

OHIO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



1472 Manning Parkway • Powell, Ohio 43065
614.436.1300 phone • 800.662.6862 toll-free • 614.436.1301 fax
www.ohiovma.org • ohiovma@ohiovma.org

Testimony of Patricia Haines, DVM
House Bill 506
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
March 7, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee. My name is Patricia Haines and I'm a small animal veterinarian practicing in Wilmington and a hobby breeder of English Pointers. I'm also a Past President of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA), former board member of the American Kennel Club and current President of the Cincinnati Kennel Club. I'm here today to present proponent testimony on HB 506 on behalf of the over 2,700 veterinarians and 500 veterinary student members of the OVMA.

Senate Bill 130 of the 129th General Assembly created the current regulatory framework for commercial dog breeding in Ohio. That legislation made great strides in creating a program to address substandard breeders while promoting those breeders using the most humane and appropriate standards. OVMA was a proponent of SB 130 and continues to support the Ohio Department of Agriculture in its efforts to implement the program. In the interest of full disclosure, I also serve as a member of the Commercial Dog Breeding Advisory Board which provides input to ODA on the current program.

Since the passage of SB 130, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) established the needed rules and regulations to enforce the program and has been actively working to identify and license those entities meeting the definition of a high volume breeder. To date more than 250 facilities are licensed and inspected by ODA. Despite the substantial efforts of ODA, no program is perfect and certain deficiencies have been identified. HB 506 seeks to address those areas where additional guidance, enforcement and care standards warrant change.

While HB 506 has a few minor areas we would suggest modifying, it will expand and codify many of the most critical care standards using science as a guide. As the healthcare professionals entrusted by society to care for animals, veterinarians believe that when regulatory programs are created for animals, science should be used as the guiding principle. As such, the specific provisions in HB 506 reflect the most current and relevant science, where it currently exists. Where specific science is not complete or yet to be available, the work of recognized experts in animal behavior and health were referenced.

Items specifically addressed in HB 506 include food and water, exercise, cage sizing and materials, and breeding frequency. For many of these areas, the requirements reflect that just as with our own health and well being, important variables exist and must be considered if we are to truly and fairly provide guidance in the best interest of the animal. In a variety of areas HB 506, recognizes this by allowing for veterinary guidance and input in areas such as nutrition, acceptable temperature ranges and verifying health status prior to breeding.

Cage sizes are an area where many may speculate on the needs of its canine inhabitants but the absence of hard science on optimal dimensions leaves us to make determinations that reflect our core knowledge of animal physiology and behavioral needs. House Bill 506 provides for normal movement within the cage including turning in a complete circle, lying down and fully extending limbs and it expands current regulatory space requirements.

Flooring is another care component where certain assumptions are not reflective of research or consideration of all aspects of sound canine welfare. Non-solid flooring or flooring made with perforations has been suggested to cause health issues for dogs. In some situations it admittedly has because the size of the perforation is too large causing injury to paws and legs. However, flooring with small perforations that allows excrement to pass through can be beneficial. Instead of banning a specific floor type, HB 506 would allow breeders to use both solid and non-solid flooring as long as the material can be cleaned, is free from protruding edges, and does not allow the paw to extend through or become caught.

Breeding frequency is another issue where certain perceptions may be well intended, but are not necessarily medically valid. Instead of establishing an arbitrary limit on breeding, the guidance provided in the bill would allow female dogs to be bred once they have regained a normal body condition and are deemed healthy following an examination. This standard reflects the unique overall health status and breed characteristics of each individual animal.

Additional items addressed include food and water, exercise, human interaction, enrichment, and climatic controls. For each, the specific requirement is based on what many of my veterinary colleagues and I think make sense. Animal care standards have and will continue to evolve as science brings us new research and ways of looking at common practices. Those who may seek to place breeding care standards in our state constitution are failing to recognize that what we know about medicine, whether for us or for animals changes over time. HB 506 addresses current shortcomings in the law in ways that are meaningful and that are reflective of what science both does and does not tell us about canine welfare.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 506. Also attached to my testimony is a letter from Dr. Candace Croney, Director of the Center of Animal Welfare Science at Purdue University. Dr. Croney is a leader in the study of animals housed in commercial kennels and her letter provides insight on the scientific aspects of the provisions in HB 506. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

To: Mr. Jack Advent, Ohio Veterinary Medical Association Executive Director

From: Candace Croney, PhD, West Lafayette, IN

Date: March 5, 2018

RE: House Bill 506

Dear Mr. Advent,

This letter is written in response to your request for scientific commentary on House Bill 506. The comments I am providing are written solely to provide scientific context related to the proposed bill. They are not intended to advocate for or against the bill, as my academic position prohibits me from doing so. My academic training and expertise are in applied animal behavior and welfare. I have conducted related studies for over 16 years and have been investigating best practices and scientific assessment of the welfare of dogs in U.S. commercial breeding kennels since 2013. As part of this work, I have written comprehensive voluntary standards for the care and welfare of this population of dogs. To my knowledge, I direct the only research program in the U.S specifically focused on studying dogs on-site at commercial kennels.

The standards outlined for food and water requirements, lighting, ventilation, climate control, whelping areas, and routine veterinary care listed under Sec. 956.031 are all in line with current science. They are in keeping with current published codes of practice throughout North America, Europe and Australia, as well as the canine care standards I have drafted and pilot-tested with cooperating commercial dog breeders during the course of my academic research.

There is no scientific basis for the space allocations outlined in part B of the bill. There are currently no published studies that have investigated the space requirements of domestic dogs. Therefore there is no science that can either support or refute this standard.

In regard to flooring, there are to date, no published scientific studies specifically focused on the health and welfare of dogs as a function of the flooring on which they are kept. The flooring standards stated are in keeping with current published recommendations for best domestic dog care practices. They are also consistent with my lab's research findings (submitted for journal publication) that indicate that dog foot health, cleanliness and sanitation of primary enclosures can be maintained on solid or perforated flooring that is well maintained, regularly cleaned and appropriately sized for the dogs' paws.

While the first statement of part F, "House the dog in a compatible group of dogs" is consistent with current scientific recommendations for dog behavior and welfare, the second part of the sentence, "...provided that the high volume breeder may house the dog in an incompatible group for reasons of biosecurity, whelping, breeding, and behavioral issues" is subject to interpretation as written that could potentially result in housing choices that jeopardize dog welfare.

Part H is identical to the standards we have produced, which were based on a thorough literature review of existing research on canine theriogenology (reproduction) and consultations with veterinary experts in canine reproduction.

Parts J-M covering exercise, daily enrichment, caretaker interactions and access to the outdoors are in keeping with various current published recommendations for dogs, including the voluntary standards my research team and I have produced. It should be noted that there are no studies published to date that have examined how much or what level of exercise dogs of any breed require. Nor are there published scientific studies that clearly and specifically compare welfare outcomes in dogs that are and are not provided access to the outdoors during daylight hours. There is, however, a well-established body of science documenting the benefits of regular exercise, enrichment and positive human contact for dogs. Further, the standards our research team have developed require all of these components and our research findings using published objective, scientific metrics indicates that implementing these standards for dogs maintained at commercial breeding kennels has resulted in demonstrable improvements in their behavioral responses. The research also indicates that it is feasible for breeders with different scales of kennel operations to incorporate these considerations into their management practices.

I hope that the information conveyed here provides a useful backdrop for evaluating the proposed bill against the current state of relevant science on breeding dog care and welfare. All of our research findings and related publications are available at <https://vet.purdue.edu/discovery/croney/current-research-welfare-breeding-dogs.php>. Please feel free to contact me should you need additional scientific information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Candace Croney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Candace Croney, PhD