

Responsible Pet Owners Alliance and RPOA Texas Outreach Action Alert. Immediate Action Required!

URGE WITHDRAWAL OF USDA “Document ID APHIS-2011-0003-0001,” a proposal to regulate home breeding of all species of pets! This is a far reaching proposal that will have tremendous implications for all pet/animal owners, who are the real stakeholders regarding this proposal – not breeders. It is an overreach of the federal government that will result in an exodus of responsible pet breeders and lead to a shortage of healthy, well bred, well socialized pets.

For over 40 years, ANYONE selling, at retail, the following animals from their homes for use as pets has been considered a “retail pet store” and exempt from USDA licensing: Dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, gerbils, rats, mice, gophers, chinchilla, domestic ferrets, domestic farm animals, birds, and cold-blooded species. APHIS is seeking comments regarding changes to this longstanding definition of “retail pet store.” Large scale breeders selling wholesale to pet shops are already required to be USDA licensed.

ALSO AFFECTED: Rescuers, their foster homes, service animals, guide dogs for the blind, sportsmen, military dogs, and many other groups that “sell” animals. When asked about these recently during the APHIS Teleconference Call, Kevin Shea, with USDA, said: “If they [the animals] are sold, they come under this rule.”

Due to a widespread public outcry, the Department of Labor recently withdrew a proposal which would have restricted children’s chores on family farms. With your help, we could do the same with this proposal. Per USDA: The sale of “one” pet away from the breeder’s home would result in a violation requiring the breeder to be USDA licensed!

HSUS fingerprints are all over this and they are aware that USDA regulations can’t be met in the home setting of hobby breeders. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and David Vitter (R-LA), both PAWS sponsors, told media that they had written to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in October 2011, urging USDA to “close this unnecessary loophole through regulatory action, rather than requiring additional congressional action.” The “loophole” referred to is selling pets on websites and claiming this is “sight unseen.” Not true! Reputable rescuers and breeders both have pictures, video and sometimes sound on their websites and are already regulated with Animal Cruelty Laws at the local and state level.

CHOICES under the proposed rules to “remain exempt” from the AWA:

1. The buyer **MUST ALWAYS** come to your home at least once per sale. No limits on any numbers but one violation of a sale off premises, and USDA licensing is mandated.
2. OR “maintain” four or less “breeding female animals.” Sell their offspring directly to consumer only. Allows pet sales away from home.
3. OR get a USDA License.

USDA says they have no definition for “breeding females” at the present time.

IMPACT: Economic impact would be disastrous to veterinarians, giant corporations, and small businesses that depend upon pet ownership for sales of pet food, pet supplies, pet animals, grooming, boarding, training for pets and much more. These regulations will affect thousands of caring, ethical hobby breeders who will shut down their breeding programs in protest.

RPOA’S FOUR PRONGED APPROACH OF OPPOSITION:

1) **E-mail your elected U.S. senators and representatives.** Find your elected U.S. Representatives from Texas at www.capitol.state.tx.us . Type your address in the Search Box and your U.S. senators’ and representatives’ names will come up. Click on their name and send an email. Copy and paste any of this information.

2) **Separate comments must be made to USDA/APHIS** before July 16, 2012 11:59 PM ET. However our elected legislators have more power than our personal comments will ever have:

<http://www.regulations.gov/#!submitComment;D=APHIS-2011-0003-0001>

Multiple comments may be made. USDA wants to know how this regulation will affect you and mistakenly assumes that breeders are the only ones affected. All pet owners are the “stakeholders” here and healthy, well-bred, socialized pets will be more expensive and difficult, if not impossible, to find. Personalize your message. Involve friends and family.

3) **Educate everyone as to the economic impact of this proposal if it passes.**

4) **Forward this alert to your personal veterinarians and state legislators** to expose the national HSUS Legislative Agenda to regulate pet ownership out of existence. Your personal state legislators can be found at: www.capitol.state.tx.us with the Search Box.

5) **Contact USDA Secretary Vilsack:** Information Hotline (202) 720-2791 and request that this proposal be withdrawn.

ENFORCEMENT: USDA is under fire for lax enforcement of existing law and cannot support expansion of their duties. APHIS’ Regulatory Impact Analysis is heavily flawed and greatly underestimates the number (1500) of new licensed facilities to be caught up in this national net. Christine Jones (USDA) says: “It will be a multi-faceted approach: complaints received, self-reporting and facilities coming forward ...” “Animal Rights” extremists will flood APHIS with complaints!

WHY WE DON’T WANT UNINVITED PERSONS IN OUR HOMES:

- 1) Unannounced federal employees conducting inspections.
- 2) Shoes carry diseases (especially Parvo Virus, deadly to puppies).
- 3) Harassment and vandalism from “animal rights” fanatics.
- 4) Danger of stolen dogs or property by visitors sizing up facilities and security.