



There
Oughta be a
law

by Pam Thomas

By now, the USDA's APHIS office in Riverdale should be swimming in public comments vis a vis the advance notice of proposed rulemaking . . . ? You did write your letter, didn't you?

As evidenced by the special consideration given the California pet warranty bill, politics is an ongoing, endless responsibility to citizens who live in democracies or republics. I heard an interesting comment while I was in Alaska discussing the APHIS situation. I was told that Thomas Jefferson once said that "government attracts tyrants." I haven't looked this one up, so don't attribute that quote to Jefferson until it is confirmed. But, it is an interesting statement, whoever said it! It appears Senator Rosenthal simply cannot be dissuaded! Is this tyranny? Misinformed zeal? Political pressure from unseen quarters?

You'll recall that I mentioned, in the previous issue, that it appeared the DDAL knew of APHIS's decision to publish an advance notice of proposed rulemaking PRIOR to the May 12 meeting in Riverdale, MD - there was virtually no reaction to the announcement when it came . . . Well, it appears that (according to an article in the NAIA News) the DDAL was confident enough in APHIS employees to do a mass mailing that included a letter from Doris Day herself stating that the US Department of Agriculture had decided to regulate dog and cat breeders and that her organization needed donations to fund a drive to assure that the USDA would use the Doris Day Animal League guidelines to regulate ALL non-pet store sales of dogs and cats. Day asked that donors read the recommendation carefully contribute "the most generous contribution you can manage", and return both to the DDAL **by April 1st**. Isn't that interesting . . . If any of you have a copy of that mailing, I would appreciate you sending it to me - I think Senator Kohl would find it very interesting . . .

Remember that King County ordinance that was supposed to empty the shelters by imposing huge license fees on intact dogs? Well, some four full years, and 2 million dollars a year over budget, and guess what - there hasn't been much to show for the

extra money, invasion of privacy, and other restrictions. The huge license fees were supposed to have paid for all the extra animal control required by the law, but tax payers had to fork over another \$1, 896,722 to cover costs - can you imagine spending over 3 MILLION DOLLARS IN ONE COUNTRY!!! Yet, the number of unlicensed animals has increased dramatically - it looks like owners are simply taking their chances at not getting caught, rather than pay \$55.00 per dog per year.

As it turns out, euthanasia rates were dropping faster BEFORE the ordinance went into effect. 1990-1992, euthanasia rates went down about 1085 per year each year; 1995-1997, euthanasia rates decreased 443 per year each year, while the number of animals handled by animal control REMAINED stable at about 14,300 per year for 95-97 (instead of dropping as they were from 1990 thru 1992).

According to Lee Wallot, the number of animals entering shelters remained stable from 1994-1997; the number redeemed by owners remained stable at approx. 2300 per year; the number unadoptable and euthanized remained stable at approx. 6200 per year. So what has changed? The number of animals adopted has increased by about 2297 per year and the number of ADOPTABLE animals being euthanized has decreased by about 2236 per year. **Increased adoptions alone account for the decreased euthanasia rates of adoptable dogs and cats.** There were 4000 unadoptable cats euthanized in 1997, a figure that has not changed since 1994, and represents the disposition of feral cats. Of course, we are well aware that feral cats represent anywhere from 60 to 75% of any shelter's euthanasia rate - an issue NEVER addressed in restrictive legislation. Why? Because. Who, pray tell, is going to enforce breeding restrictions on a colony of feral cats?

Animals are in shelters for any number of reasons, and the MYTH of "pet overpopulation" is NOT one of them! In fact, the top 10 reasons for animals being in shelters are:

1. euthanasia due to illness - yes! People actually take their animals to the pound to be put down, instead of to the vet!
2. moving
3. found animal (on the road, tied to your car, running your fence, etc.)
4. landlord will not allow pets
5. owner has too many animals
6. euthanasia due to age (see # 1.)

7. cost of caring for pet
8. animal is ill (Yes, they take it to the pound so someone else will care for it!)
9. allergies within family
10. house soiling

(these come from the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy, a coalition made up of: American Animal Hospital Association, Amer. Humane Assoc., AKC, ASPCA, AYMA, Assoc. of Teachers of Vet. Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Cat Fanciers Assoc., HSUS, Massachusetts Soc. for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, National Animal Control Assoc., and Soc. of Animal Welfare Administrators. - and are echoed by Tufts Center for Animals and Public Policy).

Donna Malone, president of the RAO of Tennessee feels certain that, to some extent, shelters and animal protectionists are to blame for this appalling lack of responsibility on the part of people. She says that shelters and animal protection groups have convinced the public that it need not feel guilty or responsible for the animal when it no longer wants to deal with it - the shelter is there to take care of the animal and they are quit free. This doesn't say much for the public's intellect, but it is probably true. It's hard for me to think much of the woman who wanted me to take her 8 year old Siberian so her daughter could get a puppy . . . she sure didn't feel any guilt but I did - that poor dog is probably in the pound by now . . .



Here's a logic lesson from college: All cats have fur (true). Some cats have mange (true). Therefore, all cats with fur have mange? *I think not.* In the same vein, Donna Malone presents: All animals in animal shelters were bred (or exist because they were bred) (true). Animals are in animal shelters (true). All the animals that exist (because they were bred) are in animal shelters? *Obviously not.* All animals are in animal shelters because they were bred? *Wrong!* And the same is true for the unfortunate animals involved in big rescue efforts - their existence has nothing to do with YOUR responsible ownership of YOUR dogs. Their circumstances are not your fault (unless you knew about and did nothing about the abuse/neglect beforehand) and your right to have dogs, breed litters, show dogs, race dogs, and place puppies and adult dogs in carefully screened, responsible pet homes should not be infringed upon because that horrible woman wanted to get rid of an 8 year old loyal companion so her snotty daughter could get another puppy! What an example to set for your kids!