

WORDS ARE WEAPONS



By Barbara Axel

The old refrain goes “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me.” Contrary to this belief words are used to harm all the time, and the harm they do can be long lasting and irreversible. Words and phrases oft repeated tend to become accepted as truths and are not easy to refute. That is the danger. Some examples:

Puppy mill: A substandard kennel, at one time used mostly to refer to a commercial kennel though now used to refer to any person who owns several intact dogs

Overpopulation: Previously meant too many pets being reproduced with the result that homeless young puppies were filling facilities and being euthanized because of lack of space and people to home them. Now refers to all dogs and cats of any age temporarily housed within a facility

Pet parent: Used to denote someone who cares for and provides sustenance to pets. Term often interchanged with guardian. Supplants the term “owner” and has detrimental legal implications

Potentially dangerous dog: Because a dog may belong to a certain breed or perhaps be a crossbreed that resembles that breed he is discriminated against from birth, and perceived to be criminal even though he himself has always been well behaved

Hoarder: Someone who harbors more pets than they can care for. This is a subjective term that is usually no more than the opinion of the observer rather than having any validity. Being used more and more often as the reason to stage raids

Abusive breeder: Anyone who breeds animals

Rescue: A pet that is harbored temporarily before being sold/ adopted for a fee. Often a small fluffy dog that is acquired by a raid on an “abusive breeder” who operated a “puppy mill” Currently all pets get a certain status by being called rescue, no matter their origin

These are some of the terms that are being used with more and more frequency by those whose goal is to end all interaction between animals and man. Because they’ve been publicized so often by proponents of the animal rights agenda they are also being repeated more and more frequently by the press, legislators, and the general public. Who would believe members of any organization with the words humane or ethical in their title is a proponent for domestic animal eradication? Animal rights organizations portray themselves as kind to animals. Anyone who does not subscribe to their beliefs and methodology is portrayed as criminal. Gentle readers, when we also use these same words to complain about one another the danger to all of us who actually are proponents of animal welfare becomes much greater. Be more circumspect before you carelessly decide to throw a verbal weapon at a fellow owner because he did not agree with you. It often becomes a petty “my breeding is better than his breeding,” “my grooming is better than his grooming,” or “my kennel set-up is better than his kennel.” Though these words often used might be very detrimental to the reputation of your fellow in the short run, in the long run your words may be used to deliver a death knell to all of us.