

Dog Legislation Moves Forward in Pennsylvania

Two bills seek to raise standards for dog kennels and commercial dog breeders.

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Pennsylvania is on its way to enacting tougher dog laws after two state House committees approved legislation this week.

The House Judiciary Committee cleared House Bill 2532, while the Agricultural Committee approved House Bill 2525. Dogs in commercial breeding kennels, defined as those that sell more than 60 dogs per year, will live healthier lives under the legislation, Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff said in a statement Thursday.

Wolff said the House of Representatives can help improve Pennsylvania's commercial breeding kennels with swift passage of the bills.

Introduced in May, HB 2525 would strengthen dog laws and mandate stricter standards for the safety of dogs in commercial breeding kennels, including increased space and an outdoor exercise area.

HB 2532 calls for improvements to the welfare of dogs under animal cruelty law. Specifically, it mandates that debarking, the practice of cutting a dog's vocal cords, would only be done by a veterinarian, as would surgical birth.

"Currently, a kennel owner can choose to confine dogs in small, stacked, wire-floored cages with no heat, no opportunity for exercise, and no routine medical care," Wolff said. "There are commercial breeding kennels operating with those conditions today, and it is completely legal under the current Pennsylvania Dog Law. The bills voted on this week will help dogs in commercial breeding kennels live more comfortable, healthy lives, and I applaud the committees for moving this important legislation forward."

Opponents of the legislation, including sporting dog organizations, said that while something must be done about the state's "puppy mill" issue, the bill goes too far.