

Legislative Issues

by Laurella Desborough, Legislative Vice President

We will briefly review the Animal Welfare Act, local regulations, and the effects of animal rights activities.

USDA Regulations on Aviculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was sued by animal rights organizations to force them to include rats, mice and birds as regulated and inspected animals under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). In settling the lawsuit, the USDA agreed to establish regulations on rats, mice and birds. Last year, the Congress refused to fund the USDA to establish those regulations, at the urging of the medical research community. This year the USDA, with the expectation of Congress providing funds, has initiated steps to establish those regulations, which would require the inspection of bird breeders' facilities, as well as birds used in research.

Helms Amendment.

Both the House and Senate have passed a massive Farm Bill to which many amendments were attached. One of those amendments proposed by Senator Helms, would remove rats, mice, and birds from the Animal Welfare Act. At present, the House and Senate Farm bills and their amendments are being reviewed by a Conference Committee composed of members from the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee. It will be up to these conferees to decide what stays in the Farm Bill and what is removed.

AFA Action

The AFA State Coordinators and members will make their recommendations known to the Committee members. After the Committee decides on a final draft of the Farm Bill, it will be returned to the House and Senate for approval. If the final version of the Farm Bill continues to carry the Helms Amendment in its basic form, rats, mice and birds will not be included under the regulations of the Animal

Welfare Act. This means bird breeders would NOT be inspected by official USDA veterinarians or Animal Care Specialists. Individual AFA members can keep informed on these legislative matters by signing up with their local bird club and receiving the club bulletin, as the AFA will provide basic legislative information via the *AFA In Brief*. Information can also be obtained from the AFA State Coordinators listed in the *afa Watchbird* Journal.

How do we Protect Ourselves from Local Regulation?

First, we have to be watchful for the appearance of restrictive regulations. We need to monitor local city and county proposals. One or two individuals from a local club can be appointed to routinely read the agenda of the meetings of the city and county zoning departments, and of the city council and county commission meetings. Monitor the newspapers for articles about problems or regulations related to dogs, cats, wild animals, exotic animals, breeding animals, or animal control regulations. Any of those items may eventually result in regulations on your bird keeping and breeding activities.

Second, when we identify proposed regulations that may present problems to bird owners, we need to take immediate action and notify others interested in birds and animals. Most successful opposition to restrictive proposals comes when you present a large group of people who are working together to inform the governing officials of the serious problems posed by the proposed regulations and provide brief yet detailed remarks. The manner of presentation is as important as what is presented. Politeness carries more weight than belligerence or extreme emotionalism. In many cases the issues which provided the basis for the proposed regulations have been addressed by regulations already in place. It is extremely helpful to anyone dealing

with regulation and legislation to have on hand the *AFA Bird Keepers Legislative Handbook*, available from the Business Office at a modest fee. This handbook provides basic information on local regulatory matters as well as guidance on dealing with local and state regulations. All bird owners need a copy of the handbook, which they should review frequently.

Third, the AFA State Coordinators and Club Delegates will be receiving some basic instruction on issues relating to proposed local regulations and proposed state and national laws. However, it is important that *all* members respond to local and national proposals regarding regulation of aviculturists.

Future Regulatory Proposals

We can expect to have proposals put forward regarding the following: **1)** numbers of pet birds that may be legally possessed by a pet owner within a town or city, **2)** restrictions on bird breeding within cities and counties, **3)** regulations on the air transport of birds, **4)** requirements for inspection of bird breeding facilities, **5)** elimination or control of bird sales through pet stores, and **6)** other restrictions that are outside the immediate area of bird breeding or bird keeping, but which, in the long run, will have a negative effect on aviculture.

"Animal rights" is not "animal welfare." Often animal rights folks use our passion for our birds to implement their goals. They use our concern for the *welfare* of animals and confuse the public into thinking that animal rights means animal welfare. Not so. The agenda of the animal rights organizations is to eliminate all animal use – including pets. ***The rights of U.S. citizens regarding animal ownership and use are under assault by a mass movement orchestrated through the collaboration of many different animal rights organizations. Unless each and every bird owner realizes the seriousness of this mass movement and takes action against restrictive regulations, we will lose our right to keep birds in the U.S.*** ➤

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE (AFA) CONVENTION 2002

Hyatt Regency Hotel – Tampa City Center, Florida

Thursday, AUGUST 8 – Sunday, August 11, 2002

Mark your calendar ! Book your flight ! The American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) Annual Convention will be truly an exciting and important convention this year. The Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater area is a beautiful tourist attraction with easy access by air into the Tampa International Airport (TPA). There is much to do here and you will find some great parks such as Busch Gardens, the Lowry Park Zoo and the Florida Aquarium. There are wonderful museums and great restaurants, including the Cuban influenced Ybor City with art galleries, restaurants, and bars. In all, there will be something for everyone in Tampa.

This has been a year of many positive changes within the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA). What is important, is that we are striving to provide all of you with the best services and with opportunities for involvement in a great organization. This convention will allow you to participate in the camaraderie and discussions with fellow aviculturists and bird enthusiasts on a number of wide ranging topics. It is our goal to have all of you leave the convention, not only pleased at having had a great time but also pleased with the new information that you can actually use.

Convenient Changes in Conference Schedule and Format

The House of Delegates meeting will be held on Wednesday and the Conference will kick off that evening with a Florida Fish Feast at the Lowry Park Zoo. The zoo is famous for its Manatee and Aquatic Center, where you can view the strange sea creatures through a glass exhibit area. It should be a wonderful evening of fun. Friday and Saturday will be full days of speakers and discussion roundtables while Sunday morning will be devoted to advanced Avian Workshops. The specialty groups will meet on Friday night and the Banquet will be on Saturday evening. We hope that these changes will better fit in with everyone's busy lifestyle thus allowing for greater participation.

Speakers and Topics

We have a very exciting line up of great speakers and important topics for this convention. Keep checking the AFA web site and the next *Watchbird* issue for information. We have speakers from the avicultural (both national and international), zoo, and conservation communities, so it should be a wonderful and exciting mix of people and subjects. Topics include aviary and nursery management, avian pediatrics, breeding and management of psittacines and softbills, behavior, mutations, breeding for show, welfare, field conservation, and the latest updates on research and trial for a West Nile virus avian vaccine. In addition to the great speaker lineup, we have added an "Issues in Aviculture" roundtable to focus on current topics of importance to aviculturists. Representatives from aviculture and related industries will address areas of concern such as the potential impact on aviculture of the proposed changes to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) to include birds. Another roundtable will focus on the potential crisis in shipping, particularly due to increased security precautions since September 11th, and a third session will deal with certification proposals, including proposals for certification as well as an open discussion of minimum standards and certification of facilities.

Sunday Avian Workshops

When making your travel plans, keep in mind that we have changed the schedule to include a Sunday morning session from 8:00 A.M. until noon. (This is at no extra expense to you as it is included in the registration.) There will be three avian workshops focused on single topics, including a workshop on studbooks and population management, "Sex and the Single Bird," a workshop entitled "Nuts and Bolts" (a how-to session on everything from aviary construction to installation and use of remote video cameras in your aviary and nest boxes), and an "Avian Behavior Workshop" to address behavior issues in both companion bird and breeding situations.

Poster Sessions

This year, we have added a new component to the convention to present you with more information regarding aviculture and zoo based programs. The first AFA Poster Session will be set up on Friday and Saturday. Abstracts of 200 words or less must be received by May 15th. Information and instructions will be posted on the AFA web site, or can be obtained from the new AFA Office.

Hotel and Registration Information

We have negotiated an absolutely great rate of \$ 89.00 per night for a single/double and of \$ 114.00 for triple/quadruple occupancy at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the Tampa City Center.

Call 1-800-233-1234 or 813-225-1234 to make your reservation before July 16, 2002.

Additional information will be posted on the AFA website at www.afa.birds.org.

Keep checking it for speaker information, registration and poster session instructions.

