

Dear Mayor Baarsma, Vice Mayor Lonergan and Distinguished City Council Members,

As those of you who attended last Tuesday's hearing on the Mandatory Spay-Neuter/Breeder Licensing proposal may recall, I am the Managing Shareholder of the above firm. I serve as the Delegate to the American Kennel Club (AKC) from the Doberman Pinscher Club of America (DPCA). The Delegate Body is the legislative body of the AKC. I am on the Board of Directors of the DPCA and serve as its Legislative Director.

The DPCA is the only Doberman Pinscher club recognized by the American Kennel Club. As a result, we are the parent club for our breed to the AKC. The DPCA is the only parent club that is organized as a charitable organization under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). Our three charitable purposes are: (1) humane rescue; (2) medical and health research for our breed; and (3) public education about our breed and responsible dog ownership. These three purposes often tie in together; as they do with respect to the proposal that is before you.

In my brief address to you Tuesday evening, I made reference to five scientific surveys and studies about the reasons why people relinquished animals to animal shelters throughout the United States, which surveys and studies are reported in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*. These surveys and studies were conducted by the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine of the Universities of California, Tennessee, Cornell, Colorado State, and Indiana.

The Tacoma Police Captain who testified stated that approximately 2,000 dogs and cats were relinquished in Tacoma last year, and that 2,500 dogs and cats were euthanized. Mayor Baarsma correctly recalled that the number was much greater several years ago. In fact, the decrease in the number of healthy, placeable dogs euthanized in the United States has been remarkable over the last twenty years. The major problem area appears to be with respect to feral cats; a population not affected by the proposal before you.

The surveys and studies are instrumental in examining how to reduce the number of dogs relinquished by owners to shelters. The fewer relinquished, the fewer euthanized.

Of the 2,000 dogs and cats relinquished, we need to know the breakdown between the two species, as the proposal addresses only dogs. Assuming that 1,250 are cats, that leaves 750 dogs as the target of a breeding license ordinance. The studies show that 24% of dogs relinquished by owners were relinquished for the express purpose of being euthanized. As one study, [Understanding Animal Companion Surplus in the United States: Relinquishment of Nonadoptables to Animal Shelters for Euthanasia](#), *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, concluded:

"Our findings lead us to conclude that a sizable number of animals are relinquished to shelters because of disease, old age, or serious behavior problems. Such animals should be excluded from consideration as contributing to the definition and epidemiology of pet surplus in the United States."

Subtracting 24 percent as being owner-requested euthanasia (180 dogs) from the 750 dogs relinquished brings us to a figure of 570 target dogs of the proposal.

The study [Characteristics of Shelter-Relinquished Animals and Their Owners Compared With Animals and Their Owners in U.S. Pet-Owning Households](#), *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, found that 24.2 percent of dogs and puppies were purebred. 70 percent were certainly mixed breeds. It must be assumed that the vast majority of mutts are not intentionally bred. Owners of these dogs are not a rational target of the proposal, because the proposal is to target "backyard breeders" who want to make money by breeding purebred dogs of an inferior quality to show breeders who produce dogs to better the quality of their breed in general, their breeding line and stock in particular, and who engage in respected scientific animal husbandry practices, as well as ensure that they have continuing contact with their puppy buyers not only to educate them, but also to take responsibility of the puppies that they produce from cradle to the grave, even after the puppy is sold.

Reducing the 570 target dogs by the 70 percent who are of mixed breeds not intentionally bred (399 dogs) brings us to 171 dogs as the target of the proposal.

The same study showed that 42.1 percent of dogs relinquished were already altered. Thus, these dogs would not be a target of the breeding license proposal. 42.1 percent of the 171 target dogs is 72. Subtracting that number from the 171 target dogs brings us to a new target of 99 target dogs of the proposal.

Were there actual overpopulation, we would expect to see two indices. First, packs of dogs roaming our streets, as we saw in the late 1800's through the early 1900's. Second, huge numbers of whole litters of puppies being brought in to shelters, with these litters overwhelming the number of adults relinquished in the shelters.

The studies do not bear these indices out. 55.4 percent of dogs relinquished were over one year of age. Subtracting that number from the target of 99 dogs, the target of the proposal has shrunk to 44 dogs.

The question is: is a breeder license proposal sound public policy? Suppose we could fashion a public policy that would target all non-owner requested euthanasia, irrespective of whether the dog was altered or not. Suppose that this approach would involve a cooperative effort between government and citizens, rather than attempted compulsion. Suppose that the fiscal impact of this approach would be substantially less than that of a compulsive breeder license approach which has been a demonstrated failure in other jurisdictions.

On behalf of the Tacoma Kennel Club, the Puyallup Valley Dog Fanciers, and the Sammamish Kennel Club, I am honored to invite all of you to serve as our Distinguished Award Presenters at the the upcoming Western Washington Cluster Dog Shows and Obedience Trials to be held at the Western Washington Fairgrounds from Friday, January 12 through Sunday, January 14, 2007. Three separate shows will be held on the three days of that weekend, affording you the chance to appear as our guest on a date that weekend of your choosing.

As you may have seen from watching the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show on television, the Best of Breed winner in each breed competes in one of seven Groups organized by breed type. For example, the Afghan Hound Best of Breed winner will compete in the Hound Group against the other Hound Best of Breed winners (Basset Hound, Bloodhound, Whippet, etc.). The winner of each Group competes in Best in Show.

We would like for you to meet many members of the purebred dog fancy, get a chance to speak with us, and learn about the successful and unheralded efforts that we have made to reduce owner relinquishment of dogs to shelters already, and to learn how we can work cooperatively together.

Your families and staff are also, of course, cordially invited as well. AKC dog shows are family activities participated in together. We welcome your families to join us as well.

Cordially,

Jeffrey P. Helsdon
Sloan Bobrick Oldfield & Helsdon, P.S.