

I apologize for the length. But understanding what this bill will do to the Sporting Dog breeds in Minnesota doesn't fit on a sound bite.

For reasons I will outline below The Minnesota Federation of Field Trial Clubs (MFFTC), The Amateur Field Trial Clubs of America (AFTCA), and the Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance (MOHA) are all opposed to House File 253 "The Breeders Bill".

I am not opposed to this bill because I don't like puppies and kittens. I am opposed to it because I like puppies and kittens, especially good and healthy ones.

"This bill will do more to damage the future quality and quantity of Sporting Dog and Hound Dogs for Minnesotans than any piece of legislation I have seen proposed in the past 20 years."

Currently I serve as president of the Minnesota Federation of Field Trial Clubs (MFFTC). MFFTC serves as an umbrella organization for Sporting Dog performance clubs in Minnesota. We are also a member of Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance (MOHA). I also serve as Region 19 (North and South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin) Trustee for the Amateur Field Trial Clubs of America (AFTCA). A 100 year old organization that has as its membership almost 500 Sporting Dog clubs nationwide comprised of tens of thousands of sporting dog enthusiasts, hobbyists, trainers and breeders. All my work is on a volunteer basis.

I have trained and developed sporting dogs that I have bred myself to National Champion status on numerous occasions over more than two decades of involvement. I know what it takes to breed quality sporting dogs. Done right, it's not easy and it's not profitable.

Three quick points why I oppose House File 253:

1. **In 2007 HSUS undertook a national "PUPPY MILL" effort to lobby for registries, regulation, inspection and strong enforcement with regard to the production of purebred animals.**
 - a. This bill is not about addressing a Minnesota problem. Using "animal cruelty" and targeting "breeders" is nothing more than a strategy to pass this legislation. It is an incremental step in a much larger agenda of challenging the concept of owning pets and stopping what they see as the unethical practice of "pure breeding" animals.
2. **Legislation traditionally first defines a need then works to provide a solution. However in this case House File 253 is somebody's solution to an undefined problem.**
 - a. Un-sourced pictures and film footage, rhetoric, emotional pandering and making the worst assumptions have been the foundation of rationale for the need for this legislation.
 - b. The utter and complete absence of data, documentation, files, public records tying retail breeders and kennels to the accusations being made is absolutely stunning.
 - c. There is a complete absence of animal science which supports the need for and the expected results of regulating retail breeders.
 - d. There is a complete absence of the financial information needed to initiate and provide ongoing support for this legislation.

3 . This bill will effectively compress the supply and diminish the quality of Sporting Dogs for Minnesota citizens.

Although points one and two are critically important in opposing this legislation, it is this third point that I want to address at this time.

In my contacts, and they have been significant over the years with people who make a living training and breeding sporting dogs, I can assure you, nobody is getting wealthy. Professionally run training and performance kennels and individual hobbyists are very much the backbone of sporting dogs throughout the state. Not unlike a farmer who might have 90% of the farm's net income come from grain production and 10% from animal production, training and performance kennels typically have 90% of their net income from training and animal development and less than 10% from breeding. But their involvement in breeding is critical and they fall, like many sporting dog hobbyists, well within the current definition of a "commercial breeder" and will be targeted by this legislation.

The breeding process of sporting dogs is very much tied to performance testing. It is a process that takes years of training and development to select worthy breeding animals. Field trials and hunt tests sponsored by organizations like the AKC, FDSB, AFTCA, NAVDHA, US Complete, NBHA and ABHA are family events held across this state and across this nation. The cost of doing this is not figured into the cost of a puppy. Breeders accept this as the cost of a hobby, not a recoverable cost of breeding. Professional kennels play a key role in the breeding, selection process, training and development of the animals that participate in this great American sport.

There are training kennels all throughout this state. A trainer, like a farmer, works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It doesn't create wealth, it pays the bills. It is an honorable way of life. The passion, the outdoors, the solitude, nature, animals are the great benefit of this honorable occupation...farmers know what I am talking about.

It's not about the money any more than "farming" is about the money. These kennels are lucky to clear \$1,000 a litter after all is said and done and that doesn't include the investment in selecting the breeding animals. Raising quality sporting dog puppies the traditional way is hard work and a huge commitment over a long period of time. But it is a significant and thrilling challenge for trainers and breeders and consequently a wonderful resource for quality animals for Minnesotans.

A traditional kennel will generate 90% of its net income in training and 10% in breeding. From a business standpoint, it makes no sense to continue to breed when the costs and time to do so is dramatically increased by legislation that will not improve the conditions or quality of the puppies. And why would a business allow the opportunity for a misunderstanding or false accusation by "inspection agents" that has the possibility of damaging their professional reputation or subject their business to the risk of spending thousands of dollars defending themselves? Kennels will simply step back in their breeding involvement either all together or far enough back to fall below the requirements. It becomes a business choice. They will not risk customers being lost because everyone remembers the accusation but nobody remembers the acquittal.

The cost to fight one wrongful accusation could be more than the net income provided by 5 years of breeding!

Minnesota customers overwhelmingly come to these kennels/breeders to purchase sporting dogs. These kennels produce the best sporting dogs in the state...PERIOD. Retrievers such as Labradors and Goldens, Spaniels like Springers, Field and Cockers, Hounds like Walkers, Black and Tans, Redbones, Blueticks and Beagles, Pointers like Shorthairs, Brittanies, Wirehairs and English, Setters like English, Red, Irish and Gordons. These dogs make not only hunting companions, but wonderfully popular family companions and they make up a large percentage of guide dogs and therapy dogs. This is not a coincidence. It is a direct result of knowledgeable dog men and women who breed for gentle and consistent disposition. I believe that pure bred sporting dogs have enriched the lives of Minnesotans for generations and are very much a part of the Minnesota fabric and experience that makes us who we are.

There is absolutely no data that indicates these kennels/breeders have participated in the cruelty that the authors of this bill accuse them of. I find this attack on their good character to be both reprehensible and deceptive. One legislator at a recent committee meeting that I attended said that any breeder or kennel who doesn't welcome this legislation must be "hiding something." I was taken back by yet another example of unfounded accusations and assaults on good hard working Minnesotans. These kennels are open to the public, subjected to the harsh scrutiny of the public and customers on a daily basis.

These breeders and kennels have done nothing wrong, yet this bill will require them to register and document the activities of their business, subject their entire operation to unannounced and unwarranted searches of their property and homes by people "yet to be determined" with qualifications "yet to be determined" and funded by money "yet to be determined". This is a disaster for the sporting dog kennels and breeders of this state.

Sincerely,

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