

## OHIO ANIMAL OWNERS GROUP CRITICIZES DEAL WITH OFB, STRICKLAND AND HSUS

July 21, 2010

Ohio Association of Animal Owners, a 10,000-member grassroots organization representing animal owners in the State of Ohio, opposes the recent "agreement" reached 6/30/2010 by Ohio Farm Bureau, Governor Ted Strickland, and Humane Society of the United States.

The proposed rule to prohibit possession and sale of certain **non**-livestock animals (declared "dangerous" by HSUS and the Governor) would severely impact breeders and exhibitors in Ohio who are federally licensed and inspected to ensure the safety of the public and the animals. Drive-through animal parks, educators and exhibitors throughout the state stand to lose if this prohibition is passed. The US Constitution (14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Bill of Rights) states "No State shall...deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law..." "Due process" generally guarantees that 1) property may be taken by the government only for public purposes, **and** 2) Owners of taken property must be fairly compensated. The rule proposed by HSUS and Governor Strickland violates both of these provisions. As it stands now, the Governor has agreed to "grandfather" those who own these animals at the time the rules take effect, but those owners cannot breed, sell, replace, or acquire additional animals. In other words, those owners are forbidden the **use** of their own private property, and will not be compensated for it. It is no different than the government taking away the guns or farms of Ohio citizens and not paying for them. For the federally licensed and inspected breeders and exhibitors, the cost will be far greater, as their businesses and very livelihoods will be affected. Ohio will suffer tremendous financial loss if this rule is passed; jobs will be lost, as will millions of dollars in feed, fencing, veterinarian care and other associated costs. This rule has been misrepresented as an effort to prevent people from owning "dangerous" animals as "pets", but those are not the people who stand to lose the most; it's the federally licensed and inspected businesses who will bear the brunt of the loss, along with the public who visits the animal parks and petting zoos and who cheers Obie the Tiger, mascot for the Massillon Boosters.

Ohio Farm Bureau does not represent exotic animal owners or dog breeders and had no right to enter into any agreement concerning those non-livestock animals, nor did the commodity groups who may have participated in the discussions. Exotic animal industry representatives and dog breeding industry representatives were excluded from the discussions, yet they are the ones being sold out to HSUS under this agreement.

Senate Bill 95, which Governor Strickland and Ohio Farm Bureau have committed to push through the legislature this year, will require Ohio commercial dog breeders who are federally licensed and inspected to tear down their existing facilities and rebuild them at approximately 3 times the cost. A facility that cost the owner \$15,000 to put up

will have to be torn down at the owner's expense and rebuilt for approximately \$45,000 – and that is only the beginning.

Ohio has, up until now, been a stronghold of agriculture. We are one of the few states that allows and encourages private entrepreneurship of exotic animals, and federally licensed and inspected commercial dog breeding without arbitrary limits imposed by radical animal rights activists. That makes Ohio a prime target for HSUS.

Ohio Association of Animal Owners has worked diligently for the past 20 years to safeguard the rights of animal owners in Ohio to conduct their legal businesses without interference from radical animal rights activists or from legislation initiated/encouraged by radical groups such as HSUS. We thought Ohio Farm Bureau and our Governor were on the same page with us, but the agreement of June 30 with HSUS indicates otherwise.

Victoria Galle', President

Ohio Association of Animal Owners