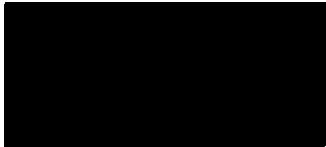


**Submission
No 342**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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4 July 2015

The Hon Alister Henskens, SC, MP



Dear Mr Henskens

Companion Animal Breeding Practices Inquiry

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide a submission to you. We are very concerned about the cruelty and excess breeding in "Puppy farms" as well as "Kitten farms". We enclose the already well-researched (G2Z, 2015), excellent recommendations addressing both puppy and kitten farms.

1. A Breeder Permit System

A user pays Breeder Permit system includes inspection, legislated standards, tracking and consumer information to protect companion animals from poor breeding conditions (e.g. puppy farming), to prevent excess animals being born with insufficient homes to go to (cats), and require responsible rehoming. Numbers of households with pets have been shown to be slightly declining, due to changing demographics such as higher density living, and more single person working households with work commitments. This makes it more urgent to address unplanned and poorly planned breeding.

Key features of a BREEDER PERMIT SYSTEM:

- a. Anyone who breeds is required to have a government permit. This includes breeders of pure breeds and crossbreeds; commercial breeders for profit, hobby breeders for breed improvement and showing, and breeders of their family pet.
- b. User pays. Breeders pay for the Breeder Permit which covers the costs of inspection and keeping records. (This is similar to permits being required for builders, car drivers etc. to ensure permit holders are suitably qualified and have appropriate resources and skills to avoid harm to people and, in this case, animals.)
- c. An independent accredited inspection. Conducted by local or state government officers or government-authorised animal welfare inspectors, inspections of breeding establishments occur on application for a permit and every 1 -3 years on renewal, so officers can check if breeders meet and are continuing to meet Standards.
- d. Inspections based on compulsory Standards. These address not only feeding, shelter and containment, but also health care, socialisation and training to produce confident sociable cats and dogs, prevention of in-breeding and hereditary defects, planning to avoid unwanted litters and illness or exhaustion of breeding stock, care or rehoming of all breeding animals on retirement, careful matching of owners to the individual needs of each animal, advice and support to new owners, and lifelong rehoming if required. ,
- e. Requirement to publish Breeder Permit Numbers. This enables consumers to make ethical purchasing choices, based on welfare Standards when looking for a new pet. All breeders are required to publish a permit number to be included with any advertisement and provided to the purchaser. This number demonstrates that they have been inspected (every 1 -3 years) and meet best practice animal

welfare and management standards. A Breeder Permit Number should also be required for, and recorded on, export licences and also displayed on any overseas websites where animals are listed for sale.

f. A national register of independently accredited breeders and promotion of this register for consumer access to verify published Breeder Permit numbers.

g. Desexing of kittens before sale or transfer from a breeder. All kittens required to be desexed prior to sale or giving away, with transfer not before 10 weeks of age (desexing exemptions if the animal is being sold to another permitted breeder or a veterinarian declares in writing that desexing is likely to be a serious risk to an animal's health e.g. Standard 38 GCCC Breeder Code of Practice for the keeping and breeding of entire cats and dogs). In 2009/10 in Gold Coast City 32% of owners surrendering undesexed cats of desexing age indicated the reason for not desexing as "didn't get around to it." Desexing prior to sale or transfer prevents this delay. Requiring that transfer does not occur before 10 weeks of age ensures that the majority of kittens will be mature enough to be desexed prior to sale or transfer, as the safety of desexing kittens between 2 and 4 months of age is now well-established in research and used by shelter and private practices around the world. Most Australian veterinary schools have lagged behind in training in this procedure, often due to logistics, which makes it important for each state's veterinary organisations to encourage and support ways for veterinarians and veterinary nurses to be more knowledgeable and experienced in early age desexing.

Anyone who has an "accidental" litter must either get a permit or their parent animals desexed (with provision of government-subsidised desexing for those in need).

h. Subsidised desexing programs e.g. the Last Litter Fund (free desexing of the mother cat when a litter of kittens is surrendered to a shelter or pound for desexing and rehoming). This is necessary for financially disadvantaged "accidental" breeders to avoid a fine for breeding without a permit. See Cooperative Desexing Programs benefits and models. Animal welfare groups can provide administration of the subsidies and fundraising support to Councils to assist with this community funded program. Such programs can be justified as they benefit both cat owners and non-cat owners to prevent costs and nuisance issues of unwanted cats.

For details of a Pilot Breeder Permit system which has been developed by dog and cat breed organisations, local government, animal welfare groups, wildlife groups, and veterinarians click here:

- [Qld Government GCCC Pilot Program Breeder Permit System](#)

2. Pet Shop Permit System with Compulsory Pet Shop Code of Practice

Similar to a Breeder Permit system, a pet shop permit system should be a user pays system to accredit responsible sellers of animals. Pet shops are inspected and if they meet acceptable standards in a Code of Practice they would be issued with a Pet Shop Permit Number which would be required to be displayed. Standards should include sourcing from only breeders with a government permit, desexing prior to sale, pre-adoption interviews and post adoption support, with capacity to provide for, and rehome, animals that owners are unable to keep.

Seller Permits and Standards to complement & support Breeder Permits and Standards, wherever animals are sold from pet shops or the internet, or by intermediaries e.g. wholesalers sourcing animals for pet shops. These legislated requirements should include:

- a. A user pays Seller Permit to ensure inspection for compliance with high level Standards wherever animals are held for sale
- b. Display of the Seller Permit (if not the breeder) and a breeder permit number with all cats and dogs sold through pet shops or via the internet within Australia, so customers can recognise animals have come from inspected breeding establishments which meet appropriate standards of care and responsible rehoming
- c. Records of the source of all animals (breeder name and address), health care treatments and sale/disposal (this will be essential if animals are going to be traded interstate) to be accessible by inspectors and local government authorities

d. Desexing all kittens prior to sale. If the Breeder and Seller Permits have compulsory standards consistent across all states, breeders will no longer be able to sell undesexed kittens across borders to avoid and undermine the effectiveness of some city/ state breeder permit legislation. Breeders who are more responsible will no longer be disadvantaged.

e. Publication of independently accredited pet shops on a shared government site for consumer access.

3. Desexing prior to sale or transfer

One of the key resolutions from delegates of the Australian National Summit in 2006 was that breeders should be required to desex their animals prior to rehoming at between 8 and 12 weeks of age. Sellers (e.g. pet shops), pounds, animal welfare shelters and rescue groups rehoming cats and dogs should also desex prior to sale or transfer. This is urgent for kittens and can be incorporated into the Breeder Permit system and Pet Shop Permit system described above (with exemptions for kittens transferred to breeders with a permit). There is research evidence that Early Age Desexing has no short or long term disadvantages for cats and many benefits and responsible cat breed organisations support this.

While there is not an oversupply of puppies in pounds and shelters, and there is disagreement about the best age for desexing of puppies, puppies from pounds and shelters should be desexed to help prevent poor or unplanned breeding and rehoming, as there are still too many dogs being abandoned.

4. Microchipping prior to sale or transfer which records breeder information

Also, one of the key resolutions from delegates of the Australian National Summit in 2006 was the requirement for all breeders and sellers of cats and dogs to microchip their animals prior to sale or transfer.

Another requirement to enable tracking of the source of puppies and kittens should the requirement for the microchip of any kitten or puppy to include the breeder name, breeding establishment address and contact details and the microchip number of the breeding parent. How this can be implemented effectively is outlined in the Breeder Permit system below.

5. Government policy and legislation which supports reclaim of stray animals and rehoming of abandoned animals.

Local government pounds should be required to undertake to rehome all healthy and treatable abandoned animals.

If killing of healthy and treatable animals was no longer allowed (unless the animal was irretrievably suffering or declared dangerous), local and state governments would need to follow the elements of the G2Z Model.

If local government apply pet limits, they should permit excess animals for community members who rehome desexed and identified cats and dogs in well-cared for and contained conditions, without nuisance to neighbours. Policies should enable people in high density and retirement living areas to have pets.

Government policy should support the return of animals to their owners unless the owner is shown to be incapable of providing appropriate care and management. Lost and found websites, returning the animal home if the owner is known and contactable, offering payment plans for impound fees and advice and support being offered e.g. helplines, training programs to assist owners, should all be included as government policy and programs.

Government policy should allow for the desexing and care of community cats.

In the interim, while the legislation and education and support programs above are put in place, killing should not be an option unless all avenues for effective reclaim and rehoming have been explored.

6. Responsibly managed cat colonies

Research and development of policies and legislation should enable carers to provide treatment and desexing programs for community cat colonies in cities and towns, and community owned dogs in rural and remote towns. It is essential to effectively manage and prevent growth of these colonies, prevent suffering of cats and dogs, and protect people and native wildlife populations.

Cats, particularly in built-up areas around factories, hospitals, retail precincts and schools can be either managed as urban wildlife, able to live free of interference apart from being desexed and treated if suffering.

In areas of high environmental sensitivity where native wildlife is at risk from cat or dog predation it is recommended that fencing and other non-harmful strategies are investigated for suitability.

Where farm animals are at risk from predation it is recommended that non harmful predator deterrents such as the use of fencing and other protective species is investigated for appropriateness.

Significant further research into humane population control measures is required in order to find a satisfactory strategy that is species specific, affordable, effective and humane for those species it is intended to impact. Wherever appropriate sterilisation programs are recommended.

7. Common national pound and shelter data reporting

Another resolution of the 2006 National Summit was the importance of compulsory national reporting by all pounds, shelters and rescue groups of numbers of animals incoming, reclaimed by owners, rehomed and euthanased/killed. Reporting of animals euthanased/killed must identify Healthy Treatable Untreatable. For definitions of these categories, [click here](#).

8. National consistency

All states should be working together to develop and implement the above legislation for national consistency as animals are traded across borders.

Legislation

- [Recommended Legislation](#)
- [ACT Legislation](#)
- [NT Legislation](#)
- [NSW Legislation](#)
- [Queensland Legislation](#)
- [SA Legislation](#)
- [Tasmania Legislation](#)
- [Victoria Legislation](#)
- [WA Legislation](#)

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Yours sincerely,
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