are misguided

RECEIVED
2007 MAR 16 PM 1:40
INDEPENDENT REGULATORY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Dear Ms Bender:

I am writing to complain about the new dog kennel and breeder regulations that are now being discussed.

My partner (significant other) and I are Southern Chester County residents, and we are very active with animal rescue. I chair the marketing committee of the Delaware Humane Association (www.dehumane.org), and I am the regional coordinator in Pennsylvania and Ohio for Wheatens In Need (www.wheatenrescue.org), the nationwide non-profit Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier rescue; both of these are volunteer positions.

We foster (and find homes for) countless dogs on our nearly 11 acres each year. We have a litter of puppies every year or two, and our dogs compete in agility through the United States Dog Agility Association (our 4 year old female, Sammy, made it to the semi-finals at the USDAA Nationals in Scottsdale last November). We are very concerned about animal welfare and we believe in a positive reinforcement approach to animal training.

We spend a tremendous amount of time and money with animal rescue, and it is not unusual for me to drive out to Ohio to pick up two dogs, foster them, pay (out of my own pocket) for their medical needs and grooming, and eventually drive each dog to a new home (sometimes as much as a day's drive away). Furthermore, every dog that spends more than a few days in our home receives at least some positive obedience and basic agility training, including basic clicker training. All dogs receive more than adequate exercise in a large fenced environment (whereas our neighbors let their ill-behaved dogs run loose throughout the neighborhood, frequently defecating all over our property).

At the end of last October, I received a call from Kevin Usilton, the Executive Director of the Delaware Humane Association, who told me that a Wheaten Terrier had been picked up by animal care and control in Delaware, and that I should check it out. I then drove down to Kent County, DE, to take in this dog. The dog, Charley, had been picked up in North Wilmington, DE, after having been hit by a car, which left him with a broken rear leg. When I picked him up, Charley had been in a poorly-constructed, make-shift splint for five weeks. I called every vet and community organization in the area to see if there were any reports of a missing Wheaten in Northern Delaware or in Southeastern Pennsylvania, but no one stepped forward. I took Charley to a specialty vet, who told me that his leg was poorly set, but was too far along in the healing process to re-set properly at that time. Last week, after more than three and a half months with limited movement, after numerous (and expensive) x-rays and regularly replaced splints, Charley was pronounced healed, and is now without a splint. We are now doing everything we can to rehabilitate his leg.

3/13/2007

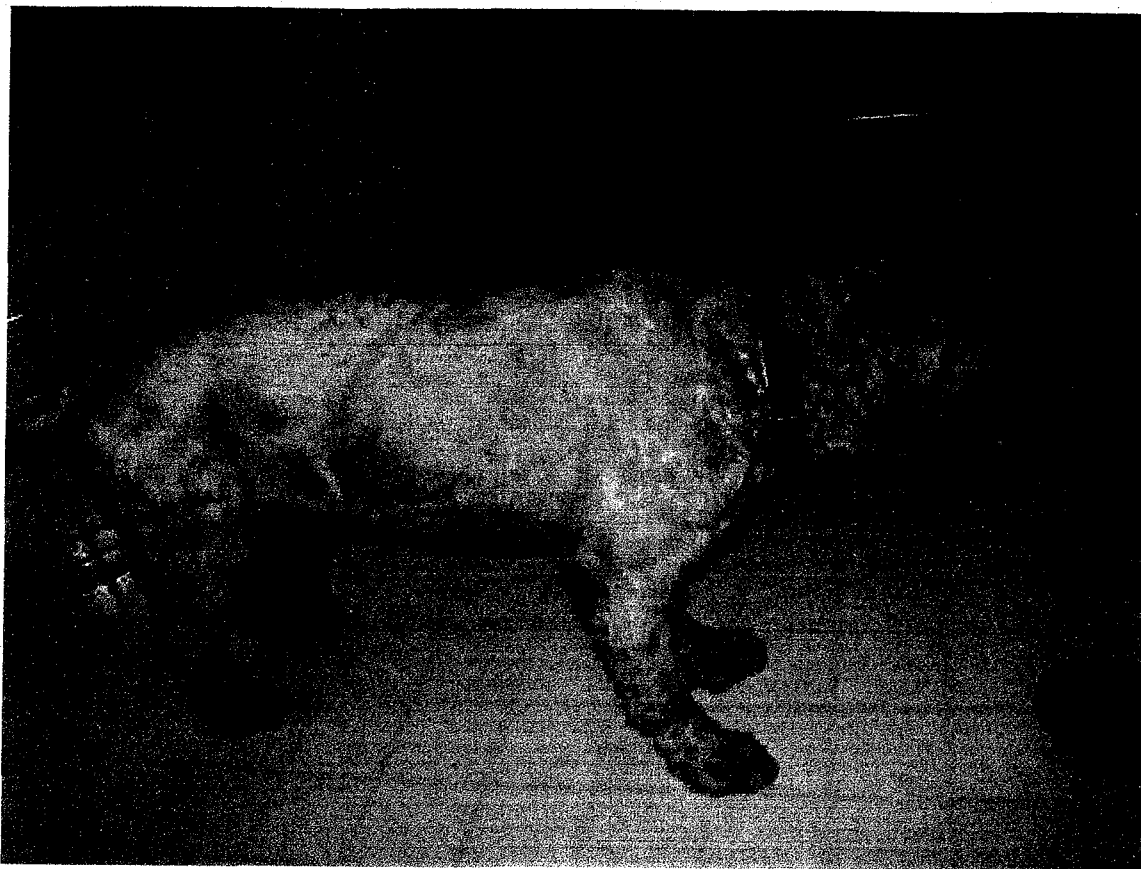


Photo of Charley taken November 2006



3/13/2007

Photo of Charley taken March 2007.

Under the proposed regulations, we could not continue to do the rescue work that we do. Under those regulations, each dog that spends any time in our home during a single year would count toward our total number of dogs; we would have to set up as a kennel, and spend the money to construct specific dog quarters per the regulations, which would be prohibitively expensive.

I could tell you countless stories about animal abuse and neglect, as I come across them every single day, and I help many animals after they have been neglected and abused.

I have another story about a Wheaten I picked up in Ohio that had been left in a garage after his humans got divorced. The poor dog suffers from tremendous separation anxiety, and it has taken us more than six months to get him to his current, more positive state. When my vet first saw him, she said that she thought I had bitten off more than I could chew, but she would tell you now that she was wrong.

I ask that you even speak with our vet about how we treat all of the animals that come through our home. Our vet is Dr. Marty Williams, Limestone Veterinary Clinic, 302-239-5415.

Some of the so-called animal rights people who have advised the state, are the very people who go around to dog agility competitions and let dogs out of their crates to run free. That puts dogs, that are among this country's best cared-for dogs, in danger!

I agree that there is a need for better regulations to ensure the well-being of puppies and adult dogs, but I think you are going about it incorrectly.

There should be limits to the number of litters a female dog can have in a year and in its life.

There should be special consideration to large breeders who show great care. A prime example is an Oklahoma breeder of Border Collies, Lockeye Border Collie (www.lockeyebc.com); the Weese family breeds carefully, does a battery of hip, eye, and genetic tests, etc., and trains every single puppy for basic obedience and recall before ever placing it in a home. I would bet that the Weese family would find the proposed regulations to be a severe hardship, and that would be a shame. They are among the best dog breeders in the country, and they are extremely careful about how they place their puppies. They see each puppy as a living being, and not some commodity, as many of the Amish puppy-mills do.

When we have a litter, I receive countless calls from people who think they want a Wheaten Terrier. Each caller has to endure my interview, and they have to deal with the fact that I will be in there lives as long as the dog is living. We breed dogs because we love the dogs, not because we think we can make any money; after all of the vet bills, etc., we actually lose money. The proposed regulations would stop us altogether. Another shame, since the families who have adopted our puppies tell us over and over again that their dog is the best thing that ever happened to them and their families.

You need to focus on educating humans about proper animal care! You need to focus on the actual care and quality with each breeder!

Few people want an end to the profit-only minded puppy mills as much as I do, but these regulations are extreme and misguided.

Please let me speak with you on the phone!

Thanks for your time.

3/13/2007

Sincerely,

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