

White Paper: Interstate Animal Transport Industry

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Introduction

For several years, and especially since the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005, an informal industry has developed, the function of which is the interstate movement of animals, in particular dogs, into the State of Connecticut from other states.

There are many reasons for this phenomenon; however, the driving force is obviously the emotional power derived from a perception on the part of the citizenry and those who are employed by this industry that they are alleviating animal suffering. The good intentions of those Connecticut citizens who would adopt transported dogs, as well as the good intentions of many who operate as agents of this transport industry are not in question. While there are those who are involved solely for profit that alone is not the reason we focus on these practices. We focus on these practices because we believe that they result in a net *increase* in suffering and an abuse of the animal control resources of the State of Connecticut and its constituent municipalities.

The animal transport industry is in the main, informally structured, with a diverse and geographically widespread network of individuals, not-for-profit organizations, commercial breeders, other informal confederations of individuals and municipal impoundment facility employees, communicating and facilitating interstate animal transport. They use the internet and world wide web sites dedicated to animal adoption to bring potential animal owners into contact with individuals and groups operating as agents of dog transport and adoption. This network and its operation are commonly known as "pet rescue."

Through these websites (petfinder.com and others) Connecticut citizens interested in owning a dog can unobtrusively identify one that meets their requirements and privately arrange for its delivery to Connecticut. Often, individuals based in Connecticut or in other states, operate as intermediaries ("agents") in placement (sale) of these dogs through their previously developed, internet-based relationship with those in control of the physical facilities where the dogs may be located. These agents generally do not have physical custody of the dogs and in many cases the arrangements are made without them ever having custody. The actual transport process is accomplished either through commercial driving companies, most notably Peterson Express Transport Service ("PETS"), and others less well known, and through private drivers that shuttle dogs a few hundred miles each, transferring the animals to the next driver at a pre-determined rendezvous point at the end of their respective transport leg. There are also general aviation pilots and at least two general aviation organizations involved.

Dogs enter the transport network from several primary sources. These include out-of-state municipal impoundment facilities, private out-of-state brick-and-mortar animal shelters, private out-of-state individual "rescue" organizations or through individuals associated with such groups, individuals or groups involved with particular breed "foster" care and from sales directly from commercial breeding operations both large and small (aka "puppy mills) some of which that are co-located with family farms in southern and Midwestern states. Indeed, some animals are bred specifically for sale into this rescue network and the characterization of these animals as animals in need of rescue is misleading.

There is little question that most of those utilizing this network to obtain family pets are well intentioned and further that many of those involved at each end of the transport chain believe they are performing good deeds by finding homes for the many out-of-state animals that would otherwise be destined for euthanasia at their point of origin. A closer look, however, reveals a plethora of unintended and negative consequences including inhumane animal welfare considerations, illegal financial transactions, circumvention of disease control regulations and unfair trade practices that harm Connecticut businesses, organizations, citizens and animals.

Problems With Interstate Animal Transport

1. Connecticut-source animals located in Connecticut brick & mortar shelters and municipal pounds are passed over for placement when large numbers of out-of-state animals arrive through the interstate dog trafficking enterprise known as "pet rescue." Many Connecticut originated animals wait long periods and/or are euthanized due to the operation of these high volume pet transport operations.
2. Trafficked dogs arrive with previously undisclosed diseases & deformities and Connecticut citizens are subject to unexpected and unrecoverable costs of veterinary care as well as exposing animals they already own to disease. Novel diseases sometimes travel with these animals and these may pose an emergent risk to animal and/or public health, risks local veterinarians and physicians may not immediately recognize.
3. Unlike regulated and inspected Connecticut brick & mortar pounds, shelters, pet stores & animal welfare organizations, out-of-state organizations and individuals operating dog trafficking enterprises skirt state laws regarding disease inspection, welfare standards & business operations requirements.
4. Cash transactions occur at each transfer of animals between organizations & individuals that facilitate rescue, between organizations & individuals that facilitate rescue and the animal transporters and between the animal buying public and the transporter or organizations or individuals facilitating rescue. It is inferred that such transactions should be accounted for and appropriately disclosed to taxing entities in multiple jurisdictions however it is not clear that this occurs.
5. Each such cash transaction deprives the state of lawful sales tax income as well as deprives legal in-state animal oriented businesses & organizations of the opportunity to do business. Many animal welfare agencies operate on shoestring budgets using volunteers and second hand items to survive. Animal transport creates a setting in which out of state not-for-profit and for-profit businesses unfairly compete with Connecticut entities.
6. The predominately south-to-north transport, especially of dogs, causes Connecticut citizens to indirectly subsidize mitigation of animal control issues in the exporting states without compensation. Our animal control costs are higher because Connecticut source animals remain in shelter longer and are harder to find placements for.
7. More broadly, the ongoing transport enables the continuing benign neglect of the serious animal control issues that exist in the dog exporting states. Our casual approach to import has become these states' unofficial overpopulation mitigation strategy, while our animal control & welfare costs remain higher than they should be.

Conclusions

Interstate Trafficking in Rescue Dogs:

- Is inhumane To Connecticut source dogs by decreasing their chance of adoption
- Exposes Connecticut animals to disease. Shipping process largely unregulated.
- Is unfair to citizens surprised by unexpected expenses and undisclosed medical issues
- May adversely impact health of shipped dogs themselves
- Shunts animal control responsibility and costs from other states to our state
- Deprives legitimate Connecticut animal welfare agencies of desperately needed income