

PART 2 COLUMN; JOSH BRECHEEN

The battle cry against this Commercial Pet Breeders Act is overwhelming among informed conservatives and humane animal producers.

The CPBA was sold as a way to stop animal rights activists like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) from creating a media campaign that might hinder Oklahoma's commercial pet breeding industry or hurt our state's image. Legislators were told that if we didn't regulate, we would be branded inhumane because of unregulated "puppy mills," and that it would hurt our ability to attract industry. Have you ever heard of a manufacturing site locator asking about our state's dog breeders or whether we have a "puppy mill" problem? I have not. They do ask about a low tax business environment and if there are state-level regulations that might increase their costs. They will ask about worker's comp laws, our road and rail system and our educated/skilled labor force, but "puppy mills" just aren't a part of the normal discussions. It was a well designed selling point but lacking in practicality.

Ironically, just recently HSUS released its annual rankings that show our state ranked 27th in humane treatment of animals. We ranked lower than 26 other states (middle ranking among 50 states) BECAUSE we allow certain common AGRICULTURAL and HUNTING practices (i.e. gestation crates for sows and using hog dogs that they deem inhumane). The regulation of 'PM's' is not the final goal for animal rights activists and yet Oklahoma is starting down a slippery slope of retreat.

"My goal is the abolition of all animal agriculture," said HSUS employee John Goodwin. The passage of the Commercial Pet Breeders Act threatens production agriculture and the agricultural community needs to be awakened. The animal rights activists will not stop here. This bill places their foot in the door with legislators and creates the opportunity for an easy transition to other animal industries.

Oklahoma is one of the most conservative states in America, with a conservative legislative majority, so the fact that the animal rights activists won a major legislative battle with the passage of the CPBA is quite concerning. *"No harm"* they say, *"It's not livestock but only applies to companion animals."* However, we should look at other states and animal rights history to know what's next. Keep in mind the issues causing us to be ranked inhumane relate to common agricultural practices.

The horse industry will likely be the next target. In several states, the animal rights activists are trying to classify horses as companion animals. We could have an Oklahoma legislature within ten years passing laws regulating stalled horses, dairy cattle or an FFA or 4-H student project. It's not so far out to see urban mindsets moving this direction, rationalizing, *"Well, we do it for dogs so we might as well for...."*

I am also convinced that the statutory number of 11 intact females for dog breeders will be lessened as the years pass and the Oklahoma legislature changes. There are lawmakers already committed to this course, and the Humane Society and PETA will make sure of it. They have just started.

Let me provide a possible future scenario: A typical rancher who raises cowdogs finds his/her three Border Collie females **are now to be inspected as three females are to be the updated 2020 female number cutoff** (again, this is just a scenario). If this occurred, the rancher would not have the right to keep a state worker from inspecting their place. Based on the current proposed regulations, a working dog's life would not be in compliance, so the rancher would have to either run the risk of committing a crime by not licensing or spend lots of money to be in compliance.

Taking it a step further, let's say the inspector notices a horse stall that has not been mucked to their satisfaction and decides the rancher should be criminally charged with animal cruelty. As a result, the rancher has to spend his hard-earned dollars defending himself against this malarkey, at what cost to his family and livelihood? We must repeal this before it grows tentacles!

Now the hard work of garnishing legislative support begins. I am doing my part to engage legislators and other key agriculture groups to join me in supporting **SB15** and its repeal of last session's **Commercial Pet Breeders Act**. I ask that all conservatives in Senate District 6 please make your voice heard to your local agricultural policy group (**Oklahoma Cattleman's Association, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, American Farmers and Ranchers**) with the knowledge that your animal industry and private property could be next.

“First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.” Pastor Martin Niemoller, WWII Holocaust Survivor

Senator Josh Brecheen
District 6, Oklahoma
www.oksenate.gov