



Re: Banning the Sale of Companion Animals in Ottawa Pet Stores

Dear Mayor Watson and Counsellors:

The Ottawa Humane Society proposed to you in 2011 a restriction on the retail sale of animals to those sourced exclusively from humane societies, shelters and rescue groups. At that time, the City of Ottawa decided not to proceed with this change in legislation.

The possibility of working together to solve this problem was raised by our friends at Puppymill Awareness Working Solutions (PAWS) in 2014. The OHS fully supports PAWS's proposal to ban the sale of companion animals. The need for the measure stems from four issues:

1. Substandard breeding operations

Puppy mills and other substandard breeding operations are among the biggest concerns for everyone that cares about animals in our community. They are among the most pernicious and insidious issues that we in the animal welfare movement are called upon to address. Conditions are often horrific, with animals used as reproduction machines with the barest shelter, poor or absent food and water and complete disregard for socialization, temperament and genetic integrity.

The operations are found most frequently in jurisdictions with inadequate legislation and/or enforcement: the Southern U.S., Appalachia, and in Canada, Quebec.

Absence of legislation and/or lax enforcement is only one of the conditions upon which the operations rely. They also rely on a purchaser that is ignorant or blind to the source of the animal they are purchasing.

They also rely on the fact that while governments may not allow these operations to exist in their jurisdiction, those same governments will not take action to ensure that the animals bred in puppy mills and other sub-standard breeding operations are not sold in their jurisdictions. While they may not have any intention of supporting substandard breeding operations, in many cases, local pet shops cannot trace the origin of the animals for sale.

Animals acquired directly or indirectly from these operations tend to be undersocialized, temperamentally questionable, medically compromised, and genetically unsound. Since they are

undersocialized, they have trouble bonding with their owners, or conversely suffer separation anxiety. Because they are temperamentally questionable, they are a challenge to live with and may pose a safety risk to the community. Since they are medically compromised, they often require extensive medical care. Because they are genetically unsound, they frequently suffer severe and incurable genetic conditions. They frequently end up in a shelter, surrendered by a tearful and bitter owner, or simply left to be collected as a stray and cared for at taxpayer expense.

2. Contribution to animal overpopulation

For more than a decade, the number of animals requiring the care of the Ottawa Humane Society has been relatively constant at more than 10,000 — and usually closer to 11,000 — despite our very best efforts. Of these, in 2014/15, 5,794 were cats and 1,867 were dogs. Overall, 5,126 were admitted as stray animals and therefore initially cared-for at taxpayer expense.

Since only about 60% of dogs and just 6.5% of cats are ever reunited with their owners, a massive rehoming effort is required at the expense of the OHS donor.

Meanwhile, some Ottawa pet stores are breeding or causing to be bred, even more animals.

3. Impulse purchases

You will note that puppies and kittens for sale in pet shops that are not partnered with the OHS or another group are placed either in the front window or behind glass at the back of the store. The purpose is clear: to draw a customer to the store at which point the customer will either — they hope — purchase pet supplies, or purchase the puppy or kitten. The customer did not generally leave their home planning to purchase a pet. They likely have done no research as to the needs of animals, breeds, care and costs. They may not have consulted with other family members. They may not have considered the lifetime commitment they are making. In short, the purchase is made on impulse. Even if the purchased puppy or kitten is healthy and temperamentally sound, the purchaser may not be ready to assume the responsibility of animal ownership. The result? Rehome the animal online with no regard to a good match, surrender to the OHS, or the cheaper alternative of allowing the animal to be apprehended as a stray.

4. Lack of education/support

There are a number of fundamental differences between acquiring a companion animal from a humane society, shelter or rescue group and acquiring one from a retail store that does not partner with one of these organizations. Shelters and their retail partners invest heavily in animal evaluation, medical intervention, matching animal to family, education, counselling and other measures to attempt to ensure a lifetime home for the animal and a positive adoption experience. A dog adoption at the OHS takes upwards of an hour, with all family members in attendance. If the adoption fails, most groups (and responsible breeders) will take the animal back. The OHS

and others vaccinate, deworm, and sterilize the animals before adoption, both to support a lifetime bond and to ensure that the animal does not contribute to pet overpopulation.

Contrast this to the stores in question that adopt unsterilized animals with no guarantee of medical, temperament or genetic soundness, no education, no screening and no support — just a valid credit card.

The time has come for the City of Ottawa to restrict the retail sale of animals to those sourced exclusively from humane societies, shelters and rescue groups.

The only remaining question is: will you vote to make Ottawa a leader in animal welfare and help prevent the suffering of countless generations of animals?

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. We hope that we can count on your vote for animals.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at 613-725-3166, ext. 232.

Sincerely,

Bruce

Bruce Roney
Executive Director
Ottawa Humane Society