



Dog Watch Nova Scotia

A newsletter for people and their dogs who want to stay on top of what's happening in the world of Dog politics in Nova Scotia

September 15, 2008

Vol 1, Number 1

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Welcome to the first issue of Dog Watch Nova Scotia

This e-newsletter is an idea. Currently the only place in Nova Scotia to find out about issues that relate to dog politics is through the mainstream media – our local newspapers. It seems like a lot of the time they don't think that when news happens – that companion animal related stories are interesting enough to be news worthy – we don't find out about what happened to the puppy millers, animal abusers, or puppy mill brokers except by chance - months later when there's nothing we can do about it. The same with legislation that affects ours and our dogs' lives – potential legislation is pushed through at Province House – and suddenly we have breed specific legislation – and no one told us it was going to happen! And that is WRONG!

So it's time for us as dog owners to stand up and say – we have a right to know what's going on in the world of dog politics – and we need a way to disseminate this information – I'm hoping this newsletter will get the ball rolling in some little way.

When court cases come up they'll be talked about here – and the media will also be alerted so they can choose whether or not they want to cover the story. Maybe until now their coverage of stories has been hit or miss simply because they haven't been keeping track of dates of the animal abusers court dates – so now they'll have someone doing it for them!

As well - we're going to cover the upcoming Municipal elections in the Halifax Regional Municipality and turn Bylaw A300 into a voting issue – telling you who voted for the bylaw to be passed – and let you judge your councillor – and pose some questions to ask your elected representative.

We'll also be highlighting different shelters across the province – looking at them from the viewpoint of – how are they contributing to animal welfare in their community? Are they doing good things? Are they helping animals, helping pet owners, or letting people off the hook? What is their stand on no-kill? And what is that community's feeling about companion animals?

The rescue community is the lifeblood of dogs and cats everywhere – and fundraising means life and death to every animal that comes through rescue – so I'll also have a small section highlighting some upcoming events in the animal community across the province seeing as how I've created a small captive audience here.

You'll also be able to submit your own stories – and we'll have a feedback section where you can write in whatever you'd like – good or bad!

And like it or not – I'm going to be talking about the only organization who is empowered to enforce the animal cruelty act in Nova Scotia – the Nova Scotia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. They have been in a crisis for a long time – and it's not getting any better – it's actually getting worse, and is currently in danger of imploding. And what does that mean for the homeless and abandoned animals of Nova Scotia.

What follows is the 1st Edition of Dog Watch NS from the editors of Dog Watch Nova Scotia

New NS SPCA Board of Directors:

In August 2008 there were applications submitted for Board of Director's positions at the Provincial Branch of the Nova Scotia SPCA. Interviews were held and they've recently announced that they've filled several. Darrell Smith – a Board member who had been chair of the Investigations Committee has resigned – and there's still no announcement about the President or Vice President's positions. Kat Horne, Sean Kelly, Brittany Hilton, Monica Donelle, Krista Keough, and Sherri Boutilier were all appointed as Director's at large – the complete list of Board positions can be found at http://www.spcans.ca/who_we_are/board_of_directors.html

Bylaw A300 in the Halifax Regional Municipality may kill your dog

Seriously – it might. There is currently a dog sitting on death row in Animal Control at HRM's Animal Control facility (which is currently contracted out to the NS SPCA) not because it killed another dog, seriously maimed or has **proven** itself to be fierce or dangerous to the community – it seems it's simply because her owner didn't take Animal Control's warnings seriously enough, (and Animal Control was being punitive unnecessarily to begin with but that's another story in itself).



She was confiscated and scheduled to be killed August 7th, 2008. Luckily for the dog, her owner sought an injunction and Brindi is still alive pending the outcome of a hearing – but Brindi has never harmed a human or seriously harmed another dog – and yet she's been deemed fierce and dangerous for one incident and issued a muzzle order. When she rushed a dog at her property line after getting away from her owner before she could get her muzzle on – she was seized by Animal Control to be euthanized.

How – you may ask, can this happen? In Bylaw A300 – all a dog needs to be deemed “fierce and dangerous” – is to APPEAR THREATENING. So if you are afraid of dogs, have a low tolerance for dogs – or simply don't like dogs – and a dog approaches you, you can say “that dog THREATENED ME” – and in the the definition of attack under Bylaw A300 – that dog has actually attacked you! And in order to be deemed fierce and dangerous – all a dog has to do is attack you – so in order to be deemed fierce and dangerous – all a dog has to do – is to appear threatening!

So if you own a dog that in any way has the appearance of a dog that some people are afraid of – you MUST act to have the language of Bylaw A300 changed. Or your dog may become the next Brindi. Bylaw A300 is online at <http://halifax.ca/legislation/bylaws/hrm/documents/By-LawA-300.pdf> . In the next issue of Dog Watch NS we'll be publishing a list of all the HRM Councilors and their email addresses and who voted for and against the bylaw – so that you can make an informed decision in October in the municipal elections about this issue.

You can also email your councilor and ask them about the bylaw and this section and ask them why they didn't change this very vague and highly litigious – and dangerous to every decent and loving dog! - section when it was approved – because the public asked for it to be revised taking the “appears threatening” out of it – but for some reason, they left it in there.

Brindi the dog who is currently sitting on death row's story can be read about on her owner's blog at <http://freebrindi.blogspot.com/> - we will be covering her case in upcoming issues of Dog Watch.

Talking about the upcoming Municipal Elections in the HRM...

Do you know what your HRM Councilor's view is on dog politics? Do you care? You should! When issues of companion animals come up at Regional Council and Community Council – does your Councilor just roll their eyes and wish it would all just - go away? Or is your Councilor a wonderful dog advocate and you're very proud to live in their riding – my Councilor is Steve Adams – district 18 – Spryfield – and I'm very lucky that he is pro-dog (and anti Bylaw A300) – so I am VERY happy with my councilor. But I've sat at HRM Regional Council meetings and have heard our voted representatives call feral cats “viral cats”, I've read minutes of meetings that have had suggestions that all dogs when off their owners properties must be muzzled – so who your councilor is – SHOULD be very important to you if you want to be a politically savvy dog owner. You as a dog owner should contact your Councilor and tell them that part of your vote is contingent on what they say about dog issues – it is THAT important to you. The quality of your dogs' lives is THAT important. Because it IS. In the next issues of Dog Watch – we will list out all the HRM Councilor's email addresses so you can contact them individually to let them know that your dogs' quality of life is important to you, and your vote depends on how they feel about dogs.

Breed Specific Legislation in Nova Scotia

May 18th of this year was the first that anyone really heard that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities was trying to push breed specific legislation through the Nova Scotia Legislature – what they were calling “responsible dog ownership legislation”. They had in fact been working on it quietly, behind the scenes since 2005 – with what they were calling “housekeeping amendments” to the Municipal Government Act – in which they would be able to impose breed restrictions across the province.

Lloyd Hines from the district of the Municipality of Guysborough was the President of the the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities when the working group on this project began – and he was quoted as saying about the pit bull type dog - "I don't want to be the warden of the Municipality of Guysborough and have to go to the funeral of some kid who was eaten."

I don't know about you – but I don't think that a person could be expected to write unbiased laws and say something like the above. I have been around dogs a long time, have read a lot of news stories about dogs, and pit bull type dogs – and I have never ever heard of a “kid being eaten by a dog”. That kind of hysteria driven language is only meant to do one thing – lead people to believe that dogs of a certain type are very bad indeed.

Luckily – because of public outrage – the offending proposed legislation was sent back to the Law Amendments Committee, where it still sits – so sections 6-8 of Bill 138 that contained the legislation didn't pass as written. But had the amendments gone through, we might have had to have put signs on the front of our house saying that we had certain breeds of dogs living in our home, purchase liability insurance, muzzle our dogs when they're off our property, construct kennels to certain specifications on our property (as dictated by the gov't), and take obedience classes – simply because we had chosen to own a certain breed or type of dog. Not because of anything our dog has done – but only because of how it looked or because of it's breed.

Just think about the idea of posting a sign on the front of your house because you own a rottweiler, say. Now think about other marginalized minorities in society today. Do you smoke? You know how a lot of people don't like to have anybody around them smoking. Think if you had to put up a sign outside of your house that said somebody inside your house smokes? How do you feel about that sign now? Or that somebody inside the house has a history of violence?

How do you feel about your personal freedom? Does that sign make you feel like the government might be starting to chip away at your personal freedom in some way? Well it makes me feel that way – and so do those other things that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities makes me want to do SIMPLY BECAUSE I HAPPEN TO OWN A CERTAIN TYPE OF DOG. Think about it.

And if the Law Amendments Committee comes back and tries to pass those amendments again – stand up – and start fighting again.

Upcoming Court Cases



Gail Benoit and Dana Bailey – were in court on June 26th and 27th on charges of neglect after the NS SPCA seized 10 puppies last fall – their trial resumes October 24th, 2008

Noemi Chapman and her husband – are due back in court November 28th, 2008 for their trial on failure to provide adequate care to 4 dogs under the prevention of cruelty to animals act – they run a puppy mill in Kilburn, New Brunswick with over 200 breeding dogs.

Zonda MacIsaac and Alice MacIsaac – Zonda MacIsaac is due back in court September 23rd, 2008 to hear the results of a psychiatric assessment to see whether she is mentally fit to stand trial and Alice MacIsaac is due back in court December 4th, 2008 – they are both charged under the Animal Cruelty Act as well as the Criminal code for neglect to animals and willfully causing pain to an animal.

Upcoming Dog Events

- Bide-a-wile's Golfing for Critters – September 20th, 2008 - <http://www.bideawhile.org/events/golfing.php>
- 5th Annual Ceilidh for Critters – September 25, 2008 - <http://ceilidhforcritters.com/>
- The Canadian Kennel Club is sponsoring “Responsible Dog Ownership Groups” all across Canada on September 27th for dog walks. There's going to be one in Halifax – starting at 10:45 behind the Westin Hotel, and walking to the Historic Properties – for more info you can go to <http://halifaxkennelclub.org/>
- SHAID Dog Walk 2008 "Come out and help us raise funds for the homeless animals at SHAID!" – Saturday October 4th from 1-4pm at the Mahone Bay Ball Field

Other Places to get local dog politics news:

NS SPCA Newsletter - http://spcans.ca/whats_new/index.html

Cape Breton SPCA Newsletter - <http://www.capebretonspca.com/newsletter.html>

Granny's Journal - <http://grannysstory.blogspot.com/>

Me and my Dogs in Halifax, Nova Scotia - <http://dogkisser.blogspot.com/>

There's a ton of Facebook groups – I'll be listing out several of them in upcoming issues...

Download past issues of the Dog Watch Nova Scotia Newsletter at: http://dogkisser.ca/dwns_past_issues.html

If you have a story or a story idea you'd like to submit to Dog Watch Nova Scotia – email me at dogkisser@gmail.com – as well, if you have any feedback – we'd love to hear from you!

Puppy Mills, what is one – and are they in Nova Scotia?

The short answer is – yes. Puppy mills exist anywhere that people know they'll make money from soft fluffy things – and Nova Scotia is no different from anywhere else in the world. Just this week I was corresponding with a lady in the Valley who visited a puppy miller that kept dogs in cages in her basement. She would bring the puppies upstairs for viewing – but refused to bring the Moms and Dad's upstairs. It was only after much protesting that she agreed to bring one Mom upstairs – and the lady who emailed me said that she was appalled at the condition of the Mom. Her feet were splayed out (because the cages obviously had wire bottoms so that when they pooped it fell to the floor rather than stayed in the cage), and the poor dog had no expression in her eyes, and the owner wouldn't put the dog down on the ground because she was worried she would pee on the floor – but it was probably because she couldn't really walk.



I myself fostered an obvious puppy mill reject in 2003 – a bouvier that was almost hairless when we got her, with rotten teeth and hundreds of mammary tumours – left on the side of the road in Ship Harbour to die. 90% of puppies in pet stores DO come from puppy mills. And a puppy mill doesn't have to have 500 dogs to be classified as one. It is the intention and the treatment that makes the qualification. If the Mom's and Dad's are treated like a commodity instead of a pet who is also a stellar example of the breed so they've decided because they're so perfect their genes deserve to live on – therefore they're going to breed them (my definition of what a responsible breeder might be) – and they are kept in cages their whole lives and only exist so that they can have litter after litter – then that that animal owner is – is a puppy miller.

Pet stores give a clean façade for puppy mills. You don't have to see the mothers with the matted fur and the missing teeth and the legs that don't work anymore – but they're out there. And the puppies have the genetic heritage of those defective mothers too – in a year or so you'll begin to experience it – your beautiful puppy that you've paid \$1,800 at the pet store for will start to limp – and she'll have hip dysplasia or luxating patella – and you'll have a \$2,000 vet bill and painful surgery, then a year later the other back leg will go – and the same thing over – and then 2 years later (your dog is 3 years old now) – arthritis will set in because of the surgeries and the poor genetics – and you've got a 10 year old dog at 3 years old. Why? Because puppy mills don't care about genetics. They care about quantity, and price. Responsible breeders care MOST about genetics and the perfection of the breed they've chosen – and the health of the dog.

So if you want the best deal on a dog – go to a responsible breeder – or a responsible rescue. Go to a dog show being put on by the Halifax Kennel Club or the Kennel Club in your area and fall in love with a breed of dog – research that breed, and choose a breeder – and buy one of their puppies, or go to that breed's specific rescue – and get an older dog – they're out there. In the long run – you will save a TON of money.

Don't even GO to pet stores that sell puppies – you won't even get the temptation to buy one – and it will also tell that store that you don't support them selling puppies. They'll get the point pretty quickly when they realize they aren't making any money – and then maybe they'll stop buying puppies from the puppy mills, and the puppy mills won't have a clean way to sell their puppies – and they'll have to shut down.

And then where will we get our puppies from? There will ALWAYS be puppies. Even the cute, soft small, furry ones that everybody wants – maybe in this brave new world – they just won't be quite so genetically defective because they won't be sold by people who don't care about their Mom's and Dad's and what they're going to be like in 5 years. Wouldn't that be lovely?

And wouldn't it also be super if Nova Scotia was the first place in the world that didn't have any puppy mills – and didn't have one store that sold puppies in pet stores? We might become world famous just for that one thing. That would truly be something to be famous for.