

**Submission
No 268**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
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SUBMISSION BY [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED]

Introduction

We welcome the Baird government's decision to initiate a parliamentary enquiry into the breeding and sale of companion animals. We are as appalled as all animal lovers are at the poor conditions that some dogs have been bred in and would also like to see an end to puppy farming. However, we also believe the role that pet shops have played in this is greatly exaggerated and there is a lack of evidence to support claims such as 95% of puppies in pet stores are from puppy farms. An unsubstantiated claim continually used by activist organisations.

We support the RSPCA's definition of a puppy farm as 'an intensive dog breeding facility that is operated under inadequate conditions that fail to meet the dogs' behavioural, social and/or physiological needs'

In the time that we have operated we have never sold puppies that have in bred in conditions where this definition could have been applied. We know this because we have visited the properties where the puppies come from, met the owners and have records of all transactions of where puppies were purchased from that since 2008 have been available for the RSPCA or AWL to check at any time.

Pet shops provide the only fully transparent and regulated way of purchasing an animal in NSW.

Under the amended 2008 code of practice for pet shops:

- Pet shops must vaccinate and microchip all animals prior to purchase

- Cannot offer puppies or kittens for sale under 8 weeks of age
- Pet shops must provide a 3 day cooling off period and a 50% refund if a new owner changes their mind during this period of time.
- We must record where all animals are purchased from and who they are sold to.

We believe that this is not enough and our store offers the following:

- A 7 day cooling off period with full refund if a new owner changes their mind
- All puppies are sold with a \$200 refundable desexing bond that can be redeemed by the customer as long as the puppy is desexed by 8 months of age
- All our animals are sold with lifetime rehoming guarantee. As a PIAA member, if an owner of one of our pups can no longer care for the dog for whatever reason, our association will pay for its care in conjunction with the RSPCA NSW until it is rehomed
- We offer puppy pre-school to new owners to assist with socialisation and behavioural training.
- We provide 30 days free pet insurance with the purchase of all puppies.
- All of our breeders must be members or the Australian Association of Pet Dog Breeders or have undertaken an independent Pet Industry Association Vet Audit
- Our pens are 4 times larger than required under the NSW code practice.
- To assist with socialisation, members of the public under supervision are encouraged to interact with the puppies in store throughout the day.
- We provide poster space for the local animal shelter to display animals that require rehoming.
- We rehome desexed vaccinated and microchipped kittens from the animal shelters and local vets.

The implications of banning the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores

We believe that banning the sale of puppies and kittens will have no impact on reducing poor breeding practices or the number of animals that are placed in animal shelters. I believe that this is supported by some new data that was presented at the 2014 AVA conference by [REDACTED] which found as few as 5% of puppies are now purchased through pet shops yet over 30% are purchased online.

Pet stores can play a role in rehoming animals from shelters as outlined above, however there will always be members of the community that would like own a puppy. Aside from requirements outlined in the code of practice and what our store offers above this. A pet shop also offers 7 day a week professional advice and assistance for new owners. This is not available from breeders of dogs directly be they registered or hobby breeders. Should a new owner be unsatisfied with an outcome surrounding the purchase of a puppy or kitten, they are also afforded consumer rights as outlined under consumer laws in NSW.

We believe that the most critical piece of information is that is continually over looked in this debate is the fact that pet shops must keep a record of where all pets are purchased from.

It is unlikely that a puppy farmer would be willing to provide this information so instead they would simply sell their animals privately. When this occurs all of the support and checks and balances that are outlined above are lost.

It is frustrating that due to a lack of financial resources, the Animal Welfare League and the RSPCA are unable to review and cross reference these records on a proactive basis.

A ban on the sale of kittens in pet shops will increase the numbers that are presented to shelters. Many pet shops currently take unwanted litters, vaccinate and microchip them and then offer them for sale. A ban would mean that these animals would go directly to shelters where accommodation is limited or worse still be dumped and contribute to the feral population.

Our store currently offers TAFE placements for students studying certificate 2 and 3 in animal studies. A banning of the sale of puppies and kittens in pet stores would mean that we would no longer be able to offer this as livestock is a requirement of this placement.

Pet Shop and Breeder Licensing

We support a self-funded licensing for all pet shops who keep livestock including fish. Ideally the licensing system would be audited by the RSPCA or the Animal Welfare League. The number of audits and license fees would relate directly to the types and species of livestock held by the store.

An example would be a yearly audit and low fee for stores selling fish but a store keeping large amounts of livestock including puppies and kittens would be audit quarterly at a higher fee for stores. Stores would then be given a star rating, similar to what is used in the food industry to assist consumers in identifying the quality of the store.

We would also support a self-funded licensing system for all breeders. Whether they be home, hobby or registered and whether they have 2 breeding dogs or several. We support the proposed South Australian Models for licensing which states that if your own an undesexed dog, then you are classed as a breeder.

Modern ethical pet shops like ours understand that making animal welfare the number priority makes good long term business sense. Like all community members we want an end to puppy farming and we have an opportunity for all stakeholders to be involved in a solution. However decisions must be based on evidence rather than emotion for there to be best welfare outcome companion animals.