



May, 2010

Dispelling The Term "Puppy Mill" And Awareness Day "Facts"

No one supports neglect or abuse of animals. However, broadly calling dog breeders "puppy mills" and claiming that they abuse their animals is unfair, unjust, and unacceptable. This tactic brought in by Puppy Mill Awareness Day (PMAD) supporters along with their slogan: "North Carolina – First in Flight Now in Puppy Mills" should not be tolerated.

On May 8th the PMAD group, partnering with HSUS, will be holding a rally to build their phantom case that puppy mills are rampant in our state. PMAD and their affiliates in Pennsylvania waged a long and malicious campaign against dog breeders coining PA "the puppy mill capital of the east". In 2008 PA Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement spent over \$8 million, licensed nearly 2700 kennels (only 3% of which were licensed for 250 or more dogs), and performed over 6,000 inspections resulting in license revocation of only 14 kennels (0.52%). Anti-breeder activists wanted more and in 2009 successfully waged an inflammatory media and legislative campaign that resulted in increased regulations for all kennels. Still pending are final standards for high volume kennels which would require them to install humidity, carbon dioxide and ammonia level monitoring systems and controls. Dogs in these high volume kennels would also be prohibited by law from displaying any sign of illness.

Surely after gaining this momentum PA activists are now rejoicing. Wrong! The same activists recently held a candlelight vigil in Philadelphia to "shed light" on the ongoing plight of puppy mill dogs. The event was an effort to urge PA Governor Ed Rendell and legislators to remove use of all wire flooring in commercial kennels throughout Pennsylvania.

This unending activism spurred by anti-breeder sentiment has moved into North Carolina. The closing statement on the PMAD flyer is the most telling: **Adoption is the only option!**

Among 20 bullet points of irrelevant and often misleading information from their purported "plain facts on puppy mills", this phrase cuts to the chase and exposes their anti-breeder agenda.

PMAD STATEMENT: Many Puppy Mills are advertising through websites. Don't be fooled by "beautiful" photos and "clever" wording.

FACT: Thousands of breeders, clubs, and kennels have websites. The North Carolina consumer isn't having the dog drop-shipped, but should be purchasing in person at the kennel location. This is an irrelevant statement in support of closing down or regulating breeders.

PMAD STATEMENT: Dogs and puppies living in filthy, unsanitary conditions.

FACT: No one supports abuse. County animal care and sanitation laws should be sufficient to handle abusive situations. In fact, seizures by Animal Control of substandard breeding kennels are possible because current laws DO work! In some cases where dogs are not removed, it is not because of lack of authority under the law, but lack of animal control funds to house and care for them once seized.

PMAD STATEMENT: Many are fed only enough to keep them alive.

FACT: Activists cannot have it both ways. The associated claim is that “puppy mill” operators care only for profits, not for the dogs. Female dogs on the verge of starvation will, in all probability, be unable to come into heat. A starving dog will mobilize her body stores to keep herself alive, but will not conceive or have the ability to carry puppies to full term. Starving one’s stock would be counter-productive to any kennel owner.

PMAD STATEMENT: Dogs and puppies living in cages stacked in a barn one on top of another. Urine and feces dropping onto the dogs below.

FACT: The majority of these photos are not even from North Carolina, but are collected from across the U.S. over the course of years and constantly recycled for anti-breeder campaigns. While there may be instances of puppies in stacked cages, not all breeders keep their dogs in the same manner; just as not all drivers of white cars use them to rob banks...grouping anyone who breeds dogs as a second class citizen and an abuser is wrong!

PMAD STATEMENT: Inbreeding is common and leads to disorders such as blindness, deafness and epilepsy. Puppies are born with genetic defects and inherited disorders.

FACT: This is yet another statement with misleading and inflammatory information aimed at demonizing dog breeders. We do not believe that a pedigree database exists to support the inbreeding claim by PMAD. Disorders do exist among purebred dogs, and those same disorders can be found in mixed breed dogs as well. Mixed breed dogs comprise the largest group of dogs in the United States and also carry the highest number of diseases. Mixed breeds are documented to have 220 different diseases. All animals carry genetic defects, and all genetic departures from health are not equal. Not all are life threatening.

PMAD STATEMENT: [Puppy mill dogs carry] diseases such as parvo, distemper or parasites. Skin conditions such as mange and ringworm.

FACT: These diseases can also be found at many animal control shelters and among pet populations at any point in time:

April 8, 2010. Tulare Advance Register (CA). Parvo outbreak hits SPCA shelter; more than 40 puppies euthanized as quarantine imposed. Valley Oak SPCA officials are battling a parvo outbreak that has forced them to euthanize more than 40 puppies over the last week, quarantine their kennels and stop putting puppies up for adoption. The shelter has quarantined about 40 kennels used for stray dogs.

Feb. 23, 2010 Fayetteville Observer. Cumberland County Distemper outbreak.

County officials have halted adoptions from the shelter until they decontaminate the entire building. The cleansing comes too late for a German shepherd mix that Tami Clifton's family rescued from the shelter in January.

Feb. 27, 2010 DVM360. Parvo outbreak runs through two Conn. Shelters An outbreak of parvovirus in Connecticut has area veterinarians concerned that it might be spreading. In the last two weeks, two area shelters have gone into an emergency quarantine — one in Stratford and one in Fairfield. Area veterinarians are speculating that the outbreak may have been imported by a influx of puppies up for sale in the area.

April 27, 2010 Statesman.com. Austin TX. Officials, vets report many more dogs with distemper. Veterinarians and animal health officials in Austin said they are seeing many more dogs than usual with distemper, an illness that is highly contagious and often fatal to dogs. Almost 70 dogs with distemper, or symptoms that appeared to be the viral illness, in the past two months. Distemper cases are on the rise in other places, and Austin vets and a Georgetown shelter said there has been an increase in Williamson County. Other parts of the country also have seen increases, said Dr. Linda Czisny said, but she and other veterinarians did not have an explanation. "We have been hearing there are reports of increased numbers of raccoons becoming ill" and spreading the illness to dogs."

[Virginia] Beach animal shelter partially reopens after parvo outbreak. Hampton Roads.com. The city's Bureau of Animal Control has reopened a section of its dog kennels to limited public access followings its closure in March because of a parvovirus outbreak. In March, the shelter was closed for cleaning and disinfection after an impounded dog died of parvovirus.

Sarcoptic Mange/Scabies outbreak strikes Boston. Examiner.com. Boston area pet owners are cautioned, following a recent outbreak of sarcoptic mange and scabies. Many Boston area veterinarians have reported an unusually high number of sarcoptic mange cases in dogs, cats and even guinea pigs. The mites that cause sarcoptic mange are commonly found in foxes and other wild animals; pets who are allowed outdoors in areas where wildlife is commonly found (i.e. thickly wooded areas) are usually most at risk of picking up a skin mite infestation.

Dogs can carry any number of diseases and skin conditions — some due to poor immune systems, genetic disorders, and others from poor environmental conditions — and dogs from substandard breeding facilities are no exception. Many conditions and circumstances can lead to disease, but a substandard facility that continuously sells diseased or sick animals will deplete the pool of buyers and go out of business — that is plain and simple economics.

PMAD STATEMENT: Millions of dogs are euthanized each year due to lack of homes. Save a life! Adoption is the only option!

FACT: This statement has many variations, such as "breeders kill shelter animals" and "don't breed don't buy while shelter animals die". The purpose of the statement is to vilify breeders and to instill guilt in anyone who prefers to buy from a breeder rather than adopt from a shelter. While purchasing a surrendered dog from a shelter is worthy, it might not be the best route for everyone. Plenty of shelter animals are happy and trainable, but there are also some that come with 'baggage' and can also have multiple health problems. These animals need an experienced and committed owner. Purebred dogs (and cats) have specific and predictable traits. Knowing these and selecting the right match can be a better fit.

Multiple studies have repeatedly proven that pets are relinquished to shelters due to retention problems, not from too much breeding of animals. People surrender animals to shelters for any number of personal reasons: animal behavior or aggression problems; owner lifestyle issues; moving; inadequate facilities; too much responsibility; animal in poor health.

According to Gary Patronek VMD, PhD — Center for Animals and Public Policy at Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine – there are regional imbalances in puppy numbers; some areas of the country import puppies to meet the demand while others do have a surplus. There is also an inability among the public to abandon the idea that producing a puppy that was wanted is somehow linked with the death of that dog in a shelter when it became unwanted. ■

Merial Temporarily Halts Rabies Vaccines

The IMRAB rabies vaccine from Merial will be unavailable temporarily.

Merial of Duluth, Georgia, recently reported that it has stopped releasing serials of IMRAB rabies vaccines due to manufacturing defects found in a small number of vials. "These defects, which the company reported to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, were recently discovered as a result of Merial's quality control procedures," according to a company statement released at the end of April 2010. "Merial is working cooperatively with the USDA to remedy the issues and return to full supply as soon as possible."

Merial did not have a specific time frame as to how soon the vaccines would be available. However, the company pointed out that the IMRAB vaccines previously released and now in the marketplace are safe and effective. Natasha Mahanes, spokeswoman for Merial, confirmed. "This does not affect any vials currently on the market," she said.

Illinois SB 2580 Animal Tethering Defeated in Committee

SB 2580 sponsored by Senator Linda Holmes (D, 42) and Representative Michael J. Zalewski (D, 21) would have placed severe restrictions on the ability to tether dogs and dramatically increased penalties for violations. For tethering to be allowed, the dog could not be tethered between the hours of 10 pm and 6 am other than 15 minutes at a time. A person convicted a second time for violating the new tethering law would be charged with a Class 4 felony with every day that a violation continues constituting a separate offense. A Class 4 felony carries with it a minimum penalty of one year in prison and fines up to \$25,000. Although the bill was amended to exempt hunters and passed by the Senate, SB 2580 was finally defeated in the House Agriculture Committee.

Pigs Yield Clues to Cystic Fibrosis-Related Lung Disease

Infection appears to precede inflammation, researchers find

Researchers say they have answered a long-standing question regarding lung disease caused by cystic fibrosis: Which comes first, infection or inflammation?

"Using our model, we are beginning to answer that question, and it looks like infection does precede inflammation," study author Dr. David Stoltz, an assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of Iowa, said in a news release from the school. "The importance of that finding is that it could dictate what types of therapy we might use. Knowing that infection is first suggests that if we can prevent or fight infection, then that might delay or prevent the lung disease in people with CF."

Most of the deaths and disability in people with CF result from lung disease. The findings also appear to suggest that lung infections in children with cystic fibrosis should be treated early and aggressively, Stoltz said. The researchers reached their conclusions by studying pigs with a genetic mutation that causes cystic fibrosis.

"This is a really great example where the pig serves as a model for what happens in the human, and the pig reacts to this disease in nearly the same way," study co-author Randall Prather, distinguished professor of reproductive biotechnology at the University of Missouri, said in the news release. "In contrast, when you use mice, they don't get the lung disease that is common in patients with cystic fibrosis."

The study was published online April 28 in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*.

READING TO ROVER: Does it really help children? Veterinary school says 'yes'

By Pat Baile. Dateline UC Davis

Kids, dogs and a good book are a great combination, according to researchers in the School of Veterinary Medicine — and they have the data to back it up.

It has been recognized anecdotally that children become better readers when they regularly read aloud to dogs, and many animal organizations and libraries around the country have developed reading programs that pair up kids and dogs.

An example is the All Ears Reading Program, an animal-assisted therapy program developed by St. Louis Cardinals baseball manager Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation of Walnut Creek.

Hoping to collect scientific data related to the observed successes of reading-to-dogs programs, the foundation and the vet school decided to collaborate on two studies.

The first explored changes in reading skills among third graders in a public school and the second study focused on home-schooled students. Researchers found that the kids' reading fluency improved by 12 percent in the first study and by 30 percent in the second study.

In both studies, the children read regularly to three shelter-rescued dogs, Lollipop, Molly and Digory, provided by the Animal Rescue Foundation.

In the second study, the home-schooled children visited the Davis campus weekly with their parents for 10 weeks. During those visits, each child read aloud to one of the dogs for 15 to 20 minutes.

"I feel relaxed when I am reading to a dog because I am having fun," one child told researchers.

"The dogs don't care if you read really, really bad so you just keep going," said another.

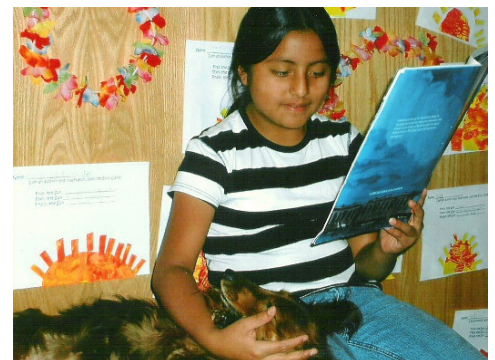
And 75 percent of the parents reported that their children read aloud more frequently and with greater confidence after the study was completed.

The researchers suspect that the patient, nonjudgmental attention that the dogs offer is key to bringing about the changes in the kids' attitudes toward reading.

"The dogs, in contrast to a human, don't judge the individual, aren't grading the individual, and hopefully that allows the children to build some confidence in their reading skills," said Martin Smith, a veterinary school science educator and lead researcher on the study. <http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu>

For more information on Reading To Dogs visit the NCRAOA website, Resources for Educators:

"Dogs Who Teach by Barbara Axel and Ashley Gould. The Reading to Dogs Program", and learn about the "Read to Dog" pilot program started in a Western North Carolina community sponsored by 21st Century Community Learning Center, a program of Communities in Schools of Transylvania County.



Kitty Kindergarten: Activities for the First Year

Ashley Mitek, Information Specialist, University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine

Having a young kitten around the house might not be as challenging as tending to a newborn baby, but they do have their similarities. Both will wake you up in the middle of the night and demand a significant amount of your attention. Likewise, both require environmental enrichment in order to grow and mature appropriately.

Linda Case is an expert in the field of animal behavior. She teaches companion animal behavior and training at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in Urbana, in addition to authoring numerous books on the topic. She says, "nocturnal activity is one of the most common problems I hear about from new kitten owners." Which is not surprising because, from an evolutionary standpoint, cats are nocturnal creatures.

If your new, fluffy bundle of joy keeps waking you up in the middle of the night for a game of cat and mouse, don't despair. You need not stock up on concealer to cover those bags under your eyes the next morning from lack of sleep. There's a simple solution explains Case, "try to schedule play sessions later at night."

Which brings us to the topic of appropriate toys and play behaviors for kittens. For example, playing with your kitten with your bare hand (as in letting it bite your fingers), may be entertaining when their chompers are tiny. But as they grow their canine teeth will turn razor-sharp and you probably don't want your fingers to be anywhere near them. In addition, "some cats may not always inhibit their bite," notes Case.

Having already instilled in your kitten that this behavior is acceptable, it will be a hard problem to break, and a dangerous one, especially if you have small children in the home. The best way to prevent the situation from occurring is to never use your hand as a chew toy with your kitten.

Instead, try to direct play towards a toy such as a stuffed object tied to a stick that you can move around, like a mouse scurrying across the floor. There are countless play items on the market to choose from; just be sure to monitor your kitten's behavior around them at first to make sure they do not consume the toy, or somehow hurt themselves.

In the past few years, laser light toys have become popular among cat owners, though Case cautions against them. She has seen situations where the cat becomes so intrigued by the light that the behavior becomes obsessive compulsive--which is not healthy for the cat or the owner. "Teaching the kitten to use a scratching post and not climb on the curtains is also a good idea at this time," notes Case. Which is another situation highlighting the importance of preventing a problem before it starts, rather than correcting the behavior after it is established.

On a final note, owners often wonder if it is a good idea to adopt two kittens at the same time so they have a companion when there are no people home. "This generally works well with cats, though we do not recommend it with dogs," says Case. But it is important to remember that adopting two kittens will be more costly than just one and require more of your time. In addition, it is important to realize that there is no guarantee that two cats who are adopted as companions for each other will actually bond and become friends.

For more information on kitten behavior and enrichment, contact your local veterinarian.

<http://vetmed.illinois.edu/petcolumns/>

APHIS announces animal disease traceability public meetings

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will hold three public meetings on the animal disease traceability framework approach. The meetings will take place in May in Missouri, Maryland and Colorado.

On Feb. 5, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that USDA will develop a new, flexible, yet coordinated framework for animal disease traceability in the U.S. Under this new direction, states and tribal nations must establish the ability to trace, animals moving interstate back to their state of origin.

USDA has scheduled three public meetings to discuss animal disease traceability with livestock industry representatives and members of the public to gather feedback on appropriate approaches under the new framework.

The public meetings will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time, with registration starting one hour prior to each meeting. The meetings will be held in the following locations: May 11 in Kansas City, Mo.; May 13 in Riverdale, Md., and May 17 in Denver, Colo.

A *Federal Register* notice about the meetings will be forthcoming to officially announce the meetings. Additional meetings will be scheduled in the coming weeks.

Study Links Dogs, Not Cats, to Kids' Asthma Risk

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - For children at higher-than-average risk of asthma, having a dog around the house may increase the chances of developing the lung disease, a new study suggests.

The study, which followed 380 children at increased risk of asthma due to family history, found that those exposed to relatively high levels of dog allergen at the age of 7 were more likely to have asthma.

In contrast, there was no relationship between cat-allergen exposure and a child's risk of asthma, according to findings published in the journal *Pediatric Allergy and Immunology*.

Exactly why dogs were related to a higher risk of asthma, while cats were not, is not entirely clear. But one factor may be endotoxin, a substance produced by bacteria that is known to trigger inflammation in the airways, explained lead researcher Dr. Chris Carlsten, of Vancouver General Hospital in British Columbia, Canada.

Carlsten and his colleagues found that children exposed to dog allergen at home were not at increased risk of developing an immune-system sensitization to dog allergen itself. Therefore, greater exposure to endotoxin may at least partly explain the association between having a dog in the home and a child's risk of asthma.

"Dogs tend to have a lot of endotoxin on them, because they're dogs," Carlsten told Reuters Health. In contrast, cats have much less, he said.

So should families with a history of asthma or allergies opt for a kitten over a puppy, or no fluffy pets at all?

"This study doesn't answer it," Carlsten said. "And in general, there is not enough evidence to recommend for or against pets."

He said that for now, his advice to parents is to base the decision on their family's desire to have a pet, rather than the potential effects on asthma risk.

The findings are based on 380 children who were at increased asthma risk because at least one first-degree relative (meaning a parent, sibling or child) had the lung disease or two or more first-degree relatives had other allergies, such as eczema or hay fever.

The children's mothers were recruited for the study during pregnancy, and researchers measured the levels of three allergens -- cat, dog and dust mite -- in the families' homes, periodically over the child's first year of life and again when they were 7 years old.

At the outset, roughly half of the families were randomly assigned to an intervention aimed at lowering the child's risk of developing allergies and asthma. That included encouraging mothers to breastfeed for at least four months, and having parents limit their children's exposure to dust mites, pets and tobacco smoke.

Carlsten's team found that exposure to higher levels of dog allergen -- at least 2 micrograms per gram of house dust -- at age 7 was associated with a nearly three-fold increase in the risk of asthma compared with lesser dog-allergen exposures. But that was only among children in the intervention group; 17 of 97 children exposed to higher levels of dog allergen at home had asthma at age 7.

Neither cat nor dust-mite exposure in infancy or at age 7 was related to the risk of asthma. Children with high dust-mite exposure were, however, more likely to show sensitization -- an immune system reaction during skin testing -- to dust-mite allergen.

According to Carlsten, the findings underscore the complexity of the relationship between indoor-allergen exposures and children's asthma risk. More research, he said, is still needed to understand those intricacies.

Because the current study included only children at elevated risk of asthma, it is not clear whether the findings might also apply to children at average risk. *SOURCE: Pediatric Allergy and Immunology, online March 19, 2010.*

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