



November 18, 2016

Senator Vincent Sheheen, Chair
Members of the South Carolina Pet Care & Humane Treatment Study Committee

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Dear Senator Sheheen and Committee Members:

We hope you are well. We are hearing from members in South Carolina who are encouraged by the creation of the South Carolina Pet Care & Humane Treatment Study Committee. We share their enthusiasm and thank you for your work to make improvements for animals in the state. I worked for several years in animal control and sheltering in South Carolina and concur with David Miller's assertion in the article "SC Pet-Care Panel Considers Changes to Animal-Welfare Laws," (TheState.com, Oct. 27): Dog chaining is a widespread animal-welfare and public-safety concern.

The use of chains and tethers to confine dogs leaves them vulnerable to attacks by other animals and [cruel humans](#) and can turn otherwise friendly dogs into ticking time bombs. Hundreds of individuals—most of them children—have [been attacked](#), some fatally, by chained dogs. The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control warns against chaining dogs: "Dogs [who] are tied or chained up, especially for hours at a time, often become so stressed they become overly protective of their space. Many cities, including some in South Carolina, have made the practice illegal."¹ We strongly support [legislation](#) to ban or restrict tethering.

We also hope you will consider recommending legislation to crack down on the growing number of individuals and trading rings claiming to be animal "rescues." Our office is deluged on a daily basis with articles and reports about "rescues" and so-called "no-kill" shelters that require the intervention and resources of law-enforcement and health officials once criminally cruel conditions have been exposed. [Children](#) and the [elderly](#) are often found during these raids, similarly mistreated. We keep a [running list](#) of cases in which shelters and "rescues" have been raided (keep in mind that these are just the ones that make the news).² There are new ones every week, and according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *of the estimated [6,000 new hoarding cases](#) reported in the U.S. each year, "rescue" groups make up one-quarter.*³

Last year, authorities in Charleston seized 108 animals from a self-professed animal "rescue" after they were found confined to cages throughout the operator's home, which was filled with sick and injured animals as well as piles of feces.

¹South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, "Prevent Dog Bites," SCDHEC.gov <<http://www.scdhec.gov/rabies/PreventingRabies/PreventDogBites/>>.

²PETA, "No-Kill' Label Slowly Killing Animals," <<http://www.peta.org/issues/companion-animal-issues/animal-shelters/kill-label-slowly-killing-animals/>>.

³Sue Manning, "When Animal Rescuers Become Animal Hoarders," Jan. 26, 2011, Associated Press <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/38978396/ns/health-pet_health/t/when-animal-rescuers-become-animal-hoarders/#.VV9at_IVikp>.

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Most of the animals were reportedly malnourished, and some had suffered from injuries, neurological problems, and respiratory infections.⁴ In Anderson County, authorities seized 60 animals, many in need of medical care, from a self-professed animal "rescue" doing business as Golden S Rescue. The animals were found in conditions that violated a court order issued after a previous criminal conviction— in February 2014, the operator was arrested twice, once when 11 dogs were found critically ill and had to be seized and two weeks later when more than 100 animals needed to be removed from the "rescue's" property.⁵ In 2013, the operator of Coastal Jack Russell Terrier Rescue (CJRTR) in Santee was ordered to stop "rescuing" dogs after she was charged with three counts of ill treatment of animals. CJRTR reportedly confined and starved dogs in cages, pens, and crates, where they wallowed in feces and urine. They were denied food or water and needed medical treatment. Bags of dead dogs were found "in the vicinity" of the sick and starving animals on the property.⁶ Similar cases have made the news in Aiken, Horry, and York counties, to name a few.

It's important also to consider this warning issued by the National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse, a program of the National District Attorneys Association: "There is an entire industry of 'rescues' that warehouse animals in horrific conditions; however, the catalyst for warehousing is not a mental health affliction, but pure, old-fashioned, greed."⁷

Regulations are needed mandating minimal standards of care, requiring inspections of animal "rescue" facilities and their foster homes, making available documentation of the whereabouts of all animals in a purported rescue's or shelter's custody, and requiring sterilization and veterinary examination and care of animals released to and from such agencies.

Euthanasia at animal shelters can be effectively and humanely reduced by ending the overpopulation of animals through prevention, including widespread low- and no-cost spay/neuter programs, community education, and legislation that penalizes those who contribute to the uncontrolled breeding of dogs and cats.

If PETA can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me at 443-320-1277 or TeresaC@peta.org.

Thank you again for your hard work for animals in South Carolina.

Respectfully,



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⁴Evelyn Fernandez, "Charleston County Woman With 108 Animals in Her Home Being Evaluated," 29 Dec. 2015, CountOn2.com <<http://counton2.com/2015/12/29/charleston-county-woman-with-108-animals-in-her-home-being-evaluated/>>.

⁵WYFF4.com, "Woman Again Charged With Dozens of Counts of Ill Treatment of Animals," 1 Dec. 2015 <<http://www.wyff4.com/article/woman-again-charged-with-dozens-of-counts-of-ill-treatment-of-animals/7018651>>.

⁶Lee Hendren, "Woman Charged With Abuse of Animals," 1 Mar. 2013, TheTandD.com <http://thetandd.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/woman-charged-with-abuse-of-animals/article_2bc16cb6-8225-11e2-84da-001a4bcf887a.html>.

⁷Sandra Sylvester and Curtis W. Baranyk, "When Animal Hoarding Is Warehousing for Profit, Part 1," National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse <<http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/TalesJustice-vol1-no2.pdf>>.