

## **The Current Situation**

The strong demand for purebred and designer dogs is encouraging a great number of suppliers to enter the breeding market. With puppies ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 each, they see this as an easy source of money. It requires no skill, training or capital. Puppy Farms have an average of 200 to 300 dogs kept for breeding at any one time.

The Bureau of Animal Welfare has records for 70 registered Puppy Farms throughout Victoria. 60 unregistered Puppy Farm addresses have been made available through Freedom of Information requests to various Councils and tip offs from members of the public. There would be many more out there which remain as yet undetected.

The production line of puppies is further boosted by smaller backyard breeders (owning less than 200 – 300 adult bitches) and the nationally recognised (legal) Purebred Fraternities – who registered a mere 66,000 puppies in 2009 – a tiny percentage of dogs registered with Councils for the same time frame.

## **Puppy Farm Sales**

Farmed puppies are sold through brokers (who can have up to 200 suppliers each), as well as the Trading Post, Dogzonline, pet shops, newspaper advertisements, E-bay and Pet Link. An example of one week's advertisements on Pet Link has been attached.

The conditions many of these breeding dogs are subjected to throughout their lives as breeding machines are extreme - many bitches have had up to 4 litters by age 3. Conditions in puppy farms are appalling – but current council and law enforcement levels mean most farms continue unchecked and without penalty.

## **Proposal for a Council Identification Certificate for Puppies**

Existing laws require all dog owners to register their dogs with their Council. Failure to register all dogs will result in a fine.

A simple change in the way dogs are registered will help to prevent the unchecked nature of puppy farms by making it a requirement that all dogs (whether from puppy farms or other sources) be registered BEFORE they are sold (as well as being registered in the local council of their new owner).

**All puppies born in a council's district are to be registered with that council by 8 weeks of age or prior to sale, whichever occurs first.**

Each registration form will include details of the sire, the bitch and the breeder.

The council will then issue each puppy with a **Council Identification Certificate** which includes a unique tracking number and the name of the issuing council.

Failure to register a dog by 8 weeks or age, or prior to sale will incur a fine.

Certificate must accompany any puppy at point of sale and into adulthood.

Any dog may not be subsequently registered without this certificate.

The law will force the breeder to register every puppy or dog disposed of, making it less attractive to produce large numbers of dogs (which currently attracts little or no monetary consideration).

Registrations will also provide the council with details of breeding locations.

## **Regulating from a different angle**

The effectiveness of introducing a **Council Identification Certificate** (CIC) for each puppy lies in the fact that it will be the consumer (new owner) who regulates the process. If a potential puppy purchaser is in the market for a dog and the relevant breeder is not willing to provide the puppy with a CIC – then it is **the new owner who will regulate the law by walking away from the purchase – as they simply cannot register that puppy with their council without the relevant paperwork**. They will then go to a breeder who will comply with the new regulations and supply a CIC.

### **The ramifications to the non-complying breeder are two-fold:**

1. They will lose the sale
2. The potential purchaser can make a report to the breeder's local council for non-compliance and the breeder will be fined.

### **This will result in enforced changes with breeders –**

- The breeder will have to comply with the new law or face losing sales and fines
- forced recording of puppies produced will, by default, require disclosure of estimated income and attract taxation investigations if tax is not paid on income.

## **Public Education/Community Awareness Program**

It is anticipated that the media would provide initial coverage of positive steps taken toward the regulating of puppy farms.

For continuing public awareness, the amendment should include the requirement by service providers such as the Trading Post, Pet Link, Dogzonline and E-bay to display a prominent disclosure at the beginning of listings for the sale or disposal of puppies and dogs:

All purchases of puppies or adult dogs must be accompanied by a **Council Identification Certificate** to be provided by the seller through their local council

## **Benefits of Council Identification Certificates**

The benefits of this proposal include:

- Councils will receive a substantial increase in funds. As an example of revenue:
  - Banksia Park has admitted they breed 2,500 puppies per annum from 300 dogs. A suggested Council registration fee of **\$25** per puppy will generate **\$62,500 each year from one Puppy Farm alone**
  - Wellington Shire has 14 registered puppy farms averaging 200 dogs each; resulting in approximately 1,700 puppies sold from each farm per annum.  $1,700 \times 14 \text{ farms} = 23,800 \text{ puppies}$  ( $\times \$25 \text{ registration fee}$ ) = **\$595,000 in new revenue for Wellington Shire Council per annum.**
- Increased revenue will allow for an increased level in rangers to monitor and regulate the welfare of dogs at breeding establishments, thereby preventing the appalling conditions in which many of these dogs exist
- The government will be seen to clamp down on puppy farms and receive extra revenue from previously undisclosed sources of income
- Costs are funded through the breeders, who will also now be traceable and accountable for their sales.
- Ongoing awareness of CIC's will be upheld by service providers

**If successfully implemented, these actions will reach a common goal in helping to eliminate the cruelty associated with many puppy farms.**



**Puppies that didn't make it.**

**Ballarat Puppy Farm 2005**



**As found.**

**Ballarat Puppy Farm in 2005**



**Deceased**

**Meredith Puppy Farm April 2010**



**Registered VCA Breeder**

**Paxton Puppy Farm 2010**



**Untreated Eye Condition**

**Gippsland Puppy Farm Sept 2010**



**Media bestowed the cynical title “Employee Of The Month”  
in their public awareness campaign.**

**Ballarat Puppy Farm 2005**



**Chained, caged and cold  
Meredith Puppy Farm 2010**

**These dogs were not removed from these conditions when the pictures were taken.**

**Their fate is unknown.**

**These animals needed help and there are thousands of others in similar situations.**

**Please implement legislation that will improve living conditions in Puppy Farms in Australia, beginning with our local council districts.**

**The intent is to include local councils across the country in a system that will better regulate the industry of puppy farming.**