

## Denali National Park and Preserve Sled Dogs

*By Barbara Busch, Lenoir NC*

While on a September trip to Alaska, we went to the Denali National Park and Preserve. While there we were able to go to the area where the park's sled dogs lived. We had time to walk around to see and pet the dogs. Each dog had its own house that he could either get in or on.



The dogs were tied out on a very simple, but clever, device that gave them the full range of their chain, but prevented the chain from getting tangled. A rope was strung around the tie out area and visitors are told to stand outside the rope and reach over to pet the dogs.

The dogs that want their backs scratched are very good at making their backs available to the volunteer "scratchers".

These dogs are bred for temperament as well as sled pulling ability. They get along well with each other and with visitors to the park.



During the summer they enjoy greeting visitors and putting on a short sled pulling demonstration. During the winter, the rangers use dogsleds to patrol the park.



## **Animal ID Opponents Seek End to Program**

A 100-group coalition -- in letters to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to Congress -- urged that the National Animal Identification System be dissolved completely. The groups stated a willingness to work with USDA "...to enhance our nation's animal disease preparedness in a manner that builds upon our past successes and respects the interests of U.S. livestock producers and consumers."

In the 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill, Congress reduced NAIS funding by approximately two-thirds to \$5.3 million, but did not specify how those funds were to be allocated.

The letter to Congress, sent Nov. 18, asks to "...support the limited use of NAIS funding to shut down the program, and to refocus the agency on measures that truly improve animal health."

The 100 groups recommend that USDA withdraw all pending rulemaking initiated by the agency to advance NAIS and pay the associated costs. The letter also suggests USDA pay all costs associated with providing the people of the United States and Congress with an official, comprehensive report on all of the testimony USDA received at each of the NAIS listening sessions held throughout the country in 2009.

In closing, the coalition writes, "We urge this course of action because, contrary to its stated purposes, NAIS will not address animal disease or food safety problems." "Instead, NAIS imposes high costs and paperwork burdens on family farmers and create incentives for corporate-controlled confined animal feeding operations and vertically integrated systems." *Source: North Platte Bulletin 11/23/09*

## **HSUS to Challenge Missouri Producers**

The Humane Society of the United States has chosen Missouri as the next battleground in its efforts to restrict certain animal and livestock production practices, according to a release by the National Pork Producers Council. Members of livestock associations and faculty at the University of Missouri last week confirmed that the Missouri state director of HSUS filed two proposed initiative petitions.

While the HSUS initiative is directed at "puppy mills" in the state, the livestock industry is concerned that if the ballot initiative is approved, it could embolden HSUS to go after livestock and poultry producers.

HSUS has gotten initiatives banning sows stalls and laying hen battery cages in Arizona and California and threatened to push a similar initiative in Ohio. Last month, voters in Ohio approved their own initiative and established the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board, which will determine and enforce guidelines for the care and well-being of livestock and poultry in the state. The measure was strongly supported by the Ohio Pork Producers Council, National Pork Producers Council and other agriculture organizations in the state.

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# An Obituary for Words

by Cindy Cooke, Legislative Specialist

You can't really ban a word. In fact, an attempt to ban something often backfires, particularly in the United States, where we don't like people censoring our speech. So I'm not going to tell you not to say "puppy mill".

I'm going to give you some very good reasons for not using that phrase.

I speak to a lot of dog clubs and frequently hear dog breeders supporting so-called "anti-puppy-mill" laws. When I ask these people to define "puppy mill," invariably the definitions given include:

- People who "overbreed" their dogs;
- People who don't take care of their dogs;
- People who have too many dogs;
- People who breed dogs "just for money"; and
- People who don't take health issues into account when breeding their dogs.

Let's look at these definitions in turn. What is "overbreeding"? In the wild, most canids can only reproduce once a year. Most domestic dogs can have two litters a year. When I first became a dog breeder, it was almost a religious belief that no female dog should be bred more than once a year. We were told that it was important to "rest" the uterus between litters. Today, however, thanks to advances in veterinary medicine, we know that an uterus is actually damaged by the elevated progesterone levels that occur in each heat cycle, whether the dog is pregnant or not. Veterinary reproduction specialists recommend that dogs be bred on their second or third heat cycle, that we do more back-to-back breedings, and that we spay the dogs at around age six.

The "overbreeding" argument also treats reproduction as something that female dogs wouldn't do if they had a choice. Dogs aren't people - female dogs actually want to be bred when they're in heat and, with few exceptions, enjoy raising their puppies. It's not an unwelcome event for dogs.

People who don't take care of their dogs are already guilty of a crime in all 50 states. There is nowhere in the United States where it is legal to neglect or abuse dogs. Sadly, a small minority of all dog breeders - commercial, home and hobby - commit neglect and abuse. Some of these do so out of ignorance, some out of laziness, and some out of meanness. All are already breaking the law. It just needs to be enforced.

One of our biggest problems now is that animal radicals insist that every dog be raised like a hothouse flower. One bill proposed this year would have required every kennel to be air conditioned. Many owners of working dogs prefer that their dogs be acclimated to hot weather so that they can work when the temperature goes up. Likewise, sled dogs in the north often sleep outdoors in the snow. Dogs can live and thrive in a wide range of environments. The Arctic Circle, the jungles of Africa, and the deserts of Arabia have all produced breeds of dogs that can live happily in conditions that might not suit all dogs. It is important that we not let activists redefine the needs of dogs to the extent that we are forced to provide a brass bed and a down pillow for every animal in the kennel!

What is "too many" dogs? Most of our breeds were developed by wealthy people who kept large numbers of dogs. Hound breeders traditionally kept good-sized packs, and early show breeders did as well. Now that our sport includes more mainstream people - people with jobs or people who need jobs - it's hard for many of us to keep large numbers of dogs. There is no inherent link between numbers of dogs and neglect. People who have the resources to keep big kennels provide a service for all of us, particularly if they maintain a good number of useful stud dogs.

Breeding dogs is expensive, and getting more so daily. It's just plain silly to pretend that none of us needs the money generated by puppy sales and stud services. Without that income, the vast majority of middle class breeders could not afford this sport. When our sport was solely in the hands of rich people, it was the norm to sneer at people in "trade", and part of that attitude was handed down to us with the culture of our sport. Today, however, the majority of us in the sport are "in trade", in the sense that we have to work to support ourselves. Our dogs must, at least in part, support themselves or most of us would have to get out of the game.

We have among us a small but vociferous group of people who think that breeders only care about producing great hunting or show dogs, and nothing about health. In fact, I've never met a breeder who wasn't concerned about the health of his dogs and the health of his breed. Most health problems in dogs don't have simple solutions, so it is only natural that breeders are often going to disagree about how to address health problems. When there's no right answer to a question, then breeders who follow a different path than you might choose are not necessarily wrong or unconcerned. I know that many believe that commercial breeders don't care about health, but the fact is that their professional organizations provide some of the most sophisticated health seminars in the country for their breeders.

Twenty years ago, animal activists created the phrase "puppy mill". Back then, it was only applied to commercial breeders, and then only to those who were breaking the law by neglecting their dogs. In a futile attempt to placate activists, many hobby breeders adopted the term "puppy mill" and used it to separate "them" from "us". It was a mistake then, and it's rapidly becoming fatal today. Every one of these so-called "anti-puppy-mill bills" has a definition that could easily include breeders of hunting and show dogs. Every time you use that phrase, you're contributing to the idea that dog breeders need to be regulated out of existence.

The message we need to send to America is that purebred dogs are good, not just because they have pedigrees, but because of their predictability, and that people should shop at least as carefully for a puppy as they do for a car. We don't need to help the animal radicals spread their message by using their favorite term: puppy mill.

<http://www.ukcdogs.com/WebSite.nsf/Articles/LegislativeUpdate06012009>

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