

# The Truth be Known

Linda D. Witouski

September, 2008

Recently, I was confronted with a comment regarding the distribution of information regarding legislation to the dog loving populace that actually set my hair on fire. I'm sure it was intended to be quite innocent, however, with all of the information flowing across the internet highway, I found the comment to be most degrading to those that have been working in the trenches with legislation issues across the country, protecting those that won't protect themselves and felt it was a worthy comment to respond to. The simple comment that had me talking to myself for several hours was "The animal rights activists seem to be the only people out there with the resources to inform the public. Somebody needs to let the public know what's really going to happen to mans best friend!" So, for all of you out there that have this same thought in your mind, this is for you.

## **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

There are many of us, but not near enough, that have been preaching, writing articles, educating and literally begging for people to see what is going on around them, since the early 80's ! The onslaught of information has been escalating over the years and only recently, has anyone decided to actually pay attention. Kennel Clubs across the country have and continue to use the media and the internet to disseminate information - organizations hold seminars regarding the issues confronting the dog loving populace - the AKC sends out alerts, but not near as often as other groups that work in the legislation trenches. Those alerts are non stop, daily and up to date. The internet is agog with information. There has never been a withholding of information or warnings - ever. It isn't the lack of information from our side - it's the apathy of the people who refuse to believe that the possibility of the demise of dog showing, breeding, and ownership could possibly exist. It's those people that, when legislation is mentioned, respond with, "I don't get involved in that." or "I don't have time for that and it will never pass anyway." Those people that say, "I'm sure somebody else is taking care of it." "That could never happen here," are only kidding themselves and in all actuality, are assisting in endangering their passion and sport as a whole. The worst response being, "I don't believe any of that stuff" clearly indicates that people are not taking advantage of the information available to them and these people who simply refuse to believe or get involved, are a large part of the problem. It's ironic that those very same people who don't have time - seem to have time to be on the computer in some chat group, discussing where the majors could be, or how many dogs they finished so far this year, or how many champion get their dogs have produced, and even go so far as talking about some other breeder in their breed, (especially if it's some rumor) but, they don't have time to take an interest in something that will eliminate all of the discussions on those chat groups? All of that - "stuff" - won't matter if everybody doesn't take the time to get involved in the movement to save their passion and sport - to save their right of choice - to save their dogs.

## **Laying the cards out on the table and holding nothing back**

It's the inability of the dog people to work with others who share the same feelings, whether they are a hobby breeder or a hi volume breeder. It's the attitude and elitism that keeps those who share the concern to "save our rights" from working together on issues that could save our dogs, rights and our sport. It's the refusal to set aside issues of husbandry, breeding practices and selfishness that will cause the demise of the very sport that people are so passionate about. It's the constant use of animal rights phrases and descriptions such as "puppy miller" & "back yard breeder", names that were coined by the animal rightists to use against us, yet our own people use those same animal rights names for those who are their fellow breeders ! The animal rights crowd loves the fact that the dog owning, showing, breeding fancy can't seem to live in peace and harmony - it's one of their greatest weapons, created for just the purpose it seems to serve. How many times have we seen a fellow dog owner become engaged in problems, whether it is too many dogs or too many litters and need assistance (for a variety of reasons such as age, health, loss of job, confiscations, et al) yet, people, and people in the very same breed, don't bother to help - in fact, they sit and talk about it and refer to those people using animal rights terms and have even created their own AR term of "show millers". We're supposed to help each other, not assist in running our fellow dog owners and breeders down. You may not agree with something they do or the way they do it, but they are still our fellow breeders and if they need help, in order to preserve our OWN integrity and rights, we should help as much as we can (and keep quiet about it) - but people don't. The issue (and story) becomes compounded, (to the delight of the rightists) by spreading it further. They'd rather agree with those that are fully intending to get to your dogs at a later date, rather than help the poor soul whose dogs need help. We may not agree with their practices, but that is something to be considered later, once we have managed to solidify our position to continue to do what we do. All else will cease to exist if we don't start working together and put aside feelings.

People that know me, know I have been passionate about the subject for more years than they care to remember. and in those years, I have learned that there are those that simply choose to remain uninformed. It's not because the information is not available to them - they just don't care to become involved and don't believe it could happen to them or it "won't affect them". Others are concerned but don't know what to do or perhaps they really don't understand the severity of the problems, yet when offers are made to help educate people and assist them with truly understanding, nobody seems to want to participate. It is impossible to force people to be involved for they do have a right to make a choice...for now.

Relax - Somebody will tell you what to do

It's unfortunate that the choice may come down to having animals....or not. Without the concern & assistance from the dog owning, dog loving, rights loving, freedom of choice loving, competitive people, (and I do mean each and every one) - rest assured, somebody will soon be relieving the burden of your inactivity in legislation issues for they will be telling you how many dogs you can have, if any, what kind, where to get them, how many times you can breed a dog, if at all, what vet to use, how many permits you will need to own/breed a dog, at what age your dog has to be spayed/neutered, the type of living arrangements required, what kind of records you must have and who gets copies of them - the list will go on, making it impossible - monetarily, mentally and physically impossible - to consider owning any animal. How will you feel when somebody knocks at your door and tells you that you must "get rid" of all but 3 dogs - which ones will you choose to keep and how will you feel watching the others loaded into a truck dispatched for some shelter? How will you react to five or six people going through your home, inspecting every corner and crack, because somebody called in a complaint about your dogs? How much can you afford for citations, lawyers fees, shelter costs and how will you ever recuperate from the heartache? Forewarned is forearmed - sooner or later, somebody will be making your choices for you and when that happens, there is nobody to blame but yourself. The information and people to help you become involved are out there!

### **Supporting Legislation and AKC**

I just returned from the AKC Delegate meeting and it's dismal. At this time last year, registrations were 1.5 million and currently, for this year, they are 750,000 and continuing on a downward spiral. The AKC has acknowledged that the future is becoming dim and the possibility of them remaining the reigning registry of the world may soon be history. Though that may not mean much to some of you, it should. If the AKC continues to lose ground, they will also lose face in other areas, including having "clout" regarding legislation. The word of AKC and AKC breeders will mean nothing to legislators or the general public and AKC pups will be worthless, right along with AKC dog shows, titles and awards. Although some profess that they don't want to be "thrown in the pile with those other breeders", it's ironic that because of apathy, you will become just what you dislike. The end of the sport, and your passion for same, will be visible on the horizon. The choice will have been made for you.

Dog people tend to be their own worst enemy and sadly, doing a good job of it. You still have the freedom to choose to make a difference. I, and all the others that have been working to protect all dog owners in this country, hope you'll make the right decision.

The cards are on the table. Bet, Call, Raise or Fold - the choice is yours.

Linda D. Witouski  
AKC Judge & Delegate  
AKC SC Legislation Representative  
Legislation Chair, BOD & Delegate - Myrtle Beach Kennel Club, Inc.  
Legislation Chair - Miniature Pinscher Club of America, Inc.  
Legislation Chair - Yankee Miniature Pinscher Club, Inc.  
SC Camo Coalition Steering Committee  
SC Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses  
Legislation Editor & Investigative Reporter - National Pet Press/The Dog Press  
Co-Author - Monthly National Legislation Report  
Owner: DogLegislation@yahoo.com  
Owner: MinPinInReview@yahoo.com  
Owner: SC Animal, Sportsmen & Wildlife Voting Coalition