

**Submission  
No 146**

## **COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

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## **Animal Welfare League Australia**

**Submission  
to**

**Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices  
in New South Wales**

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## **CONTENTS**

- 1. Background**
- 2. Position**
- 3. Key Areas of Advocacy**
- 4. The Current Situation in NSW**
- 5. Proposals to limit the number of animals allowed to be kept by breeders**
- 6. Calls to implement a breeders' licensing system**
- 7. Implications of banning the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores**
- 8. Legislative changes that may be required**
- 9. Conclusion**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

Animal Welfare League Australia (AWLA) is national non-profit organisation caring for companion animals across Australia. AWLA formed in 2007, when the Animal Welfare Leagues of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland united to become Animal Welfare League Australia. The Dogs Homes of Tasmania joined AWLA in 2010 and SAFE Inc WA in 2014.

AWLA member operations in New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia have over 300 years of combined experience in caring for cats and dogs.

Under AWLA's national banner, states work together to share, develop and promote programs which deliver high welfare standards for companion animals. The implementation of legislation and policies which will improve life for animals, pet owners and the wider community is a core objective.

## **2. POSITION**

AWLA strongly supports the introduction of breeder licencing for the breeding of cats and dogs. AWLA is strongly opposed to large scale, uncontrolled and indiscriminate breeding practices. AWLA is strongly opposed to any breeding practices which result in cruelty, neglect or the mistreatment of animals.

AWLA advocates responsible breeding practices to reduce the number of unwanted and unhealthy dogs and cats and to prevent the unnecessary killing of companion animals.

AWLA advocates for a nationally consistent breeder licence system so that all cats and dogs are responsibly bred and have responsible carers available for life. Currently, companion animal breeding is largely unregulated and it is difficult to trace the origins of a particular animal to address irresponsible homing and poor breeding practices, as well as inhumane conditions of breeding. A national breeder licence system will provide benefits to companion animals and also to companion animal owners, socially responsible breeders and sellers, veterinarians and whole communities.

AWLA supports early age de-sexing of kittens and puppies and subsidised, discounted de-sexing and microchipping programs.

### **3. KEY AREAS OF ADVOCACY**

- Anyone who breeds companion animals must have a licence
- Anyone who sells companion animals must have a licence
- Breeders and sellers must pay for their licence
- On application for a breeding licence, an independent government inspection must be conducted
- Inspections must be based on agreed regulated standards supported by detailed explanatory guidelines
- All kittens and puppies should be desexed before sale or transfer unless the purchaser has a breeder permit
- Subsidised desexing programs should be established for financially disadvantaged owners of companion animals
- All breeder licence numbers must be publicly available
- All breeding females and their litters must be microchipped and the breeder name, place of breeding, breeding parent microchip number recorded on government authorised microchip databases
- All state governments to work towards national consistency in the above regulations

### **4. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NSW**

- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats  
AWLA recommends more rigorous enforcement of this regulation generally and specifically for cats
- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Breeding of dogs and cats  
AWLA recommends this be reviewed and updated to become standards which are enforceable
- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, selling of dogs and cats  
AWLA recommends this be reviewed and updated to become standards which are enforceable

## 5. PROPOSALS TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF ANIMALS ALLOWED TO BE KEPT BY BREEDERS

AWLA is highly supportive of a limit on the number of animals to be kept by breeders, in order to encourage excellence in welfare standards and avoid a surplus or over-supply. Agreed limits would apply to the breeding of pure breeds and crossbreeds; commercial breeders for profit, hobby breeders, breeders and sellers of working dogs, hunting dogs, greyhounds and family pets. Where some breeders registered with state canine associations have argued for an exemption based on tradition or perceived rights, AWLA would strongly oppose such an exemption on the basis that regulations should be applied equally for consistency, fairness and effectiveness.

AWLA supports the following:

- The Code of Practice be strengthened to become enforceable standards and include the maximum number of litters per female dog over her lifetime be no more than four litters
- The Code of Practice be strengthened to become enforceable standards and include the age for an animal to cease breeding as no later than six years
- The Code of Practice be strengthened to become enforceable standards and ensure male dogs are not confined in breeding establishments for more than five years
- That a minimum level of accreditation and training in animal care be identified for all breeders
- That dogs retired from breeding have their health and temperament assessed as suitable for re-homing by an independent veterinarian
- That all animals for re-homing are de-sexed
- That an incentive system be identified and implemented to reward establishments where exercise, socialisation, handling and enrichment activities exceed the guidelines

## 6. CALLS TO IMPLEMENT A BREEDERS' LICENSING SYSTEM

AWLA strongly advocates for a breeder licensing system, based on enforceable standards identified and agreed by key stakeholders.

All breeders would initially be inspected to establish compliance with the standards before being issued with a licence. A proportion of breeders would be randomly selected annually for unannounced inspection, to encourage on-going compliance.

More frequent inspections would occur where concerns have been previously raised or identified

Recommended cost of breeder licence - \$200.00 annually

All animals would be sold with a recognisable breeder permit number.

Consumers are educated to ask for the breeder permit number when sourcing a new pet.

Consumers are educated to report breeders who can't supply a permit number.

Licensed breeders appear on a public on-line register.

A breeder licensing system has the capacity to bring benefits over and above those related to traceability and enforcement. (Refer – Key Areas of Advocacy)

A comprehensive licensing model applying to all owners of entire dogs (over 6 months of age), regardless of whether owners intend to breed from them or not, has precedents in Queensland and ACT. Under this system, the cost of breeder registration can be set to act as a motivator for owners to de-sex their animals and avoid accidental litters. This model of breeder registration system can significantly reduce the number of unwanted litters, reduce the number of animals surrendered to animal shelters, reduce the cost to the community of managing unwanted animals and improve welfare outcomes for dogs and puppies. The revenue raised would support the registration system and inspections on breeding establishments.

The effectiveness of a breeder licensing system will rely on:

- a) a direct link to enforceable standards
- b) rigorous enforcement

AWLA recommends that:

- a) RSPCA NSW and AWL NSW be better resourced to carry out the enforcement role
- b) the enforcement role be widened beyond RSPCA and AWL NSW to ensure sufficient capacity to rigorously apply the standards

## **7. IMPLICATIONS OF BANNING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS IN PET STORES**

We support pet shops in their role as suppliers of pet equipment. If pet shops choose to offer animals, we advocate they rehome dogs and cats on behalf of shelters/pounds or sourced from licenced breeders who abide by a set of enforceable and exemplary animal welfare standards. Pet shops offering animals should also be subject to a set of enforceable standards and unannounced regulatory inspections.

## **8. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES THAT MAY BE REQUIRED**

That the Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Breeding dogs and cats be reviewed and updated to become a set of exemplary and enforceable standards.

That the Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Animals in Pet Shops be reviewed and updated to become a set of exemplary and enforceable standards

That all animals be sold with a recognisable breeder licence number

That the sale of animals at community markets not be permitted

That internet sales be permitted by licensed and identified sellers only

That classified sales be permitted by licensed and identified sellers only

That sellers' permit number & breeder registration number to be displayed on all advertising of animals puppies/dogs for sale

That de-sexing prior to sale or transfer be compulsory (unless a registered breeder)

That standards be introduced for council pounds to support rehoming of impounded animals

That a penalty system is introduced for selling or giving away animals without a seller permit

That animals obtained through pet stores are de-sexed prior to re-homing/ sale

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The Government of New South Wales has the opportunity to take the lead in establishing a breeder permit system and a seller permit system linked to enforceable standards for breeders and sellers of companion animals. We fully support our member, AWL NSW, in calling for these licensing systems and an increase in resources to enable the effective enforcement of these systems.