

PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATION

Submitted by Dotsie Keith, Legislative Chairman

1. Last year House Bill No. 2951, was introduced by Rep. Daley. It will be reintroduced for this year. It amends the Dangerous Dog section of the Dog Law and adds a section for “Potentially Dangerous Dogs.” We are very much opposed to this as there is no definition of what a dog must do to be declared “potentially dangerous.” A district justice would make the determination but no specific evidence is called for. Also, the way this bill is worded, the breed of the accused dog could be used as part of the evidence.

Another unrelated section has been added. It puts every species of “warm blooded domesticated nonhuman animal” into the Dog Law and calls them “Animal Companions” if they share a bond of companionship with one or more persons. Obviously, we oppose the inclusions of all these other possible animals. If any animal is “killed or injured as a result of another person’s willful, wanton, reckless or negligent act or omission” that person will be responsible for damages for mental anguish, emotional distress, veterinary and special care costs, burial expenses, court costs, etc. We oppose this section in its entirety. Among other concerns, no one will ever stop to help an injured animal again for fear that they will be charged under this section.

2. House Bill No. 165 has been introduced this year by Rep. Adolph. It amends the Dog Law. It adds “cats” to shelter requirements and lengthens the holding times. Since cats are not licensed and owners do not pay into the Dog Law Restricted Account that helps shelters financially, we have in the past and still oppose including cats. Extensive records and statistics must be kept of the dog and cat population. These requirements would have to be met by anyone who “receives, accepts or temporarily houses a domestic animal or releases a domestic animal”. This is the definition of “Domestic Animal Shelter” and would include every person who ever had an animal of any kind – boarding kennels are exempted!! We oppose this legislation.

3. Pa. State Attorney General Tom Corbett wants to amend the Dog Purchaser Protection Act, “The Puppy Lemon Law,” to allow for more time for the puppy to display an illness and to give the purchaser more time to have the puppy looked at by a veterinarian. This is due to many complaints his office has received. We have not seen these proposed provisions in writing. Senator Stewart Greenleaf is working on these revisions.

LOCAL CONCERNS

1. The city of New Castle, PA. is considering legislation governing dangerous dogs. The AKC has been in touch with the Mayor. We do not know the outcome of this situation. Please remind your municipality or city that it is

illegal under the Dog Law in PA. to include breed specific language in their ordinances.

2. The Tarentum Borough was considering an ordinance to limit the number of dogs and cats a person would have in the borough. Again, this type of ordinance, based on numbers, was found to be illegal by the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court on March 30, 1994 in Creighton vs. Borough of Carnegie. Please remind your municipality or city of the results of this court case.