



MYTHS VS. FACTS ON PROPOSITION B

MYTH: *Proposition B targets those who are already licensed and inspected by the Missouri Department of Agriculture. It does nothing to address the real problem -- unlicensed breeders.*

FACT: Prop B will apply to all large-scale puppy mills, including both licensed and unlicensed facilities, and will establish common-sense standards for the proper care of dogs across the state. Prop B makes it a crime to house dogs in horrible conditions whether the owner is licensed or not, and ensures that dogs in such large-scale breeding facilities receive basic humane care. With approximately 3,000 puppy mills in Missouri—half of them licensed and half of them unlicensed—as many as 200,000 dogs are confined for life in small wire cages and produce an estimated one million puppies a year. This is a serious problem in the state, and needs to be addressed.

Many facilities have lost their federal licenses for improper care of dogs, but continue to operate under state licenses. Dogs are crammed into small and filthy cages, denied veterinary care, exposed to extremes of heat and cold, and not given exercise or human affection. Prop B will set clear and understandable dog welfare standards across the board. Responsible breeders who are providing adequate shelter, food, water, and veterinary care will feel no effects from the passage of Prop B, nor will small-scale hobby breeders be affected.

MYTH: *Prop B creates a class C misdemeanor crime of “cruelty” for any violation no matter how small, including a drop of food in a water bowl, a cobweb in the corner of a building, or a scratch on a painted surface.*

FACT: Prop B’s requirements are extremely modest and, unlike the current regulatory scheme which is complex and difficult to understand, it will provide clear and consistent guidance to inspectors. The measure requires access to nutritious food daily and continuous access to drinkable water, veterinary care for illness or injury, adequate space and exercise. The humane standards in Prop B provide a clear roadmap for the Missouri Department of Agriculture professionals to apply. Like any law, enforcement officials have discretion on when a violation is severe enough to warrant action, and will prioritize the most extreme cases of puppy mill cruelty since there is no shortage of those in Missouri.

MYTH: *Prop B requires immediate treatment by a licensed veterinarian for things as minor as an upset stomach, torn toenail, or a cut on the nose. Costs for veterinary care would skyrocket.*

FACT: Although puppy mills claim to provide medical treatment, federal and state agriculture inspectors have documented severe, untreated medical issues in dogs at Missouri’s puppy mills, including open, oozing sores, infectious mange, leg entrapment resulting in permanent mutilation, underfed dogs with their entire skeletal structures visible on their starving bodies, and dogs so covered in filthy, feces-encrusted matted fur that they are unable to move about or even move their bowels. Puppy mill owners sometimes attempt to provide treatment without a veterinarian, causing even greater problems for these already suffering dogs.

To help set standards for care, Prop B will require an annual veterinary examination for each dog and prompt treatment for any illness or injury—basics of care that most Americans already provide for their dogs. Unlike large-scale mills, responsible breeders already abide by this common-sense standard of care. Missouri's puppy mills rake in hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in puppy sales; surely they should be able to afford a once-a-year veterinary exam for the breeding animals who are the backbone of their business. Current Missouri regulations already require each licensed breeder to have an attending veterinarian who makes "regularly scheduled" walk-throughs, but Prop B will require that the veterinarian actually examine each individual dog. Given the types of severe ailments seen every day in puppy mills, it's absurd to think that any inspector would suggest criminal charges for "a scratch on the nose" or other minor issues.

MYTH: *Prop B requires access to an outside exercise area which will be deadly to newborn and non-weaned puppies that may crawl outside to follow their mothers and cannot find their way back inside. Drafts of air will ensure upper respiratory stress and pneumonia for puppies.*

FACT: Prop B only applies to dogs over 6 months of age, and would not require that non-weaned puppies have unfettered outdoor access or be housed within the new temperature parameters. Further, upper respiratory illnesses are not caused by fresh air. More often in the extreme confinement conditions typical of large-scale puppy mills, respiratory illnesses are caused by poor ventilation and the repeated circulation of airborne disease molecules. The idea that providing fresh air will be detrimental to the health of dogs is absurd as anyone who lets their dog play outside will understand.

MYTH: *Proposition B interferes with the working relationship between a breeder and his or her veterinarian on the health of the dogs and sets arbitrary limits on the frequency of breeding.*

FACT: Prop B simply requires that no dog be bred to have more than two litters of puppies in any 18 month period, which generally means that dogs get one heat cycle of rest after every two breeding cycles. Over-bred dogs who have been rescued from puppy mills are commonly found in depleted physical condition, missing all or most of their teeth by the time they are only a few years old, and seriously undernourished due to the physical demands that constant breeding and nursing places on the mother dog's system. More than fifty (50) national breed clubs recommend breeding a female dog no more than twice in a 12 to 18 month period and/or resting the female between litters, including the Siberian Husky Club of America, the West Highland White Terrier Club of America, the American Fox Terrier Club of America, the Yorkshire Terrier Club of America, the Afghan Hound Club of America, the Bernese Mountain Dog Club of America, the Cardigan Welsh Corgi Club of America, and many more. Prop B is consistent with the breeding practices of responsible breeders.

MYTH: *Breeders can't afford to upgrade their kennels.*

FACT: Prop B does not require breeders to upgrade their kennels if they provide basic standards of care outlined by the Act. The average person assumes, and expects, that anyone caring for a live animal will provide decent and reasonable care. Adequate care of dogs still allows breeders operating under Prop B's minimal humane standards to make a big profit. Under Prop B, a commercial breeder who has 40 females and 10 males can produce approximately 200 to 400 puppies a year (breeding each female twice in each 18 month period). With these sales, a commercial breeder can earn more than \$100,000 a year, well over twice the median income of the average Missouri family. These breeders make a good income from their dogs and if they are not providing sufficient humane housing and care, they can, and should, make any needed improvements for the wellbeing of their animals and the overall success of their businesses. Other industries are expected to re-invest in their businesses from time to time. The commercial breeding industry should be

no exception. If clear, humane standards are in place, consumers will have more confidence in Missouri's dog breeders and it will help their long-term business outlook.

MYTH: *The space requirements under Prop B are unreasonable, and we're going to be forced to build a Taj Mahal for each dog.*

FACT: Prop B does require that dogs have more space so they will no longer be crammed into small and filthy cages, 24 hours a day, for their entire lives. It also requires them to have access to both an indoor and outdoor area, but even the largest outdoor enclosure required by Prop B is still smaller than a parking space at your local grocery store. The space requirements under Prop B are determined by the size of the dog. For example, a small dog would require indoor space the size of a sleeping bag and outdoor space that measures about half the size of the bed of a Ford pickup truck. A medium sized dog would require indoor space the size of a twin bed mattress and outdoor space the size of a pool table. And a large dog would require indoor space the size of a standard elevator floor and outdoor space the size of a compact car. Giving dogs enough space to turn around, stretch their limbs, and exercise is just common sense.

MYTH: *If breeders are limited to 50 breeding dogs, they will have to kill their excess dogs when Prop B takes effect.*

FACT: The vast majority of breeding facilities in Missouri are already below or close to this limit, and will not be affected by the new law. The Missouri Department of Agriculture estimates that 36% of licensed breeders have more than 50 breeding dogs, while independent review of the inventory figures provided by licensed breeders found that only 18% had more than 50 adult dogs. So somewhere between two-thirds and four-fifths of all licensed breeders in the state already have fewer than 50 breeding dogs and will not need to make any changes in the number of dogs they have.

Moreover, Prop B limits only the number of sexually intact adult dogs used for breeding, and imposes absolutely no limit on the total number of dogs a person can own. A breeder can keep as many dogs as they want over the limit of 50, as long as those excess dogs are pets and not used for breeding. There is a network of animal shelters and rescue groups prepared to remove and re-home dogs from the small number of large-scale puppy mills that have more than 50 breeding dogs, should mill owners request assistance with placement. Since puppy mills have one year to comply with the new law before it takes effect, transports and adoptions can be managed over a long period of time; animal shelters or rescue groups won't be flooded simultaneously.

MYTH: *Missouri already has some of the most strict dog breeding regulations in the country.*

FACT: With 3,000 puppy mills in the state—30% of all puppy mills in the country—Missouri is a magnet for bad operators because the current laws are too weak and/or too vague or complicated to be effectively enforced. Facilities with dozens of federal and state animal welfare violations remain licensed in Missouri to this day, and clearly the current laws have not done enough to stop puppy mill abuses. Facilities are licensed year after year after dogs have been documented living in filth, sometimes severely underweight or with untreated injuries. Prop B will establish a new set of clear, easily understood standards that will give law enforcement officials the tools to crack down on puppy mill cruelty. Moreover, Proposition B will criminalize a number of violations for which criminal sanctions are not currently available under Animal Care Facilities Act or the Missouri criminal code, including the failure to provide sufficiently large indoor enclosures; the failure to provide indoor enclosures that are unstacked and have solid floors; the failure to provide adequate rest between breeding cycles; and the failure to provide constant, unfettered access to an outdoor exercise area.

MYTH: *Prop B actually weakens Missouri dog breeding regulations because it replaces the Animal Care Facilities Act and its Class A misdemeanor penalties with Class C misdemeanor penalties.*

FACT: Proposition B does not replace or supplant any existing breeder-related standards in Missouri. Instead, it leaves the Animal Care Facilities Act and its accompanying regulations intact and creates several additional, easily understood requirements that all large-scale dog breeders in Missouri must comply with or face criminal penalties. First violations of Prop B are Class C misdemeanors because Prop B sets a higher bar for humane animal care than current Missouri law. If a breeder also falls below the minimal standards in current Missouri law, such violations are a Class A misdemeanor. This graduated structure makes sense, as breeders that fail to even meet the current, inadequate Missouri standards of care should be penalized more severely than those that violate the improved standards of Prop B.

MYTH: *We don't need new laws, but just need to improve enforcement.*

FACT: Prop B does not change any of the existing enforcement structure. Prop B does not change the fact that Missouri Department of Agriculture can impose administrative penalties for any violation of its regulations but cannot initiate criminal prosecutions itself (though it may refer violations to local law enforcement for prosecution). Moreover, local law enforcement is already permitted to bring prosecutions for violations of criminal Animal Care Facilities Act statutes which provide for criminal penalties. Prop B does, however, increase the likelihood that local law enforcement will actually act without waiting for the Missouri Department of Agriculture's blessing, for it provides new, clear cut criminal prohibitions, like the limit on total breeding dogs, the cage size requirements, and the requirement that there be constant access to outdoor space, that a local officer can readily identify without the need to consult an expert. Missourians for the Protection of Dogs/YES! on Prop B is not against stronger enforcement of existing law. Both strong enforcement *and* the provisions of Prop B will, in combination, have the biggest impact on the lives of dogs in Missouri's puppy mills. The two are not mutually exclusive.

MYTH: *Prop B is the first step to ending all animal agriculture and hunting in Missouri.*

FACT: Prop B only covers dogs bred to produce puppies sold commercially as pets—no other species of animal—and includes a specific exemption for hunting dogs. It could not be more clear that this measure has no impact on sportsmen or agriculture. Fifteen states recently passed strong laws cracking down on abusive puppy mills, including major agricultural states, giving dogs basic humane standards of care such as food, water, veterinary care, exercise and shelter. Missouri is the largest puppy mill state, but is lagging behind on dog protection—that's why Prop B is needed. It's absurd to think that these new policies have any effect on policies related to livestock. In fact, our opponents made the same arguments in 1998 during the debate over the ballot initiative to ban cockfighting in Missouri, and 12 years later, there has been no attempt to impact livestock agriculture or sport hunting in the state through the Legislature or through the initiative process. Their claims dating back 12 years proved false, and the invoking of these same scare tactics are equally false today.

Paid for by Missourians for the Protection of Dogs/YES! on Prop B, Judy Peil, Treasurer