



## January, 2011

### Words Are Weapons

By Barbara Axel

The old refrain goes “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me.” Contrary to this belief words are used to harm all the time, and the harm they do can be long lasting and irreversible. Words and phrases oft repeated tend to become accepted as truths and are not easy to refute. That is the danger. Some examples:

***Puppy mill:*** A substandard kennel, at one time used mostly to refer to a commercial kennel though now used to refer to any person who owns several intact dogs

***Overpopulation:*** Previously meant too many pets being reproduced with the result that homeless young puppies were filling facilities and being euthanized because of lack of space and people to home them. Now refers to all dogs and cats of any age temporarily housed within a facility

***Pet parent:*** Used to denote someone who cares for and provides sustenance to pets. Term often interchanged with guardian. Supplants the term “owner” and has detrimental legal implications

***Potentially dangerous dog:*** Because a dog may belong to a certain breed or perhaps be a crossbreed that resembles that breed he is discriminated against from birth, and perceived to be criminal even though he himself has always been well behaved

***Hoarder:*** Someone who harbors more pets than they can care for. This is a subjective term that is usually no more than the opinion of the observer rather than having any validity. Being used more and more often as the reason to stage raids

***Abusive breeder:*** Anyone who breeds animals

***Rescue:*** A pet that is harbored temporarily before being sold/ adopted for a fee. Often a small fluffy dog that is acquired by a raid on an “abusive breeder” who operated a “puppy mill” Currently all pets get a certain status by being called rescue, no matter their origin.

These are some of the terms that are being used with more and more frequency by those whose goal is to end all interaction between animals and man. Because they’ve been publicized so often by proponents of the animal rights agenda they are also being repeated more and more frequently by the press, legislators, and the general public.

Who would believe members of any organization with the words humane or ethical in their title is a proponent for domestic animal eradication? Animal rights organizations portray themselves as kind to animals. Anyone who does not subscribe to their beliefs and methodology is portrayed as criminal.

Gentle readers, when we also use these same words to complain about one another the danger to all of us who actually are proponents of animal welfare becomes much greater. Be more circumspect before you carelessly decide to throw a verbal weapon at a fellow owner because he did not agree with you. It often becomes a petty "my breeding is better than his breeding," "my grooming is better than his grooming," or "my kennel set-up is better than his kennel." Though these words often used might be very detrimental to the reputation of your fellow in the short run, in the long run your words may be used to deliver a death knell to all of us.

## **Sen. Stouffer Files Bill to Repeal Missouri 'Puppy Mill' Law**

Friday, December 31, 2010

*By Marcia Gorrell/Staff Writer*

When state Sen. Bill Stouffer (R-Napton) filed a "straight-up" repeal of Proposition B -- the ballot issue commonly known as the "Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act"-- critics were quick to speak up.

"Missouri's elected officials should respect the will of the people," said Barbara Schmitz, campaign director of Missourians for the Protection of Dogs, on a website statement. "Subverting the judgment of voters is anti-democratic. Our system is built on majority rule, and a majority of Missouri favored Prop B. The voters acted precisely because the legislature has failed to stop puppy mill abuses."

On Nov. 2, the proposition passed by 2 percent of the votes: 997,870 or 51.6 percent to 936,190 or 48.4 percent.\* However, opponents of the law have pointed out it passed in just 11 of the state's 114 counties, with all but two of the counties being part of the metropolitan areas of Kansas City and St. Louis.

Since filing the repeal bill on Dec. 1, Stouffer's office has fielded many negative e-mails concerning the subject including at least one that hoped his family "all got AIDS and died."

Recently, six billboards have been purchased by the Missourians for the Protection of Dogs, a non-profit organization, that was formed to promote the legislation, to greet returning legislators with, "Missouri voters have spoken. Will you listen?"

"It is a highly emotional issue on both sides," Stouffer said in a recent interview with The Marshall Democrat-News. "I have breeders coming to me with tears in their eyes, because that is what their family depends on."

Stouffer -- who represents Saline, Lafayette, Howard, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Ray counties, along with a small portion in Clay County -- points out that by proposing the repeal he is representing the will of the voters in his district.

"When I looked at my Senate district, I have a couple counties that voted 80 percent against it. I think in Saline County it was 65 to 35 against it," he said. The only county he represents which voted for the law was Clay, where he serves a small portion of precincts. In pulling out just the voters he represents in Clay, the vote was close to 50-50 on the issue, he said.

"So I feel like I am representing the folks that elected me."

According to Stouffer, proponents of the legislation, which included the Humane Society of the United States, an animal rights advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., spent \$4.5 million on advertising, including a strong television ad campaign in the metropolitan areas.

Those against the legislation, which included the Missourians for Animal Care coalition, spent approximately \$120,000. Their campaign relied heavily on social media, word of mouth and local speakers.

Some opponents of Prop B have said the obvious split in voting, where some rural districts voted up to 90 percent against the issue, shows that "city voters" were swayed by the heart-tugging advertisements, instead of studying the issue, according to Stouffer.

Early polls had indicated that when first told of the issue, Missouri voters were 91 percent in favor of the legislation, said Stouffer. "(But) It passed by less than 2 percent. That tells me the more people were informed, the more they realized this was a bad law," said Stouffer, who spent time in his district speaking against the law before the vote.

The new legislative session begins on Jan. 5, but Stouffer isn't under any illusions that this will be an easy fight.

"I think we will definitely get it altered," he said. "My impression is that if every legislator voted the way their district voted it would (be repealed)."

According to proponents of the bill however, the bill passed in 18 of 34 state Senate districts, and in a majority of House districts as well.

"The HSUS has already hired four lobbyists and this will be a donnybrook," Stouffer said.

<http://www.marshallnews.com/story/1691877.html>  
Contact Marcia Gorrell at [mgorrell@marshallnews.com](mailto:mgorrell@marshallnews.com)

## Managing Destructive Scratching Behavior

Cornell Feline Health Center has introduced a new addition to their online video series. Managing Destructive Scratching Behavior was created to help cat owners understand their cat's instinctive behavior. The video covers ways to manage the behavior without the need for surgical declawing.

The video series covers five steps to successfully managing your cat's scratching problems:

- Selecting scratching posts that your cat will like to use
- Placing them in areas where your cat spends time
- Encouraging your cat to use them by rewarding desired behavior
- Discouraging scratching on furniture
- Claw maintenance to minimize scratching damage



The video can be viewed from this link: <http://www.partnersah.vet.cornell.edu/destructive-scratching>

## **Retailers Agree to Put Warning Labels on Flea Collars**

A group of 18 retailers, including PETCO and PetSmart, has agreed not to distribute or sell flea collars containing propoxur without a warning that they include a chemical listed as a known carcinogen in California.

Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) filed the lawsuit against the companies in California Superior Court in Alameda County last year for failing to comply with California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act. This law prohibits businesses from knowingly exposing consumers to any chemical "known to the state to cause cancer or reproductive harm" without proper warning.

The NRDC has petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to order the chemical removed from pet products nationwide. The petition is still pending.

In a press release NRDC recommended using a flea comb, and regularly bathing pets, washing their bedding, and vacuuming to control fleas in lieu of chemical-based products.

According to AOL News, PETCO spokesman Kevin Whalen said the company agreed to the settlement terms but did not believe the collars contained high enough levels of the chemical to pose a serious health risk. He said that not using a flea collar could pose a greater health risk. "Many diseases are carried by fleas," Whalen said. "Not providing flea and tick treatment is not a good option."

## **3<sup>rd</sup> District Court Issues Decision on Pet Food Class-Action Lawsuit**

A 3rd District US Court of Appeals ruled that a US \$24 million class-action lawsuit settlement over melamine-contaminated petfood was a "fair, reasonable and adequate" deal, but sent the case back to a New Jersey district court judge for more information.

While the Settlement establishes a cash fund of \$24 million to reimburse claims for all reasonable economic damages, the Settlement limits claims for the purchase price of recalled pet food ("Purchase Claims") to an aggregate maximum of \$250,000. This means that if all Purchase Claims total more than \$250,000, each Purchase Claim would be reduced to its proportionate share of \$250,000. The Appellate Court held that Judge Hillman "lacked the information necessary to determine whether the \$250,000 allocated to Purchase Claims was fair, reasonable, and adequate." The Appellate Court instructed Judge Hillman to reconsider whether the \$250,000 allocated to Purchase Claims was fair, reasonable, and adequate and asked the settling parties to "either produce the relevant information or demonstrate that it is unavailable or that producing it would be unfeasible."

The petfood scandal originated with Chinese suppliers that tried to boost the protein contents of their products by spiking wheat gluten and rice protein with nitrogen-rich melamine, a substance not approved for human consumption. The tainted product was imported by ChemNutra and sold to Menu Foods, a private label petfood manufacturer. It also affected several other petfood makers, including Hill's Pet Nutrition, Mars Inc., Nestle Purina PetCare Co., The Iams Co., and Procter & Gamble.

## **Veterinarian's Oath Revised to Emphasize Animal Welfare Commitment**

Prevention of animal suffering also a key addition

At its Nov. 18-20 meeting, the AVMA Executive Board approved a recommendation from the Animal Welfare Committee to amend the Veterinarian's Oath to clearly identify animal welfare as a priority of the veterinary profession.

The newly revised section of the oath—the committee's additions appear in italics—reads as follows: "Being admitted to the profession of veterinary medicine, I solemnly swear to use my scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of society through the protection of animal health *and welfare*, the *prevention and relief* of animal suffering, the conservation of animal resources, the promotion of public health, and the advancement of medical knowledge."

"From today forward, every graduate entering our profession will swear an oath not only to protect animal health but also welfare; to not only relieve animal suffering but to prevent it. That's a powerful statement defining ourselves and our responsibilities, not a vague symbol," Dr. J. Bruce Nixon, AWC chair-elect, said about the Executive Board action.

The earliest version of the Veterinarian's Oath was adopted by the AVMA House of Delegates in 1954 and revised in 1969 and again in 1999.

Amending the Veterinarian's Oath was no small proposal, explained Executive Board Chair John R. Brooks. But, after extensive debate and deliberation, the board was right to approve the changes, he said, because the updated oath reinforces veterinarians' responsibilities to promote animal welfare and is consistent with contemporary veterinary medicine.

In addition, the board action sends a message. "The message is we as the AVMA and veterinarians in general do recognize that protecting animal well-being is what we're all about," Dr. Brooks said.

In its recommendation to the board, the committee explained that the changes refocus and update the Veterinarian's Oath to make it clear that veterinarians have responsibilities not only for animals' health, but also for their welfare.

"In addition, these changes extend the veterinarian's approach toward animal welfare from one of treatment only ... to one of prevention and treatment ... which is consistent with modern approaches to veterinary practice," the committee added.

It was noted in the recommendation background that no mention was previously made in the oath of veterinarians' responsibility to ensure adequate animal welfare, nor was there any reference to promoting good animal welfare.

Moreover, as written, the oath was a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to protecting animal welfare, according to the committee. "AWC members believe strongly that such an approach is not consistent with an organization (and by extension, a profession) that has embraced a strategic goal to be 'a leading advocate for, and an authoritative science-based resource on, animal welfare'," the recommendation stated.

The approval came despite a proposal from the AVMA Council on Veterinary Service for the Executive Board to reaffirm the Veterinarian's Oath without revision. In September 2009 the council reviewed the oath in accordance with the five-year policy review directive and recommended the board reaffirm the oath with no changes. The board referred the proposal back to the COVS, however, to consider whether animal welfare should be specifically addressed in the oath.

The AVMA Animal Welfare Strategic Goal team saw the board action as a step toward implementation of the Association's strategic goal for animal welfare by explicitly stating in the oath that veterinarians have a responsibility to promote animal well-being and prevent animal suffering. The Animal Welfare Committee would later formally propose amending the oath accordingly.

During its review, the COVS queried several AVMA councils and committees as to whether a few words about veterinary "stewardship" of the animals should be added to the oath. The council was reluctant to use the term "animal welfare" because the council believes there is no universally accepted definition of the term. The AVMA entities that responded to the COVS saw no need to revise the oath and suggested reaffirming the original wording, which the council recommended at the November meeting.

In its recommendation to the board, the AWC noted the concerns over the definition and explained that animal welfare has been defined in the scientific literature as "the state of an individual in relation to its environment." An animal's welfare can be measured and may be either good or poor, the AWC wrote, adding that the AVMA has concurred with policies developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in which the term is used in a similar way.

During deliberations, some board members raised concerns about differing definitions of animal welfare. But a clear majority thought it was more important that the board make a strong statement about the profession's commitment to animal welfare than get mired in debate. "We have to do this if the AVMA is going to be a global leader in animal welfare," said AVMA President-Elect René A. Carlson. "We can't keep debating this. The time has come."

Part of the AWC's review of the oath included a review of the promises made by veterinarians in other countries. Most English-speaking countries whose oaths the committee was able to obtain include mention of animal welfare, according to Dr. Nixon, who added it was not the committee's intention to copy other countries with regard to their veterinarians' expression of commitment.

"I believe our Association did the right thing at the right time for the right reasons," Dr. Nixon said. "We can be proud of its leadership for having the wisdom to adjust our oath to reflect professional progression."

Source: JAVMA News. <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/jan11/x110101a.asp>

## **How Foot-And-Mouth Disease Virus Begins Infection in Cattle**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientists have identified the primary site where the virus that causes foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) begins infection in cattle. This discovery could lead to development of new vaccines to control and potentially eradicate FMD, a highly contagious and sometimes fatal viral disease of cloven-hoofed animals that is considered the most economically devastating livestock disease in the world.

The discovery was made by scientists with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Foreign Animal Disease Research Unit at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center at Orient Point, N.Y. ARS is USDA's principal intramural scientific research agency, and this research supports the USDA priority of promoting international food security.

Veterinary medical officer Jonathan Arzt, research leader Luis Rodriguez and microbiologist Juan Pacheco found that after just six hours of exposure to the FMD virus through the cow's nasal passages, the virus selectively infects epithelial cells in the nasopharynx, a specific region of the back of the cow's throat.

"Because we have determined the actual route the FMD virus takes in infected cattle, we can now begin to target the virus-host interaction in an effort to develop better vaccines and biotherapeutic countermeasures against the disease," Arzt said.

Although the United States has not had an FMD outbreak since 1929, the disease is still considered a serious threat. Epidemics in other countries have resulted in the slaughter of millions of infected and uninfected

animals to prevent the virus from spreading. Outbreaks of this disease in previously FMD-free countries could cause billions of dollars in economic losses related to eradication efforts and trade bans.

Vaccines that offer temporary immunity for livestock have been developed, but there is no universal FMD vaccine against the disease. Because there are seven different types of FMD viruses and more than 60 subtypes, vaccines must be highly specific, matched to the type and subtype present in the area of an outbreak, to protect animals against developing clinical signs of disease. Blocking the initial site of infection may be the most effective way to achieve complete protection.

The research was published in *Veterinary Pathology*.

The findings have allowed Arzt and his colleagues to answer some basic, yet long-standing mysteries regarding how the FMD virus first invades and propagates in susceptible cattle. The scientists now are conducting further research to answer questions about why the particular epithelial cells are susceptible, and how the initial infection site can be blocked.

"The answers to these questions will result in a new era of FMD prevention in which highly effective vaccines will provide rapid and long-lasting immunity to even the most virulent strains of FMD virus," Arzt said.

*Source: Sandra Avant*

*United States Department of Agriculture -- Research, Education and Economics*

## **Summit of the Horse Jan. 3 to 6, 2011**

*The horse industry gathers to address head-on—with knowledge, experience, and compassion—the issues that threaten to destroy the viability of the equine industry.*

**The Summit of the Horse** is a gathering of men and women who make their living with horses, and those who care deeply about ecological balance on healthy lands. A summit of concerned citizens who understand what is necessary to keep the land, the horses, the people, the cultures, and the economies vibrant and healthy. Conference speakers include a broad range of horse industry spokespersons representing horse marketing, top trainers in various disciplines, breeders, breed registries, and event organizations.

**Topics include:** devastation of the horse industry; necessary steps to restore lost equine value and normal markets; politics of land and horses; efforts around the country are underway to bring humane and regulated horse processing back to the U.S.; the current situation of wild horses and burros on federal lands; market effects of BLM policies on the horse industry; practical, hands-on advice and training on how to protect yourself and your way of life from radical extremist agendas.

**Featured Speakers include:** Bob Abbey, Director, Bureau of Land Management; J.D. Alexander, Vice-President, National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA); Joey Astling, USDA Slaughter Horse Transport Program; Frank Bowman, Horsemen's Council of Illinois; Ed Butcher, Montana State Senator (retired); Dave Duquette, Working Cow Horse Trainer, President, United Horsemen; Dr. Temple Grandin, Grandin Livestock Systems; Brian Sandoval, Governor of Nevada; U.S. Representative Charlie Stenholm, Texas (retired); Sue Wallis, Wyoming State Representative, Unified Equine; Dr. Boyd Spratling, DVM, Wild Horse and Burro Advisory Committee.

**Visit the Summit website for full list of speakers and program schedule.**

**FULL SUMMIT ACCESS ONLINE is available for only \$25.** <http://www.united-horsemen.org/summit-of-the-horse/>

# Lee County Proposes Revisions to Animal Control Ordinance

Lee County has drafted revisions to its animal ordinance. At the Commissioners' meeting on December 6 a presentation of the ordinance was made and public comments were accepted. No action was taken. The County plans to hold informational meetings throughout the county beginning in January.

Items of concern in the new provisions include:

## **Sec. 4-41. Animals running at large.**

A dog or cat impounded for running at large for a second time may be reclaimed by its owner only upon the owner's agreement to have the animal altered at the owner's expense within thirty days of the date the animal is reclaimed.

## **Sec. 4-42. Possession or release of inherently dangerous exotic animals.**

Defined as any member of the canidae, felidae or ursidae families, including hybrids thereof, which due to their inherent nature, as generally described below, may be considered dangerous to humans, and any member of the class reptilia which is venomous or the order of Crocodilia. Inherently dangerous Canidae includes wolfdogs. Inherently dangerous Felidae includes any member of the cat family weighing over fifteen (15) pounds not customarily domesticated by man. With limited exemptions, it shall be unlawful for any person to harbor or to release from captivity in Lee County an inherently dangerous exotic animal. Any person who harbors an inherently dangerous exotic animal in violation of this Section shall be given a notice of violation by Animal Services and the animal impounded.

## **Sec. 4-46. Failing to provide proper shelter for equine and dogs.**

Proper shelter for an equine shall have a roof and at least three sides sufficient to prevent exposure to the elements.

## **Sec.4-61. Tethering.**

Fixed tethering must be coated cable wire not shorter than 15 feet attached to a ground anchor. Chains and ropes shall not be used as a tether line. If running tethering is utilized, the animal must be tethered to a coated cable runner wire not shorter than 15 feet and the runner wire must be firmly secured to two fixed anchor points, e.g., posts, trees, or fences. The running tether must be attached to a runner wire and have a swivel connector to prevent entanglement. Tethering is not allowed for longer than 12 consecutive hours in a 24-hour period.

## **Sec. 4-62. Enclosures.**

... to contain a dog in an enclosure, pen, or fenced-in area, the following requirements will apply:

- (1) An enclosure for one dog must provide a minimum of 100 square feet surface area with sides that are a minimum of six feet high.
- (2) If two or more dogs are contained in an enclosure, the minimum square feet surface area must be 100 sq.ft. plus an additional one square foot for each pound that the total weight of all dogs exceeds 100 lbs.

## **Sec. 4-193. Special permit fees.**

Any owner of a total of thirty (30) or more dogs and/or cats shall have a permit to own greater than thirty animals. The special permit fee shall be set by the Lee County Board of Health at a minimum of \$200 per year.

Contact Commissioners directly with your concerns or attend one of the public meetings.

Commissioner Linda A. Shook, Chair [lshook@leecountync.gov](mailto:lshook@leecountync.gov)  
Commissioner Larry C. "Doc" Oldham, Vice Chair [loldham@leecountync.gov](mailto:loldham@leecountync.gov)  
Commissioner Robert T. Reives [rreives@leecountync.gov](mailto:rreives@leecountync.gov)  
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Commissioner Jim Womack [jkwomack@leecountync.gov](mailto:jkwomack@leecountync.gov)

\* Requiring an impounded dog be sterilized as a condition of release unfairly punishes a dog. Dogs can be great escape artists and can escape even from a responsible owner if a child or maintenance person accidentally leaves a gate or door open. If the owner is not responsible, forcing the dog to undergo surgery will not instill responsibility in the owner.

\* Banning canine and feline hybrids is very problematic. The proposed ordinance does not contain a grandfather clause for citizens who may currently own a wolfdog. For animal control to seize the dog or force it to be removed from the county is excessive.

\* Banning hybrid cats makes criminals of law abiding citizens. Currently there are 3 cat breeds, Bengals, Savannahs, and Chausies that would be affected by banning hybrid felines in the county. Bengals are one of the most popular breeds, worldwide, and the most exhibited breed in TICA - the second largest pedigreed cat organization in the US and 3rd largest worldwide. Savannahs are one of the fastest growing breeds. They compete at cat shows along with recognized breeds such as Persians, Maine Coons, and Siamese. Banning these cats serves no purpose, eliminates choice, and would make criminals out of county residents who may currently own any of these breeds. The U.S. Federal Animal Welfare Act defines domestic x wild hybrids as domestic cats.

\* A 15-foot tether is unnecessary and may become entangled more readily than a 10-foot tether. A 15-foot tether requires approximately 700 square feet of unobstructed area which could be excessive or impossible to achieve for small yards.

\* The proposed tethering regulation does not take into consideration that tethering is commonly used and well accepted at field trials, and other dog sporting events; as well as at dog parks and outdoor dog training fields. A 15-foot tether is impractical in the field.

\* Tethering time limits are unacceptable and are not enforceable. The time limit idea is a direct result of the image of tethered, neglected, abused dogs. Limiting the tether time does not magically instill responsibility to the owner or provide them with the skills to play/train/socialize their dog. The time limit will become a harassment tool and animal control officers will be inundated with phone calls from busy-body neighbors. Unless the dog on a chain is being video taped with date/time, exceeding the limit would be extremely difficult to verify. It is a waste of everyone's time to legislate time limits.

\* Attempting to enforce time limit restrictions would take away valuable (and limited) law enforcement resources, perhaps even preventing them from responding to situations where animals are truly suffering from abuse and neglect.

Visit the NCRAOA website for ordinance, updates and listing of public meetings.

# NC Dept of Agriculture and Consumer Services Animal Welfare Study

Following the intense debate and defeat of SB 460 Commercial Dog Breeders, the General Assembly authorized a companion animal welfare study. [See SL2010-31, Senate Bill 897](#). The study will focus on current laws and regulations pertaining to the welfare of dogs and cats; the oversight of public and private animal shelters; the state's spay/neuter program; the scope of commercial breeding operations; the protection of consumers who purchase companion animals; and options to reduce the number of unwanted dogs and cats that are euthanized in the state each year.

Activists cling to the myths that breeders are filling our public shelters with unwanted dogs when study after study proves that owner retention is the cause. Today, most professionals recognize that pet overpopulation is no longer an accurate catchphrase to describe the reasons for animals leaving their original homes, especially for dogs. Pet population is an extremely complex issue that involves not only the number of births, but whether these births are from owned or unowned animals. It involves reasons for relinquishment, income status, level of owner education, ownership rights, and the responsibilities of pet owners.

Continual, blind focus on blaming breeders for shelter populations and high euthanasia rates will never lead to measurable reduction in shelter euthanasia rates. It is estimated that at a minimum 75% of shelter dogs are mixed breed. There are no kennels purposely breeding lab/collie crosses or boxer/beagle mixes, and turning them loose to roam or dropping them off at the local shelter.

The majority of pets are obtained from acquaintances and family members while only 15 to 20 percent of dogs are purchased from breeders. In summary, the anti-breeder sentiment has been kept in the forefront of discussion for decades and breeders labeled as the root of all pet population problems. The true problem of owner retention is not properly addressed by government at any level. Communities, local and state governments must move away from punitive legislation tactics to shelter reform and solving owner retention problems.

Every effort should be made by city/county/state shelters to require that all adult dogs and cats being placed are altered before adoption. This is a critical factor in reducing irresponsible reproduction. While pediatric spay/neuter has been promoted for decades, studies are now showing dogs are at increased risks for distorted bone structure, bone cancer, and hip dysplasia from early spay/neuter. However, young dogs can be placed with contracts requiring spay/neuter at a specified age and shelter staff must be diligent with contract follow-up. The shelter must be able to confirm at least 90% of its adopted animals are sterilized to ensure that the shelter itself is not contributing to the pet overpopulation problem.

Animals leaving shelters should be microchipped. The best reason to have animals microchipped is the improved chance to get the animal back if it becomes lost or stolen. Studies have shown that the return rate of dogs with microchips is more than 2 times that of dogs without microchips.

Additional commentary is on the NCRAOA website. We encourage breeders and pet owners to submit comments to [animalwelfarestudy@ncagr.gov](mailto:animalwelfarestudy@ncagr.gov)

## ***Protecting your right to responsibly own and breed animals.***

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance, Inc. (NCRAOA) is a statewide organization of animal owners and professionals dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of responsible citizens to breed and own animals. NCRAOA, a 501(c)3 organization, provides education and information to the public and supports reasonable and humane animal welfare laws. Permission granted to copy and distribute NCRAOA News and Views in its entirety as is.