



Humane Pet Acquisition Proposal – Kent County

FAQs

April 2017

Question: What will this ordinance do?

Answer: While the Kent County Animal Regulations already prohibits exotic and dangerous animals, a Humane Pet Acquisition Ordinance will prohibit the retail sale of cats, dogs, birds, rabbits, ferrets, long-lived birds and large reptiles with the exception of such animals being offered up for adoption by area shelters and rescue organizations.

This ordinance does not take away an individual's right to own animals or prevent adoptions occurring in pet stores. Rather, it will better regulate the animals that are being shipped into the state of Michigan from commercial breeding facilities, often known as "puppy mills" and "animal warehouses".

Question: Won't this put pet stores out of business?

Answer: Pet stores, both independently owned and chain stores, primarily earn profit through pet services and products such as pet food, toys, grooming and boarding. A Humane Pet Acquisition Ordinance does not prevent pet stores from trying to connect potential pet owners with their wanted pet. Rather, it prevents businesses from selling potentially sick pets from out-of-state pet warehouses. Pet stores would still have the opportunity to collaborate with local animal shelters and rescue organization to serve as a point place to offer space and support for showcasing adoptable homeless pets.

In addition, the cost to the community is far greater than the profits collected from selling ill bred puppies shipped from distant states. Unsuspecting families are making spontaneous purchases of poorly-bred animals, resulting in expensive veterinary bills. The city of Warren spent over \$20,000 on animal impound and veterinary care for just one pet store seizure in 2013 which included over 200 animals.

Question: Why do the local communities have to pass this ordinance, why can't the county?

Answer: The Kent County Board of Commissioners does not have the authority to regulate business and commerce, however, the local municipalities (cities, villages and townships) do have the legislative regulatory authority.

Question: Who has passed such an ordinance?

Answer: More than 100 cities throughout the United States and Canada have passed versions of a Humane Pet Acquisition Ordinance. Such locations include: Los Angeles, California; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Austin, Texas; Glendale, California; Coral Gables, Florida; and Toronto, Canada. Additionally, Cook County in Illinois passed such an ordinance in 2015.

Four Michigan cities have recently passed the ordinance and the Macomb County Commissioners signed a resolution urging communities to pass the ordinance to protect both families and pets.

Question: Aren't the puppies and other animals sold in these stores checked by veterinary?

Answer: Michigan Pet Store laws only require "wellness" checks that do not include fecal or other tests leaving many illnesses undetected. These quick wellness checks do not include behavioral assessments and certainly do not guarantee a healthy pet. In fact, some veterinarians have listed illness or genetic issues on the required 30-day health certificates, yet the pet stores fail to disclose this information to families purchasing the pet. This presents a public health risk as some viruses can be taken home and transmitted to humans. In addition, some veterinarians are not requiring the pet store to provide treatment to ensure those pets are well before sale, and instead wait for the pet stores' referral. This is a conflict of interest and against most veterinary medical association's code of ethics and principles.

Literature published in Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association supports the fact that dogs sold at pet stores are at a greater risk for behavioral problems than those obtained from noncommercial breeders. Another study in Applied Animal Behavior Science found that breeding dogs at commercial establishments were significantly more likely to have health and behavioral problems, including higher rates of fears, phobias, and compulsive behavior.

Question: Will I still be able to purchase a pet from a breeder?

Answer: A person or business entity can still sell dogs, cats, ferrets, rabbits, long-lived birds that were bred and reared on their premises. The county regulations already prohibit some large reptiles from being owned under the exotic and dangerous animals section of the regulations.

Question: How will this ensure humane treatment of animals?

Answer: Animals bred in commercial breeding facilities, such as puppy mills, are bred for the sole purpose of being a commodity. By cutting down on the demand for this there will be less of a "need" to breed cats and dogs in these deplorable conditions that often leave them with health and behavioral issues. These issues not only cause harm to the animals themselves, but also typically impose exorbitant financial and emotional costs to the owners. Additionally, such an ordinance will further encourage individuals seriously interested in becoming a pet owner to seek adoption as their pet acquisition mechanism. This will then help reduce the number of pets being held in and euthanized local shelters and rescues. In 2013, according to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 23,000 dogs and puppies were euthanized.

Question: How will such an ordinance affect me as a taxpayer?

Answer: Through the adoption of a Humane Pet Acquisition Ordinance at the local level taxpayers will experience a reduced financial burden because there will be fewer animals requiring care and the need

to be euthanized in the county and city animal shelters. Pet seizures from unfit and illegally operating stores can cost thousands of dollars to the cities in which the business is operation in. For example, the city of Warren spent more than \$20,000 in 2013 to impound and care for more than 200 animals that were seized from one store. Additionally, the Kent County Animal Control charges a \$70 fee for the adoption of an animal, meaning additional funds will be brought into the county and cities if they have their own animal shelter, for services. It should also be noted adopted fees are typically far less expensive than the cost of purchasing a pet.