

Senate Agriculture Committee

From: Michel Hammes <hammesym@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2016 3:55 PM
To: Senate Agriculture Committee
Subject: PCHTSC

Hello,

I work full time as a reference librarian, but I spend many hours each week working in my community (Park Circle, North Charleston) to assist animals in need. Over and over again I am calling animal control due various issues. The north charleston animal control officer's team is always responsive, but I find that often the laws are not there for them to enforce anything. I would like to see:

- breeders to register and have some oversight
- support for the shelters and animal non-profits with low spay/neuter clinics (this can help stop the cycle of unwanted cats and dogs)
- have training for police and animal control officers so they know the laws and have guidance on how to solve issues to the best of the owner and animals
- change the laws to stop tethering of dogs at any time
- adopt animal welfare laws from other states so that the animal control officers, police, and the legal system enforce the fines and penalties, plus- ultimately concerned citizens will stop being apathetic since nothing ever changes.

I understand that many people tether dogs because they can not afford a fence. 90% of the animal control issues I call in are dogs on a chain (never come off the short chains)- the dogs are often flea infested to the point of having skin conditions, skinny and unhealthy, usually aggressive due to being chained.

I live in a county with an amazing shelter- Charleston Animal Society- and I often rely on them for information, programs for the elderly to keep their pets/have them spayed/neutered, assistance with tnr for the feral cats in my community (it really does keep other cats out and the number of unwanted kittens down) and much more. I can't even imagine what other concerned citizens have to deal with in other parts of the state. Please do what you can to change the lives for animals.

I look forward to seeing what can be done for animals in South Carolina.

Michel Hammes
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To: Pet Care and Humane Treatment Study Committee
Date: October 21, 2016
Subject: Protection of pet birds under South Carolina Animal Cruelty Laws

Dear committee members,

Please allow me to introduce myself and then tell you of an error in South Carolina's animal cruelty laws that needs your attention.

I have worked in the Charleston area veterinary industry since 1997. In addition to my Bachelor's in Business Management, I am a Licensed Veterinary Technician, and a Certified Veterinary Practice Manager. I was the 2009 South Carolina Veterinary Technician of the Year. Beyond veterinary medicine, I have worked with pet birds (parrot species) since 1994. I am a Certified Avian Specialist. I have been published internationally and have traveled the country speaking to groups about pet birds. Additionally I was formally permitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to possess three different endangered species of parrots – this being a permit that few people are granted.

Some 13 to 15 years ago I received a call from a friend to go to her home and check on her pet birds (there were parrotlets, lovebirds, cockatiels, conures, a macaw and perhaps another species I can't recall). She was out of town for an extended period of time and became concerned that her husband had quit caring for the birds. She overnighted me a key. Upon entering, I found almost all of the birds dead in their cages. The macaw was still alive but near death. They had died from apparent starvation as there was no food or water in their cages and their bodies were emaciated. The cages were pure filth. The water bowls were either dried up from evaporating or contaminated with slime and fecal waste. The police were called and an animal control officer came. I believe the husband was arrested at his place of employment. However, his case was ultimately dismissed due to wording in South Carolina Title 47, Chapter 1 (Cruelty to Animals). Specifically it was 47-1-40 (C) that states "this section does not apply to fowl." "Fowl" was considered to be *any* bird.

Over a decade later and I still remember the pain and disgust that I felt when I found all those poor, helpless birds dead or dying from an act of cruelty. I knew the owner of these birds and I knew these birds. Prior to her extended travel, the birds were healthy and well cared for. They had their own room in the home which was setup for their comfort and safety. They didn't deserve to die a slow and agonizing death. With extensive care, I was able to save the macaw. He required tube feeding and other care while nursing him back to health. Her young son had named this bird Shrek. It was devastating to tell her that her pets had died. It was painful for her to tell her son that the birds had died and how. There was comfort in saving Shrek and both mother and son were full of tears when reunited with Shrek.

I suspect the original intent of this law was to exclude bird species that are commonly raised for food or sport. There are over 9,000 species of birds on our planet. Parrots (order Psittaciformes) represent some 360 species even including common pets such as parakeets and cockatiels. Surely this law was not intended to exclude all 9,000+ species of birds. Certainly it did not intend to exclude the approximately 360 species that are in the parrot and pet bird group from protection against cruelty.

I plead to this committee to please update the definitions of Section 47, Chapter 1 of the South Carolina Code of Laws to include a clearer definition of the word "fowl." Fowl are limited to the taxonomic order "Galliformes" which includes the common chicken, turkey, quail and pheasant and the order "Anseriformes" which includes ducks and other waterfowl. There is a simple solution: Add a definition in 47-1-10 stating that "fowl" are only birds of the taxonomic orders Galliformes and Anseriformes.

Thank you for your efforts in helping me to give pet birds a voice and protections against cruelty in South Carolina. I am available to assist in any way the committee desires so please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Marshall Liger, LVT, CVPM, CAS

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