

**Submission  
No 226**

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

**Organisation:** Dog Rescue Newcastle  
**Name:** Mrs Sue Barker  
**Date Received:** 15/06/2015



DOG RESCUE NEWCASTLE

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12 June 2015

Joint Select Committee on  
Companion Animal Breeding Practices (NSW)

Dear Committee Members,

Dog Rescue Newcastle (DRN) was established in 2008 in an attempt to reduce the number of animals being euthanased in pounds, or by vets, simply because owners were unable or unwilling to care for their animals for the duration of the animal's life.

To date, DRN have successfully rescued and rehomed almost 6,000 dogs, making us one of the largest rescue organisations in NSW. We incur veterinary costs of approximately \$400,000 annually, which consists of de-sexing and any necessary veterinary work as a result of poor pet ownership. We achieve this without any government funding and rely solely on donations, fundraising and sales.

40% of the animals we receive can be traced back to puppy farms having been sold via pet shops, internet sites such as Gumtree and local markets, just to name a few.

As President of DRN, and with over 20 years' experience in rescue (including a ten year directorship with RSPCA (NSW)), I am saddened to say that our unwanted animal problem has increased dramatically in recent times rather than decrease. I believe that this issue is largely due to the flood of puppies from large breeding facilities, ie puppy farms.

Furthermore, I was hopeful that with the introduction of the Companion Animal Act that there would be an increase in the level of responsible pet ownership. Unfortunately this has not been the case and the time has come for the State Government to intervene and stop the over-supply of companion animals in NSW.

There needs to be a code of practice in place which allows for prosecution of all non-compliances of the Companion Animal Act. I believe an independent authority should be established to monitor and enforce the code of practice of these companion animal breeding facilities.

I have visited several such facilities over the past 20 years and the problems I see are as follows:

1. Unsuitable housing with animals having very limited access to exercise and socialisation.
2. Animals are often kept in large sheds that do not have natural light, ventilation or temperature control.
3. Animals generally do not have suitable bedding.
4. Poor hygiene conditions with regard to food and water and the animals often do not have access to a proper nutritional diet. Sadly, I have known of a facility that only feeds road kill to their animals.
5. Animals do not have appropriate veterinary care (including dental). For example, female dogs often have untreated urinary tract infections which are very painful and distressing to a dog, yet can be easily treated. Similarly, male dogs can have an infected penis from 'over-use' which is also very painful and easily treatable if diagnosed early.
6. Puppies raised in these facilities are not socialised and often do not adjust to life in a family environment. This creates longer term issues including failed adoptions resulting in these animals being surrendered to pounds.
7. These facilities are generally located in very remote areas, enabling proprietors to mistreat or abuse their animals. Furthermore, if potential adopters were able to see where the puppies originated from, they would be horrified. Therefore these puppies are sold via the internet, pet shops or newspaper advertisements. This means there are no checks done on the prospective adopter, their yard and whether they will be a responsible pet owner.
8. I have also been witness to a deceased animal being consumed by other animals at a facility when the animal had been left dead in a cage.
9. Many animals bred from these facilities have hereditary health issues as veterinary treatment has been non-existent over generations. Examples include heart murmurs, allergies, hip dysplasia and eye problems to name just a few. Unfortunately the majority of these issues are expensive to treat, so owners will surrender the animals to pounds or leave them untreated.
10. Adult animals of these facilities often have severe psychological trauma due to the circumstances they find themselves. Symptoms of trauma include running in circles or obsessive behaviours like pacing or licking and chewing themselves. Sadly, some animals shut down and become almost catatonic.
11. Finally, millions of dollars change hands without the knowledge of the Australian Tax Office, allowing breeders to make a high tax free income.

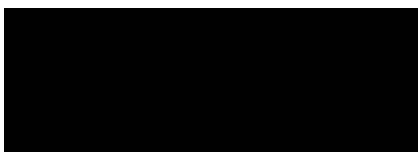
To stop the mistreatment of these animals, I believe the following suggestions should be put in place as a reasonable starting point:

1. All breeders are to be registered and all animals to be under veterinary care for the duration of their time at the facility.
2. All companion animal breeding facilities should be limited in the number of breeding bitches they have at any time, for example, no more than 10 per facility.
3. Breeding animals should only be allowed to breed from the age of 18 months and should only be limited to one litter per year for a total of 3 years. A female animal should not be bred over the age of 5 years.
4. At the age of 5 years, the female dog should be de-sexed and rehomed responsibly by the breeder. Under no circumstances should any dog (male or female) be rehomed undesexed.
5. All animals that are sold (including puppies) cannot be sold unless the animal is de-sexed. This will have a twofold effect to stop future accidental litters and back yard breeding.

Something needs to be done now and I believe it is up to the NSW Government to step up and set a precedent for the other States. We live in a disposable society, but surely that should not extend to our pets?

It's time to make a change.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Sue Barker.

Per:

Sue Barker  
**President**