

December 4, 2014

## **Testimony submitted for Task Force Concerning the Sale of Cats and Dogs at CT Pet Shops from Inhumane Origins**

To the Task Force on the Sale of Dogs and Cats in Connecticut:

My name is Cynthia Socha. I am the co-owner of H3 Pet Supply in Stratford, CT. Thank you for this opportunity for me to show my support of the proposed ban on the sale of commercially bred puppies and kittens in pet stores in Connecticut in favor of humanely sourced puppies and kittens. My decision to support this ban came after much thought on the subject as it directly affects the industry I make my living from.

I have read some of the comments presented by fellow business owners who currently sell puppies and kittens bred by commercial breeders and have spoken directly with some. The basis of their argument seems to converge around:

- There are not enough rescued animals available to fulfill demand thus the loss of their puppy sales will put their business at risk, resulting in lost jobs.
- We should work together to do something about sub-standard breeders rather than punishing the "good breeders". Conditions at the breeders they use are not as bad as the pictures animal welfare advocates routinely publish. Their breeders meet USDA guidelines hence earning the "good breeder" label.
- The "ultimate goal" of animal welfare advocates who support this proposed ban is to eliminate all pet ownership.

As the owner of a successful pet store that does not sell commercially bred animals, I can vouch for the fact that not selling such animals does not guarantee a demise in business. The fact that over 85% of the pet stores that operate in Connecticut do not sell puppies or kittens should be proof enough that not selling them will not cause a well-run store to close. Bad management will put a company out of business, erring on the side of humanity will not. We currently operate with a version of the humane model being proposed as we have cats, kittens and various small animals and reptiles available in the store for adoption. This model has helped us become successful as it generates a tremendous amount of goodwill within the community. I feel that the job loss threat is exaggerated and can be overcome with a good management team that can adjust their business models appropriately.

As I have never personally been to a commercial breeding operation I cannot comment from experience about the conditions at a "good" breeder. My opinion here is that if these breeders are so good, why don't we see more pictures of what the inside operations look like at these facilities? Animal welfare advocates have no problem coming up with derogatory photographs. It is rare to find online photographs of the living conditions inside of some of the largest commercial breeders. The fact that these "good" breeders meet USDA regulations is of little comfort given how antiquated the USDA guidelines are. I cannot imagine how animals forced to live their entire lives in small cages or kennels, producing litter after litter could ever be considered acceptable or "good".

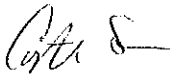
While the argument that we should work together to improve things sounds logical, it is clear that the pet industry has no intention to do this. In one of their recent advertisements, the Pet Industry Joint

Advisory Council (PIJAC) specifically mentioned fighting increased inspection requirements and facility regulations on animal suppliers as two of their main goals (see attached Exhibit A). This does not support their argument that they would like to work together. PIJAC calls these potential laws that could benefit the welfare of animals "anti-pet". A recent article about PIJAC publishing guidelines for the care of breeder rodents started with the sentence "Looking to avert government oversight..." and later quotes PIJAC's CEO referring to "obtrusive government regulation" (see attached Exhibit B). It does not appear through their own words and advertisements that PIJAC has any interest in working with any government agency to improve the care of any animals used in commercial breeding. Unfortunately, sometimes legislation is necessary to get industries to do the right thing.

The argument that supporting the humane treatment of animals could be construed by some as being against pet ownership or "anti-pet" is preposterous. I realize there are organizations operating at a national level that would like to see an end to pet ownership but I do not believe that anyone can ever put an end to pet ownership as it is too ingrained in our culture. Making sure that animals are treated humanely has nothing to do with ridding our culture of pets. My supporting this ban does not make me "anti-pet".

In summary, I support the proposed ban on the sale of commercially bred puppies and kittens in Connecticut pet stores. While I don't think that doing so will immediately put an end to the cruelty at commercial breeding facilities, it is a step in the right direction. I urge the Connecticut legislature to look past the baseless claims of large scale job loss, the pet elimination theories and unfounded offers of cooperation from inside the pet industry and do what is correct in the name of humanity.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Socha, co-owner  
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Stratford, CT 06614

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## ANIMAL SUPPLIERS

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# PIJAC

PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL

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# PIJAC Sets Care Guidelines for Feeder Rodents

Looking to avert government oversight, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) on Oct. 21 released best management practices for breeders and distributors of feeder rodents.

Nearly 10 months of work by PIJAC's Herp Committee led to what the Washington, D.C., trade group called "the first

nationwide set of standards" governing rats and mice raised as food for reptiles and birds of prey.

Feeder rodents do not fall under the Animal Welfare Act, giving individual breeders the freedom to determine cage, transportation and handling guidelines. Most producers adhere to

professional standards, the committee emphasized, but "there have been a few operations with unsanitary conditions and substandard care and housing."

PIJAC President and CEO Mike Canning helped recruit the 29 committee members, who were drawn from breeders, retailers, equipment suppliers and

other expert groups.

"As an industry, we need to set the bar high," Canning said. "These best management practices are another step in an ongoing effort to develop voluntary, industry-driven practices as an alternative to obtrusive government regulation."

The guidelines, posted at



The feeder rodent industry classifies mice by age. Newborn, hairless mice such as those above are called "pinkies." Other sizes include fuzzies, hoppers, weans, adult and jumbo, which consist of former breeding specimens.

[www.pijac.org/feederrodent-imp](http://www.pijac.org/feederrodent-imp), cover everything from enclosures and bedding to nutrition and euthanasia.

The most common feeder rodents produced in the United States are the house mouse (*Mus musculus*) and the Norway rat. The female breeder mouse pro-



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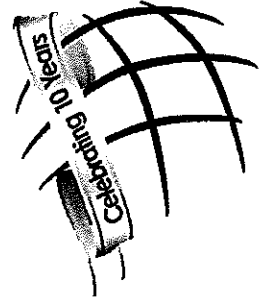
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duces three to 12 offspring up to 10 times a year. The female rat bears eight to 18 pups as many as seven times a year.

Large breeding operations can produce thousands of offspring a week, some of which are immediately frozen under American Veterinary Medical Association euthanasia guidelines. Others grow to a variety of sizes before being shipped live or frozen to distributors, stores and hobbyists.

Failure to adhere to husbandry standards might lead to parasites and disease, including mite infestations and respiratory infections within mouse colonies, the PIJAC report stated. Of equal concern is the threat to people from the spread of zoonotic diseases such as salmonella, lymphocytic choriomeningitis (LCMV) and rat bite fever.

"Without a steady supply of quality mice and rats, there would be a significant disruption in the production, distribution and health of captive rodents in private possession as well as in zoos and museum collections," the report stated.

Nearly 100 best practices are outlined in the report. They include advice on bedding and dietary tips, such as avoiding the consistent use of prophylactic antibiotics.