American Pet Products Association, Inc.

Monday, March 17, 2014
Hartford, CT

Good afternoon. My name is Bob Vetere, and I am the president and CEO of the American Pet Products Association, or APPA. APPA has been headquartered in Greenwich for more than 55 years, and we are the leading not-for-profit trade association within the pet industry. APPA represents more than 1000 pet product manufacturers, their representatives and importers, among others. Needless to say, many of our members have a vested interest in seeing customers' pet-choice protected.

Since 1998, APPA has compiled and published a biannual National Pet Owners' Survey. This is the industry's most comprehensive consumer research study and it is the premier resource of its kind. In gathering the data for the most recent Survey, we found that almost 10 million dogs are acquired every year. While an increasing number of these dogs come from shelters and rescues, many come from breeders, including a small percentage that are sold through pet stores.

Those of us who deal in pet products know that there is nothing more fatal to business than selling poor quality merchandise from manufacturers who cut corners and flout existing laws. When a pet store sells live animals, it's even more important that they hold their suppliers to the strictest standards of quality and care. With this in mind, quality pet stores make it a point to use good breeders, those who supply healthy, well-cared for animals and who adhere to strict standards imposed by the USDA and the states in which they operate.

I am pleased to see that the legislation before you today makes no attempt to prohibit responsible pet stores from continuing to support and encourage the good actors within the breeding community by buying from them. While those who advocate for sales bans or new restrictions on retailers argue that such legislation would hurt bad actors, in truth these efforts have the opposite effect: they eliminate a market for responsible breeders' dogs while driving potential pet owners to less reliable and less scrupulous sources like unlicensed breeders and unregulated internet sellers. Both of these results have a negative impact on quality breeders' ability to operate.

There are those who would have you believe that ALL commercial breeders are profit-driven ogres whose only concern for the animals they raise is how much money they bring in. This is the only rationale that could justify efforts to prohibit the sale of dogs and cats from ALL out-of-state breeders. I urge you to continue to reject this line of thinking in favor of logic and reason.

Connecticut pet stores are proud to sell dogs and cats from quality breeders to Connecticut families. Existing regulations offer further consumer protection. Knowing these things, does the argument that these stores are in the habit of selling poorly raised, sickly animals make any sense to you at all?

Thank you for your time today.

Bob Vetere
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