

In reference to the bill highlighted in the subject line, may I submit the following testimony:

I first became aware of a situation in Westport, CT approximately 4 years ago. This situation involves a home owner keeping his dogs, two short-haired pointers, in a penned-in area with only an igloo for “protection” from the elements (photo attached). Since first becoming aware of this situation, the following conditions have been observed and reported to Westport Animal Control: no water, frozen water, dogs shivering in the cold (after the pen being hosed out with the dogs inside), overpowering stench of urine and fecal matter build up (particularly in the summer when the “care” of the dogs is left to a family member while the owners are vacationing), excessive panting by the dogs in excessive heat (90 degrees plus), red paws, dogs painfully trying to drink and eat out of metal bowls in extreme heat and extreme cold. Additionally, it has been noted that both dogs cannot comfortably fit inside the igloo which requires part of one dog to be outside the igloo (front legs or rear). This was noted on a day when it was raining.

On January 8, 2015, a meeting was held at the residence with the owner, representatives from the Westport Police department and animal control division and Officer Nancy Jarvis of the CT Department of Agriculture due to numerous complaints from Westport residents. Among other items, it was noted that there was no straw or bedding in the igloo or a mechanism to keep the water warm. While recently the owner has been compelled, due to public outcry and calls to the police department/animal control, to bring his dogs into an unheated garage during cold weather warnings, Officer Jarvis noted that because the definition of “appropriate shelter” is not defined in CT statutes/laws, he cannot be forced to do so in regard to weather extremes. Also, because the dogs are not tethered, anti-tethering statutes do not apply – even though these same statutes do refer to “confinement”.

My concern is not only with cold weather but hot weather as the igloo does not provide relief from the heat nor does the tree which Officer Jarvis mentioned could be considered shade. Compound this with the fact that the dogs are living on cement, presents these two pointers with a very cruel environment in which to live.

It should also be noted that the home/dog owner “classifies” his dogs as “working animals” not pets. They are “hunting dogs” and, in his opinion, would be ruined if provided a caring environment. To date, no fines or cruelty summons have been issued.

Submitted by:

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