

March 7, 2012

The stated purpose of the original bill SB 253 was to curb the importation of sick dogs in to the state of Connecticut. On the surface, this seems to have a logical appeal. However, it is readily apparent that the practical effect of this bill was not considered.

There is no question that legislation was needed to curb abuses and we support change that actually protects animals and their adopters. The practical effect of the bill passed last summer has increased the cost of our adopted dogs. As non-profit entities, we all operate on a tight budget and we already spend an average of more than \$300 just to vet our dogs properly, including spay/neuter, shots including distemper/parvo, bordetella, and rabies, microchipping, screening for heartworms, lyme disease and ehrlichia and other parasites and any other treatment and care which the dog might need.

The existing law requires at least two more vet visits to obtain new health certificates from a Connecticut vet which have added a minimum of \$150 to our costs. Responsible rescues are already doing these things and this creates no additional benefit to dogs or adopters. Those individuals who have never bothered to provide vet care in the past haven't changed their behavior, but it has made rescue significantly more expensive. When the cost gets too high, the responsible rescues in Connecticut which currently place more than 10,000 dogs a year will close, but the demand for adoptable dogs will remain the same. The State cannot legislate away demand for family pets and those people that cannot find an available dog meeting their needs in a Connecticut shelter or who cannot afford a breeder will create an expanded black market which is exactly the opposite of what this bill is supposed to do. Moreover, in the border areas, this law refuses to recognize that the vets of other states are just as competent to check a dog's condition. For example, a dog in Enfield may see a vet in Springfield, but under this law, that doesn't count. We are aware that the CVMA has lobbied hard to insist that a Connecticut vet must examine the dog. This is unconstitutional protectionism at its worst and there is no legitimate reason to insist that only a Connecticut vet see a dog. It seems that the CVMA is protecting its members financially to the detriment of vets outside the Connecticut borders.

All reputable rescues provide the following minimum care before they place a dog:

1. The dog is spayed/neutered.
2. The dog has it's distemper/parvo, rabies and bordatella vaccines.
3. The dog is cleared from heartworms and other parasites.
4. The dog is groomed, provided Frontline, Heartguard and a collar.
5. The dog is microchipped and registered to the rescue.
6. The dog is examined by a vet within in 5 days of traveling and an interstate health certificate is obtained.

The average total cost for Big Fluffy Dog Rescue is just shy of \$310. Add to that the cost of transport (averaging about \$150 per dog) and you can see the reason for an adoption fee in excess of \$400. Everything else pay for is made up through fundraising.

Now, with the new regulations, we have to take the dog specifically to a Connecticut vet (no other vet will do). We must pay for a complete exam again within 48 hours of arrival, even though if there is a disease, the odds of seeing it just after transport is next to nothing as it generally takes 5 to 7 days to show symptoms. That exam averages around \$100. Then we must take the dog to a Connecticut vet no more than 15 days before it is adopted for another exam and health certificate at a cost of an additional \$100. This has no demonstrable effect on disease.

We are not against rules and regulations, and indeed welcome and support the creation of standards. It has fallen to responsible rescues to step in and take care of the messes created by those who either lack basic understanding of how to appropriately handle rescuing dogs or those who just don't care. As current laws stand; a sick, ill and unvaccinated dog can come into the state and go to a foster or adoptive home. If this dog has a communicable disease, whether it is seen within 48 hours or 15 days, has the opportunity to expose resident animals and animals within the community to disease. You can imagine the effects this could potentially have. We would like to see animals coming into the state required to have already been seen by a vet, be issued health certificate and be fully vaccinated. This is what is best for all involved.

We support the stipulation of all dogs coming into the state being seen by a vet within 15 days, with the choice of vet left to the individual foster home or rescue. We also would whole heartedly support a set of regulation that included that ALL dogs coming into the state be vetted by the standards numbered 1 to 6 listed above. By ensuring healthy animals are being brought into the state, we are truly protecting the people and canines of Connecticut.

Sincerely,
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