

Testimony Of Jane Elles to the Environment Committee on SB 445.

I was part of a group that spent 15 hours over two days at the CT Dept. of Agriculture reviewing all of the Certificates of Origin submitted by CT Puppy Stores.

When the Office of Legislative Research asked the Dept. if they could identify the fewer than 20 breeders connected to puppy health complaints filed they responded that they did not have the resources to identify those breeders.

Our time at the Department helped us understand the problem. We found over 30000 certificates from over four years and over 20 stores in 12 cartons. They were only partially sorted, with only some date stamped, and the vast majority not reviewed.

These certificates were required to both inform the consumer and to enable the state to track where CT pet stores get their puppies.

With just six officers statewide, the Department doesn't have enough resources to properly review and act upon these documents. They have consistently been tasked with greater responsibilities but they

have not been provided with enough resources to do their work both administratively and in the field.

At the end of February, the Department was still completing 2014 permit and license applications.

While they have all the information in hand, they have yet to compile the number of rescues imported into the state for year ending June, 2013. The latest available number is over 14000 through June 2012 and that number is important for this Committee to consider. But it is not available.

If the health and welfare of puppies is important enough for a Task Force Study, multiple statutes regulating puppy stores and repeated attempts at further regulations....
...then it must be important enough to insure that the Department with the responsibility to enforce the laws have all of the resources they need.

I find it hard to understand that the animal activists on the Task Force were opposed to providing any additional resources while all of the puppy stores argued for additional funding.

There was clear evidence of violations within some of the Certificates of Origin we reviewed, which, if pursued, would go a long way to

improving the quality of breeders used. But the Department is stretched too thin to act upon them.

The most important step that this Committee needs to take is to provide the Department of Agriculture with the appropriate resources to enforce the laws already enacted. Without that funding, any new regulations are unlikely to achieve the desired results.