



SAN FRANCISCO REJECTS BAN ON PETS...**TEMPORARILY**

The Issue.

A planned vote by the San Francisco Commission of Animal Control and Welfare, at its August 12th meeting, to recommend a ban on the sale of pets was further delayed following a more than 3-hour long hearing at which opponents packed the room. PIJAC testified against the ban at an earlier hearing, and urged all lovers of pets to come out in force against the anti-pet proposal at last night's meeting. PIJAC also joined the Pet Food Institute and many members of the pet industry at the most recent hearing to offer additional testimony and urge a rejection of the ban. The Commission responded by tabling the proposal, but made clear that the issue is not dead.

The Impact.

The original proposal, made by Commission member Philip Gerrie, was to ban the sale of dogs and cats by pet stores. In subsequent meetings of the Commission, it was expanded to encompass essentially all pet store animals. The justification offered up by the Commission was that the proposed ordinance would "stop the sale of dogs and cats from puppy mills, as well as decrease euthanasia rates of other small animals in city shelters." PIJAC pointed out in its testimony that a ban on pet sales in San Francisco will not solve the shelter issue but that, in fact, that issue had already been addressed with a commitment by pet retailers to help re-home adoptable animals from shelters. Unfortunately, that offer was rejected.

Notwithstanding opponents' success in forestalling adoption of the anti-pet proposal, the Commission intends to move forward with the initiative in one form or another. Following hours of testimony, Commissioner Gerrie said, "I don't think we should rush this. This is democracy, and sometimes democracy is messy, but we want to do this right." However, the Commission's view of "doing this right" appears to still involve a restriction on the ability of San Franciscans to buy or sale pet animals at pet stores, rather than focus on a proactive effort to resolve the problem of shelter animals.

In tabling the proposed ban, the Commission suggested further consideration of alternative options, with likely action at its January meeting. Among possible alternative restrictions would be a "waiting period" for customers interested in buying a pet, a mandatory training program for every pet owner, and a license required for everyone having a pet, whether it is a dog, cat, bird or any other pet animal.

The Commission is an advisory body, and does not have any authority to adopt law. However, its recommendations to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors carry significant weight. Whether the Commission ends up moving forward with an outright ban on pet sales, or other restrictions that limit the ability to keep pets, the impact goes far beyond the borders of San Francisco as extremists will seek to use such a precedent as a basis to adopt similar restrictions in other jurisdictions.

PIJAC Position.

PIJAC strongly supports the right to responsibly keep pets, and the right of pet owners to have options as to where they obtain their companion animals based on the pet owner's individual circumstances, needs and preferences. Pet stores provide healthy, responsibly raised pets to the public, and should serve as one of the options pet owners may turn to in choosing a companion animal. Imposing costly and overly-burdensome restrictions on pet ownership in order to discourage the keeping of pets does not eliminate shelter populations...Responsible re-homing of shelter pets does.

Recommended Action.

While the Commission has temporarily tabled a proposed ban on pet sales, it is imperative that the Commissioners, as well as elected officials, know that the pet lovers of San Francisco are aware this issue has not gone away. **Inform all customers, and others, of the impending action by the Commission to restrict pet ownership. Encourage continued contacts to persons on the Commission as well as the elected members of the Board of Supervisors (see contact list below) to voice opposition to unnecessary and unreasonable restrictions.** You may wish to make the following points, in your own words:

- The sponsor has endorsed his agenda as “consistent with the City’s goal of caring about animal welfare” but limiting the ability of people to get pets is actually inconsistent with that goal. Pet stores provide people who love pets a responsible source of healthy, loving companion animals.
- The Commission’s proposal is touted as addressing concerns about shelter populations, but retailers have already offered to re-home these animals and that offer continues to be rejected.
- Contrary to the claims of some advocates, research demonstrates that pet store puppies are as healthy, or healthier, than puppies from any other source.
- Banning the sale of pet store animals, or making it difficult to buy such animals, will not ensure pet owners adopt shelter animals. Those who choose pet store animals do so for many reasons, including the reality that the pet of their choice may not even be available for adoption.
- Dogs ending up in shelters rarely came from pet stores. Major studies consistently show that pet store dogs represent a very small percentage of the animals relinquished to shelters.
- Most pet stores obtain their puppies from responsible breeders, and customers choosing pet store puppies overwhelmingly end up with healthy and well-socialized pets.
- A ban targeting pet stores to protect animals is not rational. Pet stores are already more heavily regulated than any other source of pet animals in the state (and no state regulates pet stores more stringently than does California).
- Regulations on business should be based on a rational relationship between the restrictions and a goal serving the public interest. Limiting the ability of people to get pets is NOT in the public interest – it is CONTRARY TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST!

PIJAC will be posting revised *PetAlerts* on the Breaking News page of its website (<http://www.pijac.org/petinformation/breakingnews.asp>) to advise members of any change in status and to recommend appropriate action. You are encouraged to check the PIJAC website regularly for additional information. Those having questions about this proposal should contact PIJAC’s Michael Maddox via email at michael@pijac.org or by phone at 202-452-1525, ext. 106.

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