

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, January 12, 2006

The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc.

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The fur is flying over the Federal “PAWS” Bill !!

Thousands of cat fanciers, dog fanciers, pet owners and rescuers have joined the Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) in opposition to federal legislation that threatens the future of home-raised pets in America. Every day new cat, dog, bird and rabbit clubs add their names to the growing list of over 460 organizations all working to stop Senator Rick Santorum's "PAWS" (the Pet Animal Welfare Statute of 2005).

These are animal lovers who deplore cruelty or substandard breeding facilities. Yet they consider PAWS to be dangerous to pets and pet owners because of the bill's serious consequences. Members of Congress have returned from the holiday recess and Senate Bill 1139 is expected to be heading to the Senate floor while HR 2669 is poised to be heard by the House Committee on Agriculture.

For over 30 years the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) has required the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to inspect and license commercial breeders who sell dogs and cats at wholesale to the pet trade. PAWS would shift the focus to pet lovers who raise or rescue animals and place them from their own homes. In doing so PAWS would "federalize" home-based hobby breeders and rescuers.

Hobby breeders of pedigreed cats are particularly impacted by this bill. Those with as few as 4 or 5 breeding females living as household pets would be regulated since they would produce over the arbitrary threshold exemption of 6 litters total per year. Cats, unlike dogs, come in heat year round and should not be allowed to cycle frequently without pregnancy as this can lead to health problems such as uterine infection.

CFA considers the best environment for raising healthy, well socialized kittens and puppies to be the home of a breeder dedicated to preserving their chosen breed. Records show that PAWS would add over 7000 private homes to the federal inspection and licensing responsibility of the USDA, which now inspects approximately 3000 commercial breeding facilities.

Joan Miller, CFA Legislative Coordinator notes: "PAWS would overwhelm the ability of the USDA to enforce the AWA for those it was intended to regulate – large commercial breeders who sell

dogs and cats at wholesale to the pet trade. Cats and dogs will suffer as a result.” In response to previous attempts to regulate home-based breeders and rescuers, the USDA itself has suggested that licensing hobby breeders “could severely strain available Federal resources for carrying out inspections and other enforcement activities under the AWA.”

Miller also says that “the USDA standards of care are not appropriate for home environments”. Federal housing facility standards require hard surfaces for sanitizing (i.e. no porous materials such as carpeting or fabric furnishings).

Federal dealer status would trigger local zoning laws that prohibit commerce in residential neighborhoods. Eventually the moderate sized breeders with genepool diversity and conscientious breeding programs will discontinue their breeding efforts. Many rare and beautiful breeds may become extinct or no longer available to the public. PAWS would merely increase the market for more commercial breeding facilities.

There is no evidence of interstate or international trade in cats that calls for federal regulation of home-based cat breeders and rescuers. In fact, according to the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association’s National Pet Owners Survey only 3% of owned cats are obtained from breeders! Over 90% of all cats in American households are random-bred strays who show up at the door, are obtained from friends and family or adopted from shelters.

On November 8th Senator Santorum held a Senate Agriculture Subcommittee “hearing”. As he is the Chair and was the only committee member present, this became a one-sided pro-PAWS forum. No witnesses opposed to PAWS were allowed to testify before the committee. There was no evidence presented that would indicate situations of retail breeders with substandard facilities that could not be resolved or were not handled through existing state or local laws.

Proponents of PAWS have promised to alleviate some of the acknowledged flaws in the bill, including poorly written and confusing provisions, but no draft amendments have yet come forward. Even if some changes are made to help the USDA better enforce their regulation of existing commercial dealers, the primary objections remain. PAWS means fewer choices for pet buyers and less personal contact with the breeder of their pet.

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The Cat Fanciers' Association, Inc. -- Background Information

The Cat Fanciers' Association (CFA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1906. As the world's largest registry of pedigreed cats CFA has over 600 member clubs in the United States, Canada, Japan and many other countries. CFA's mission is to preserve and promote the pedigreed breeds of cats and to enhance the well-being of ALL cats. CFA licenses cat shows and is proud of the high quality of cats exhibited and bred by participants. The Winn Feline Foundation, affiliated with CFA, is a major source of funds for feline health studies. CFA participants are active in breed rescue, programs to assist feral cats and activities to educate the general public about proper cat care and responsible ownership. CFA is a member of the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy.

CFA has for many years encouraged good breeding practices through its Breeder Code of Ethics, the Breeder Mentoring Program and the CFA Voluntary Cattery Environment Inspection Program. CFA continues to support better enforcement of the AWA to protect the welfare of animals in large commercial facilities that breed, transport and sell to the pet trade. These are the facilities congress intended to regulate with the Animal Welfare Act. Diverting limited federal resources to license and inspect local hobby breeders is not in the best interest of the well-being of animals.

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