

SUSPENSION



March 26, 2015

To: Erie County Legislators

From: Barbara Carr, Executive Direct SPCA Serving Erie County

Re: Erie County Animal Abuse Registry

In its current form the SPCA Serving Erie County is opposed to legislation that would create an Animal Abuse Registry in Erie County.

The legislative intent for an Animal Abuse Registry cites a major reason for this registry as "offenders being more likely to offend again or commit other violent crimes." While there is research that indicates that there might be a correlation between violently abusing an animal and or killing an animal and being involved in violence towards people, these types of violent crimes towards animals are extremely rare. In fact in the 22 years I have been associated with this SPCA I can remember only two or three of these types of cases. Generally we are seeing individuals who have neglected their animals due to financial circumstances, ignorance concerning animal care, or mental illness. These are not violent crimes. An additional type of animal abuse seen frequently is dog fighting.

In my experience recidivism is limited to those with mental illness, (hoarders), and dog fighters. Other than hoarders and dog fighters there has never been in my 22 years at the SPCA a person arrested twice for animal cruelty.

An animal abuse registry will not serve to reduce recidivism in either of these types of offenders. For the rest of those being convicted an abuse registry will only serve to shame them and will use resources of animal welfare organizations as well as the resources of the Sheriff's Department that could be better utilized in some manner.

While I applaud the interest of our Legislature in their concern for animals, I don't see the usefulness of an animal registry. It will not address the concern you state.

Should you wish to develop legislation that would address the underlying causes of hoarding, like mandatory counseling for hoarders as part of sentencing, the SPCA would happily support such a law.

Dog fighting is a felony crime and consequences are much more severe. Even with that, dog fighters most often will continue with this crime and other crimes associated with dog fighting. However, it is highly unlikely they would ever come to a shelter or a pet store to get a dog. The dogs that they fight

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have been specifically bred to fight and these dogs are not found in animal shelters. Consequently this legislation will not be effective to reduce the suffering of those animals connected with animal fighting.

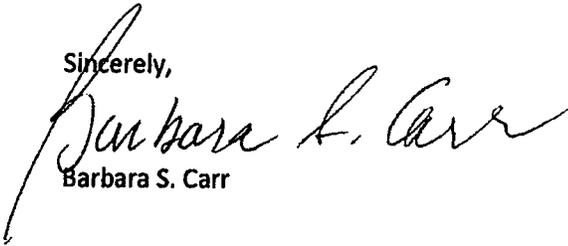
Further, as I stated to you in 2013, when appropriate, courts order offenders to not own pets and allow for unannounced inspections by the SPCA or the police and should someone convicted have such an order, the offender is brought back to court on contempt charges should they be found to possess an animal. This is a serious consequence and we have found it to be effective sentencing. Because of these safeguards that make certain that animals are protected already from those convicted of animal abuse the proposed legislation is duplicitous.

Animal hoarders do not come to shelters to adopt animals, generally they find them on the streets. In fact anyone that would be listed on an Erie County registry can easily find a stray or cross county lines to acquire an animal.

This type of registry is insulting to the 8,000 people who chose to adopt from our shelter annually, people who are kind and compassionate. I myself would be embarrassed if I was in this situation of having my name checked on a registry. This legislation could easily cause fewer animals to be adopted if those interested in adoption were made to feel uncomfortable through this unnecessary background check.

Again, the SPCA Serving Erie County is very willing to work on the creation of legislation that will help to further protect animals in this community.

Sincerely,



Barbara S. Carr