

O.K. WHAT GIVES WITH THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU?

By Jim Hughes

It probably comes to you as no surprise that when somebody starts to bad mouth my industry, they quickly get on the “fight’en side of me”. Just like Meryl Haggard says, “I do not intend to take it lying down”. In last month’s issue, we printed a web site for you to look up. Space did not permit us printing this biased, prejudicial, piece of unmitigated CRAP. Besides, I did not want to stink up my beautiful magazine with the BULL EXCREMENT, bought and paid for by unnamed enemies that are dedicated to the demise of the entire animal agriculture industry. I would think another Internal Revenue Service audit is now indicated for the BBB. At this time, I am not condemning the nationwide group of the BBB, just the St. Louis group who is obviously being brainwashed by the H\$U\$. BUT, if a retraction is not forthcoming by press time, then this condemnation is directed at the group as a whole.

Please go to *The Kennel Spotlight* web site to read the entire 6 page report published by the BBB. Some of this is just the rehashing of old charges from years back, some are new charges, some are false charges and some are true charges. We are not lily white as an industry, but we are a heck of a lot better than the BBB and the H\$U\$ would have you believe. If you do not understand how to work the computer for information, ask your grandchild, he grew up with a video game in one hand and a computer in the other. He would love an excuse to show grandma or papa how smart he is or how dumb you are. Smart Alec little twirp!

I want the industry leaders in Missouri to demand an open public meeting with the BBB to tell us the who, why, when, and how that this investigation was performed, and the competency and qualifications of the one who did the investigation. I want him to stand in front of a group of conscientious, well educated, hard working, LEGAL AND LICENSED, kennel operators and tell them they have no right to produce puppies in this state of Missouri or any other state because he has deemed them unfit to raise dogs based on his opinion of the worst 5 to 10 percent of the people who are in this business. Surprise, we want them out too. But not with laws over and above what we already have in place.

This study headlines; “Missouri—The National Hot Spot of the Puppy Industry” It is stated that the Animal Welfare Act or USDA licenses 4000 breeders nationally. About 30 percent of these are in Missouri, with two-thirds of all licensees being in the five contiguous states including Missouri. In six of the states surveyed, they reported one kennel per 100,000 residents, while Missouri has about one kennel per 3000 residents. Missouri has four times as many USDA-licensed kennels as Nebraska, which they say is the next highest. They then proceed to claim that southwest Missouri is the hub of the kennel industry.

O.K. What this says to me is that Missouri is the best place to raise puppies. Why? Because until very recently the breeders here in Missouri had a faith that they could invest heavily in quality breeding stock and first class kennel buildings with the assurance that if they followed Missouri laws and passed Missouri inspections they would not be harassed out of business. They felt safe that a Missouri license would protect them. I now fear for Kansas, as I felt their license would also protect them.

Now we read that Nebraska is the second largest state in kennel population, even though Missouri outnumbered them, 4 to 1. So, I deduce from this figure that the Missouri Dept. of Agriculture was doing a pretty good job of regulating the kennel business. I want to know how many unlicensed breeders Nebraska has. Is the USDA inspection process so lax that it takes the Missouri ACFA program to bring their breeders under the inspection umbrella, either/or USDA or Missouri. If Nebraska had a similar program within the state, the number of USDA licensees would increase significantly. Also, as an after thought, why is Oklahoma also listed as the second largest state in breeding kennels as the H\$U\$ is trying to ram a licensing bill down their throat that is not sympathetic to our industry. I feel that facts and figures are manipulated to push the agenda for whatever the H\$U\$ is trying to push onto us.

May I brag just a little as the BBB recognizes that southwest Missouri and Barry County in particular is the hub of the industry. I will remind you that Do-Bo-Tri Kennels and its children grew up in Barry County. Nuff said!!

We are told that 352 complaints were filed with the BBB in the past three years. We are also told that there are 1200 licensed kennels and around 2000 unlicensed kennels in the state. The average puppy sales are around 100 puppies per breeder per year. 3200 kennels are producing 320,000 sales per year. Given the nature of live animals to get sick from being under the stress of weaning, vaccinations, de-worming, and shipping I give a hearty congratulations for an outstanding job well done. One tenth of one percent, even the MAYO clinic can not come close to that figure. Also, somebody needs to tell this ignorant person that a puppy might be harder to fix than a toaster. Another thing he needs to learn is that the pet industry depends on live animals to sell, not a carcass hanging on a hook. A side of beef does not get sick at a later date.

The BBB cites a case as a prominent example. The Kennel Spotlight would refer to this case as an isolated example. They also cited as an example that 20 breeders garnered over 987 violations in three years. For twenty breeders out of the 1200 that were inspected, we are supposed to support a change for harsher laws that would change the way we raise our dogs based on years of experience? These laws would be formulated by bleeding hearts in the city that regularly kiss their dogs in the mouth just minutes after it has licked himself clean. I think not!!! We have people who know what they are doing. If we want advice and input, we can attend our state seminars and listen to knowledgeable people that want to help us, not some jackass who wants to put us out of business.

We are then reminded of the traitorous acts of Senator Claire McCaskill who appeared as a speaker at the Springfield, MO seminar a few years back and pretended to be a friend, only to attempt to stab us in the back after she won her state auditor position. I always felt the inspector was there to help and a good inspector would offer advice on how to come into compliance on an inspection. It seems that the McCaskill idea is now permeating the thinking in the state auditor's office as well as the Atty. General, the Governor and the new Secretary of Agriculture. Are all of these office holders also disciples of the H\$U\$? Should government employees be reminded that they work for the tax paying public, not the other way around? We should be keeping these breeders in business, these people who bring millions of dollars into the state from the east and west coast.

We can then refer to the statement, “Consumers also may adopt a pet from an animal shelter”. Have you ever priced a dog from the shelter? Does the shelter pay taxes on the sale? Does the shelter provide paying jobs to the community? The Better Business Bureau needs to look into the business of stealing dogs from breeders, selling them to the public, getting most of their labor force free of charge, paying no taxes, being exempt from most of the regulations governing the handling of dogs, being allowed to kill a dog at will, having little to no veterinarian charges and with most of their feed and supplies donated to them. Hell yes, that’s a BETTER business. Better than we got, by a long sight.

Then the article talks about contracts, or guarantees which they criticize heavily. They do not address the situation of a puppy being handled by a three year old toddler, being fed table scraps which are a sure bet to cause diarrhea, being exposed to disease that he does not possess mother’s immunity for, not excepting the Parvo vaccine into it’s immunity system because of mother’s immunity, paying east coast veterinarian bills designed to cover the payments on the new Mercedes.

We are then told that the best we have to offer, a 20 million dollar broker facility and a chain of pet stores with franchises covering the world from Japan to South Africa is not good enough, notwithstanding the fact that the Arizona lawsuit against these two entities were thrown out of court before this article was published. The omission of this fact proves the report to be prejudiced.

We are then told that the state does not spend enough money to enforce its existing laws, therefore the fees need to be raised to the breeders and the state needs to commit more money. Meanwhile state funded education projects and state funded mental health projects are being cut so drastically that a hospital in Nevada, Missouri is being closed with 98 patients being dumped out on the street. Sure, BBB, (can’t print my true thoughts) let’s spend some more money on enforcing the regulations you want passed.

Forgive me, the more I wrote the madder I got. I guess I am a radical after all. I need to go take my Valium.