

Interview with Dr. Kenton Beard

President of the Breeders Legal Defense Fund

KS: What is the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: The Breeders Legal Defense Fund is a non-profit organization that has been created solely to defend the folks who really make the pet industry even possible, the professional breeders.

KS: What is the purpose of the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: The purpose of the organization, and the fund, is very simple: to win the legal battles necessary to protect breeders from those who want to put them, and frankly all of us in the pet industry, out of business.

KS: Why did you get involved with the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: I got involved because I'm in the pet industry. We all are. And we all have to get more involved or there won't be a pet industry.

KS: Who started the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: The fund was created by a group of us that included veterinarians, breeders, puppy distributors, state breeder associations, retailers and we even had input and a great deal of interest and support from rescue groups, groomers and others in the industry.

KS: How are funds being generated?

Dr. Beard: Of course, we're seeking donations from anyone and everyone who recognizes the constant threat that breeders are under. In addition to that, breeders, retailers and distributors have recently adopted a "check-off system" that automatically designates a per puppy donation for each transaction to go into the fund.

KS: What specifically are the funds used for?

Dr. Beard: The first place they will be used is to fund the lawsuit that was filed against the USDA/APHIS to prevent them from releasing the personal and private information of breeders in Missouri to the Humane Society of the United States. Had that suit not been filed, that information would have already been handed over to HSUS in Missouri and the same thing would've happened soon in other states as well.

KS: What is the latest regarding that lawsuit?

Dr. Beard: Well, the stay was issued, which kept the information from being released for now but the lawsuit will likely take years and could easily cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Even though this particular lawsuit was filed against USDA/APHIS, there's no doubt that HSUS will continue to apply pressure on them to release the information. We all know, they're not going to back down and they're not going to go away. That's why this fund is so important.

KS: Is the Breeders Defense Fund a political organization?

Dr. Beard: No. We are all about defending breeders from specific legal matters that threaten them and their livelihood, which directly affects all of our livelihoods. None of the money goes to political action committees or special interests groups or to fund legislative battles. 100% of the money raised by the Breeders Legal Defense Fund is used for legal battles that protect and defend professional breeders.

KS: We noticed that the address for the Breeders Defense Fund is located in Washington, DC. Why is that?

Dr. Beard: Two reasons, really. First of all, the group that established the Breeders Defense Fund is located in the Midwest, primarily Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and other Midwest

states. However, the law firm handling the case against USDA/APHIS is located in Washington, DC.

Also, because of the broad appeal of this fund, we felt it was important to create a national presence in order to better solicit participation from major contributors from within the pet industry, such as pet food, pet supplies and product manufacturers as well as others.

KS: What's been the response so far to the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: It's been overwhelmingly positive. We've had people contacting us from all over the country asking how they can participate, how they can contribute. This has very broad appeal. It's not just breeders and distributors and retailers who understand the need to fight these battles. They understand that without pets, they too are out of business. We've heard from rescue groups and pet groomers and vet clinics and even retailers who don't sell pets. They get it and they all want to help. This fund gives them the tool for doing that. More importantly, this fund enables us to fight back together, not just on behalf of breeders but on behalf of everyone in the pet and pet care industry.

KS: How do people get involved and support the Breeders Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: We've talked about the "check-off system." This will systematically enable breeders, distributors and retailers to begin supporting the fund financially. For everyone else, I can't encourage you enough to contribute as much and as often as possible. If we lose these important legal battles at the breeder level, then we're all done. If breeders are shut down, which let's face it that's their objective, then none of the rest of us have a job either. Vets. Distributors. Groomers. Rescue groups. Pet retailers. Manufacturers of canine vaccines, dog food, supplies and every pet product imaginable won't be needed either.

KS: What final thoughts do you have about the Breeders Legal Defense Fund?

Dr. Beard: Support it. Support it now. Tell everyone you know to support it. Because if we don't protect breeders, who will? And if we don't do it now, it'll be too late.

EDITOR'S NOTE: To find out more about the Breeders Legal Defense Fund, visit www.fightforbreeders.com.