

FOR A FEE

*By L.D. Witouski*

Recently, a letter was sent to the Editor in a Lancaster, Pennsylvania newspaper regarding the dishonesty of rescue organizations. The comment section was especially interesting since many did not believe the facts in the letter.

Since the Oprah show, highlighting "puppy mills" - many people have questioned why the State has not done anything about the conditions that were shown. It could be that there is some type of arrangement between those that "rescue" dogs that are "no longer wanted or needed" and the facilities shown on the Oprah expose'. It was interesting to note that in an interview, the man that has been hailed a hero, by some, for bringing these dogs to Oprah's attention, stated that he was counting on the Amish that were featured in the Oprah show - not having televisions. Having made such a comment tends to lead one to believe that something is not exactly as originally stated and even more so questionable particularly since the Pa. Dog Law Bureau is having a difficult time identifying those "kennels". However, that isn't the subject of this article and I only mention it because the Oprah show opened other doors related to the subject.

In reading the comments regarding the LTE mentioned above, the writer was asked to prove her allegations. Many of those that commented simply refused to believe that dogs were being imported into the United States by "rescue" groups. One particular individual asked why these phenomena would occur since there are, allegedly, so many homeless dogs available in shelters and rescues across the country. Another person commented that dogs had to sit for 6-8 weeks before entering U.S. soil. Rather than research the subjects themselves, to see just how duped they have been by animal rights activists, they accused the writer of misinformation.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has regulations on the importation of dogs and cats into the United States. In general, they require that dogs be vaccinated against rabies at least 30 days prior to entry, except for puppies younger than 3 months and dogs originated or located for 6 months in areas considered to be free of rabies. A dog with an unexpired health certificate meets these requirements. This information is verifiable at the CDC website. The US Department of Agriculture has certain restrictions on the importation of dogs imported from any part of the world except Canada, Mexico, and regions of Central America and the West Indies. Only those dogs that are to be used in the handling of livestock must be inspected and quarantined at the port of entry for a sufficient time to determine their freedom from tapeworm. Dogs that are imported into Hawaii are quarantined for 130 days. There are no quarantine regulations for "pets" or "strays". It is monetarily advantageous for groups with a "non-profit" status, who, at the same time, claim the country is "overpopulated," to import puppies for resale or "adoption" - for a nonreportable fee. There are some special circumstances regarding dogs imported from areas known to be infested with screwworms or foot and mouth disease, but the general rule is that all dogs are only subject to inspection at ports of entry for evidence of infectious diseases that can be transmitted to humans. As a result of this missing link in governmental importation regulation, statistics of imported dogs are estimated according to Port of Entry reporting.

On April 2, 2008, the Division of Viral and Rickettsial Diseases of the CDC, filed a report regarding Importation of Dogs into the United States and in the summary of that report it states: "The importation of dogs into the United States poses a risk for the introduction of rabies and other zoonotic diseases. Federal regulations (42 CFR 71.51) currently require proof of valid rabies vaccination for imported dogs, but allow the importation of some unvaccinated dogs, including dogs less than 3 months of age, provided certain requirements for confinement are met until the dog is vaccinated. Although there is no accurate surveillance data on the number of dogs imported each year, it is estimated based on extrapolated data that over 287,000 dogs were imported into the United States during 2006. Of these, approximately 25% were either too young to be vaccinated or lacked proof of valid rabies vaccination. Import trends suggest that an increasing number of unvaccinated puppies are being imported into the United States, mostly through commercial resale or rescue operations." Since 2006, that 287,000 figure per year has doubled. Importation from Canada, Mexico, Central America and the West Indies, where no regulations are required, continues on a daily basis. The majority of dogs imported are puppies and small breeds that are far more acceptable to the general public than large dogs and much easier to resale or adopt out - for a fee. Not counted in the CDC's estimated number of imports are those dogs that are brought into the country by various groups,

such as Compassion Without Borders (who partners with another organization in Albuquerque, New Mexico to bring MexiMutts into the U.S). United Hope for Animals in Southern California, Doglandia (a People's guide to Mexico, asks to adopt a dog during your trip to the country), Blue RoadRunner, and SAMM (Save a Mexican Mutt) are only a handful of such groups bringing dogs into the United States from Mexico. This doesn't include those groups bringing dogs in from Central America, Puerto Rico or the West Indies. These imported dogs are flown, driven, shipped, transported and sent to shelters throughout the United States. Shelter owners say the importation programs are safe, moral and in demand. Although the work that these people do is admirable, one has to ask - What are their definitions of safe and moral? Bringing in dogs of questionable background and health issues from other countries while our own American dogs are euthanized is NOT safe or moral nor humane for those dogs already in shelters across the U.S. Accusing American breeders of causing overpopulation and high shelter kill rates is not safe, moral, just or fair, especially when the problems exist all - for a fee.

Groups that convince the public that breeding should be restricted or banned should be looked at closely by legislators. Somebody has got to ask the question sooner or later. If all breeding is regulated, restricted or banned, how would these non profit groups continue to operate? The answer is simple. They don't need breeders here. They can continue to plead to the American public's emotions about some dog in BF Egypt while they pursue the removal of the American dog breeders and their Constitutional Rights. That's how big business works. In order to make more money, to get more orders or to increase the profit margin, they remove anything or anybody that could be remotely considered as competition while still keeping their sources in place. You won't see non profit importing groups pushing for the demise of all breeding or mandatory sterilization in those countries. It's not good sense to eliminate your sources if your intention is to continue in the business of filling shelters and rescue groups offering animals that were "rescued from a puppy mill" to the unsuspecting public to adopt - for a fee.

Now that you have access to verifiable facts, you can ask those who do the importing yourself. More than likely, you'll be told they do it "to save the dogs". You can then ask them why they aren't spending that money and time on the alleged "over-surplus" dogs that are already here. I wonder if any of them will be honest enough to tell you. The general public needs to learn to research issues and think for themselves prior to repeating comments that they have been spoon fed over the years. They need to stop listening to those whose intentions are less than honest and ask for facts and verifiable proof - or can you only get that information from those who lead you down their dishonest, profitable path... for a fee?