

P.O. Box 175  
Oxford, Maryland 21654

June 28, 2012

Alan Kalter, Chairman  
Dr. Robert D. Smith, Vice Chairman

American Kennel Club  
8051 Arco Corporate Drive, Suite 100  
Raleigh, NC 27617-3390

Re: Animal Welfare Act - Proposed Rule Change;  
Docket Number APHIS-2011-0003

Dear Chairman Kalter and Vice Chairman Smith:

We are Girl Scout Troop 6811, from Sandy Spring, Maryland, and are writing to ask that you and your members support the proposed rule change to the Animal Welfare Act. We have personally studied the problems associated with puppy mills and have worked very hard to reduce the suffering of dogs and puppies. We learned of the AKC's opposition to the rule and respectfully request that you consider our position, on the attached two pages, and help us understand why you oppose helping the puppy mill dogs. We found the AKC's positions on your website and have questions about them. For example, we always believed that the AKC loved dogs like we do. But for your group to say that the Animal Welfare Act standards are onerous and will cost breeders too much money really does not make sense to us. The USDA standards require much less care than our dogs receive. In our County, if we treated our dogs only as well as required by the USDA standards, the police can take our dogs away from us because they consider the treatment as inhumane. For example, if our dogs don't have enough room to sit, stand or move around, or have clean water and food, or protection from harsh weather, or veterinary care when they need it, our neighbors can report us to the police for animal cruelty. In our County, it is against the law for dogs to live without these minimum standards. We don't understand why the rules should be different for some people, especially if they are making money by selling dogs, who keep so much of the money that their dogs are suffering. This seems greedy and wrong to us and we hope it does to you too.

Last year we decided upon a public awareness campaign as our Bronze Award Project. The Bronze Award is the highest honor that a Junior Girl Scout can earn and requires making a lasting change. We decided to try to reduce the suffering of pets in our local shelter. We asked our principal and local experts for help. We learned that one of the reasons shelters are overcrowded is because of puppy mills. Leaders in Annapolis learned about our project, and House Bill sponsor, Delegate Tom Hucker, asked if we would testify before a House committee that was considering a Bill he sponsored that would be the first step toward eliminating puppy mills in Maryland. We testified and the Committee liked our testimony. We were then asked to testify before a Senate committee on the same Bill. The Senate Bill was sponsored by Senator Lisa Gladden.

While we were waiting to testify in the Senate, we saw Governor Martin O'Malley. We asked him if he would listen to our testimony, and he agreed! He told us he hoped we could get the Bill passed, and if we did, he would sign it. Several senators and delegates encouraged us not give up, and said it was important for children to try to meet with leaders and tell them what matters to them, just like adults.



**That's us reciting our testimony for Governor O'Malley in the halls of the Senate.**



**Here we are testifying before the Senate committee.**

Well, the Bill passed and we were invited to the Bill signing!

We promised the leaders in Annapolis that we would keep working on this issue, and Girl Scouts keep their promises, so that's why we are writing. Our project leader has explained how important and busy you are, and doubted that you would have time to answer our questions. He said the same thing about us trying to meet with Governor O'Malley. He also said the same thing about us trying to meet with Mr. Todd Batta, the Senior Advisor to Secretary of the USDA, the Honorable Tom Vilsack. But Mr. Batta did meet with us just last week! He explained how important it is for people provide comments on the proposed rule and why the White House, Secretary Vilsack and Mr. Batta support the rule. Please consider answering our attached questions and supporting the proposed rule change.



**That's us at the Bill signing with the Governor. Delegate Hucker is the tallest man in the picture and he is also an Eagle Scout!**

Please also let us know what laws or regulations that have been proposed to reduce the suffering of dogs in puppy mills have been supported by the AKC, because we have not found any. If after reading our comments you still do not support the rule change, please let us know what changes you would support to reduce the suffering of puppy mill dogs.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Michele Carter	Katie Mirgon
Ally Diogo	Mary Fran Papalia
Tessa Kanstoroom	Romina Poblete
Greta Knowles	Rachel Shaw



**That's us meeting with Mr. Batta last week. He told us that President Obama meets with Secretary Vilsack in the same room!**

Attachment – Questions about AKC's Opposition to Proposed Rule Change

cc: Mr. Todd Batta, Senior Advisor to Secretary Vilsack

## Attachment – Questions about AKC’s Opposition to Proposed Rule Change

Chairman Kalter and Vice Chairman Smith – we learned the following information about the AKC’s opposition to the rule change from your website and from some of your breeders. We respectfully request that you consider our thoughts below and answer six questions about the AKC’s positions.

- 1) The AKC believes that there is no need for the USDA to inspect breeders who sell over the internet. Instead, the AKC believes it can do inspections.<sup>.i;ii</sup> We are concerned for several reasons that the AKC’s solutions would not protect dogs of all breeds from cruelty in the same way that the proposed rule would.

We checked with the USDA and confirmed that your group has no power to enforce the law - so we don’t understand how your group could replace the government inspectors. We think this would be like you trying to act like a police officer, yet you don’t have a gun or a badge. We learned that if your group found a problem, the most that it could do is prevent a dog from being registered with your group – that would not protect other dogs at the same breeder from continuing to live in terrible conditions. We also learned that there are many breeds that your group does not register. We believe that if your group plans to do the inspections instead of the USDA, that you need to let the public know about the results of your inspections, just like the government would – otherwise it would be as if your inspections didn’t really happen. Also, you would need to have the authority to take action, just like the government. Can you tell us how you would have the authority to enforce the law, how you would publicize your inspections and publicize the problems that you find?

- 2) We read that your group believes that the USDA regulations will put “onerous” restrictions on small breeders.<sup>.iii;iv</sup> We don’t understand how you can say this because the proposed rule will not apply to breeders with fewer than five breeding females. Also, breeders who sell puppies from their own property, to people who visit the property, are also exempt from the rule. So we don’t understand why you believe that small breeders will be affected in any way. Can you please tell us what you consider to be a small breeder and how you believe they will be affected by the rule?
- 3) We learned that only breeders who sell to people over the internet or by phone or mail, and only to people who have never visited the breeder, will be covered by the new rule. As you know, when the rule was first written the internet did not exist. It does not seem fair to us that just because a new technology is invented that all of a sudden some people don’t have to follow the rules. We think everyone should be treated the same, and hope you feel the same way. Please let us know what you think about this point.
- 4) We learned that some AKC breeders are spreading a rumor<sup>v</sup> that small breeders will have to take dogs out of their living rooms, or other parts of their house, and put them in cages so they can have sanitary surfaces as required by the Animal Welfare Act. It doesn’t seem like your group is doing anything to explain this or calm down breeders who believe the rumor. But we checked on this and learned that there is nothing in the Animal Welfare Act regulation that says dogs can’t have beds, furniture or rugs. It just says that “furnishings” have to be cleaned or replaced if dirty or worn out.<sup>.vi</sup> So we think that any home that is clean enough for humans would be clean enough to meet the proposed rule. Sometimes our pets have accidents, but either our parents or us are able to clean up the accident as if it never happened. We believe

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your breeders could do the same thing. Why do you believe the breeders could not clean up after their puppies and still make money?

- 5) We read that your group believes it will cost too much for your breeders to purchase a license, yet we understand the cost of a license is less the cost of a single puppy. Where we live we are not allowed to adopt a dog from the shelter unless we can prove that we have the money for veterinary care, a fence for our yard and proper food for our dog. We also have to show that we have enough space for our dog to run and play before we are permitted to adopt it. Many of the dogs at our local shelters come from puppy mills. We don’t understand why your group feels it is fair for your breeders to be treated differently than the rest of us and not have to pay for the proper care of their dogs. Can you explain why your group feels that way?
- 6) We began our Bronze award project with the goal of reducing the suffering of dogs at our local shelter. Since that time some puppy mill owners have said very mean things to us, including before our legislators, and called us animal rights people. We are not animal rights people – we are Girl Scouts who are trying to make a difference and see that everyone is treated fairly – just like we are taught in school. We have read that your group believes that animal rights people want to take away the right to own a dog so that no one can have a pet. We don’t feel that way. We love our dogs and can’t imagine living without them. We have never met or learned of anyone who suggests that people not be allowed to have dogs as pets – and we have met some very knowledgeable people on these issues. But did you know that millions of dogs each year are put down at animal shelters in the United States, and when there is not enough money the dogs are thrown in the trash? It’s true – we’ve seen it. Please tell us who says that people should not be allowed to have dogs as pets so we can contact them. Like you, we believe that is wrong.

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<sup>i</sup> [http://www.akc.org/news/index.cfm?article\\_id=4671](http://www.akc.org/news/index.cfm?article_id=4671)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.akc.org/petition/>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.akc.org/about/chairmans\\_report/2012.cfm?page=6](http://www.akc.org/about/chairmans_report/2012.cfm?page=6)

<sup>iv</sup> “It is also unreasonable and virtually impossible for responsible hobbyists to comply with regulations designed for large, commercial operations.”

[http://images.akc.org/governmentrelations/documents/pdf/usda\\_alert\\_dog\\_shows\\_june2012.pdf](http://images.akc.org/governmentrelations/documents/pdf/usda_alert_dog_shows_june2012.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Comments being circulated online by some AKC breeders and in numerous public comments at Regulations.gov.

<sup>vi</sup> From the Animal Welfare Act regulations: “Sec 3.1 Housing Facilities, General (C)ii.(2) Maintenance and replacement of surfaces. All surfaces must be maintained on a regular basis. Surfaces of housing facilities--including houses, dens, and other furniture-type fixtures and objects within the facility--that cannot be readily cleaned and sanitized, must be replaced when worn or soiled.”