

## AVMA hires lobbying firm

The AVMA has hired a lobbying firm to assist the Governmental Relations Division in advancing the Association's legislative and regulatory agenda. Following an extensive search, the American Capitol Group was selected to represent the AVMA in Washington, D.C. The firm began its work for the Association Oct. 1.

According to its Web site, the ACG was formed by several Washington veterans who have worked on important national and regional issues for more than a decade. All members of the firm have experience as senior staff members of key congressional committees or leadership offices, and as senior counselors to companies and national organizations.

American Capitol Group represents a variety of clients, including large agriculture, energy, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as national and regional business associations, and state and local governments. The firm's other areas of expertise include communications, financial services, health care, homeland security, and local government issues.

The AVMA Executive Board earlier this year approved the proposal to retain the services of a lobbying firm to augment the efforts of the Governmental Relations Division (*see JAVMA*, [May 15, 2007, page 1438](#)). The AVMA's legislative and regulatory agenda comprises several priorities for the 110th Congress, including defeating bills banning horse slaughter for human consumption, obtaining funding for the National Veterinary Medical Service Act and the Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank, and passing legislation strengthening the veterinary workforce.

<http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/nov07/071101d.asp>

## The Criminalization of Pet Ownership: Fact, Not Fiction

By Barbara Axel

Too many times during my long stint in pet legislation, I have seen punishing pet ordinances created, meant to be enforced only secondary to another offense. The good, but naive people who have fought hard for these compromises are delighted at their inclusion, and high five one another on the supposed wins. They believe what they have been told: Since the regulators can not afford to search for offenders, damaging secondary regulations will be put into force only after a complaint is brought to their attention.

The truth is that these secondary regulations that can be triggered by the primary offense are really MORE and not less dangerous. For a while, because nothing dire happens to anyone they know after one such law is passed, pet owners become complacent. They feel secure in the thought that nothing is ever going to happen to them.

Actually the newly written and adopted laws, though not often the political promises made aloud, have created a group of people who, though their pet-owning lifestyle has not changed, are suddenly and

unknowingly committing illegal acts. These formerly law abiding citizens are now existing below the radar at the whim of those in power.

Make no mistake, when it becomes expedient, the existing laws can quickly be modified or interpreted to be used to retaliate against anyone who might be annoying, vocally oppose, or otherwise stand in the way of an animal rights activist's political goals. This type of primary/secondary law has often been utilized in the past to target and harass specific people. It has been put on the books for just that purpose.

For example, let us assume that you own a number of intact dogs that you are showing or are planning to show. Two are adult males. One is winning multiple awards at shows across the country, and is in the top ten for his breed. The other is his sire, retired and at home, but still at stud. You own three bitches, all champions, but currently not being shown. One of the bitches has had a litter recently and the pups were of superb quality. Because of their potential you've kept three pups, now five months old. One is a male, and two are bitches that you are letting mature and run-on till you decide which one you want to keep.

Lately, concerned about the political anti-dog trends, you have become active in dog legislation. You have attended and spoken at city, county, and statewide meetings and hearings. You've written op-ed pieces in the local paper that have been picked up and distributed widely. Now you are becoming annoying to too many animal rights activists, and their legislative confederates. Your dogs are still beautiful, still good canine citizens, and still well cared for. The fancy holds you in high regard.

Your unemotional, objective, and entirely accurate words backed by referenced studies are gaining support where it counts so you must be stopped. Be assured that animal rights activists will retaliate to ensure your silence.

Since the local cruelty law is already on the books it is most convenient to implement even though it has yet to be enforced against a hobbyist.

People whose philosophy is to use disruptive means to silence opposition will publicly and frequently call for an investigation of your alleged cruelty. Because more than three pets reside in your home rumors can be introduced that there may be more than meets the eye to your pet ownership, and that you are engaging in suspicious behavior. Maybe even hoarding? Can an unfriendly neighbor be convinced to complain that your nuisance dogs bark? Your yard is unsanitary and smells awful? The local cruelty ordinance will ensure that it will take little time to obtain the necessary legal means to enter your home to search for infractions.

Recently, during raids in different communities throughout the United States these instances have been used to allege cruelty to judges whose understanding of animal husbandry is nil, but who can be swayed by emotional words uttered by silver-tongued attorneys employed by well-funded animal rights groups. Soon, without warning, your napping dogs are rudely awakened by loud, angry words at the door directed at their master. Threatening strangers gain entrance to your home and perceive frightened pets. Your home is in a turmoil while they aggressively move through it to find evidence of infractions. Even though the strangers are the cause, they will claim that your pets' agitated behavior is proof enough that something is not right.

Yes! You crate your dogs. Yes! Food and water is not available 24/7. Yes! Your whelping box contains a pig rail. Aha! A prong collar is found in the dog room. The floor of your kennel room is carpeted, not made of cement, and there is no drain hole for hosing it down. Horror of horrors there is a treadmill in that room. Therefore it stands to reason your min-pins must be fighting dogs. Now you will be arrested for breaking one or more existing laws, and the fines for harboring intact dogs will be triggered automatically. You must either make an appointment to have all your pets surgically made sterile, or pay the fine. You pay the fine of \$800.00.

However, if you continue to be annoying enough, and you live in North Carolina, you should be aware that a state law passed in 2006 now exists that allows someone who complains about your alleged cruelty to your pets to file these charges before a judge. If the judge agrees with the complainant, that person can then legally confiscate your dogs and be awarded custody of them prior to trial. The pets that you bred, whelped, and lovingly raised are now no longer yours till after you go to trial and perhaps win your case. Within a week of assuming custody the appointed custodian turns over the harboring of your dogs to a facility. You must now pay for their upkeep till your case has been resolved.

Meanwhile time passes and you think you may never see your pets again. It is now two years later. You've won your case, but you still don't know when you will see your pets again. The law has set no time limit for the dogs' return.

Finally, after quite a delay you get your dogs back, except for that wonderful dog you had at stud. Though he was in excellent health and spirits when he was confiscated, this senior's health quickly deteriorated because of the stress caused by subjecting him to continuous exposure to new and strange environments. He was now considered old and infirm by the custodian. Her vet agreed. Keeping him alive was going to be too expensive. You were told he had to be euthanized. You were notified by law, but were powerless to stop his execution. The other dogs have all been surgically altered.

But you will be able to start over again if you wish, for the dog who was in the top ten was not at home when the raid took place. Now you are considering moving to a more pet friendly location and have been researching. However, prospects are dim indeed. Maybe you will just give up and find another hobby. This one has cost too much in lawyer fees, the astronomical amount necessary to pay the bills associated with your confiscated pets' upkeep, and way too much in emotional fatigue, and heartache.

Horror fiction? You'd better not believe that. One day in the not too distant future this may be you. What can you do to halt this scenario? Insidious laws must be defeated in their entirety and not allowed to include exemptions or trigger points.

When it comes to mandatory spaying/neutering, breed specific legislation, intact permitting, or differential licensing laws, to name a few, compromise has never been the answer. It is even more dangerous now no matter the honeyed vocalizations and sweet promises. Understand the intent of the written words before they become the handwriting on the wall.

Oppose, don't compromise. Work to defeat all oppressive legislation that intends to separate us from our animals. Our laws. Our pets. Don't allow this to become a no pet nation because we continue to be complacent. ■

## **Man's Best Friend May Open Door To Understanding Fibrotic Lung Disease In Human And Animal Populations**

Medical News Today, October 17. In what is a growing trend among research scientists in the United States and the United Kingdom, animal and human researchers are collaborating to find answers that will lead to effective treatments for deadly diseases that affect both species. Researchers from internationally-recognized medical, veterinary and academic institutions joined together for the first human/canine conference on fibrotic lung disease.

The group met in Lafayette, Ind., in an effort to examine potential collaborative opportunities to research the disease. The researchers joined to investigate the possibility of finding faster paths that will lead to the identification of effective treatment in the human form of the disease which has confounded researchers for decades as well as identifying, diagnosing and treating dogs with canine pulmonary fibrosis.

"We brought together thought leaders on both the human and animal sides of fibrotic lung disease as a groundbreaking opportunity to look at this devastating disease and its impact on West Highland White Terriers (Westies) and discuss how science in animals and humans can work together to combat it," said Wayne Kompare, president of the Westie Foundation of America, the group that hosted the two-day meeting along with two foundations that fund canine veterinary research: the American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation and Morris Animal Foundation.

Similarities between human fibrotic lung disease and fibrotic lung disease that affects dogs are profound. Dogs known to be more commonly affected by the deadly lung disease, which is characterized by extensive and progressive scarring in the lungs, are Westies, a loveable companion popular in the U.S. and the U.K. It is currently believed some terriers may be at significant risk for the disease.

"We are certainly encouraged about the opportunity this type of comparative research presents," said Jesse Roman, M.D., a human fibrotic lung disease expert from Emory University Medical Center who attended the meeting. "It is known that dog physiology is similar to human physiology and this combined effort may provide findings that will be important to both bodies of knowledge."

The disease in Westies and some other breeds of dog appears to be very similar to the disease that claims 40,000 human lives each year in the U.S., the same number as breast cancer. The main symptoms of the disease, including shortness of breath and a dry cough, also seem to be consistent between humans and dogs. There is no known cause, no approved treatment and no cure for either the human or animal strains of the disease.

Because dogs age at a rate that is believed to be about seven times that of the human rate of aging, and fibrotic lung disease tends to be most common later in life, participating scientists are optimistic that the opportunity to study canine pulmonary fibrosis may provide a new approach that will lead to the discovery of treatments for both humans and animals. At the same time, veterinarians are excited about the opportunity to learn from human research to better diagnose and treat the dogs that are dying from fibrotic lung disease.

"There is no question we in veterinary medicine can learn from our colleagues in human medicine. Their understanding of fibrotic lung disease is much more developed than what we know about the canine disease," said Kurt Williams, DVM, PhD, DACVP, Assistant Professor of Pathobiology and Diagnostic Investigation from Michigan State University, who also attended the meeting.

"We believe that researching this disease in animals may move the field forward at a much faster pace than is possible in human medicine."

"We support unique collaborations like this that can help improve understanding of pulmonary fibrosis, and eagerly await the opportunity to contribute to this partnership," said Mark Shreve, CEO for the Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis, the nation's largest nonprofit organization representing the PF community. "New approaches are clearly needed to advance research into PF, and we're encouraged that such an esteemed group of specialists came together in this setting to freely discuss what opportunities may exist".

Comparative dog and human research is a growing trend in the scientific community due to the benefits for both. At nearby Purdue University, scientists are currently researching bladder cancer in dogs and applying what they're learning to human research and vice versa. Plans for the human/canine fibrotic lung disease research include the creation of the first published white paper on this aspect of fibrotic lung disease as well as the creation of diagnostic guidelines and standards of care for animals and creation of an animal tissue bank to study the pathology and epidemiology of the disease.

#### **About the AKC Canine Health Foundation**

Since its beginning in 1995, the AKC Canine Health Foundation has awarded more than 400 grants totaling more than \$20 million to veterinary schools and research institutions worldwide. Founded by the AKC, the AKC Canine Health Foundation is the largest nonprofit organization in the world that funds health research exclusively for canines.

#### **About the Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis**

The Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis (CPF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, founded in 2001 to accelerate research efforts leading to a cure for idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF), while educating, supporting, and advocating for the community of patients, families, and medical professionals fighting this disease.

#### **About Morris Animal Foundation (MAF)**

Morris Animal Foundation, established in 1948, is dedicated to funding research that protects, treats and cures companion animals and wildlife. MAF has been at the forefront of funding breakthrough research studies benefiting animals in some 100 countries, spanning all seven continents on earth.

#### **About the Westie Foundation of America**

The mission of the Westie Foundation of America is to provide financial aid and other support for medical research in order to benefit the health and quality of life of West Highland White Terriers; and, to further develop and communicate information regarding the health, care, breeding and quality of life of Westies to Westie owners, Westie breeders and veterinarians. For more information visit <http://www.westiefoundation.org>.

Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis

<http://www.coalitionforpf.org>

Article URL: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/85721.php>

## **Carolina Canine Epilepsy**

North Carolina State University is currently recruiting dogs for a research project which is looking for a genetic link to drug response in epileptic dogs. The project is being performed in the Department of Genetics and College of Veterinary Medicine at NCSU. Much current research is designed to find out why some dogs get epilepsy. NCSU is interested in a more practical question, namely why some dogs fail to respond to anti-epileptic drugs, specifically Phenobarbital. The idea is that there is variation among dogs and breeds in their ability to digest the drug, or deliver it to the right part of the brain, or maybe even in how the drug affects their neurons. This approach has already shown promise as a way to help doctors dose drug treatments for epilepsy in humans. Some of the technology from the Human Genome Project will be adopted for use in dogs. Using the blood samples, DNA will be compared from dogs that do or do not respond to Phenobarbital.

Preliminary data shows very promising results. Based on those results NCSU has decided to expand the study to include more dogs in hopes of replicating the original results. The goal is to collect blood samples from 300 dogs by the end of 2008. More information can be found on the Carolina Canine Epilepsy website: <http://www.carolinacanineepilepsy.org/>

## **How Does Your Dog Greet Another Dog?**

What does your dog do when approached by another dog? Let's assume that the approaching dog just wants to greet your dog with uncontrolled enthusiasm and chaos. There probably isn't a mean bone in his body. Does your dog growl or snap because he is under the attack of happiness? I don't mean that your dog lunges after another for no reason. I'm talking about a stable dog that is being greeted by a whirlwind.

Consider this – if you were on the street and a stranger came up to you (with only good intentions) and got right in your face, put their hands on you and excitedly/loudly wanted to share all kinds of information with you, how would you feel? This person is probably very nice but has no social skills and comes across as very rude and offensive. I know how I would feel – back off, get away, slow down, get your hands off me. I'm a fairly friendly person but can't help but be offended by rude behavior.

Now exchange places with your dog. How do you think he feels when playfully bombarded by dogs allowed to rush up and insist on being his best friend? Watch the other dogs around yours and protect him from the assault. If he ever growls or snaps at the offender your dog is going to be the one accused of being aggressive. If your dog is fearful or dominant a disaster might happen. Tempers will flair out of control. It can become a huge mess. But we are talking about your sweet, behaviorally stable dog right now. Personally, if I saw this whirlwind approaching my dog, I would step between them while telling the owner to control their dog. This is the point where a lot of owners will say, "Oh, it's alright, he just wants to say HI." This is the point where I will do whatever is necessary to protect my dog. The other owner has shown no regard to my or my dog's feelings so I really don't care if they like my response or not. My dog trusts me to look after him. I'm not going to compromise that trust because I don't want to hurt someone's feelings.

In a perfect world I'd let my dog discipline this delinquent, but the world isn't perfect. You have no idea of the temperament of the other dog or its owner. If they "fight back" your dog might be seriously injured or it may become a legal issue.

I would probably receive a bite because I would wade right into things (so much for intelligent decisions). To avoid a possible disaster it would be better to simply protect and remove your dog from the situation. Unfortunately, if we try to educate this type of owner it would probably fall on deaf ears because all he can see is that his dog just wants to say Hi! But, it is always worth a try. There are people out there that just don't realize what they are allowing their dog to do. If you are lucky enough to run across this type of owner then do, nicely, try to explain why their dog's behavior is objectionable.

Now to the friendly beast! If you are the owner of a dog that seems to love every other dog on the face of the earth ***you have to realize that not everyone loves him as much as you do!*** If your dog doesn't have the social skills to politely meet other dogs then you have to help him learn. If you allow him to rush up to other dogs and climb all over them (or their owners) then expect that one day that greeting will end in a trip to the veterinarian. Not all dogs have the social understanding to handle his type of greeting. They may have no tolerance for obnoxious behavior. These dogs can do serious damage to your dog. ***The fault will be yours because you didn't protect your dog when "he just wanted to say Hi!"***

In a perfect world, you would be able to find a very stable older dog that would teach your delinquent all the manners he doesn't possess. Usually, these are the best lessons when given to a young dog and are learned quickly. What you end up with, after a lot of noise and display, is a wet, slimy dog with a new respect for others. But we don't live in a perfect world. In the real world, if you allow the wrong dog to teach these lessons then your dog could be seriously injured.

Be careful, respect others and protect your dog. Don't allow him to be in a position to be hurt because he "just wants to say Hi!" You might consider a consultation with an experienced instructor, trainer or behaviorist to help map out a strategy for teaching your dog the social manners he needs. Then he will be able to meet and greet other without problems. He will find real buddies to body slam with and have a great time because they will all be speaking the same language. He will then have the skills to truly be able to "say Hi."

## **New on the NCRAOA Website**

The newest addition to the website is the Multi Media Corner. The Multi Media Corner will contain videos, power point presentations, and handouts on a variety of topics that can be used by clubs and organizations for educational purposes at meetings. This is a work in progress so please check back often.



***Protecting your right to responsibly own and breed animals.***

**Join NCRAOA. See our home page for membership information and application**

*For more information on animal health, training, reports on pet issues, animal sheltering, or to learn the difference between animal welfare and animal rights – visit our website at [www.ncraoa.com](http://www.ncraoa.com)*

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance, Inc. (NCRAOA) is a statewide organization of animal owners and professionals dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of responsible citizens to breed and own animals. NCRAOA, a 501(c)3 organization, provides education and information to the public and supports reasonable and humane animal welfare laws.

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