

Breeders and Kennel Operators in Los Angeles County need you.

In late 2008, the Los Angeles County Dept. of Animal Care and Control (DACC) raided one kennel near Lancaster, CA. More dogs than the kennel was licensed to possess were discovered, and a number of those dogs were removed with permission of the kennel owner. Afterwards, this kennel was featured on the TV news. On that newscast, extreme Animal Rights group "Last Chance for Animals" was interviewed and they labeled the Lancaster kennel a "puppy mill." Subsequent to the TV coverage, the LA Board of Supervisors announced to the media that a "Puppy Mill Crisis" existed in LA County. In March of 2009, Supervisor Mike Antonovich formed a "Puppy Mill Task Force" to deal with this "huge" problem. ONE kennel was out of compliance. An imaginary "Puppy Mill crisis" was taking shape. Antonovich's task force consisted of ONLY extreme Animal Rights groups, a rescue group, the Department of Animal Control and the County Department of Regional Planning. Breeders and kennel operators were NOT even notified much less invited or included. The mission of the task force was to provide a solution to a non-existent "Puppy Mill Problem" in LA County.

The first action of the task force came from Mr. James Bell, the Director of Regional Planning (Antelope Valley), who, without proper notification, held a "Public" hearing. Mr. Bell intended to make dog breeding illegal on property zoned A-2 (Heavy Agricultural) -- most of the kennels operating in LA County are on A-2 property. Indeed, those properties were purchased for that express purpose and have been in existence for decades. These same kennels had received past approval from Regional Planning and DACC and have consistently received A ratings. In order to solve this imaginary "Puppy Mill Crisis," Regional Planning's solution was to eliminate ALL licensed and legitimate breeding kennels. Fortunately, we discovered this attack on our constitutional rights before it was enacted. Unfortunately, we found ourselves labeled with the derogatory term "Puppy Mill" by the LA Board of Supervisors and the Animal Rights groups who were advising them. We were forced to begin a fight to defend our kennels and our right to breed dogs.

A number of breeders and kennel operators organized to oppose this outrageous taking of our rights. On October 28, 2009, the kennel group delivered forceful testimony at the Regional Planning Commission. We were fortunate that a majority of the Commissioners were appalled at the use of the inflammatory and derogatory term "Puppy Mill" to label legitimate breeders and properly licensed business owners. They recognized the use of the media to inflame the public's emotions, and stated that the news coverage was "sensationalized." The Commissioners instructed Mr. Bell to send the task force "back to the drawing board." They

cited a LACK OF ENFORCEMENT by DACC as the reason for the conditions at the Lancaster kennel, and requested the Board of Supervisors to change the name of their task force, as they found the use of the term "Puppy Mill" offensive.

After the Regional Planning Commission's ruling, the breeders and kennel operators of LA County breathed a sigh of relief. That relief was short-lived, however, as the Department of Animal Care and Control immediately proposed sweeping changes to Title 10 ordinances -- Title 10 regulates kennels in Los Angeles County. These changes entailed:

- Heavy financial burdens on breeders and kennel owners.
- Limits on the number of animals that could be kept
- Multiple and redundant inspections
- Increased fees
- Increased minimum staffing requirements
- Demands that kennels hand over private client and customer records

Existing laws and ordinances are sufficient to regulate kennels and have been for decades. We agree with the Regional Planning Commission that the unfortunate conditions at the Lancaster kennel was due to a LACK OF ENFORCEMENT by the Department of Animal Care and Control.

About the time of the Lancaster kennel raid, several lawsuits were filed against Marcia Mayeda, the Director of Animal Control, and are still pending. The lawsuits address horrific conditions that existed at the County's six animal shelters. Ms. Mayeda is on record stating that staffing problems contributed to those conditions. We believe this same lack of staffing also contributed to the conditions at the Lancaster Kennel. Indeed, a large number of kennels were NOT inspected for almost two years during this time period.

We have continuously insisted the County hear our objections to these outrageous proposed ordinance changes that threaten our livelihoods. A meeting was promised to consider our input. Director of Animal Care and Control, County Counsel and a representative from Supervisor Mike Antonovich's office was at the meeting with us on March 4th, 2010. However, on February 27, 2010 Los Angeles County breeders and kennel operators received notification from Animal Control of their intent to present their proposed Title 10 changes to the Board of Supervisors on March 16th. This is in spite of the fact that the March 4th meeting with our group had not taken place yet!! It appears that extreme Animal Rights groups were the only voices our government agencies were interested in hearing. We found this very disturbing and frightening.

We continue to fight for our rights, but know that we have nothing close to the amount of resources the County and their Animal Rights cohorts have at their disposal. All we have available is the help of our clients and friends, who, we hope, will take the time to contact their supervisors and express their outrage. We are legitimate and responsible business owners and breeders. We pay our taxes and have complied with all County requirements in order to operate legally and above-board. As a result of complying with the law, we are being targeted and punished by the County.