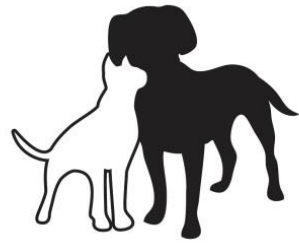


**Submission
No 232**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Animal Welfare League, New South Wales
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Position: Acting Chief Executive Officer
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ANIMAL
WELFARE LEAGUE NSW

'caring for pets and their people'

Animal Welfare League, New South Wales

**Submission
to**

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

June 2015

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1. BACKGROUND

Animal Welfare League NSW (AWL NSW) is a registered charity that has been caring for surrendered, neglected and abandoned animals since its inception in 1958.

- AWL NSW has a team of 2 Inspectors authorised to investigate allegations of animal cruelty under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
- AWL NSW operates three animal welfare shelters, a veterinary clinic and has 13 branches of active volunteers across NSW
- All animals available for adoption are temperament assessed, vet checked, desexed, microchipped, vaccinated, wormed and flea treated. Importantly AWL NSW aims to match all adoptable animals with the lifestyle of potential owners, to ensure a long and happy relationship for all
- AWL NSW delivers an education program to improve animal welfare in the community
- AWL NSW provides a discount desexing program through a network of volunteer branches around NSW

Our Vision

All companion animals in NSW have a safe, happy and loving home

Our Mission

To lead the standard of animal care and sheltering

AWL NSW has continued to be a leader in current practice relating to animal welfare issues.

AWL NSW is an active member or participant in the following committees and groups.

- Getting 2 Zero
- Ag & Animal Services Emergency Management Committee (NSW Disaster Plan)
- Animal Management in Rural and Regional Indigenous Communities (AMRRIC)
- Animal Welfare Advisory Council (AWAC)
- Animal Welfare League Australia (AWLA ~~NSW~~)
- Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS)
- Australian Companion Animals Council (ACAC)
- National Parks and Wildlife Service - Deer Program
- School Animals Care Ethics Committee (SACEC)
- University of Wollongong Animal Ethics Committee
- Macquarie University Ethics Committee

2. POSITION

Animal Welfare League New South Wales strongly supports the introduction of a breeder licensing scheme which ultimately would reap cost saving benefits to Government, Councils, Welfare Organisations and the wider community by the reduction of unwanted animal litters. AWL NSW is strongly opposed to large scale, uncontrolled and indiscriminate breeding practices.

AWL NSW is strongly opposed to any breeding practices which result in cruelty, neglect or the mistreatment of animals.

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

AWL NSW advocates for a nationally consistent breeder licensing scheme 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 licensing scheme will provide benefits to companion animals and also to companion animal owners, socially responsible breeders and sellers, veterinarians and whole communities.

AWL NSW advocates for an independent regulator for breeder licensing as the only means to control indiscriminate breeding for personal gain over the welfare of animals; while at the same time resourcing funding to maintain adherence to regulations by an inspectorate.

3. KEY AREAS OF ADVOCACY

- Anyone who breeds companion animals must have a license
- Anyone who sells companion animals must have a license
- ALL advertising media must include a breeders license number in any 'for sale' of animals and in any form
- Breeders and sellers must pay for their license under a scaled system dependent on maximum numbers of animals kept
- On application for a breeding license, an independent government inspection must be conducted
- Routine inspections should be carried out on breeding establishments and systems in place to continually monitor these
- Inspections must be based on agreed regulated standards supported by detailed explanatory guidelines
- All breeder license numbers must be publicly available, preferably on a database similar to ABN lookup
- All breeding females and their litters must be microchipped and the breeder name, place of breeding, breeding parent microchip number recorded on a government authorised microchip central database
- All state governments to work towards national consistency in the above regulations
- All companion animals should be desexed before sale or transfer unless the purchaser has a breeder license
- Subsidised desexing programs should be established for financially disadvantaged owners of companion animals

4. THE CURRENT SITUATION IN NSW

NSW currently has:

- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats – **not currently well enforced, particularly with cats, needs to be tightened through legislation**
- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Breeding dogs and cats – **this should be reviewed, updated and amended so that standards are improved and enforceable as opposed to current guidelines**
- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Animals in Pet Shops – **this should also be reviewed and amended to improve and enforce standards**

New South Wales has the opportunity to lead towards national consistency by establishing a breeder licensing system linked to the relevant codes of practice.

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

AWL NSW believes that the number of animals allowed to be kept by breeders should be dependent on their ability to provide high welfare for the animals in their care. These would include but not limited to:

- Environmental conditions – housing, climate etc.
- Physical health
- Behavioural health
- Hygiene and cleanliness
- Human interaction
- Social interaction with other animals – of their own kind and other species
- Genetic predispositions – physical and behavioural

In addition, AWL NSW supports the following:

- The Code of Practice for breeding be strengthened to include the maximum number of litters per female be no more 1 per year for both dogs and cats
- The Code of Practice should be strengthened to include a minimum age to breed and the maximum age for an animal to cease breeding, after which time the animal should be desexed
- That a minimum level of accreditation and training in animal care and responsible pet ownership be identified for all breeders and sellers
- That all animals for rehoming are desexed prior to being rehomed unless going to a licensed breeder
- That an incentive system be identified and implemented to reward establishments where exercise, socialisation, handling and enrichment activities are both maintained and improved with good outcomes for animals bred there

6. CALLS TO IMPLEMENT A BREEDERS' LICENSING SYSTEM

AWL NSW strongly advocates for a breeder licensing system, based on enforceable standards identified and agreed by key stakeholders including breeders, animal welfare advocates and government.

- All breeders would initially be inspected by authorised, independent inspectors to establish compliance with the standards before being issued with a licence.
- Breeders would be randomly selected for unannounced inspection on a regular basis, to encourage ongoing compliance.
- Inspections could be done more frequently if there are any flags for concern.
- Licensing should be done under a tiered system with a fee schedule dependent upon the number of animals housed in a breeding establishment.
- Revenue raised would support the licensing system and inspections on breeding establishments.
- All animals would be sold with a recognisable breeder license number.
- Consumers are educated to ask for the breeder license number when sourcing a new pet
- Consumers are educated to report breeders who can't supply a license number
- Licensed breeders appear on a public online register – similar to ABN lookup
- A comprehensive licensing model applying to all owners of entire animals (over 6 months of age), regardless of whether owners intend to breed from them or not. Under this system, the cost of breeder licensing can be set to act as a motivator for owners to desex their animals and avoid accidental litters. This model of breeder licensing 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.

The effectiveness of a breeder licensing system will rely on:

- a) a direct link to enforceable standards
- b) a penalty system that encourages compliance and acts as a deterrent
- c) rigorous enforcement

AWL NSW recommends that:

- AWL NSW and RSPCA NSW are better resourced to carry out the enforcement role by increasing the powers of the inspectorate by Law and the number of inspectors to carry out that role.

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

- Pet stores would have to comply with the same standards and ensure that animals are sourced through either licensed breeders and/or rescue groups/shelters/pounds
- The Animal Welfare Code of Practice for Animals in Pet Shops - **this should be reviewed, updated and amended so that standards are improved and enforceable as opposed to current guidelines**
- Pet stores should be licensed and an accreditation system which should be made an industry standard.
- All animals would be sold with a recognisable breeder license number.
- That a minimum level of accreditation and training in animal care and responsible pet ownership be identified for all sellers
- That all animals for rehoming through pet stores are desexed prior to being rehomed

8. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES THAT MAY BE REQUIRED

- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Breeding dogs and cats – **this should be reviewed, updated and amended so that standards are improved and enforceable as opposed to current guidelines**
- Animal Welfare Code of Practice, Animals in Pet Shops – **this should also be reviewed and amended to improve and enforce standards**
- Inspectors need to have power of entry increased to include dwellings
- 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 and breeder license number is displayed on all advertising of animals for sale
- Pet stores should be licensed and an accreditation system which should be made an industry standard.
- All animals would be sold with a recognisable breeder license number.
- That a minimum level of accreditation and training in animal care and responsible pet ownership be identified for all sellers
- That a penalty system is introduced for selling or giving away animals without a seller permit
- That a penalty system is introduced for consumers adopting from a known non-licensed breeder
- Microchip forms should include breeder license number
- Common access database for all inspectors – national
- Compulsory microchipping of dogs and cats – **not currently well enforced, particularly with cats, needs to be tightened through legislation.** A review of the enforcement capability of local councils to increase compliance may improve this

9. OTHER RELATED MATTERS

- Community awareness must be increased to include the need for responsible breeding and selling
- Responsible pet ownership awareness must be increased
- Community awareness program to promote desexing – including potentially an incentive scheme to reduce desexing costs for responsible pet owners.
- Early age desexing, from 4 months of age should be encouraged in both dogs and more importantly cats
- An incentive scheme could be offered for breeders who apply early for licenses
- The need to ensure that the purchase of dogs and cats is not made so difficult that there is an increase in pocket pets and other types of animals

In closing Animal Welfare League NSW would welcome the opportunity to be involved in any consultation following the enquiry into Companion Animal Breeding Practices in NSW. As our inspectorate is required to enforce Prevention of Cruelty to Animals ACT and also codes of practice we believe that we have an important role to play in decision making.