

Calling All Breeders!

By Jenny Thrasher

Most of you don't know me, and there is really no reason you should. I run a small breeding program of show dogs, though my family has bred dogs my whole life. I got into political activism against the Animal Rights Movement a few years ago when the city I live in decided that it would be a good idea to enact Differential Dog Licensing (that means having to pay for the "privilege" of allowing my dogs to remain intact) and Litter Licensing as a means to end the "pet overpopulation" at the area shelter. I didn't care for that idea much, because the annual fees to keep my dogs intact would cost more than I could make from the sale of the occasional litters my dogs produce. The Litter Licensing fees would do the same. So I called Karen Strange, President of MoFed, to find out what to do. I followed her instructions to the letter, and after several public forums and meetings, the City Council dropped the proposed ordinances. That incident left me with the knowledge that I couldn't take my right to breed for granted any longer. I was going to have to fight to keep that right. Times had changed, and our society was pushing hard for all levels of government- City, State, and Federal, to micro-manage our lives for us. I knew I was going to have to learn about politics and be diligent in keeping an eye on those who would try to take my rights and freedoms away from me.

Those first few years of my Pet Industry Advocacy were relatively uneventful in terms of the success of the Animal Rights Movement at the Capitol. MoFed was able to hold them back and shine the light of reason on the bills that the AR lobbyists constantly pushed, and I was able to learn the process of legislation because I got involved. This Session, 2009-2010, has not been so uneventful. In fact, one could say that some stuff went flying right into the fan.

Most of you have heard about the Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention petition initiative and the subsequent lawsuit filed by Karen Strange to challenge the Constitutionality of that petition initiative. You may have participated in Frank Losey's Spay and Neuter the HSUS Campaign in which we have bombarded the IRS with over 5,500 requests to audit the HSUS in order to curtail their excessive lobbying. You may have heard that Governor Nixon recently signed into law a pair of bills, one of which would prevent any non-profit organization (such as the Humane Society of Missouri) from participating in or conducting kennel inspections under the ACFA program, the other now requires all shelters, pounds and licensed rescues to have to pay licensing fees based on a per capita scale of animals sales a.k.a. "adoptions". Additionally, the report published by the Better Business Bureau that attacked the Pet Breeding Industry in Missouri offended us all, and most recently the USDA audit, which revealed the inconsistent quality of USDA inspections.

There has actually been a hurricane of activity that has buffeted the Pet Industry in Missouri in the past 8 months which has blown far beyond the walls of the Capitol into our own front yards. Every aspect of pet breeding has come under the scrutiny of the public, yet the wind still howls around us. Stricter inspections, HSMO staffers

impersonating officers to gain entry to kennels to collect information for potential raids, and animal activists that are organizing to stand at the August 3rd polls around the state to pass out information encouraging voters to support the Puppy Mill Cruelty Prevention Act.

I don't know about you, but I am offended to my very bones at the thought of anyone with absolutely no knowledge of animal husbandry trying to micro-manage my breeding program. Most of us have forgotten more than these animal activists will ever know about how to properly care for dogs, yet they would have the public believe that they are the experts. They spread lies about us, about how we run our kennels and breeding programs, about how we house our dogs, how we neglect them and care only for the money. Does that make you angry? It makes me mad as hell. I am proud to be a breeder! I am preserving a breed that I love with all my heart. So I speak out against this propaganda every chance I get, I try to educate people about basic breeding information, and I tell folks about what I do and how I do it because the public has lost touch with even the basics of animal husbandry.

So what are you willing to do to help fight the Animal Rights campaign and educate the public about the reality of the pet industry in Missouri? Are you willing to talk to people? The animal activists have been busy promoting their agenda of misinformation, yet they have no significant interest in the outcome of their labors. We do. Our livelihoods are at stake, our families, our animals, our very reputations are at stake in this war, yet the majority of us are in hiding, living in fear, or believe that someone else will fight for us and shelter us from the storm. I'm here to tell you folks- this is more than just a hurricane. This is a war, and it can ONLY be won if everyone steps up to do everything they can to help. The time to fight back has been upon us for several months now- yet we see only the "usual suspects" out there on the front lines, while everyone else seems to have gone into hiding. Why?

There are so many small things we can all do everyday to help fight this war. Most of us have computers and printers; there is a wealth of handouts and fliers on the NAIA website that are free and available to download and print off. How about printing some of those fliers out and handing them out to people when you run your errands? Fold one up and slip it in with your deposit at the bank, send one in with your utility bill payment, tack them up on community boards. Put the website address of Humane Watch in the signature line on your e-mails, as well as a line or two of information about the HSUS. If you are notified by e-mail that there is an article that sheds an unfavorable light on the pet breeding industry in Missouri, we all need to go to the website of that article and bombard it with polite comments correcting the misinformation. The propaganda and myth MUST be countered with the truth every chance we get. We have been silent for too long about our kennels and our dogs, and the public has assumed that we have been silent because we have something ugly to hide. The Animal Rights Movement has used that silence against us, filling the void with their horror stories that play on the public's heart strings. I have nothing to hide- do you? I won't invite them into my home, but I will tell them the truth.

Know your regulations. I can't stress enough how important it is to keep your kennels and dogs immaculate. If you need to have a friend come over and give you a practice inspection, do it. If something needs to be fixed, do it. The inspectors are under the gun to not tolerate violations, no matter how small, anymore. If something is worth doing, it's worth doing right.

If you are not a member of the Missouri Pet Breeders Association or the Professional Pet Association, join. You will receive updates and alerts, and they will tell you when action is needed, what to do, who to contact, etc. These groups are our network, and without a network, we have no direction, no solidarity.

More than anything else, though, if you are discouraged by the trend in public opinion, if you feel defeated and no longer want to continue owning and running a kennel, then by all means, liquidate and get out of the industry. But don't demoralize anyone else. Most of us are working hard to fight this war against the Animal Rights Movement, and we have enough dissention in our ranks already.

These are just a few easy ways to act and stop a social movement that has nothing do with the care of animals. We can't fight this with only a few people doing a little bit here and there. We need everybody with a vested interest in this war to get on it and fight back. It's completely possible, because the HSUS is on a downhill slide. Between the Humane Watch website and the IRS, the donations are slowing down considerably. Keep pushing them back. Keep educating people about what this lobbying firm is really about, because they sure aren't about helping animals. We are a \$4 Billion a year industry- why are we allowing the HSUS to beat up on us?