

## How Much Is That Piggy In The Window?

August 1, 2012 – Pigs, cows, and sheep are coming soon to your local pet store if you listen to some agricultural interests. Believe it or not, some farm groups are alleging that USDA's plan to redefine the term "retail pet stores" could adversely affect farmers. The Animal Agriculture Alliance (AAA) issued an alert on July 24, 2012, entitled "Proposed APHIS Rule Could Impact Farmers."

In reality, the proposed USDA rule merely extends the definition of a pet store to include large scale dog breeders who sell puppies over the Internet sight unseen. The AAA maintains, however, that if a farmer sells even one farm animal for a pet or sells a farm animal "for purposes such as a 4-H project" that they "could potentially come under the impact of the proposed new rule."

Never mind the fact that "farm animals" are specifically exempted from the Animal Welfare Act, the AAA states that this new proposed rule could cost a farmer "up to \$10,000 per day" in penalties and that USDA may "seize animals or work with state and local authorities to seize animals." Later in their alert, the AAA concedes that "livestock used for food production are not included in this rule." The AAA continues to argue, however, that the new rule "potentially does present an opportunity for APHIS inspectors to gain access to agricultural operations, which is unprecedented."

What is not without precedence is the paranoia of agricultural groups and their claims that dogs are farm animals. We heard the same preposterous claims during the Prop B campaign when farm groups argued that Prop B covered all domestic animals and would lead to the closure of Missouri farms. While one might be tempted to laugh at such outlandish claims, the AAA alert encourages farmers to "take action" and provides the link for submitting comments to USDA on the new rule. Unfortunately, pork and cattle industry publications have reprinted this same message urging farmers to submit comments in opposition to USDA's proposed rule.

Equally repulsive is the American Kennel Club's (AKC) effort to quash the new rules. AKC breeders are protesting en masse against USDA's plan to regulate Internet puppy mills. This opposition is being driven by economics as AKC fears any tightening of regulations will result in fewer puppy mill breeders and a resultant decrease in registration fees going to AKC coffers. The efforts by AKC and agricultural groups have caused an overwhelming number of comments being submitted to USDA in opposition to its efforts to regulate the Internet sale of dogs.

**We need your help to offset these negative comments. The comment period has now been extended to August 15.** If you have not yet submitted a comment in favor of the proposed rules, please do so now. You can submit your comments electronically (**CLICK HERE**) in just a few seconds. If you need further information on submitting your comments, **CLICK HERE**. If you have time, it would also be helpful to contact Congress and tell your U.S. Senators and Representative that you support USDA's proposed rule. **SEE UPDATE BELOW.**

The dogs desperately need your help to counteract the deceptive campaigns being conducted by farm interests and AKC breeders not to mention the puppy mill industry. **Please act now!**

**UPDATE: The comment period has now concluded. Thank you so much for taking the time to submit your comments to USDA. Your input was critically important and hopefully will make a difference in attaining needed protections for dogs housed in puppy mills across the country. The Department of Agriculture has indicated that due to the hundreds of thousands of comments that they have received, it will take them several months to read and consider such input. As a result, it will be at least next year before USDA announces their decision in reference to their rule proposal. We will keep you posted as we learn more concerning these proposed rules.**