

Los Angeles Says “NO” to Missouri Puppy Mills



October 31, 2013 – The Los Angeles City Council voted NO to puppy mill cruelty. It did so by passing an ordinance prohibiting the sale of dogs in pet stores in the City of Los Angeles. The only exceptions are for dogs obtained from a municipal animal shelter, non-profit rescue, or humane organization. The ban also prohibits the sale of cats and rabbits in pet stores.

This is a commendable effort to halt the cruelty of puppy mills and it will have a direct impact here in Missouri. The City Council recognized that many pet stores in Los Angeles were nothing other than puppy mill outlet stores. The Council realized that if citizens of Los Angeles continued to purchase puppies that originated from Missouri, the cruelty of puppy mills would continue unabated. The Council acknowledged that the ultimate solution to puppy mill cruelty rests at the retail end of the business.

The efforts to enact this prohibition were led by the Companion Animal Protection Society (CAPS) which conducted a two-year investigation into the source of the puppies being sold in Los Angeles pet stores. CAPS turned over to the City Council video and photographic evidence of substandard conditions of puppy mills supplying L.A. pet stores. The Council was shown evidence that L.A.’s pet retailers were in business with commercial dog breeders who were neglecting and abusing animals, and repeatedly violating USDA minimum standards of care.

Not surprisingly, many of these inhumane breeders selling sick puppies to L.A. pet stores were Missouri dog breeders. Carole Davis, West Coast Director of CAPS, reported that some of the worst dog breeding facilities marketing puppies to Los Angeles pet stores were Missouri establishments. Ms. Davis stated that **the ordinance was specifically directed at Missouri as “Missouri stood out as the source for sick and dying dogs in L.A. pet stores.” In fact, over 50% of pet store dogs in Los Angeles originated from Missouri breeders.**

Fortunately, the L. A. City Council took appropriate action and implemented an outright ban on the sale of dogs in pet stores and other commercial establishments. The ordinance passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 13-2.

This ordinance will also help to encourage the adoption of shelter pets and hopefully diminish the pet overpopulation problem in Los Angeles. Last year, municipally operated shelters alone in L.A., took in over 55,000 dogs and cats of which 25% were euthanized. It makes little sense for Missouri breeders to churn out puppies for Los Angeles when thousands of dogs in that city are already without homes and many having to be put down. Councilman Paul Koretz, who introduced this bill after his own dog died due to an illness caused by conditions at a puppy mill, has indicated that his ordinance is intended to “shut down puppy mills and reduce the tens of thousands of euthanizations performed on unclaimed animals each year.”

Many other cities surrounding Los Angeles have similar bans including Laguna Beach, Irvine, West Hollywood, Glendale, and Burbank. The Los Angeles area is the second largest market for puppy mill puppies in the country. Hopefully, these new ordinances will deal a devastating blow to the substandard breeders here in Missouri.

This is another victory in our efforts against puppy mill cruelty in our state. We have improved standards of care for dogs in commercial breeding establishments as a result of the passage of the Canine Cruelty Prevention Act last year, we have seen dramatic improvement of the enforcement of our laws to protect the dogs as implemented by Governor Nixon, and we now have tough prosecution of those who abuse animals by Attorney General Koster. Combined with consumer awareness and strong local ordinances in cities where puppy mill puppies are marketed, **we are finally making significant headway in the fight against puppy mill cruelty.**

As co-founder of CAPS, I take special satisfaction in the work CAPS is doing to help us in our efforts against animal abuse here in Missouri.

Bob Baker
Executive Director
Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation