

REASONS WHY BREEDING REGULATIONS ARE WRONG

Introduction

Animal populations and control are complex issues with many variables. Accurate assessment of problems is critical before any steps can be taken toward solutions. Best results are obtained when there is public acceptance for reasonable and fair laws. This enables animal control officers to work with the public in areas of education, increase adoptions, perform any needed investigations and critical enforcement rather than being placed in repeated confrontational situations with an unwilling public over laws felt to be invasive of privacy and unjust.

Breeding Restriction Is Based On An Assumption That Shelter Population Will Be Reduced.

In general, movements to restrict or eliminate breeding and mandate sterilization stem from a desire to reduce shelter populations. It is an erroneous assumption that shelter populations exist solely due to animal procreation.

The top reasons animals are surrendered to shelters are: Moving, landlord issues, cost of pet maintenance, lack of owner's time to care for pet, lack of funds to care for sick pets, and pet behavior problems.

Statistically less than 3% of dog owners are responsible for surplus births.

Study of programs that have enacted harsh anti-breeding ordinances reveal increased surrender, increased euthanasia rates, evasion of authority, and avoidance of veterinarian care (possibly including rabies vaccinations) in order to prevent discovery.

How can a correlation to restricting and permitting breeders of pure bred dogs be made to shelter populations primarily comprised of mixed breed dogs?

Breeding Restriction Legislation Unfairly Impacts Only One Source Of Intact Or Unwanted Animals.

The shelter may be perpetuating the homeless animal problem by receiving the same animals again and again. To eliminate the unwanted animal problem, the shelter must achieve a 100-percent placement rate for outgoing animals. If the same animals keep coming back to the shelter, then its screening system and new-owner support services are lacking.

In order to be absolutely sure that it is not adding breeding animals to the population, a shelter must either alter all outgoing animals prior to adoption or achieve a 100-percent success rate on compliance with spay/neuter agreements.

Breeding Restriction Legislation Negatively Impacts The Quality Of The Dog Supply.

Breeding restriction laws would limit the options of dog buyers. Options are important to prospective dog owners because it is important for them to choose dogs that will fit in well with their lifestyles in terms of size, grooming requirements, and exercise needs. The fewer choices available to potential owners, the greater chance that their new dogs will not fit in well with their lifestyles and expectations.

A poor match between owner and dog often results in irresponsible or careless dog ownership and an increased number of dogs surrendered to shelters by dissatisfied owners.

A good match is more easily found with purebreds, due to the predictability of many characteristics in purebred dogs. A proposal that encourages a shelter monopoly for available pets by regulating the "competition" out of existence does a disservice to the community and might be considered an unfair business practice.

Implementing taxes or permit fees on breeding would encourage economics of scale, meaning that larger, commercially oriented operations would be better able to afford the added costs than would individual hobby breeders.

Small-scale breeders are often better able to give the individual care and human contact that each puppy needs in order to grow into a healthy, well-adjusted companion and neighbor. Also, small-scale breeders often have more time to screen potential dog owners and to educate them.

Such screening and education benefit the entire community, because responsible and informed owners will be less likely to have nuisance pets.

Some might argue that there are plenty of homeless dogs to fill the void that breeding restrictions would cause. However, not all animals in shelters are good candidates for adoption, due to behavior or health problems that may have landed them in the shelter to begin with. Also, many shelter dogs are older, and many prospective dog owners prefer to bring a young animal into their homes. An older dog that has had several previous owners or has been a stray may pose greater training challenges than a puppy. Not all prospective pet owners want to handle or are capable of handling this additional responsibility. **The law should not mandate it for them.**

Breeding Restriction Would Have Negative Impacts On The Community

According to the National Pet Owners Survey (American Pet Products Manufacturers Association), 61 percent of all households in the US have pets, and 39 percent own dogs. American citizens obviously have an ongoing desire for pet ownership, and a majority of the population would be directly impacted by any legislation which negatively influenced the pet supply.

Even those citizens who do now own pets stand a good chance of sharing their neighborhoods, apartment buildings, public parks or sidewalks with the companion animals in their communities. They too would be negatively impacted by a decline in the quality of the pet supply, or a decline in the quality of the owner-pet relationships in their areas.

One owner's uninformed choice of breed, for example, can disturb the whole neighborhood.

Breeding Restriction Legislation Will Have Little Or No Impact On Claims Of Public Health And Safety.

Breeding restriction proposals are often proposed as necessary to protect the public health and safety. A dog's reproductive status has nothing to do with its ability to contract rabies, destroy property, or be a nuisance in general. Altered or intact, health of the animal is the responsibility of the owner. Enforced leash laws can prevent roaming dogs from being destructive to property.

Breeding Restriction Legislation Is an Inefficient Use of Our Government's Time and Money.

Laws already in place, such as leash laws and running-at-large laws, if well enforced could eliminate accidental breedings which can contribute to the homeless pet population found in shelters.

Passing breeding restrictions costs the public money in the form of administrative fees, burdens animal control to enforce an unpopular law, and takes focus away from needed duties dealing with strays, abandoned animals, cruelty cases, public education, and shelter adoptions.

In Conclusion

Pet welfare, control of pet populations, and safety for pets and citizens is a community responsibility. Success is dependent on community awareness and support. The reasons that animals end up in shelters are varied, and multiple solutions are needed to decrease the number of pets surrendered as well as increase the numbers that can be reclaimed or adopted.

Rather than unfairly target one sector of the community, develop animal control strategies that:

- ✓ Educate and Inform
- ✓ Provide Support for Stable Pet Homes
- ✓ Increase Adoptions
- ✓ Enforce Existing Laws
- ✓ Promote Responsible Ownership