

Dog Owners stop SB460 in Finance Committee

SB#460 Commercial Dog Breeders stalled in House Finance on Monday, 8/10/09. The House is now adjourned and the bill cannot be heard until May 2010. The bill is stopped, although it is not dead. Committee Chair and bill supporter, Rep. Jennifer Weiss (D-Wake), called another bill to be heard out of order stalling in order to give proponents time to arrive. Although Sen. Davis stated to the press that “procedural problems” caused him to pull the bill from the committee calendar, the truth is that he, HSUS and bill supporters did not have the necessary votes to pass SB460.

The bill had been rapidly amended between Senate passage and committee hearing and a new Fiscal Note added. A major change was to relieve the state of responsibility and pass enforcement to county authorities. **SB460 will not require AWS (Animal Welfare Services) to inspect commercial dog breeders; counties will have the sole responsibility to investigate violations related to commercial breeding operations and to take the appropriate enforcement actions authorized by law. It is expected that most investigations would come due to complaints about specific facilities.**

Without including extreme budgets, such as Charlotte Mecklenburg Animal Services with a budget of \$4.7 million, the average county animal control functions on a budget of approximately \$550,000 annually. To pass along an unfunded mandate to local animal control and counties who are already struggling with budgets is completely unreasonable.

SB460 can still return for consideration in May 2010. It is your responsibility to speak with your Representative and explain the many problems with this HSUS inspired legislation. This is the tip of the iceberg. The number of bills HSUS and animal rightist friends were able to introduce in this NCGA legislative session was nothing short of breathtaking. That is only a small part of the HSUS arsenal against dog owners and the animal agriculture industry.

HSUS Paints Bulls-Eye on Ohio

*July 6th, 2009 Adapted for the Ohio Sheep Industry from an article written by:
Elizabeth Harsh, Executive Director of Ohio Cattlemen's Association*

In recent months the leadership of Ohio Agriculture has been facing the reality that the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has painted a bulls-eye on our Buckeye State. The group has publicly stated it would like to make Ohio its next victory, seeking to initiate and pass provisions similar to those that passed with a two-thirds majority in California as Proposition 2.

At a meeting they requested with Ohio Ag groups in February, HSUS representatives said their goal was to address livestock confinement through either legislation or a 2010 statewide ballot initiative like Prop 2. These confinement housing issues would change housing such as sow gestation stalls, veal crates and cages for layer hens.

Can they be successful? Since HSUS started its campaign to change agriculture's confinement practices, five states have imposed bans on housing systems. Their singular message in these ballot initiatives has been that farm animals need to have enough room to turn around and extend their limbs.

This seemingly common-sense message provides a concept that the voting public, the vast majority of which have no agriculture knowledge, can easily support. This makes agriculture's need for broader consumer education a daunting challenge, but never more important.

One thing the livestock industry can start doing now is to share with our stake holder's important information about HSUS – but in a way that is fact-based and not radical in nature. We must be a voice of reason in this effort, while communicating critical information about their agenda.

So who is HSUS? Although they benefit from name identity confusion, HSUS is not the same organization as your local humane society, the one that is primarily responsible for the protecting and sheltering of dogs, cats and other domestic animals.

HSUS also benefits financially from the misunderstanding that exists over the two very different organizations. It has an operating budget of more than \$120 million in 2007 and more than 10 million members. Well-intentioned people send donations to HSUS that in reality do not support the local volunteers and staff who are working to protect animals in their community.

In the last few years, HSUS has softened its campaign of activist vegetarianism and animals-are-our-equals and are capitalizing on a more mainstream approach. However, time and time again, HSUS has publicly indicated it supports an agenda that would lead to the end of all animal agriculture and stop the consumption of meat and animal products.

You may ask what gestation stalls and layer cages have to do with the sheep industry? It has everything to do with us – because HSUS' success will be greater if they are successful in dividing the agriculture industry – and we must stand together with our animal agriculture colleagues. While HSUS may be focused on livestock confinement housing issues today, next time around their focus may be on castration, tail-docking or even lambing outside.

We have to change the dialogue and focus on food safety, food affordability and protecting consumer choice. We have to identify our emotional argument and develop the same passion and commitment to our message as HSUS demonstrates.

Sheep farmers produce safe, nutritious food that feeds the world. We care for our sheep because it is the right thing to do and because we know it just makes sense. We are active in our communities, and we protect the land, air and water around us. That's a story worth telling.

As the leadership of Ohio agriculture plans its response to the HSUS agenda, we can be working as advocates in our communities. Everyone you come into contact with is a potential ally in this fight. Regardless of what's next in the political arena, our story is a good one and it's time for us to tell it. Please join your voice with ours and with our livestock partners. Divided, we are at risk, but together, we can be strong.

<http://sheep.osu.edu/2009/07/06/hsus-paints-bulls-eye-on-ohio/>



Novartis Ups Rhetoric v. "Terrorist" Animal Rights Activists; "Police Not Taking It Seriously"

By Jim Edwards | August 11th, 2009 @ 6:07 am

Novartis CEO **Daniel Vasella** and his company spokespersons have hit back at animal rights activists who burned his Austrian vacation home and stole his mother's ashes from a grave: "How far do things have to go before you can speak of terrorism?" Vasella told a Swiss newspaper.

The attack seems to have gotten the attention of Novartis management, and caused a change of strategy, from quietly dealing with threats to publicly criticizing them. On the other side, arsonists seem to be enjoying the attention.

The arsonists are part of the campaign against Huntingdon Life Sciences, which does animal testing for drug companies. SwissInfo:

Vasella said Novartis has had no relationship whatsoever with the laboratory for some time now and that police have not taken the threats seriously enough.

Vasella called the grave desecration "unacceptable" and described it as an "unforgivable disrespect."

Separately, a Novartis representative hinted that the situation with animal rights activists is getting worse:

'The situation with SHAC has completely degenerated,' he said, adding: 'We take the security of our officials very seriously.'

What's going on here? Vasella is clearly rattled and the company has decided that this is a "teachable moment" for the public. It is hard for ordinary people to sympathize with a millionaire CEO who flies to his hunting lodge via helicopter, but when the activists desecrated the Vasella family grave they crossed a line — and Novartis will use that as ammo against them.

Similarly, there seems to be a total contradiction — working in Novartis' favor, at this point — between Novartis' assertion that it has not done business with HLS for some time and SHAC's position that Novartis is one of HLS's top customers.

<http://industry.bnet.com/pharma/10003571/novartis-ups-rhetoric-v-terrorist-animal-rights-activists-police-not-taking-it-seriously/>

Noted from AVMA: therapy dogs can acquire MRSA

Updates to a backgrounder on methicillin-resistant **Staphylococcus aureus** incorporate recent research on colonization of therapy dogs that visit health care settings.

The AVMA and American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine backgrounder cites research that indicates the presence of MRSA in health care environments may put animals at risk of infection or colonization during their involvement in animal-assisted intervention programs and includes guidelines for handling animal-assisted intervention programs in health care settings.

One study cited in the backgrounder indicates that dogs that participated in animal-assisted programs in health care settings were six times as likely to acquire MRSA as were dogs that participated in non-health-care-related intervention programs.

The backgrounder also cites a separate study of 26 dog-handler teams in Ontario. **Clostridium difficile** and MRSA were not detected on the therapy dogs' forepaws or fur or on the hands of their handlers or the investigator prior to visiting long-term care facilities. **Clostridium difficile** was detected on one dog's paws following a visit to an acute care facility, and MRSA was detected on the hands of the investigator who petted a dog after it had visited a long-term care facility.

"These results suggest that therapy dogs may become infected with pathogens during their visits to health-care facilities and reinforces the importance of good hand hygiene before and after handling therapy animals," the backgrounder states.

The update includes information on a June 2009 report on MRSA in livestock, pets, and food. The joint report by the European Food Safety Authority, the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, and the European Medicines Agency concluded it is most effective to control MRSA transmission on the farm.

The report advocates for judicious use of antimicrobials in animals and for avoiding use in animals of medicines of last resort for treatment of MRSA in humans.

The MRSA backgrounder is available at www.avma.org. Click on the dark blue "Reference" bar, then on "Animal health." <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/aug09/090815b.asp>

More and More Cats Are Living Longer Lives

Statistics show that in just over a decade, the number of cats over age six has almost doubled.

Aging is not a disease, just a natural progression. Having said that, there are problems we more commonly see in the golden years. We try to manage senior cats so that we don't wait until problems are entrenched because once some of these progressive problems get rolling, they get much more difficult (or impossible) to stabilize. With appropriate early intervention, goals may include improved quality of life, slowed progression, and sometimes cure! By taking action, and implementing proactive wellness preventive monitoring and other measures, the golden years for your cat really can be golden!

It is important not to confuse signs of early abnormalities with the perception that this change is just a normal change in any aging cat! Your veterinarian can help to educate you about what is normal, and what is not.

Care in the senior life phase involves:

- Increased frequency of monitoring by your veterinarian. Since cats move through their lifespan much more quickly than people, waiting a year to recheck a cat is like waiting 5 or 6 years for you to see the doctor! At least twice a year, your cat should be seen at the hospital for routine senior health visits.
- Home monitoring should occur including —

- monthly weight checks
- daily monitoring for thirst and appetite, normal bowels and urine production, normal breathing and sleeping behaviors
- behavior assessment
- monitoring for lumps and bumps
- unusual odors during grooming

Doing this routine makes you a part of your cat's health care team by allowing you to pick up EARLY changes in health.

Changes in hearing and vision are not uncommon. Your veterinarian can share some simple tests to help you assess these important senses in the home. Indoor cats can accommodate well to loss of hearing and vision—just don't move the furniture! When vision or hearing reduction or loss occurs, an outdoor cat should become an indoor cat as they will be at much increased risk of injuries of all sorts.

- Continue routine preventive care such as vaccination (customized program, based on risk),
- Continue external parasite preventives, and worming, tailored to your cat's lifestyle.
- Monitoring by the veterinary health care team to include (at least once a year) a complete blood count, selected blood chemistry and electrolytes, thyroid hormone levels, blood pressure, Lead II ECG, and a urine analysis. There are many problems that can only be identified in the early stages using screening programs such as this.

Why do we need to be so thorough?

Each system of the cat goes through functional and structural changes during aging that increase the chances of loss of the normal organ balance. The older cat has increased likelihood of high blood pressure due to an increase in incidence of hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid gland), and chronic kidney failure. Old cat kidneys tend to have reduced ability to process potassium normally, and this can lead to ongoing low level potassium deficiency. This causes low grade weakness. The digestive system efficiency drops and the normal motility, or gut movements are less vigorous leading to increased risk of constipation. Incidence of inflammatory bowel disease increases.

In some cases, the veterinarian will prescribe a special diet especially if chronic diseases such as diabetes, kidney, intestinal, or heart problems are present. They may also recommend senior diet formulations that have been balanced to allow for the changes in dietary requirements of the senior cat. Sometimes a change to at least partial intake of canned food is recommended if oral health is poor or water intake is an issue. Diabetes is also more common in senior cats.

Arthritis is much more common than we previously thought. Senior cats may appear stiff upon rising and then warm out of their stiffness. Changes on X-rays do not seem to correlate well with how lame the cat is—many cats seem to tolerate changes in their hips and lower back that would make a dog really gimpy!

Older cats tend to develop advanced dental disease, which can be quite painful.

Chronic low grade dehydration may also occur, which is often associated with other chronic diseases of old age.

Old cat “senility” changes, which we term **cognitive dysfunction**, may lead to onset of novel behaviors such as disorientation, wandering, night crying, changed sleep patterns, and reduced interaction with family.

The overall efficiency of the immune system drops off as age advances. This means that older cats are less able to fight off infections.

Chronic pain may occur in older cats. Pain is tough to assess in this species because cats like to hide their problems. Signs of pain can be totally hidden, or you may note difficulty eating, weight loss, lethargy, change of personality, crying when handled, and increased meowing or crying out.

Obesity in older cats (and any cats) leads to increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Muscles, bones and joints are also under increased strain, and degenerative joint disease may result. Careful, slow weight loss programs carried out under professional supervision may allow the older cat to regain mobility and comfort. Obese seniors may require bathing of their back end to be done regularly since the combination of a stiffer spinal column and obesity may prevent normal self-grooming of the anus, tail and topline over the hips area, leading to fecal and urine soiling, dandruff and oil buildup in the coat. This may require ongoing nursing care to keep the area sanitary and clean.

Here are the common signs of cancer that you can watch for at home: (List derived from: Veterinary Cancer Society)

- Weight loss and poor appetite
- Abnormal growths that do not go away or heal
- Abnormal fluids or bleeding from any location
- Bad odor
- Problems eating or drinking
- Lost mobility and poor exercise tolerance
- Trouble with breathing, passing the bowels, or urinations

In summary, the golden years can be a time of great enjoyment and high quality of life if we take the time to provide a bit of extra care for our aging feline friends.

<http://www.cathealth.com/goldenyears.htm>

Max the Terrier Becomes 'World's Oldest Dog' as He Celebrates 26th Birthday

A terrier-cross in Louisiana celebrated his 26th birthday yesterday, making him a contender for the title of world's oldest dog. Max, who is a staggering 182 in dog years, has a veterinary birth certificate to prove his impressive age, and is awaiting official confirmation from Guinness World Records. Owner Janelle Derouen, 49, bought her beloved pet in 1983 from a local sugar cane farmer.

Until recently it was believed that a New York-based dog called Chanel was the oldest dog alive after turning 21 in May - but the Dachshund-cross, who is riddled with health problems, is a full five years junior to Max. Max, in turn, is still in fine health and only suffers from mild arthritis and some cataracts. He has been visiting the same vet since birth at the local Robichaux Veterinary Clinic.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1205517/Max-terrier-worlds-oldest-dog-celebrates-26th-birthday.html#>

Fading Puppy or Kitten Syndrome

The failure to thrive in newborn puppies and kittens, or neonates, is known as *fading puppy and kitten syndrome*. The syndrome can occur from birth to 9 weeks of age. Affected neonates can decline quickly and die, so immediate detection and treatment are key to survival. Be sure you know what to look for and what to do if you see any warning signs.

Causes

The causes of fading puppy and kitten syndrome are divided into three groups: environmental, genetic, and infectious.

Environmental

- **Hypothermia or hyperthermia**—Puppies and kittens' body temperatures vary with the environment for the first week of life, thus making them easily susceptible to becoming too cold or too hot. They are able to shiver, which helps keep them warm, when they are about 6 days old, and they develop the ability to pant in response to overheating within the first week. Neonates that are too cold are unable to digest food or nurse. Their heart rates decrease and their circulatory and respiratory systems can collapse. These neonates must be seen by a veterinarian immediately because hypothermia can quickly cause death. Hyperthermia is less common but can occur in hot climates or with inappropriate supplemental heat. Overheated neonates often cry relentlessly.

- **Maternal factors**—Overweight or older dams are more likely to experience neonatal loss.

- **Maternal neglect**—Maternal neglect can be exhibited by a dam's reluctance to lie with and warm the neonates, refusal to permit nursing, or lack of sufficient milk production. Large-breed or barrel-bodied dogs may also step on or clumsily crush puppies.

- **Environmental toxins**—Neonatal skin is thin, and chemicals can be more readily absorbed through the skin in a neonate than in an adult. Breathing chemical fumes is also a concern. So evaluate the bedding material and products used to clean the whelping or queening box. Avoid pine oils and phenols as well as direct contact with bleach or quaternary ammonium (*e.g.* Roccal—Pfizer Animal Health; Parvosol—Neogen) residue.¹ Use gentle cleaners with little odor, and remove all residue before contact with the neonates.

Genetic or congenital factors

- **Physical defects**—Abnormalities of the mouth, anus, skull, and heart that are present at birth are relatively common. Swimmer (flat) puppies and kittens can be identified by flattened and widened chests. Pectus excavatum is a severe deformity resulting from intrusion of the breastbone into the chest cavity. Neonates with physical abnormalities should be evaluated immediately.

- **Birth weight**—Kittens have a normal birth weight of 100 ± 10 g (3.5 ± 0.35 oz). Kittens with a birth weight of less than 90 g (3.2 oz) have poor survival rates. The normal puppy birth weight varies with breed. For example, Pomeranian birth weights are about 120 g (4.2 oz), and Great Danes weigh about 625 g (22 oz). While pups and kittens may lose a small amount of weight (< 10%) during the first 24 hours of life, after that weight gain should be steady. Pups should gain 5% to 10% of birth weight daily, while kittens should gain 7 to 10 g (0.25 to 0.35 oz) a day. Weigh neonates twice a day, and bring them in for immediate examination if normal daily weight gain does not occur. Associated with low weight is transient juvenile hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) syndrome, particularly in toy-breed dogs.

Failure to maintain frequent feedings can result in low blood sugar. This can occur for several weeks to months in toy breeds and often arises when the pups are transferred to a new home where feeding schedules are not rigidly followed.

- **Neonatal alloimmune hemolytic anemia in cats**—Cats have two main blood types, A and B. Some kittens' blood types do not match the queen's blood type. Kittens with type A blood that ingest colostrum while nursing from a queen with type B blood absorb antibodies that destroy their red blood cells, which leads to severe illness or death.

Infectious agents

- **Bacterial infection**—Because of their immature immune systems, puppies and kittens are at risk for infection through the placenta, umbilicus, or gastrointestinal or respiratory tract from contaminated environments. Clinical signs of bacterial infection vary but include vomiting, diarrhea, constant crying, fever, failure to nurse, and sloughing of the ear and tail tips and toes.

- **Viral infection**—Many viruses can affect neonates. Canine herpesvirus infection is common in puppies, and signs vary from constant crying to abdominal pain. Canine parvovirus type 1 produces a rapid onset of crying, failure to nurse, vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty breathing, and weakness. In kittens, feline herpesvirus type I and calicivirus are most common. Coronavirus infections are also common in ill kittens and can cause diarrhea and feline infectious peritonitis.

- **Intestinal parasites**—Because roundworms and hookworms are transmitted through the placenta, most pups are born with these parasites.⁴ Kittens and pups can acquire roundworms through the dam's milk. Hookworms are transmitted to kittens and puppies through the placenta and mammary glands. In addition, some protozoan parasites cause diarrhea in the young. While rarely fatal, they can contribute to illness and put a neonate at higher risk of additional infection.

Things to look out for

To catch any struggling neonate early, always observe all the neonates' behavior and be on the lookout for key benchmarks. Normal puppy and kitten neonates sleep and nurse. They spend most of their time in a group and cry only briefly. Neonates that lie away from the group, cry constantly, are restless, or fail to nurse should be examined at once. www.vetmedpub.com

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