

Do We Have a Dog Problem or
Do We Have a People Problem

During the past ten years I have been a chairperson for the American Animal Sanctuary Association, a political analyst for the National Animal Breeders Rights Association, and have produced several studies on the embedded social habits of canines in domestic environments.

I have spoken to thousands of people on both sides of the animal rights issues; breeders, pet owners, animal rights activists, humane society center/shelter employees, legislators, the media.

I own the Oklahoma Reporter, a publication with more than two-million readers monthly, that receives thousands of emails each month about the animal rights agenda (both sides of the agenda).

I can tell you with no hesitation, with absolute certainty, that what we have is not a dog problem.

What we have is a “people problem”.

99% of the dogs in county shelters and other humane society facilities...in county and private rescue facilities, did not come from breeding kennels. They came from pet owners who either mistreated their dogs or the dogs escaped and their owners had not found them yet (most times they never locate them). They are dogs that were “let loose” after they were no longer the cute little puppies they were when first bought. Or they are dogs that have developed health and emotional issues as they relate to their current pet owners and the owners would rather, “take ‘em down the street and let ‘em go” rather than resolve the issues. Many times those resolutions are driven by the lack of money on the part of the pet owner.

Most of the dogs and cats in these county, city shelters and private facilities that have been abused have been abused by pet owners...not pet breeders.

Fact: Pet breeders do not make money from pets that are in poor health or are being raised in conditions that do not allow the pet to be sold at a top dollar level to either a USDA lic. Broker or sold with a health warranty or health certificate!

Fact: You would never buy a car without a long term warranty or prior inspection...so why would you ever buy a living creature without a long term health warranty against genetic defects and without a certified health inspection and vaccinations record! If you are buying an animal from a person that does not offer these items as part of the “purchase contract”...them do not buy from them. Simple as that!

Fact: Ask your neighbor when the last time they had their dog’s teeth cleaned. Ask most pet owners if their pet’s rabies shots are current. Ask your general pet owner if they purchase dog food (or cat food) based on the breed and age and weight of the animal or if they purchase based on how much the food costs! Your pet breeder will have positive answers to all of those questions. The majority of pet owners will have to answer much less favorably.

If any of this was truly about the health and care of pets, we would not be in a civil war over the bills being presented in state after state, in county after county, and in city after city.

Instead, you would see breeders and concerned animal lovers working side by side to develop honest standards of care that support the true nature of different species and their life cycle requirements.

Fact: Sadly, too many veterinarians know very little about breeding and raising most domestic animals. They are not dramatically educated in animal husbandry. They know about treating animal illness. Ask most of them about the socialization requirements for proper husbandry of certain dog breeds and you will get a blank look. And yet, state board after state board places these people on their board of control simply because they know how to administer medicine. Here is a thought for you. Most breeders who have been in the business for more than 15 years know as much about the required treatment of illness and disease in canines and felines as most veterinarians do. (I am not talking about surgical procedures of course)

Fact: The majority of Animal Rights activists' "raids and seizures" occur after dark or on the weekends when people are not at home or are asleep. If these were truly valid seizures, then why the cloak and dagger tactics?

Fact: The HSUS is a 501(c)-(3) organization that is not supposed to legally be able to directly lobby for or against laws and bills. And yet, with their millions and millions of dollars going into the pockets of state and county legislators around the United States, they find themselves actually being to openly write and produce bills and even directly lobby for bills (in Oklahoma in 2010 they actually ran a lobby day out of the governor's own conference room. This was blatantly against the law....and yet...not a single legislative member or any person from the attorney generals office or the IRS invested this).

Fact: HSUS has openly stated on their web site and other publications (You Tube for example) that their goal is to get rid of all breeding or all animals and to severely limit the ability to own a pet.

Fact: There are breeders out there that raise dogs in horrible conditions. This is not in question at all. In fact, many quality and USDA breeders have been known to confront these substandard breeders themselves! All sides of this issue want these breeders "gone". The difference is that the USDA and quality breeders want to see such horrible puppy mills go away because (1) they too care for their animals and hate to see dogs raised in horrible conditions, (2) and it just makes sense that you get rid of the bad apples in the basket...in order to allow the rest of the good apples to shine! The general animal rights activist makes no difference of definition between the bad breeder and the good breeder.

Fact: In 2010, as the political representative for the quality breeders in Oklahoma I offered to sit down with the chair person of the central Oklahoma Humane Society, the House author and senator author of SB1712 to see if we could put together a meeting of minds (senator Ellis offered to be part of this meeting) and find a positive center ground that truly supported the animals, the breeders and the concerns of the animal rights people. This was offered after I had been notified by the senator's office that rep. Denney had asked for my phone number and email address. Not a single person from Rep. Denney's office, Senator Anderson's office, Central Oklahoma Humane Society returned a phone call or email or response of any kind from the "invitation" offered by my office and the office of senator Ellis. They were not really interested in the issues and situation. It was not about the dogs. It was about the "people"!

Fact: If you are USDA breeder, you cannot allow a broker to handle your animal until it has a health certificate. And all certificates cannot be older than 10 days. You cannot transport a dog commercially until the animal is at least 8 weeks of age. Most brokers will not handle/take/transport the animals unless they are up to date with all of their vaccinations and medications and have the proven data to support that. Puppies born in "pet owners' homes" seldom have this level of required care!

Fact: Most breeders spend a major portion of the funds they generate from the sell of their animals...reinvesting back into the support of their kennel and their animals...health, grooming, utilities, nutrition, facilities, etc. The average pet owner does not have such dramatic life cycle requirement and seldom invest into their "pet's life" other than nutrition and toys and maybe their sleeping pillow.

Fact: Over and over animal rights people will tell you that "we do not need anymore dogs bred in this world. We already have too many dogs right now that we cannot place in homes. Just look at all of the shelters. They are filled with dogs and cats. They are filled with dogs and cats because a majority of those dogs in those shelters have serious health and emotional issues that are a direct result from their previous owner! Most people do not want to "adopt" the health and emotional issues of another owner's doing"! And to make these emotional issues even worse...they take these dogs...previous pets with emotional issues and health issues...and place them in concrete floored cages in a cold and unloving atmosphere. These are the same people that claim they know so much about the care of animals and yet, they place a dramatic "period" on the animal's emotional challenges by placing them in the very environment that they claim the breeders should not. Only this time...they have provided the situation and location that will not allow many dogs to emotionally recover from the drama of their lives. Doing such, the shelter(s) become a part of the animal's emotionally damaged history.

We do not have a dog problem...we have a people problem!

And the “people problem” we have at this time is part of a much bigger “people problem” of challenging social issues as others decide that freedom of rights and freedom of expression and freedom to pursue really means...”as long as it is what I want and what I like”.

As a person that has spent a great deal of time traveling around the country over several years, talking to and listening to thousands of people...I can inform you...the mercury on this social situation is about to boil over.

But isn't that what always occurs when you have...a “people problem”!

Michael Costin