

## **WHERE, O, WHERE HAS THE LITTLE DOG GONE?**

By Jim Hughes

Where, o, where can he be? Fifty years ago I never dreamed that I would be lamenting the words to this children's song from times past. When I first entered this business, one of the highlights of a child's day was to get to visit a pet shop or to go to a kennel to play with the puppies. Today, the pet shop is about to suffer the same fate as Hostess Twinkies. The puppy breeders are disappearing in droves as legislation in state and city and county regulations are becoming impossible to deal with at both the pet shop and the kennel entity.

Twenty years ago the commercial puppy breeder sold 400,000 puppies through pet stores across the country. That has been cut in half. The city of Los Angeles got 80,000 of these puppies. Today it has been decided by the L.A. city council that it is now against the law to sell puppies, kittens, or rabbits within the city limits. This same rule has passed in many municipalities, both large and small all across the country. This is a direct result from the illegal lobbying efforts of The Humane Society of the United States and the pet industries almost total lack of interest in presenting any opposition to the lies spread about honest, legal and respectable breeders. Many good breeders are reluctant to tell their outside acquaintances that they are in the puppy business for fear of rejection because of this national brainwashing from HSUS.

I have been a strong advocate for establishing a positive Public Relations scenario for our industry for forty years now. I have seen the handwriting on the wall as legislation has been passed that will force us out of business. I have advocated that we must do something before it is too late, but now I believe it is already too late.

At risk of sounding like a politician, I believe that we have kicked the can down the road for too long and now we must consider some other approach besides image building. We, as an industry, have been tarnished as a bad bunch for too long to rebound to our way of life as we have known it in the past. To survive in the dog business, we must think of a new approach. Twenty five cent gasoline and fifteen cent hamburgers will never come back. Montgomery Ward and drive in movies are gone and so are the large dog breeders. As much as we loved all of the things from the past, we have somehow let them slip away, never to return.

OK, Mister Jim, tell us what the answer is.

OK, I will. Small is what the answer is. Stay under the radar. Stay small enough to avoid having to be licensed. Most breeders sell over the internet these days. You pass the brokers and the retail pet shops so many times that we see these outlets fade from our picture. We had 70 brokers in the membership of APPDI in 1990. Today there is no APPDI and those 70 brokers have mostly disappeared from the scene. You get a lot more money for your pups by bypassing these outlets but keep in mind, you will earn it. Of course, as a former broker and pet shop owner before internet, I feel that the broker and the store deserve their money as they absorb all the hassle and headaches there will be when you choose this route. Some breeders will just not be willing to sell through the internet because of these troubles and will be willing to continue selling through these brokers because they will just not put up with the public nor the government.

We started in this business in 1960, but we did not become a major broker until 1968. No one was required to be licensed in those days and the business was fun. We enjoyed it very much but the government is always looking for ways to take the pleasure out of life if they can. And the industry was not even aware that the start of the death of this industry started in 1973 when the animal welfare act became a reality. Up to that time this act was only used to track stolen dogs, so they said, but so far as I know they only found one dog in the six years the act was in place before they decided to make my life miserable.

There were very few large kennels in those days. We got the Springfield and Joplin newspapers and read the "dogs for sale" section and went from house to house picking up puppies. We bought enough puppies to make a decent living from the backyards of pet owners all over the area. We were not interested in monopolizing the market, just in making decent wages.

America will have it's dogs. No matter how hard the HSUS tries to stop dog production in the U.S., they will not succeed. Remember prohibition, where there's a will there's a way. The "backyard breeder" shall return. We have a girl in our church who has three English Bulldogs. She also has two children with medical problems and can not work outside the home. Those three dogs produced twenty thousand dollars worth of pups last year. I talked to a breeder at the Hunte seminar that raised beagles. She could sell the silver one for two thousand dollars and the common black and white for twelve hundred dollars. I remember selling ordinary tri color beagles for thirty five dollars. Some breeders are regularly getting one thousand or more for most breeds when selling over the internet to the final consumer.

Oklahoma had 600 licensed breeders before state licensing became a reality. Now they have 190 legitimate licensed breeders. My prediction is that within five years there will be over 2000 “back yard” breeders in the state. The same prediction applies to all the states. State and federal licensing was to upgrade the living conditions of the dogs in our care, but the asinine regulations making it impossible to breed dogs profitably will force the return of the unregulated breeder and set the standards we have adopted back twenty years. You can survive the purge that is plaguing you. Just stay under the radar. Continue to produce pups just like you did when an inspector was sitting on your shoulder. Do not lose sight of the fact that John Q. Public expects you to put the comfort and welfare of your animals as your first priority.

Be aware that as soon as the Humane fanatics realize that the industry is recovering from the death blow they tried to bestow upon us, they will try to outlaw back yard breeding. They will try another Los Angeles stunt or lobby to get a federal law making you subject to getting a license if you try to sell even one puppy. You must stay informed and ready for action at a moments notice. Join your state breeders club and go to the meetings.

Support PIJAC, this is the only group that represents the entire pet industry. If your state does not have a breeders club then form one. Help Frank Losey stay a thorn in the HSUS side. Stay in contact with AKC, ACA, and APRI. You are not on your own, these people will help you. Mo-Fed has helped Missouri breeders defeat Prop B, which would have taken Missouri breeders out. Join Mo-Fed and start a chapter in your state. Make sure you know your state and local law makers and let them know how you feel about animal welfare laws, both the good and the bad. Support a check off amount for your state breeders association.

I am a political animal and I realize that our future lies in the hands of congress, state legislators, and city councils. I realize that my readers are both Democrats and Republicans, so I shall not say how I truly feel about the election but I certainly hope that we do not see big government strangulation at every turn of our personal and our business lives. I loved 25 cent gas and 15 cent hamburgers. Why did we ever let those days get away from us?



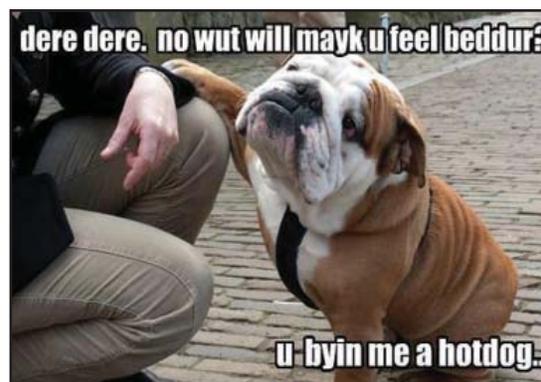
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