



TESTIMONY OF PET INDUSTRY JOINT ADVISORY COUNCIL
BEFORE COMMITTEE ON
AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & NATURAL RESOURCES
HOUSE BILL 1172

February 4, 2009

Position: Qualified Opposition

As the world's largest pet trade association, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) appreciates the opportunity to offer this esteemed committee our views on House Bill 1172. Representing the interests of all segments of the pet industry throughout the United States, PIJAC counts among its thousands of members various associations, organizations, corporations and individuals involved in the commercial pet trade. More specifically, we represent pet breeders, pet product manufacturers, distributors and retailers throughout Colorado who would be significantly impacted by the legislation before you today.

Let me emphasize that nobody cares more about humane breeding and rearing standards than does PIJAC. We have, for many years, provided a highly respected animal care certification program intended to ensure that employees are well trained in the care of the animals they sell; a program that is widely utilized not only by persons in the commercial pet trade but also shelters and humane societies throughout the country, and one that has even been adopted as a statutory standard. PIJAC has worked closely with the USDA on effective implementation of the Animal Welfare Act for pets since its inception over three decades ago, and has joined hands with state and local agencies to ensure adoption and enforcement of appropriate regulatory standards. Indeed, we have supported and continue to strongly support the Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act. Our association has long been recognized as the voice for a responsible pet trade, and routinely advocates for new statutory standards that are in the best interests of companion animals and the pet-owning public. We also continually seek to advance the voluntary implementation of superior standards in the care, handling and transport of companion animals.

Our concern about the pending legislation is with certain provisions that would advance neither the interests of pet animals nor the public at large. Indeed, as well intentioned as the bill is, we respectfully submit that, as currently crafted, it will compromise the goal of humane treatment for dogs and cats. **PIJAC is not in any way opposed to legislation, but believes the pending bill should be reconsidered.**

**PET INDUSTRY JOINT
ADVISORY COUNCIL**
1220 19th Street, N.W., Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: 202-452-1525
Fax: 202-293-4377

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Colorado currently has a well-respected commercial breeder licensing scheme, and we submit that it has complemented federal law in raising professionalism in the pet trade in the state. Changes ought to be made reservedly and with due consideration.

For this reason, PIJAC is perplexed by the proposal to prohibit a commercial breeder's possession of more than 25 unsterilized adult dogs. This type of ban would advance neither the interests of pet animals nor the public at large.

It is critical to note that there is no correlation between the number of animals in a facility and the quality of care those animals receive! Some of the largest commercial breeding operators in this country employ state-of-the-art facilities, exceptional and frequent veterinary care, and the highest standards for breeding and raising their animals (typically exceeding what is required by law).

Any licensure statute should focus on establishing, and providing appropriate enforcement authority for, standards that will ensure dogs and cats are receiving quality care, nutritional sustenance, appropriate veterinary care, adequate exercise opportunities and sound, safe transport. Pet animals can and are provided humane care in abundance at countless breeding facilities of all sizes. By the same token, there are some breeders who do not comply with appropriate standards; but that has absolutely nothing to do with the number of animals in the facility.

If there is a need to revise Colorado's existing licensing statute, that need would be based on the existence of breeders within the state who do not already meet appropriate care standards. Any legislation should be targeting such breeders based on the need to ensure humane care. Placing a limit on the number of dogs a facility may maintain does nothing to further this goal. Worse, though, it compromises the goal. If the state drives out quality breeders who maintain high standards it will only create a void that may be filled by unscrupulous persons who care neither about legal requirements nor the humane care of the animals they raise. Putting out of business good, caring breeders who do an exemplary job will detract from the model facilities that commend the Pet Animal Care and Facilities Act, cost jobs during an economic downturn, and result in a reduction of state tax revenue.

PIJAC submits that an arbitrary cap on the number of dogs a licensee may own or possess has no rational relationship to the health or wellbeing of those animals or their offspring! Irrespective of the committee's view on other provisions of this bill, the numerical cap should be eliminated. It is poor public policy that provides no commensurate benefit to the people, the state or the animals themselves!

Again, I must emphasize that PIJAC is not opposed to legislation per se, and in fact we always support improvements to an already effective commercial licensing statute. By the same token, we would caution against change merely for the sake of it and, particularly, reflexive change that is neither necessary nor justifiable. Notwithstanding the hysteria and hyperbole disseminated by some, professionalism in the pet trade has steadily and consistently increased over the past several years, and the quality of care provided pet animals has improved and continues to do so. Most in the commercial dog trade do a good job. If the existing statutory scheme is not sufficient to target the minority who do not, then consideration should be given to modifications that address that concern. A numerical cap, however, does not.

We respectfully urge the committee to table this bill, or to amend it so as to strike any reference to a numerical cap on ownership or possession of dogs by licensees.

Thank you greatly for your consideration of our concerns!

Respectfully Submitted,

Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council
By: Michael P. Maddox, Esq.