

**Submission
No 320**

COMPANION ANIMAL BREEDING PRACTICES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Bathurst Regional Council
Name: Mr Richard Denyer
Position: Acting Director
Environmental, Planning and Building Services
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Companion Animal Breeding Practices in New South Wales

(a) The current situation in New South Wales in Comparison with other jurisdictions

In 1995 the New South Wales Government asked for representations from councils and other relevant organisations to become involved in writing new legislation for dogs and cats as the old act had become unworkable. Bathurst Regional Council's Senior Ranger was involved with the original review panel which led to the formulation of the Companion Animals Act.

Many issues were discussed including the problems some councils were having with the over breeding of dogs and cats, and, the over population of these animals. It was decided to put the issue of the breeding of dogs and cats off until the next review in five years. This review never took place.

Council's Senior Ranger has contacted 4 councils in Victoria being City of Greater Dandenong, Glenelg Shire, City of Bendigo and Glen Eira, and 2 councils in Queensland being, Southern Downs Regional Council and Ipswich City Council.

There are many differences between local government agencies throughout Australia, in particular with the control and management of companion animals.

Animal numbers per property, animal registration and breed classifications are distinctly different in different states. For example in Victoria and Queensland most council's have a two dog, two cat policy per household. If the dog or cat resides in a rural area or lives on a farm then a rural policy may apply to that property depending on the land size and whether the land is used for rural purposes or not. Some councils then allow 6 dogs and 6 cats per property. This situation does not apply in New South Wales.

In Victoria and Queensland, a kennel permit is required if the animal owner wants to breed their dogs or their cats. Also, if a dog is of a restricted breed type the owner must go before a board to plead the case for keeping the dog. It has become very litigious.

Dog registration in all other states and territories is annual, with a different cost per animal type. A reduced rate for pensioners, even if the animal is not de-sexed, applies. Most councils don't charge for cat registration as they have found it too difficult. However in New South Wales the same registration fees apply to both cats and dogs.

Interesting facts are that Southern Downs Council charges a higher registration fee for declared dangerous dogs and Ipswich City Council has a reduced fee for the first year of a dogs registration.

In New South Wales:

- An annual fee for animal registration is not available.
- Reduced registration fees are for de-sexed animals. Pensioners also receive an additional discount if their animal is de-sexed.
- Nil registration fee for working dogs, assistance animals and greyhounds. Greyhounds must be microchipped and registered with the greyhound board.
- Reduced fees for dog and cat breeders if owner is a member of an approved organisation.
- Approved animal rescue organisations are not required to register animals on rehoming. New owner must register the animal.
- There are no across the board laws for restricting animal numbers. NSW Legislation does not allow for Council's to have an across the board number of animal policy. However a council can introduce a policy for a particular property.

(b) Proposals to limit the number of animals allowed to be kept by breeders

There are several types of breeders as follows:

One off litters

These are the result of the owner forgetting to get animal de-sexed, unaware of what will happen or is against de-sexing the animal. You could expect one litter a year as a result of this scenario.

Registered Dog NSW breeders

The number of litters from each bitch needs to be regulated. One bitch should produce no more than one litter every 18 months and only 3 litters in a lifetime. When the bitch has the third litter she should be de-sexed and kept by the breeder, sold or given away. Bitches should not be dumped at a pound or shelter nor should they be euthanased.

Puppy/kitten farmers

Breeding many litters a year, never giving the bitch a chance to recover. A terrible life for the bitch who is normally kept in a small dirty cage mostly inside a shed or house.

Farmers

Rural farmers that keep working and pigging type dogs. Always needing a new dog to keep bloodlines and to train for working purposes.

(c) Calls to implement a breeders' licensing system

In line with the above limitations there needs to be a level of oversight to breeders to ensure that the ethical treatment of animals occurs. This would obviously extend to the licensing of breeders, restrictions on the capacity to sell animals unless you are registered and an administrative body providing oversight.

(d) The implications of banning the sale of dogs and cats in pet stores

The Pet Industry Authority is attempting to regulate the sale of puppies and kittens. The majority of pet shop owners are members of the Pet Industry Authority and are regulated under the constitution of this authority.

All pet shops who are members of the Association must sell all Companion Animals vaccinated and microchipped.

If an animal is returned in 2 weeks back to the pet shop they must accept the animal back and give the former owner the sale price back less fees.

If an animal is taken to an animal shelter/pound then the pet shop must take responsibility for the animal.

Instead of banning the sale of animals in pet shops restrict who the pet shop buys their companion animals from. Make sure the pet shop buys their puppies or kittens from licensed breeders only. This could be implemented easily through the Pet Industry Association.

With the pet shops who are not members of the association advise the local Council or RSPCA who will then carry out inspections and ensure they comply with the relevant legislation. Introduce a licensing system where before they set up a pet shop they must get a yearly licence through the local Council/RSPCA. A fee would apply for registration and inspections.

Banning the sale of dogs and cats in pet shops will not stop the numbers being bred as there are many other alternative markets available.

Some of these dogs and cats sell for \$1,000 or more. The majority of these animals are of mixed breed, undershot or overshot jaws, poor leg structure, bad nasal

problems, poor eyesight, heart problems to name a few of the health issues. Some of the buyers have poor language skills and don't understand the health problems some of these dogs and cats have. They are designer pets that look cute for a while then the problems start. Coat too long, full of knots, dog gets dirty, coat not clipped because it is too expensive, hair goes into eyes and sticks to anus and dog becomes ill. Long haired cats have the same issues. Pet ownership is a big responsibility. No amount of reforms on animal breeding will help these animals as owner loses interest, can't afford to keep up vet checks, food quality drops, dog starts escaping or barking.

This scenario happens when pet is sold from anywhere.

(e) Any legislative changes that may be required

All pet shops should be licenced by Council/RSPCA and inspected yearly for cleanliness and record keeping. This should also include boarding kennels. Additional inspections can be undertaken on a needs basis.

Regulate all pet shops so all dogs and cats which are sold from pet shops are chipped, vaccinated for parvo, hepatitis and distemper, and a deposit to be taken for de-sexing and put into a government fund.

All pups and kittens that are for sale through a pet store must have been purchased by the pet shop from an authorised breeder for resale. Pet shops would also be able to sell animals from local pounds and animal welfare groups.

Restrict the advertising of cats and dogs being sold in certain sections of the media including social media.

Dogs and cats if bought from Council pounds should be registered at a nominal fee if de-sexed.

(f) Any other related matter

Promote education programs for pre-kindergarten up to year six.

Encourage vets to notify Council/RSPCA of puppy/kitten farms operating in the local area.

Prior to the implementation of the Local Government Act 1993 and the Companion Animals Act 1998 Council were authorised to undertake inspections of boarding kennels and pet shops. An inspection fee was also applied.