

INQUIRY INTO PUPPY FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

HEARING – Monday 23 May 2022 SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

By Amy Johnson

1. Do you think there is an assumption by members of the public that laws are in place to stop large scale breeding facilities from legally running? Do you think that most people in the community would be surprised to hear that there is no breeder licensing scheme in NSW and that it is largely left up to the public to investigate breeders?

Absolutely, most people don't know that there isn't a limit. Most people think we have strong laws protecting animals in Australia and NSW from cruelty, especially for companion animals. The public is very surprised when they find out how weak our cruelty laws are, how a charity the RSPCA is expected to control this cruelty, that the police can do the job but often won't and palm it off to the charity RSPCA. It is shocking to think that a charity is expected to control crime. How is there not a government department controlling and managing animal cruelty. Especially as it would be in their best interest as large fines can mean a lot of money can be put back into the department meaning it wouldn't cost that much tax money.

The public doesn't want their tax money being wasted on trying to monitor the cruelty in puppy farms. Time and time again these large breeding farms have shown extreme cruelty, both physical and psychological. These farms are inherently cruel and can never be humane. Forcing animals to constantly be breed which takes a physical toll on the body, to live in a cage in a constant state of sensory deprivation is very cruel. When people spend thousands on a puppy they are expecting to be purchasing a dog from a loving home where the puppy and parents have their physical, emotional and psychological needs highly cared for. They do not expect, nor do they want to spend thousands of dollars on a dog that has come from a profit driven farm that is making big bucks off the suffering of animals. I have never met someone that was ok with puppy farming, I have never met someone who has realised they have accidentally bought a puppy farm dog to be happy with this. They feel like they have been cheated and robbed. They feel guilty and feel they have been treated unfairly. They feel like they don't know how to fix what has happened because there is nothing in place to protect them from this fraud, there is also no where they can go to report fraud. They have been falsely advertised too and have no rights as a consumer. This shocks and angers a lot of people, especially when most other purchasing is protected under law.

2. Could you please outline the process of how foster carers are selected and any vetting criteria used?

My rescue is a small operation in comparison to larger groups like Hunter pet Rescue and Newcastle Dog rescue. It is mostly just me who foster cares. I have in the past had some people foster care for me but it is a big job managing foster carers so it was not possible for me to manage them thus why I just run by myself with my husband. From my understanding of the rescue, foster and rehoming of pets in NSW with my 15 years' experience with many other organisations and my personal experience I have seen that all foster carers have training, they always have support from other foster carers and the rescue organisation. Foster carers are regularly checked and they don't directly take in animals themselves, they have animals passed onto them through the rescue organisation thus there is a record of how many animals each foster carer has and there is a limit on how many they can have.

All foster carers have the support of vets from the organisation thus medical care is provided. Many foster carers learn a lot from vets about caring for medical needs. I have not seen a proper established rescue charity ever not care for animals properly. All foster carers are able to return their fostered animals back to the rescue group at any time if there are problems.

As for becoming a rescue organisation, in order to advertise on the largest database of rescued animals needing a home in the whole of Australia, there is vetting to prevent dodgy people from advertising on there. All rescue groups need to be registered as not for profit, they also need references from vet clinics proving that vet care is provided and all animal are desexed and microchipped before rehoming. This website is called petrescue.com.au. More information on rescue can be found here. It is an excellent and professional service. They also respond and investigate complaints and can remove organisations from their website if they are deemed to have breached the rules. This petrescue.com.au organisation helps to identify true legitimate rescue organisations. Council pounds also use the service to assist them in rehoming. Being registered as not for profit also provides a guarantee of a legitimate rescue group. There has been many reports of large breeding farms advertising as rescue organisations to fool the public, the best way for people to know if they are genuine is to see if they are a registered as a not for profit charity and if they were able to be approved by the petrescue.com.au website.

3. What training, if any, is provided to foster carers?

I'm not sure of any standardised formal training, I have seen Hunter Animal Rescue offer training sessions. All foster carers I have come into contact with and my experience of fostering for other organisations in the past and also managing some foster carers myself, I have seen that all foster carers have the support and education from fellow foster carers in the group and support from the organisation they are fostering for. Any care information is learnt from the strong support of other very experienced foster carers, I have seen rescue groups have a buddy system for all new foster carers, they buddy a long serving very experienced foster carer with new foster carers. I have provided this in the past when I managed some foster carers in my small rescue group. Any questions can be asked and assisted with, all animals needing vet care receive it and a lot is learnt from a close relationship with vets and rescue groups. Proper registered not for profit rescue organisations always have a close relationship with vets, there is no way you could run without having a strong relationship to a vet clinic. They offer discounts on procedures in order to help as they too also care about rehoming abandoned animals. It is imperative to know that foster carers are assigned animals through the organisation and don't take in rescues directly from the public or pound. This means there is a limit and record for animals foster carers have. This prevents overloading foster carers and supporting foster carers to not feel overwhelmed. This helps maintain the high quality of care foster carers provide for rescued animals.

4. Do you know of any instances of people being expelled from their role as foster carers?

I'm not aware of this, I suspect it to be rare as there are many checks in place to prevent foster carers from taking in too many animals, also the rescue organisations covers vet costs so there wouldn't be a reason for foster carers to not provide medical care. If I noticed a foster carer from other organisation or a foster carer I managed, not providing the standard of care required I would remove the animals from them and expel them from fostering for my organisation. The ownership of the rescued animals is under the rescue organisation so they have the right to rehome the animals from foster carers. I would also report any dodgy foster carers to the rspca and police, if the care not provided breached cruelty laws. If they do anything about it, I'm sceptical about it but it is the only avenue. Again though, I have not seen this in my 15 years of experience.

If this question is wondering how common cruelty to animals is in the rescue and foster caring of companion animals, in my experience it is not common and would be quite rare. Most animal cruelty happens for profit, out of neglect usually because of money or not caring about animals. It is rarer for animals to be abused just out of enjoying inflicting suffering or in anger, I don't doubt this does happen but I suspect this to be the rarer form of reasons for abuse and be even rarer in rescue/fostering. Most if

not all of these reasons for cruelty have safe guards in place in rescue and foster caring to prevent cruelty from happening. These include;

- All foster carers are vetted and monitored to prevent people from taking in animals they can't and don't want to care for. All rescues can be returned by foster carers thus preventing cruelty due to not wanting to care for animals. So even if all the checks to prevent non committed foster carers from fostering, if a foster carer changes their mind or if they can't for some reason care for the their foster animals they can return them to the organisation.
- There is no profit involved which means animals aren't abused for profit.
- All vet care is provided for by the rescue organisation thus foster carers won't be in a position to not provide medical care because they can't afford it or because there is profit involved.
- Foster carers can't be overloaded with animals they aren't capable of caring for as there is limits in place. When I mentioned my experience with taking in too many animals that was me as a rescue organisation, not as a foster carer for a rescue organisation. The rescue not the foster carers control how many animals are rescued and in foster care.
- Animal aren't neglected out of not wanting them or not being able to afford to care for them as the foster carers can return them to the rescue, they won't be stuck with animals they can't or don't want to care for.
- Lack of education causing neglect wouldn't be common as rescue groups are heavily involved with their foster carers and are constantly supporting them.
- Hurting animals out of enjoyment and anger wouldn't be common as to be a foster carer takes a lot more effort than getting a free animals off the internet. I can't see it being common for someone to go through the hoops of becoming a foster carer just so they can hurt animals, it would be much easier to steal animals or just get them for free.

5. If someone was interested in becoming a foster carer, how do they get involved?

They can google search and find an organisation that is close to them and enquire with them on how to be a foster carer. They can also read information on petrescue.com.au. Each group would have a slightly different process but in all my experience I have seen that foster carers have a lot of support from the charity and from very experienced long standing foster carers. Most if not all rescue groups would assess the premises especially if dogs will be foster cared for to prevent dogs escaping. It is a headache to have foster carers come and go constantly so most, if not all registered not for profit rescue groups have methods in place to prevent foster carers from not being committed to the fostering for an extended period of time. These methods also mean that foster caring is taken seriously and that high level of care is provided because it's not a super simple process to be a foster carer. Animals aren't just given to anyone, not only for the animals sake but also because it is a lot of work to organise foster carers and monitor them so it is not in a rescue groups best interest to be handing out rescued animals to many non-committed foster carers. The rescue group will obtain a clause 16(d) exemption in order to allow sourcing of animals from their local pound facility, so there is always oversight by the group on all their foster carers. It takes too much work to manage many non-committed foster carers, better to be vetting them and making sure they are committed to helping. It's less work for the rescue group and it's better for them animals.

Link to pet rescue questions on becoming a foster carer.
<https://www.petrescue.com.au/library/articles/rescue-pet-foster-care>