

## *Animal Rights: Shipping by Air and the Puppy Protection Act.*

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Aviculture covers many types of pet bird ownership: from the single pet bird owner to the bird breeder to the bird rescuer. Often people forget that there are also bird owners who keep and breed game birds and waterfowl, cranes, and owls. Unfortunately, this wide range of types of bird owners does not make it easy to communicate about the complex issues facing present day aviculturists. However, it is becoming ever more critical that the issues be well understood by the majority of people who keep and/or breed birds of any kind. Why? Quite simply, restrictive laws are being generated at the national level which will eventually affect even the single pet bird owner. Let's discuss two issues before us today: pressure on the air lines to restrict or prohibit the transportation of birds, and legislative proposals to expand the powers of the federal government over pet animals.

There were problems associated with shipping birds through the airlines even before the September 11 terrorist attack. After that event, numerous changes in airline regulations were put forward, most referring to changes in the Federal Aviation Association (FAA) regulations. Finding that there were different regulations required by different airlines, I asked why. I was told that there were basic requirements but that each airline could establish stricter guidelines for shippers. First, agents stated that people had to be "known shippers." Several years ago, one airline agent quoted exactly those words and requirements to me in regards to shipping birds via air cargo. The "known shipper" requirement was put in place by that airline, long before September 11. Some airlines now state

that shippers must be "verified shippers," which means an airline official must visit your place of business and establish that you are breeding birds.

While all this was in progress, there was an effort on the part of the animal rights (AR) folks to prevent day old chicks from being shipped through the postal system in air cargo, claiming that these chicks were at risk of dying due to lack of food and water. Day old poultry are very hardy. There were 300 Rhode Island Red chicks, newly hatched, which were supposed to fly via air cargo from the East Coast to California, but no air cargo was moving as it was the week after the WTC disaster. The hatchery placed the chicks with a long haul trucker. They arrived five days later in California. Out of three hundred live chicks transported, one arrived dead. One died a couple days later. The rest were just fine. Chickens and other precocial birds are designed to survive for quite a time without food or water; they are using up their yolk sac. Shipping them by air cargo is the quickest and most reasonable way to move chicks across the U.S. But, would anyone except a poultry producer know that? Probably not.

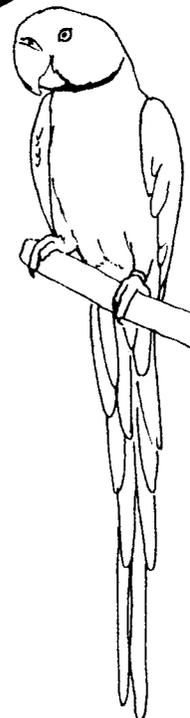
Legislation potentially close to home was recently proposed in Congress in two bills, SB 1478 and HB 3058, fondly called the Puppy Protection Act. Now who would be against protecting innocent little puppies? The animal rights folks are skillful in placing the right buzz words before members of the general public. This legislation is promoted by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and has the potential for creating federal government regulations on when, how, and whether or not you can breed your dogs. So, why do we bird people care about dogs? We care about this proposed legislation because it opens the door to the expansion of this regulation to include the control of the breeding of *all* pets. And, haven't we been hearing the cries of some of the pet bird rescuers, that there should be an end to the breeding of pet birds?

The Puppy Protection Act includes three areas of concern: **1)**

The act would require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish regulations pertaining to the age and frequency for breeding female dogs. **2)** The act would require the government to establish and enforce compliance with engineering standards based on the recommendations of animal welfare and behavior experts for the socialization of dogs. And, interesting enough, dog breeders would have no input to these engineering standards. **3)** The act would provide for a revoking of a person's federal license to sell dogs if the dog breeder had three violations of the Act within an eight year period. The supporters of this bill are telling the public that it will only affect "puppy mills." Unless a recent decision obtained in federal district court is reversed, (the Doris Day Animal League suit to expand coverage of the number and types of breeders regulated under the AWA), this Puppy Protection Act and the AWA would require that every person who breeds and sells one litter of puppies is subject to the regulations. Do you see how the animal rights folks work? Focus the issue on the worst cases in communicating with legislators and the public, but in the proposed legislation, cover all cases!

We all know that there are problems with unwanted dogs and cats and that there are some animal breeders who could improve on their husbandry and management. However, do we need federal regulators inspecting every person who breeds an animal and sells the young? Do we need federal licensing and permits for each animal breeder? Who will be most affected by these regulations? Will it be the puppy mills who already hide from scrutiny by the public and officialdom? Or will it be the people who are doing their best to provide good husbandry and proper management for their animals and who "follow the rules" already? Will the public and the animals benefit? Or will this be one more victory for the animal rights agenda: the eventual elimination of pet animals? Please check out these bills and talk to your legislators. 

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