

Animal Rights Activists Get Official Roles In City and County Dog Law Enforcement

Undercover Surveillance, Vigilantes, Uniforms and Badges
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PALM BEACH, FL – Animal rights activists in many parts of the country are proving the adage that paranoia doesn't necessarily mean dog owners are crazy.

Cities and counties that have enacted repressive ordinances targeting dog owners are increasingly using volunteers as a major tool to enforce the law. Not surprisingly, only animal rights activists are likely to be accepted as volunteers. Many of these activists are opposed to the private ownership of animals in any form, and most of them are willing to accept what they term animal "guardianship" only under strict government regulation.

The vigilantes are coming!

That is true in Los Angeles, Dallas, San Antonio and Houston. It also is true in several states where volunteer animal rights activists are routinely sent undercover to investigate allegations of animal cruelty and even to check out people who advertise a litter of puppies in local newspapers.

But Palm Beach County, Florida, has made vigilantism into an art form, and Los Angeles may be preparing to carry it to the nth degree.

Volunteer activists in Palm Beach County have been sworn in, given badges and uniforms, and granted the authority to enter private homes to check for violations of a new mandatory spay/neuter ordinance, animal cruelty and other possible dog law violations.

These members of the "Palm Beach County Citizen Animal Patrol" are empowered to issue formal written warnings for noncompliance and turn in the information to regular animal control officers for official investigation and prosecution.

According to a county announcement of the program, search warrants are not needed for these volunteers to inspect private homes or privately

owned pets. The county's official position is that "The hobby breeders who have a permit from the county have already given implied consent to these people to enter their homes by signing the permit."

That is the little known fine print of dog and kennel licenses in almost every state: If you buy a license, you sign away your right to privacy. If you don't buy a license, of course, you are breaking the law and can get busted.

Catch 22!

In many other areas of civil law, such as with zoning and building permits, obtaining a license has been viewed in court as *prima facie* permission for government officials to inspect private property. This precedent is now being extended to dog laws, and citizen patrols to "rat out" noncompliant neighbors are being seen as important enforcement tools.

Spying on their neighbors and intimidating dog owners is only one part of the job description of the Palm Beach County Citizen Animal Patrol. Other duties include answering newspaper ads placed by people who advertise puppies for sale, contacting dog clubs for breeder referrals, and even setting up surveillance at dog shows.

If they see anything they consider suspicious or a possible violation of the law, they are told to report the information to animal control to start a full investigation.

In the world of crime, they would be called snitches. In the world of animal law, they see themselves as on a mission to save helpless animals from exploitation.

According to an article in the Palm Beach Post newspaper, citizen patrols will help increase enforcement without adding to municipal costs.

Local officials stress the "public education" aspect of the citizen patrols, but are noticeably quiet about the surveillance and enforcement aspects of the volunteer positions.

This pattern is apparent in Dallas, San Antonio and Houston, which passed draconian pet sterilization ordinances within the past year. Volunteers are being actively recruited in those Texas cities to help "educate" people about the new laws. As in most places, these citizens groups are comprised almost entirely of animal rights activists, and each application must be approved by a quasi-official advisory board

that consists of animal rights activists. People who advocate the right to own dogs need not apply.

Dog owners are convinced that these volunteers also will be used to find and turn in people who do not follow the laws.

Los Angeles appears to be adding its own twist.

The Los Angeles Department of Animal Services, directed by animal rights extremist Ed Boks, has set up a program of Directors of Animal Welfare, nicknamed DAWs. The city has been divided into 86 different "neighborhoods," and thus far a reported 44 of the positions have been filled. According to an announcement from Boks, some of these appointees do not live within the City of Los Angeles.

The DAWs website profiles the backgrounds of many of the appointees, and they read like a who's who of the animal rights movement in Los Angeles. Many of the profiles tout the appointees' close ties to the radical Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the ultra-radical People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Many of the profiles also tout radical vegetarian activism, opposition to the use of animals in circuses and other darling causes of the animal rights elite. Overall, it is clear that the vast majority of these people oppose the private ownership of animals, and are totally opposed to the right to breed dogs.

Please read some of the profiles for yourself: <http://www.dawprogram.org/>.

The DAWS Board also has several committees, including an "Animals Are Not Property Committee," whose members are listed as Andrea Boyington, Adele Langdon, Tina Reynolds and Patti Sugarman. Each of these people has published ties to radical animal rights groups.

None of the profiles indicate that the appointees breed dogs, show dogs, compete with dogs, or belong to any organization that works to protect the rights of dog owners. Not one.

A very ominous sign is that DAWs has gone underground since Los Angeles passed an exceedingly restrictive spay and neuter mandate this year. The DAWs meetings used to be advertised on their website, agendas used to be published, and minutes were displayed online.

Since August, all public accountability and openness have been removed from the DAWs website.

In addition, the DAWs volunteer manual has been withdrawn for complete

revision, and is no longer available to the public.

An announcement from Boks called the DAWs appointees “the eyes and ears for the animals in their areas.”

In other words, being snitches is one of their duties.

The DAWs mission statement says: “DAWs provide a voice and a form of political representation for nonhuman animals.” That line is straight out of the PETA textbook.

Perhaps the most common use of animal rights activists as volunteers has been for undercover work and surveillance in animal cruelty investigations. Because these volunteers have no official designation, the use of them is not subject to constitutional protections against searches without warrants. They go under cover as private citizens, and then file complaints with animal cruelty police officers. They work with the officers, and their identities are not revealed. The officers use these “complaints” as legal grounds to obtain a search warrant.

The most famous use of undercover volunteers occurred at a California slaughterhouse that was highly publicized this year and led to a complete overhaul of federal and state inspections.

A large percentage of animal cruelty cases in several states rely on animal rights activists to go undercover into private kennels and dog events, and their observations and opinions are relayed as “semi-anonymous complaints” to humane police officers in order to obtain search warrants. “Semi-anonymous” means that these people’s identities are known to the officers and judge, but are not revealed to the public or the person who is accused.

A common tactic is for these activists to pose as puppy buyers when responding to advertisements in newspapers or online, or to appear at dog events as a spectator. This tactic is so common that virtually anyone who advertises puppies for sale in many areas of the country can expect to be visited by undercover activists pretending to be looking for a puppy. Usually they are easy to spot. They are mostly college-aged people who know little about the breed of the puppies that are for sale.

Sometimes it gets much more organized. For example, the toll of animals from Hurricane Katrina has led to the formation of many “disaster rescue groups.” They raise money locally to rescue animals from disasters, and sometimes get contributions of tax dollars. Fortunately, disasters are rare in most places. But these programs

allow a well-funded team of animal rights activist/volunteers to perform organized surveillance work. For example, a Venango County, PA, disaster rescue group received newspaper coverage this year for playing the key undercover role that led to the animal cruelty prosecution of a “puppy mill” in West Virginia.

Another Pennsylvania situation that we reported this year was how animal rights activists have begun to take over local zoning boards, in order to require people who seek a permit to build a kennel to meet impossible demands. In one case that would be amusing if it hadn't harmed a person who wanted to build a kennel, these activists required an applicant for a kennel permit to promise that none of his dogs would be mated naturally.

What can we do about it?

The first thing that dog owners must do is to understand that there is a planned takeover of local boards and commissions by animal rights groups, and that this has been happening behind the scenes for many years.

Thus, vigilance is the first step. Find out what official or quasi-official groups have been created in your town and county that work on animal issues. Animal shelter or animal control advisory boards are common examples.

Then, learn the names of the members of these boards and committees. These names should be public records, and also may be found by looking up the group's website. Chances are an Internet search will yield many connections to animal rights groups.

The next step is educating public officials about the real agenda of animal rights groups such as HSUS and PETA, and, if possible, showing verified connections to members of local boards. Letters to the editor of local newspapers are another good approach, if you have documentation.

However, the most important thing you can do is to volunteer to serve on any board, commission or committee in your town or county that deals with animal issues. Let your elected officials know that you want to serve on these boards, and volunteer to fill any current or future openings.

Our goal should be to have as many dog owners and people who support the rights of dog owners as possible on any board, committee or commission. It is vital for us to be able to begin to reverse the animal rights strategy of taking over local boards.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance will assist local dog owners in any way possible to accomplish this important goal.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance represents owners, breeders and professionals who work with breeds of dogs that are used for hunting. We welcome people who work with other breeds, too, as legislative issues affect all of us. We are a grassroots movement working to protect the rights of dog owners, and to assure that the traditional relationships between dogs and humans maintains its rightful place in American society and life.

The American Sporting Dog Alliance also needs your help so that we can continue to work to protect the rights of dog owners. Your membership, participation and support are truly essential to the success of our mission. We are funded solely by the donations of our members, and maintain strict independence.

Please visit us on the web at <http://www.americansportingdogalliance.org>. Our email is asda@csonline.net. Complete directions to join by mail or online are found at the bottom left of each page.

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Judy Criswell
~Juwel's Bostons~