

Laws won't stop with pet animals

A flood of animal-rights legislation throughout the United States is being rammed in front of state and federal legislators, driven by organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals.

Legislation in Illinois such as Senate Bill 139 bans tail-docking and ear-cropping, and House Bill 198 is a heavy-handed dog breeder regulation bill. Both are to be heard in committee this week in Springfield.

American Kennel Club legislative advisers say HB198 won't move but be put forward as SB53 to be the vehicle for regulation of dog breeding.

If those bills pass, they will create requirements and regulations that aren't based on proven animal husbandry practices, nor will they improve the health and welfare of dogs in Illinois. They will impose breeding permits, breeding bans and mandatory spaying or neutering of purebred dogs.

Numerical limits don't address the underlying issues of responsible ownership and proper dog care, according to the AKC and advocates for laws that protect the welfare of purebred dogs and don't restrict the rights of breeders and owners who take their responsibilities seriously.

When legislators discuss laws against pet animals, they risk setting a precedent that could eventually lead to removing farm animals, which would threaten food-animal production.

Responsible people take animal husbandry seriously. Whether the animals are pets, food animals, zoo animals, sporting animals or wildlife, the owners, farmers, medical researchers, wildlife biologists and veterinarians are interested in the best care for them.

A dairy farmer might not think the proposed draconian laws around dogs will affect them, but it is the beginning of additional legislation already in queue that's supported by the animal-rights activists.

A recent American Farm Bureau editorial by Chris Chinn described how newly proposed legislation in Illinois would "ban egg-laying hen cages, sow stalls and veal stalls."

Without much imagination, we can see the next step will be imposing more oppressive laws until even pork producers quit because they can't fulfill the requirements for care.

We all feel the fatigue of the legislative battles, but that too is a strategy employed by animal rights and vegan activists, and it is an old reliable one. Think of deer flies in summer. Deer flies are swinging hatchets aimed at anyone with animals. Some farmers quit farming because they can't bear the harassment and accusations.

We also need to draw the big picture for legislators so they understand the precedent they're considering. Those proposed dog laws threaten the future of pets (a primary goal of HSUS/PETA - change the culture so animals are not in our lives in any way - "One generation and out," said Pacelle) but are also doorways to removing animals used for food production in Illinois and Iowa.

With fewer than 2 million farmers in the country, under the best circumstances you couldn't recruit new farmers fast enough to replace the loss and meet the need. Consider the dramatic decline in the number of veterinarians. Read the General Accounting Office report on the veterinarian shortage and the risk it poses to public health at www.gao.gov/new.items/d09178.pdf.

Regarding economic interests, what is the tax base in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio? Who is the constituency? What will be the new economic model in five years anywhere in the United States?

Laws require enforcement. Enforcement requires resources on streets and in courtrooms. That suggests the need for more animal rights law attorneys cultivated by HSUS/PETA and rushing to build their law and political careers exploiting animals.

People who typically aren't actively involved with animals also need to understand how their tax money is used for this legislative activity.

People such as social workers and health care providers need to see where their resources are being squandered by HSUS/PETA as they attempt to further destabilize the economy at a cost to all of us.

Just this week I worked on grants to fund mental health services and support for farmers, to support alcohol and drug abuse prevention, to help parents learn to support good bone growth in their children, and to fund therapeutic community programs to support veterans returning from war. That's from small pots of money communities will use to take care of people - many without access to affordable health care. Communities are writing grants to help support law enforcement and trying to intervene to keep people out of overcrowded prisons.

Meanwhile, legislators are spending my tax money to conjure laws that will rip my dogs out of my arms to kill them. Oh, baby; it isn't gonna happen. This is an outrage and people need to let their legislators know this isn't acceptable.

If those laws go into place, the cost will be enormous to enforce.

Who will feed the world, especially in places where the climate is changing in ways that make it more difficult to grow food already? I doubt we'll see a big rush for urban residents to move back to farms even to grow spinach or peanuts. And it isn't likely to happen within 10 years.

There needs to be a big push back. A shake-up once in a while can be healthy, but this is mass destruction that is far beyond management of breeding dogs, and it was never about animal welfare. It's about power and control, and in this equation the real animal welfare advocates - us - have less and less of either.

We are the genuine advocates for our animals' welfare, as Chinn wrote. This is a fight for our civil rights, our property rights and our economic stability. This story must be framed so our legislators see the precipice they hover over.

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