

Wisconsin Sheltie Rescue

Position Statement

"Puppy Mill Law" AB 90

History of WSR: Wisconsin Sheltie Rescue was founded in 1997 by Lisa Martin. In 1999 she also founded Wisconsin Dog Rescue, an organization that allows networking between shelters and rescues. Since its inception in 1997, WSR, an all-volunteer organization has found homes for over 1,000 lost or abandoned shelties or sheltie mixes. We do not take dogs from out of state unless all the shelties in WI are already cared for. We do not adopt out our dogs at retail outlets like Petsmart to people who have not had their references checked or home visits done. Every dog is spayed/neutered prior to placement as well as all shots and Heartworm tested at our own veterinarian, not a low cost spay/neuter warehouse-type clinic. Each dog goes home with a contract that has a \$2500 penalty clause for breaking the contract and a lifetime return guarantee. We have a monthly newsletter. Our adoption fee has never increased from the original \$125 per dog.

History of the Puppy Mill Law: The Puppy Mill Law was originally drafted by the founder of the Puppy Mill Project because of a Dalmatian that she owned who came from the biggest puppy mill in Wisconsin, in Sheboygan County. This puppy mill is still in business and is now licensed by the DATCP (Department of Trade and Consumer Protection) under the Puppy Mill law. WSR attended many informational meetings on the law, and rescues and hobby breeders were led to believe from the start that this law would close puppy mills as we know them and regulate 'bad' rescues by requiring them to be licensed and inspected. We were told that the license fees would be "minimal" and that the requirements were things that good rescues and breeders were already doing.

Who drafted the verbiage in the law: The committee was made up of many people from the pet industry including humane society paid staff, veterinarians and large scale breeders. It's important to note that there was not ONE rescue person or hobby breeder on the committee that was not also a paid humane society staff member. The entire committee was made up of people who would either financially profit from a law or are well-funded to handle any fees.

Who needs to be licensed: The law requires any rescue or breeder to be licensed if they 'sell' or adopt out more than 25 dogs per year. The fee amount depends on whether or not you are 501(c)3. Anyone 501(c)3 pays a flat amount of \$125 per year to the DATCP. If you are not 501(c)3, you pay based on the number of animals you find homes for per year. In WSR's case, this amount would be \$500.00 per year. Backyard breeders who do no health testing, breed designer breeds or breed a few litters a year are not required to be licensed.

What is a CVT: The law requires any dog that is adopted out or sold to the public to come with a health certificate from the vet. This certificate expires 30 days from the date of issue, usually well before the dog actually finds a home. The Puppy Mill Project website states that the certificates cost 12cents each. That is the cost of the actual form to the veterinarians. The cost that rescues incur to have vets fill them out can be anywhere from \$20 to \$50 per dog, per visit (not including exam fees and office visit fees).

How this affects WSR and other small rescues: Unfortunately, after 17 years of doing 100 or more dogs per year, this law would cripple our rescue financially should we choose to be licensed so we are now staying under the 25 dog limit in order to avoid being licensed. There are several things that caused us to come to this decision.

1. We want to continue to take every dog to the vet when he/she comes into rescue but with the current law requirements, any CVT that we would get for that dog would expire before he/she was ready for their new home. This would mean an extra ½ hour one way trip to the vet to renew the CVT and another \$20-\$30. (Remember, our adoption fee has always been \$125.)
2. Our group's fee to the DATCP would be \$500 for finding homes for 50-99 dogs and a lot more if we found homes for over 100.
3. We would be listed on the DATCP website right along with any other 'Dog Seller'. It is not our wish to be on the same listing with someone that breeds without testing, buses in vanloads of puppies from out of state and whose dogs end up in rescue or homeless again on a regular basis.

What you can do: EDUCATE yourself. When you hear remarks about this new law, ask the person speaking HOW THEY ARE AFFECTED. Continue to support the smaller rescues who have been doing good things for a really long time without the benefits of getting paid. Most importantly, PLEASE STOP purchasing puppies from pet stores, puppy mills and backyard breeders. Unfortunately, because of the public continuing to purchase from these places, the legislators felt the law was necessary in the first place. It would have been a lot easier to close puppy mills in the old fashioned way.....stop their income.

What we will do: We'll continue to take in shelties as we can and referring the rest to out of state rescues that are not crippled by this law. We will continue to provide support for any adopted shelties that are in their homes (over 800 of them). We will continue to advocate on behalf of homeless dogs and provide resources like foster homes, advice and financial support to rescues with the same mission as ours.

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