

**Submission
No 121**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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The Chair
Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal
Breeding Practices in New South Wales
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

By Email: CABPinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au

10th June, 2015

Dear Joint Select Committee Members,

Re: Inquiry into Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales

On behalf of our 60,000 Australian supporters, Humane Society International (HSI) is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission to the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales (NSW). HSI believes that puppy farming and other intensive breeding facilities should be banned in NSW as current regulations fall short of providing appropriate standards of care for dogs and cats. However, we take this opportunity to request improvements in this area.

HSI offers the following comments which we trust will be considered and contribute towards improved animal welfare outcomes. Our concerns and recommendations are outlined below:

WELFARE INITIATIVES

There is an urgent need for a limit on the number of animals allowed to be kept by a registered breeder on their property.

State legislation needs to enforce a law that puppies and kittens between 8-10 weeks old must be de-sexed before being sold and transferred to their new home, thereby preventing them from contributing to the overpopulation issue. Furthermore, all pounds, shelters and rescue groups should be required by law to de-sex all companion animals before they are rehomed.

HSI supports better matching of pets with owners to reduce the risk of them being surrendered.

BREEDING

In NSW there are no laws that require breeders to be registered. HSI strongly advocates for the introduction of a legislated breeder licensing program in New South Wales. Such a program should clearly outline strict standards on housing requirements, exercise, socialisation, hygiene and food. Initial certification must be obtained, followed by annual inspections by Department of Primary Industry inspectors to ensure standards are met.

Significant penalties need to be in place for those who are found to be breeding animals outside of the breeder licensing program.

A maximum breeding age must be set for an animal to ensure that they cannot be subjected to confinement in a breeding establishment for their entire life. HSI recommends a five litter limit for female dogs in a registered breeding establishment, as well as protections to be in place for animals that have reached the end of their breeding cycle.

An individual animal that has a heritable defect must not be bred from under any circumstances, even with a healthy partner.

HSI opposes the selective breeding of companion animals to produce physical changes such as exaggerated features or behavioural changes as they can be harmful to the animals' health and welfare.

HSI objects to the inbreeding of companion animals (both first degree (father to daughter) and second degree (grandfather to granddaughter) mating) because it leads to more inherited disorders, and can negatively impact their health or welfare.

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIALISATION

HSI believes that all dogs must have a general health check by a veterinarian at each stage of life, particularly at the point before breeding commences to ensure the animal is in a healthy condition before being bred from. A veterinary surgeon (rather than a breeder) should also be required to declare a dog is suitable to be offered for sale.

Minimum recommendations for socialisation and handling for companion animals should be set. Regular socialisation with humans and other animals of the same species is crucial for stress reduction and social development in dogs and cats, particularly for puppies and kittens. Lack of socialisation and enrichment can lead to psychological and/or emotional distress.

TETHERING

HSI believes that tethering is not acceptable as it is detrimental to the dog's physical and mental well-being. A tether significantly restricts the dog's movement and continuous confinement of dogs by a tether is inhumane. It can also become tangled around or caught on objects, further restricting the dog's movement and has the potential to cause injury. A tether prevents the dog from exercising and expressing natural behaviours such as socialising and playing.

Tethering can also increase aggressive behaviours in dogs, possibly resulting in serious dog bites. This important safety factor for humans must be considered. State laws must specify that tethering is not an acceptable means of housing a dog and should only be used as a method of temporary restraint.

THE SALE OF COMPANION ANIMALS IN PET SHOPS

HSI supports the move to ban the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops, or at the very least restrict the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops to those from approved rescue shelters. This would remove a major market for puppy farms, and also allow pet shops to play an important role in educating the public about the industry. An estimated 95% of puppies sold in pet stores are bred in puppy farms or by backyard breeders. A ban on their sale in pet stores would also help to discourage the impulse buying of animals. Consumers searching for a specific breed can either contact a registered breeder, or alternatively a breed specific rescue group, many of which have puppies available.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

HSI believes that the food offered to animals within breeding establishments should be of sufficient nutritional quality. HSI does not support the feeding of raw offal to dogs in an effort to reduce costs for the establishment, even when provided in conjunction with a complete worming program. Puppies must not be left without food for longer than 12 hours, and cats must be provided with a minimum of two feeds per day to meet their welfare needs.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia must be performed using a barbiturate overdose. Other methods of euthanasia must be prohibited in breeding establishments. Euthanasia must always be performed by a fully trained veterinary professional. Under no circumstances must any animal be euthanised in the presence of other animals, or in the presence of dead animals.

HSI appreciates the opportunity to make this submission, providing comments to the Joint Select Committee on Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales.

Yours sincerely



Georgie Stewart
Program Officer
HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL