



Dogs are Barking About...

Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs Newsletter #3

Fall-Winter 2019

Changing the PA Dangerous Dog Law (SB798)

Admiral Perry Obedience DTC
Airedale Terrier Club of Greater Philadelphia
Allentown DTC
Anthracite Brittany Club
Back Mountain Kennel Club
Bald Eagle Kennel Club
Berks County DTC
Berks County Kennel Club
Bernese Mt Dog Club of Watchung
Borzo Club of Delaware Valley
Bucks County Kennel Club
Bull Terrier Club of Philadelphia Inc.
Bulldog Club of Philadelphia
Butler County Kennel Club
Butler Dog Training Association
Cavalier King Charles Spaniel of Delaware Valley
Chambersburg Area Kennel Club
Colonial Rottweiler Club
Dachshund Fanciers Assoc. of Berks County
Delaware County Kennel Club
Delaware Valley Bullmastiff Club
Delaware Valley Dalmatian Club
Delaware Valley German Shepherd Dog Club
Delaware Valley Havanese Club
Delaware Valley Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier Club
Delaware Valley Toy Dog Fanciers Assoc.
Delaware Valley Weimaraner Club
Delaware Valley Yorkshire Terrier Club
Devon Dog Show Association
Doberman Pinscher Rescue of PA
Dog Training Center of Chester County PA, Inc.
Dog Training Club of York
Erie Kennel Club
Great Dane Club of Lehigh Valley
Great Dane Club of Pennsylvania
Greater Philadelphia DFA
Greater Pittsburgh Golden Retriever Club
Greater Valley Forge Rhodesian Ridgeback Club
Harrisburg Kennel Club
Hatboro Dog Club
Hilltown Dog Training Club
Huntington Valley Kennel Club
Inter-State Shetland Sheepdog Club of PA
Irish Wolfhound Association of Delaware Valley
Kan-Do K9 Sports Association
Keeshond Club of Delaware Valley
Kennel Club of Philadelphia

When you change a law, you are generally seeking to change public behavior. For instance, if you lower the threshold for Blood Alcohol you expect people to drink less before getting behind the wheel. So what behavior change are state Senators expecting when they lower the threshold to charging a dog owner or keeper with harboring a dangerous dog?

A change to the PA Dangerous Dog Law is being sponsored by Senator Thomas Killion (R9, Delaware County) as Senate Bill 798. A child in his district was severely injured by a friend's dog while he was visiting in that friend's home. The dog's owners brought many "character" witnesses to court to say the dog had shown no previous propensity to attack. The Magistrate erroneously ruled (in our opinion) that the dog could not therefore be labeled dangerous and that the owners were not guilty of harboring a dangerous dog. The distraught mother demanded changes to address this injustice.

The current Dangerous Dog Law allows anyone who has been attacked, not necessarily bitten, to file a complaint with a District Magistrate. That Magistrate is compelled to hold a hearing on the complaint. The complaint does not have to be filed by a Dog Warden or Police Officer. If you are chased into a car or building by a dog that clearly intends to harm you, you can file a complaint alleging it is a Dangerous Dog. It does not have to actually bite you. Also, the current Dangerous Dog Law does not require evidence of a prior propensity in order to label a dog as "dangerous". It does require evidence of a prior propensity in order to convict the owner or keep of harboring a Dangerous Dog.

It is the automatic charge of "harboring a dangerous dog" that has us concerned. In our experience as dog owners, trainers and handlers, we have seen dogs that have "gone off" on others for reasons we cannot imagine. Subsequent medical exams may determine that there was an unknown, underlying illness or injury causing the dog pain, but this isn't always the case. They cannot tell us about something that scared them long before, or if they are just having a bad day.

In addition, irresponsible rescues and shelters are placing dogs with known bite histories without telling the new owners. Some of these dogs have attacked and caused serious physical injury or death. Who is responsible, the new owner of the dog who has no knowledge of the dog's history or the rescue or shelter that placed the dog knowing it was dangerous? The question is, what would the legislators who favor this change have us do to avoid being charged with harboring a dangerous dog if the owner wasn't told about the dog's history or the dog never showed any signs previously of attacking?

If this change becomes law, every dog owner or keep in Pennsylvania will be at risk for being charged with a crime despite not having taken any action or failing to take any step to that point. Criminal convictions, even for summary offenses, can increase your insurance costs or have effects on future court proceedings many years later. For those who have never had any negative interaction with the justice system, this can be devastating. The law does need to be changed to hold

Kerry Blue Terrier Club of Greater Pittsburgh
 Keystone English Springer Spaniel Club
 Lancaster Kennel Club
 Lebanon County Kennel Club
 Lehigh German Shepherd Dog Club
 Lehigh Valley Coursing Club
 Lehigh Valley Kennel Club
 Lenape Golden Retriever Club
 Liberty English Cocker Spaniel Fanciers
 Lower Bucks Dog Training Club
 Lower Susquehanna Bulldog Club
 Mid Susquehanna Valley Kennel Club
 Middle Atlantic St Bernard Club
 Mifflin County Dog Training Club
 Montgomery County Kennel Club
 Mt Nittany DTC
 Nita-Nee Kennel Club
 Obedience Training Class of Harrisburg
 Old York Road DTC
 PA Sportmen's Alliance
 Penn Ridge Kennel Club
 Penn Treaty Kennel Club
 Penn-Dutch Great Pyrenees Club
 Philadelphia DTC
 Pocono Mountain Kennel Club
 Poodle Club of the Lehigh Valley
 Quaker City Doberman Pinscher Club
 Saucon Valley Boxer Club
 Schuylkill Valley German Shorthaired Pointer Club
 Siberian Husky Club of Delaware Valley
 Skycastle French Hounds
 South Eastern Keystone Chinese Shar-Pei Club
 South Hills Kennel Club
 Suburban Dog Training Club of
 Eastern Mont-gomery County
 Tri State Dog Obedience Club
 Waterland Retriever Club
 Westmoreland County Obedience Training Club
 William Penn Poodle Club
 William Penn West Highland White Terrier Club
 Williamsport Dog Training Club
 York County Dog Training Club

those who place dogs with known dangerous propensities responsible for the harm they create by placing these dogs.

The PA Federation of Dog Clubs believes a lot of work needs to be done on education of both justices and the general public regarding the current Dangerous Dog Law. Only after that, can we really decide what changes need to be made to strengthen it going forward.



Legislation to Watch

HB2036 - After reading the memo on HB2036 it sounded like a proposal we could support. It mandates that all types of kennels meet the same standards as the commercial kennels set by the Dog Law changes of 2008. However, after reading the actual text of the Bill and analyzing it closer, we are going to oppose it. When we drafted the new Dog law in 2008, separate provisions were applied to Private Kennels versus Commercial Kennels. The only new requirements for private kennels was an exercise plan and smoke alarms and fire extinguishers. There were many additional requirements for commercial kennels, including statutory restrictions and in regulations from the health advisory board. These include many of the APHIS requirements for commercial kennels like being able to sanitize surfaces (no dogs on rugs or near painted walls), unfettered access to the outside runs for exercise, no dogs on wire flooring, etc.

It is not reasonable in our opinion to mandate the same requirements for a hobby breeder, raising a litter or two annually in their home, as is mandated for a commercial kennel.



Kennel Raid Concerns

Many have heard the old parable about the frog in the pot. If you throw a frog in hot water, it will hop right out. However, if you put the frog in a pot of room-temperature water and slowly heat the water, the frog will be cooked before it realizes what is happening. We are afraid that is what is happening to show/hobby breeders in our Commonwealth with recent kennel raids on marginal facilities.

All the information coming out of recent raids via the media has been very 1-sided with only the Humane Police Officer's version of conditions being conveyed. In most cases, conditions are depicted as unlivable and disgusting. Supporters of radical, national animal organizations come out in droves in social media condemning these "horrible puppy mills" and demanding that the HPO seize all the animals on the properties whether they are signed over or not. If someone dares question if conditions really are as bad as reported, these people pounce and vilify the questioner. The concept of questioning authority apparently does not apply when animals are involved.

But why would authorities lie about the conditions at a kennel? In recent raids, the dogs involved were highly marketable toy breeds such as Chinese Cresteds and French Bulldogs. If you are skeptical of this motivation, again you need only look at social media. People lined up by the dozens to "adopt" one of these unfortunate pups. One must wonder, given that shelters have a high percentage of "pit bulls" available already, if these kennels were filled with pit bulls, would there have been a raid?

Another troubling aspect of these raids is the heavy-handed tactic used by HPOs threatening to take every animal on the property or adding additional criminal counts unless the subject signs over ownership of the most marketable animals immediately. Keep in mind, the United State Supreme Court has ruled that police and prosecutors can lie to the accused without penalty. The accused on the other hand will face criminal prosecution for perjury or obstruction of justice if they lie to authorities. Please see our brochure, what to do when “Animal Control Comes Knocking” so you know your rights before it happens.

Finally, keep in mind the passage of Act 50 in 2013. This Law provides for a hearing to determine the cost of room & board for seized animals pending trial. The shelter will bring documentation to court and a hearing will be conducted to determine a “reasonable cost” for each animal per day. It will not matter what the accused can afford; only what the shelter says their expenses are.

Once that cost per animal per day is set, the accused will be given a schedule to make payments. If they cannot make those payments, the animals will be considered forfeited and the shelter will assume ownership. They will then be free to adopt out those animals for their usual fee. Even if the accused is subsequently found not guilty or their case is dismissed, once those animals are adopted out, the accused may not get their property returned. The shelter, courts and HPOs are not required to reimburse the accused for the lost value of their property either.

We have no inside information about the conditions at recently raided kennels prior to the raids but the lack of transparency is very troubling. We certainly see a need for changes in Act 50 to recommit our justice system to the concept of innocent until *proven* guilty. We ask all to be skeptical the next time a reporter comes on the air to lament the unlivable conditions at a recently raided kennel because who knows which of us will be the next frog being cooked.

Club Spotlight: PA Sled Dog Club

PA Federation of Dog Clubs' Newest Member Club

The Pennsylvania Federation of Dog Clubs welcomes our newest member organization, the Pennsylvania Sled Dog Club to our ranks. Today the club has over 150 members from Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Delaware, Virginia, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey and Alaska. Classes at club races range from the International Sled Dog Racing Association's (ISDRA) Sanctioned classes right down to the Pee Wee classes. Sportsman classes for beginning and recreational mushers are also popular. We also feature pure bred classes. Many club members compete in weight pulls sanctioned by the International Weight Pull Association (IWPA).

The Pennsylvania Sled Dog Club has been a member club and a strong supporter of ISDRA for over twenty years. Club events are run under



Photo from <https://www.pasleddogclub.com/>.
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ISDRA rules and many club events apply for not only ISDRA but also IFSS sanctioning.

Recreational teams, rig races, weight pullers, officials, juniors, and professional sprint racers: these are

the many faces of the Pennsylvania Sled Dog Club. Such diversity, bonded together by a shared love of the dogs and sled dog sports, is the core and strength of the Pennsylvania Sled Dog Club.

DTCCC Profile

The Dog Training Center of Chester County is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization run by members for its members and the public since 1974. We strive to provide a friendly, welcoming atmosphere. Dog training is all we do, we're specialists!

Our training program is positive in its approach and based on the tested and proven science of animal learning. Our instructors are certified by an independent national testing agency through the Certification Council of Professional Dog Trainers and are required to earn continuing educational credits annually. You will find that DTCCC instructors are passionate enthusiasts of the disciplines that they teach.

DTCCC is also committed to the community. Club instructors and members regularly volunteer their time to conduct Canine Good Citizen and Therapy Dogs International testing. We also actively support area shelters and rescue groups through our Rescue Liaison Program (RLP) and provide training discounts for dogs obtained from local rescue groups that participate in RLP. Supporting local non-profits through the donation of classes and training discounts is another way we support our community.

Vision Statement: All dogs are effectively trained through dog-



DOG TRAINING
CENTER
OF CHESTER COUNTY

friendly techniques and therefore, are lifelong companions in a relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

Mission Statement: To enhance the human-dog relationship by educating members, trainers, and the public and advocating dog friendly training.

A few upcoming events being held at our training center and to which we invite the public to learn more about us and dog activities include:

- Therapy Dogs International Test- Sunday November 17
- Cynosport Rally Trial - all day December 8, 2019
- NAFA Flyball Tournament- New Years Eve afternoon, Tuesday, Dec 31st.
- Agility Fun Run- Saturday, January 4, 2020 from 10 am - 4 pm
- AKC Community Canine Test (Advanced CGC)- April 2020

DTCCC offers 40 to 50 dog training classes a week for beginners to advanced sports teams in our indoor, temperature controlled, 10,000 sq. ft. training center. Visit our website at DTCCC.org to

learn more about upcoming Puppy Kindergarten and Socialization classes, Basics for Puppies, Mini Weekend Manner courses, as well as classes for Basic Manners, Dog Sports Fundamentals and Foundation classes. Agility, Rally, Obedience, NoseWork, Freestyle/ Dancing, Trieball, Trick Dog, and Show Handling training courses are offered. All classes are held at this location.

After visiting the website, should you need additional assistance to determine the class that is right for you and your dog, call us at 610-280-6960. We are a volunteer organization and do not have a full time staff, so please leave a message and a DTCCC representative will contact you.

Feel free to stop in during a class (reference the class schedule on our website) to see our training center. Our address is 880 Springdale Drive, Suite 100, Exton, PA 19341, conveniently located near Routes 30 and 202.

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Editing and Layout: Marguerite Plank

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