



March 14, 2013

To the CT Environmental Committee:

As a veterinarian practicing in the State of Connecticut for 30 years, I have been involved in the treatment of thousands of newly acquired pets. Being part of their care is a privilege I still cherish. However treating obviously sick, weak, or poorly bred young animals acquired from less than responsible providers, whether a “puppy mill” or poorly run rescue agency has been a constant source of heartache for the new families incurring unanticipated expenses and often undeserved emotional distress. I am writing and will be testifying in support of HB 5027-AN ACT PROHIBITING THE SALE OF DOGS AND CATS FROM SUBSTANDARD DOMESTIC ANIMAL MILLS (with additional language) PRESCRIBING THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE TO SET ‘STANDARDS FOR THE CARE OF IMPORTED HOMELESS ANIMALS WHEN KEPT IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS IN ONE LOCATION’ (The exact language of this bill yet to be finalized but that is my interpretation of its intent).

I was recently involved in a legal action pertaining to the confiscation of 65 dogs in my home town of Bethlehem. They were being kept in what was considered inadequate and inhumane conditions by both myself and the enforcement professionals involved. The utter heartache I felt as I entered a very cold dark barn to see all these dogs kept in small cages meant for temporary transport with totally inadequate heat sources, no water in their cages, and small pieces of newspaper to protect them from the cold ground will not soon be forgotten. The relief the small dogs in particular felt as they climbed inside my coat to be carried to the waiting warm vans could not be missed, and the good natured trust they still held in their captors was heartwarming but incredibly frustrating. The disappointment I felt in the fact that these creatures had weathered much adversity and traveled long distances to be subjected now to this neglect spoke of profound failure at many levels.

As the process went on and I was called to testify in the civil hearings designed to confiscate these dogs and find them proper homes, the inadequacy of the existing regulations as they pertained to imported “rescued” dogs kept in significant numbers became readily apparent.

While regulations setting minimum humane standards exist for pet stores, pounds, and commercial kennels, and are clear, there is no similar set of standards for these collections of "rescued" dogs languishing in their transport cages. As the circumstances in this case warranted criminal charges and some of those standards were applied, the difficulty the judge had in disposing this case was evident, basically due to the lack of applicable and specific standards of care. To this day 65 dogs are barred from finding their "forever homes" as they remain in municipal pounds waiting months for a resolution of this case.

I want to be clear. Finding homes for animals otherwise destined for death in shelters outside this state is a noble cause which I have supported financially and professionally my entire career. My parents were involved in the rescue of homeless and abused animals my entire childhood, and my mother often was called upon to convince a negligent owner to give up their pet when legal means proved inadequate. She was fearless in these cases and always won.

We need to give the professionals we have entrusted with protecting the voiceless better tools to do their job. Guidelines must be constructed to enable enforcement of reasonable standards so that these rescued animals lives improve as the advance along the road to a home, and not prolong or worsen the suffering they are forced to endure. They must also be protected from the unscrupulous individuals who seek to profit from their hardship endured, under the moral authority of those principled rescuers who do amazing work, often at great personnel sacrifice. It is in their spirit I thank and commend your work here and Senator Hartley her interest in making a difference.

The relationship man and dogs share is like no other in nature. This species has helped us feed our families, protect our homes and provided loyal non-judgmental companionship like no other. We have selectively bred them to be like this but we share a common bond deeper than any breeding program could produce. We owe them a warm place to rest, food and water, and freedom from pain and suffering to the very best of our ability. To do less is to diminish our very humanity.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION,

W. Bradley Davis, DVM