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How Do You Make the Perfect Sled Dog?

Over the last few hundred years, Alaskan sled dogs have been bred to haul cargo over Arctic terrain and, more recently, for racing. Now, researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Genetics* have identified the contributions different breeds have made to the speed, endurance and work ethic of Alaskan sled dogs.

Heather Huson and Elaine Ostrander, from the National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, USA, worked with a team of researchers to carry out genetic analysis in 199 sled dogs and 681 purebred dogs from 141 different breeds. Huson said, "The Alaskan sled dog comprises several different lineages, optimized for different racing styles -- long or short distance. We sought to identify breed composition profiles associated with expertise at specific tasks, finding that the Alaskan Malamute and Siberian Husky contributions are associated with enhanced endurance; Pointer and Saluki are associated with enhanced speed and the Anatolian Shepherd has a positive influence on work ethic."

The researchers sampled sled dogs from eight kennels, rating them for speed, endurance, and work ethic, using established criteria specified for the distinct racing styles of sprint and distance. These attributes were correlated with genetic information taken from each dog and compared to likely ancestral breeds. Speaking about the results, Huson said, "The Alaskan sled dog presents a case in which a genetically distinct breed of dog has been developed through the selection and breeding of individuals based solely on their athletic prowess. Interestingly, this continual out-crossing for athletic enhancement has still led to the Alaskan sled dog repeatedly producing its own unique genetic signature. Indeed, the Alaskan sled dog breed proved to be more genetically distinct than breeds of similar heritage such as the Alaskan Malamute and Siberian Husky."

Source: *Science Daily July 21* <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/07/100721194758.htm>

Pit Bull Honored for Heroics

Bristol Indiana. They're calling it a "phenomenal act of heroism by a dog." And that "dog" happens to be a pit bull.

While it seems pit bulls get a bad rep at times, one is being credited for saving the lives of his Bristol family members Thursday night.

"It started here on the back porch, they said, underneath it. We have no idea how the fire started."

When the fire began, Kemper Hunter, his girlfriend Sarah Laughlin and their three month old baby, Shelby, were asleep. They woke up to their pit bull "Thor" jumping persistently on the bed.

Kemper Hunter says, "We kept pushing him away like, 'Yeah, we'll take you outside in a little bit. It's 3 o'clock in the morning. We're asleep.' We kept pushing him away and then I pushed him one time to turn around and he hit me in the face with both paws and he nipped at me and I sat up, you know, my dogs never done that."

Sarah Laughlin says, "I kind of peaked around the curtain we have in our hallway and seen the flames and smoke and it just freaked me out. I'm like, 'Oh my God, I just started screaming.'"

Hunter says, "And we turned around. He had my daughter, which is three months old, in the bassinet, pulled to the front door ready to go." They had only lived in this Bristol mobile home for a week... saying it had taken them months to find a place that would accept pit bulls. They say that's a shame because Thor - regardless of his breed - is very smart and wonderful with kids. Hunter got him seven years ago when the pup was rejected by his mother.

Hunter says, "He's seven years old. I've had him since he was born. I've got him through parvo and I winged him through that. We went to jail together one time, to be honest; and he's just been a fantastic dog." A dog who has now given back to his family. And as they start back at square one in trying to find a new home, they say, now, more than ever, leaving Thor is not an option.

Source: FOX News 28

Researchers Uncover 'Oldest' Dog Remains in Swiss Cave

Researchers have found that fragments of a dog's skull and teeth discovered in a cave in [Switzerland](#) date back more than 14,000 years in what could be the oldest known remains of man's best friend.

The fossils were among a haul of archaeological finds uncovered in 1873 in the Kesslerloch cave in northern Switzerland, Swiss news agency ATS said Monday.

But it was only last year that researchers at Germany's Tuebingen University took a closer look at them, it said.

"During a recent re-analysis of the faunal remains, we identified a cranial fragment and teeth of the domestic dog," the researchers said in an article in the International Journal of Osteoarchaeology.

"The large maxillar fragment was directly dated to ...14,100-14,600 BP (Before Present)," it said.

"We argue that the maxilla fragment must now be considered the earliest indisputable directly dated evidence of a domestic dog," they said.

Belgian archaeologists have claimed to have found the cranium of a dog dating back 30,000 years, but researcher Hannes Napierala told ATS: "We are skeptical because the teeth are very similar to those of a wolf."

The fragment found in the cave in Switzerland's Schaffhausen canton, however, was clearly distinct from remains of wolves, the researchers said. *Source: <http://archaeologycurrentevents.com/>*

Activists Share Anti-Agriculture Agenda at Conferences

Animal agriculture was under attack at the Animal Rights 2010 Conference and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)-hosted Taking Action for Animals (TAFE), two of the nation's largest animal rights events. Both meetings were held in Washington, D.C. during July 2010.

AR 2010 and TAFE brought together more than 1,000 activists to discuss the political strategy of the animal rights movement. Speakers at both conferences provided participants with tactics to target the animal agriculture industry through demonstrations, litigation, and ballot initiative campaigns. Animal activist leaders taught attendees how to utilize social media tools to fundraise and share videos from undercover operations.

While HSUS launched TAFE in 2005 in an attempt to distance itself from the violent tactics embraced by many attendees of the AR 2010 conference, the core messaging and highly emotional images used to promote veganism at both events was eerily similar.

Both conferences encouraged attendees to prey on the fears of the unknowing public by spreading misinformation about the way today's farmers and ranchers care for their animals.

Key Quotes from AR 2010 and TAFE Speakers:

"We should distinguish our message from less meat, because what we want is no meat." - *Carrie Packwood Freeman, Activist and Professor at Georgia State University. AR 2010*

"Owning animals is the equivalent of slavery." - *Hope Bohanec, In Defense of Animals. AR 2010*

"I have no problem with breaking and entering, destroying labs, burning buildings, and busting open cages." - *Camille Hankins, Win Animals Rights and spokesperson for Animal Liberation Front. AR 2010*

"The point at which society moves towards our views is a point where we are significantly closer to the vegan world that we are all working toward." - *Bruce Friedrich, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. AR 2010*

"Any state with an initiative process is on our radar." - *Jennifer Hillman, Humane Society of the United States. TAFE*

"I dream of a vegan world - that's where I want everything to go." - *Gene Baur, Farm Sanctuary. TAFE*

While HSUS' leadership continues to assert that animal *rights*- not animal *welfare*- is a mainstream issue, supporters of the movement seem divided. Many of its loudest proponents also advocate for violence, destruction of property, and abolition of pets - tactics that the American public would certainly not condone.

Most people do not understand the real - and devastating - consequences that animal rights activists are steadily pushing for. As shown by the attendance and content of the AR 2010 and TAFE conferences, the movement is relying more on legislation and less on shock tactics to gain momentum. The threat to animal agriculture is real and cannot be ignored by the industry.

Animal Agriculture Alliance <http://www.animalagalliance.org>.

Canine Melanoma: Your Dog's Blood Collection Can Aid New Research

The Canine Hereditary Cancer Consortium (CHCC) is requesting blood samples from any **purebred** dog to further their research to identify the underlying genetic lesions and biochemical pathways that contribute to canine melanoma. Melanoma is a form of cancer in which the pigment-producing cells of the skin, melanocytes, multiply in an uncontrolled manner.

The CHCC will provide sample collection kits and pay for shipping. Requested samples include whole blood (5 mls in an EDTA "purple top" tube) and/or fresh tumor samples. Dogs in remission are eligible to participate in this study, as are dogs who have already had tumors removed.

For further information, collection kits and shipping information, contact [Dr. Roe Froman](#) at the Van Andel Research Institute (office: 616.234.5569 cell: 616.914.0934).

Anyone interested in information about research being done on other canine diseases can visit the [AKC Canine Health Foundation](#).

Horses Are Victims of Economic Turmoil

University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine tries sterilization effort to control horse population.

Compiled by staff Published: Sep 1, 2010

Equine veterinarians at the University of Missouri and around the state are seeing more cases of unhealthy and unwanted horses due to the economic recession and ban on horse slaughter in the U.S.

A double whammy of economic recession and a ban on horse slaughter in the United States has resulted in a steadily growing number of unwanted horses with owners who are unable to care for them. Equine veterinarians are seeing more thin, poorly cared for and unwanted horses than ever before, and as a result, are attempting new efforts to control the horse population.

Alison LaCarrubba, a veterinarian who heads the equine ambulatory section at the University of Missouri, Columbia, reports that the unwanted horse population has risen as the cost of purchasing a horse has dropped, but the cost of keeping a horse has stayed the same. LaCarrubba notes it costs about \$60 per month to feed a horse hay and grain, depending on pasture availability. With regular veterinary costs for hoof trimming, de-worming, vaccinations and dental work, combined with the costs for fencing and shelter, the price to keep a horse adds up quickly, to as much as \$15,000 per year.

"It's a supply and demand issue," LaCarrubba says. "It used to be that you could buy an entry level horse at auction for about \$700, but now you can buy that same horse for \$50. It is still expensive to feed and keep a horse, however, and there aren't a lot of options when that cost becomes too great. We're seeing more and more horses that are not getting enough to eat, and we have been looking for solutions to the problem."

In addition to economic woes, horse slaughterhouses have been closed in the United States since 2007. From 1993 to 2007, approximately 75,000 to 150,000 horses were sent to slaughter each year in the United States. The meat was sent to countries in Europe and Asia where horsemeat is considered a delicacy and consumed by humans. With the U.S. slaughterhouses out of business, many horse owners cannot afford to euthanize their unwanted animals.

One approach to controlling the horse overpopulation in the United States is a low- or no-cost castration clinic planned for this fall at the University of Missouri. Stallions that are referred by area veterinarians or equine rescue organizations will be brought to the university's Middlebush Farm, where students will assist with the procedures and gain valuable experience. The effort is modeled after a similar project in Minnesota that was successful.

"We have certainly seen the evidence that the service is needed," LaCarrubba says. "This is a win/win situation for horse owners, our students and the horses that will come here. It's just a small effort to tackle a growing problem."

Source: University of Missouri News Bureau
Farm Progress.com

Mandates in animal control: What MUST local governments do?

NC Local Government Law Blog

By Aimee Wall Monday, November 23, 2009

I am often asked, what animal control services MUST local governments provide? The question may come from local officials who are in the process of evaluating their options. Perhaps money is tight and they are considering dropping some animal control services, consolidating services with another jurisdiction or otherwise streamlining animal-related functions. Or the question may come from the media or members of the public, often because they are frustrated that local officials are not responding to an animal-related issue. For example, an article on urban coyotes in Sunday's [Charlotte Observer](#) explained that despite the growing coyote population and the public's expressed concerns, "county animal control doesn't respond to coyote calls, referring residents to state officials and private contractors who trap wildlife for a fee." So, what is the answer?

The short answer is *very few*. State law *authorizes* local governments to provide quite a few animal control services but *requires* only a handful of services.

State law mandates local government action in three main areas: rabies control, animal adoption and dangerous dogs. Some of these mandates are actually new, stemming from the recently enacted legislation discussed in an earlier blog post.

RABIES CONTROL

State law requires that an "animal control officer" – [defined](#) as a city or county employee whose responsibility includes animal control – canvass the jurisdiction to determine if there are dogs, cats or ferrets not wearing rabies vaccination tags ([G.S. 130A-192](#), as amended by [2009-327](#)). If such an animal is found, the law directs the officer to follow up with the animal's owner, if known (i.e., animal wearing a tag or microchipped). If the owner is not known, the officer is *authorized* but not *required* to impound the animal.

If the animal is impounded, additional mandates are triggered. The amendments to G.S. 130A-192 in [S.L. 2009-304](#) require that most impounded animals (1) be made available to the public for viewing for a minimum period of time and (2) be made available for adoption before being sold (presumably for research purposes) or euthanized. Note that the rabies law does not require every city and county to have an animal control officer that performs these functions – but the implication is that every jurisdiction will be served by one. Many municipalities, for example, rely on the county to perform this function for them while others have their own officers.

The rabies and communicable disease control laws also impose duties on local health directors to respond to reported animal bites, manage potential human exposure to rabies, and organize at least one rabies vaccination clinic per year. Local health departments often take the lead on these responsibilities but in some jurisdictions, a close partnership with local animal control officials results in some or all of this authority being delegated outside the health department (see [G.S. 130A-6](#); delegation of authority).

ANIMAL HOLDING AND ADOPTION

While local governments are not required to have animal shelters (see [G.S. 153A-442](#) and [160A-493](#); authorizing county and city expenditures in support of shelters), the mandates in the rabies law related to confinement of cats and dogs that bite can be read to imply that local governments who participate in rabies control functions should have an arrangement with some type of animal holding facility. Some local governments address this need by operating their own shelter while others have agreements with neighboring jurisdictions, private shelters, boarding facilities or veterinary offices.

With the passage of S.L. 2009-304, state law imposes several new sheltering-related mandates on local governments. All animals that are “taken into custody for violation of statutes or ordinances not related to rabies control” and animals surrendered to a shelter by an owner must be held for a minimum of 72 hours, subject to limited exceptions. In addition, as mentioned above, before any animal held by a shelter can be sold or put to death, it must be made available for adoption as provided in the revised law. It is important to remember that the law does not *require* that these animals be “taken into custody,” but if they are the additional mandates kick in.

DANGEROUS DOGS

Several basic state statutes governing dangerous dogs are found in [Chapter 67, Article 1A](#). The statutes define some key terms and outline consequences related to actions of dangerous or potentially dangerous dogs and their owners. Many local governments have also adopted their own dangerous dog ordinances to supplement the state law (see [G.S. 153A-131](#) and [160A-187](#); authorizing counties and cities to regulate possession or ownership of dangerous animals). The state law imposes only one express mandate on local governments and it is procedural in nature. G.S. 67-4.1(c) requires that county or municipal authorities responsible for animal control designate (1) a person or a Board to determine when a dog is potentially dangerous and (2) a separate Board to hear appeals from such designations. The law further outlines procedures that govern such determinations and appeals, but the bottom line is that the state law assumes local government officials will be playing a role in dangerous dog regulation and enforcement.

In talking with officials over the years, it seems that many of them see the rabies and dangerous dog enforcement activities as non-negotiable services because they are related to public health and safety. They seem comfortable with the notion that they need to ensure that there is some mechanism for responding to these types of concerns within their jurisdictions, regardless of resource implications. But once we step outside of these two areas, the response is often mixed. Some perceive the public demand for local government responsiveness to issues such as animal cruelty, nuisance animals, barking dogs, or exotic animals as authoritative to the point of becoming a “mandate” from the citizens rather than the state. Others conclude that the limited resources of their local government should not be allocated to these types of “optional” services. As another trying budget year faces our state, it will be interesting to see how many animal-related services are dropped by local governments and how many new initiatives are launched.

<http://sogweb.sog.unc.edu/blogs/localgovt/?p=1386>

Guilford County Animal Control Ordinance Changes

A public hearing is scheduled for September 16, 2010 at 5:30 PM in the Commissioner's Meeting Room, 301 W. Market St., Greensboro.

Guilford County plans to update their existing animal control ordinance. Although the county already has a comprehensive ordinance, a kennel raid last spring provided the impetus for a new set of extreme and detailed regulations for dog breeders.

Under the proposed regulations Guilford County plans to license and inspect newly created classes of "high volume breeder", defined as anyone who breeds more than 6 litters a year and "high volume retailer", defined as anyone who sells or transfers 50 or more dogs per calendar year. Mandates on these newly created categories of breeder/sellers include: permitting; inspection; hiring of trained staff as employees; diurnal lighting cycles; yearly vet exams; prompt veterinary treatment of any and all illness or injury; records of veterinary care; conspecific socialization between dogs; inanimate environment enrichment (toys and structures); visual enrichment; access to locomotory activity; documented programs to determine cause of any displayed aggression; inspection by Guilford County Animal Control personnel without prior notice; and more.

It is flawed logic to use numbers as criteria for regulation. While 6 litters in a large breed could be 40 to 50 puppies, in a toy breed this could be as few as 6 to 12 puppies. Regardless of the number, there is no correlation to quality of care. Two dogs that breed and have puppies in the backyard of an uncaring owner can be in far worse condition than 50 dogs in a well-maintained family-run kennel. Further, this proposed criteria does not take into consideration co-ownerships.

The definition for "high volume retailer" includes "...sale, resale, and transfer that occur via the Internet", which will encompass rescue organizations that use multiple foster homes who collectively sell 50 dogs/puppies in a calendar year, use their websites, the Internet and Pet Finder to find buyers and conduct business.

The proposed ordinance "borrows" language from both the USDA Animal Welfare Act and the newly introduced American Veterinary Medical Association (AMVA) Guidelines for the dog breeder/seller regulations. It has always been clear that the intent of USDA was to regulate breeding and selling of dogs by commercial operations directly to commercial outlets. The regulations were also geared to the well-being and care of dogs housed and raised in research facilities. Notations and background contained in the AVMA Guidelines are also drawn from papers written by researchers for research facilities, sometimes based on mere theories on animal behavioral needs. This level of regulation is NOT and NEVER was intended for private breeders.

The requirements written into this proposed ordinance are so over-the-top they defy any possibility for actual enforcement. There are no standards for behavior protocols in the Federal Animal Welfare Act, and to our knowledge, at any state level in the United States. These requirements would be so varied among breeds, that any standards would be nearly impossible to set. Further, "necessary behavioral needs" is so poorly defined from a scientific sense, it would be unfair and impractical to expect a breeder to develop a "documented protocol", build facilities, and hire staff to meet these intangible "needs."

The proposed regulations mandate conspecific socialization/providing full body contact. This is completely impractical for a number of breeds of dogs, in which adult dogs (especially adult dogs of the same sex) are assumed to be incompatible, based upon history of the development of the breed.

Examples of such breeds include livestock guardian breeds (e.g., Anatolian), certain primitive breeds (e.g., Canaan Dogs), and “bully breeds” (American Staffordshire Terrier.) Mandating “full body contact daily” invites injury from aggression and too easily spreads disease, and is impractical except for certain breeds highly compatible when kenneled in established packs (Beagles, Foxhounds, etc) or among small home breeders where a small number of dogs permanently live in a home and are continually monitored for compatible behavior by their owner.

The proposed ordinance also mandates that "inanimate enrichment" (toys) be provided in the kennel. This concept is borrowed from the newly created AVMA welfare guidelines which use as a basis for this recommendation a report entitled, "Comfortable Quarters for Dogs in Research Institutions (Hubrecht, 1993)." Research facility design and protocols have no bearing or relation to private dog kennels.

The same report reminds readers that "It must be remembered that dogs have different personalities that are a product of their genetic makeup and personal experiences" and “Any enrichment device has to be practical, provide a measurable benefit for the animal and should not interfere with the aims of the research protocol.”

The fact “all dogs are different” can readily translate to mean that many adult dogs are aggressive chewers well into normal adult age, and are not safely left with toys, bones, or rawhide while others have no interest in inanimate objects. The same article also states: "Objections are sometimes made to enrichment items such as chews/toys because it is considered that they can trigger aggression and cause hygiene problems, or simply because the dogs lose interest in them."

Simply stated, mandating "inanimate enrichment" is excessive, invasive of owner rights, has no basis or value in a private kennel setting, and is lacking in reason. There is no “chew proof” toy or chewing bone (no matter what the toy manufacturers say). Placing a toy in a cage for a puppy or young dog, without constant observation, is an invitation to disaster; should the puppy or young dog chew up and swallow pieces of the toy, they could easily choke or develop a fatal intestinal obstruction.

Is Guilford County willing to assume liability for injury/death should the puppy or young dog chew up and swallow pieces of the toy, choke, or develop a fatal intestinal obstruction?

What plan does Guilford County have to train and certify their animal control officers in dog psychology, anatomy, locomotory activity, and behavioral needs in order to assess and approve the required documented plans kennel owners must write under the proposed ordinance? We find it unconscionable that untrained personnel would be given authority to not only evaluate these indefinable protocols at breeder kennels, but use their determination as the basis to potentially revoke kennel permits.

The proposed ordinance mandates that the kennel owner "provide prompt treatment of illness or injury under the direction of a licensed veterinarian." This would include something as simple as an upset stomach, torn toenail, bee sting, or any minor issue often treated by the breeder. In fact, allowing the breeder/owner to treat minor routine situations would allow these to be treated in a more timely manner than most veterinary offices could provide, speeding up the healing process for the dog.

The proposed ordinance mandates "examination at least once yearly by a licensed veterinarian for breeding dogs." There are no standardized, specific laboratory tests or specialized reproductive examination procedures that are suitable for assessing the health status of bitches for breeding. The veterinarian will only be able to assess external physical condition, maybe over or under weight or teeth should be cleaned, and can only make observations that the breeder is most likely already aware of. The veterinarian has no authority to perform any treatment not authorized by the breeder/client.

There are no guidelines for what the veterinarian should evaluate or for what is an acceptable veterinary report to be included in the kennel documentation. There is no measurable benefit to this mandated exam and serves only to increase maintenance costs for the breeder.

In addition, the ordinance bans feline and canine hybrids; requires permitting for exotics, defined as "wild animal or a species of animal not indigenous to the United States or to North America" (exempts non-native species used as domestic farm animals and aquarium fish).

Currently there are 3 cat breeds, Bengals, Savannahs, and Chausis that would be affected by banning hybrid felines in Guilford County. Bengals are one of the most popular breeds, worldwide, and the most exhibited breed in TICA - the second largest pedigreed cat organization in the US and 3rd largest worldwide. Savannahs are one of the fastest growing breeds. They compete at cat shows along with recognized breeds such as Persians, Maine Coons, and Siamese. Banning these cats serves no purpose, eliminates choice, and would make criminals out of Guilford county residents who may currently own any of these breeds. The U.S. Federal Animal Welfare Act defines domestic x wild hybrids as domestic cats.

A number of definitions have also been expanded or added. For example, "Dealer, Pet Shop" now covers any person in Guilford County who buys, sells, breeds, or boards a pet animal and is not covered by either North Carolina or federal animal welfare laws. Expansion of this definition therefore includes anyone who sells a dog because they are moving, or anyone who retires a dog once used for breeding, or anyone who sells an oops litter, and every hunter in the county who sells a puppy that didn't work out for field work; and entitles animal control to inspect your premises to ensure this animal is not being abused.

Guilford County Commissioners should **reject** this radical proposed ordinance in its entirety.

NCRAOA urges all dog breeders to contact the Guilford County Commissioners and oppose the suggested changes to the existing animal ordinance.

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



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