

Animal owners lobby Nevada lawmakers

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A group of animal enthusiasts from around the state visited Carson City on Monday to meet with lawmakers as a preemptive measure against the Humane Society of United States' (HSUS) schedule to lobby its animal rights agenda in Nevada on February 12th. Tim Stoffel from Reno (the organizer of the group's efforts), Chris Vaught from Washoe Valley, Zuzana Kukol and Scott Shoemaker from Southern Nevada, and Deeanna Croasmun from Wendover, registered as non-paid lobbyists and spoke with various assembly members and senators.

They explained the difference between the Animal Rights movement and Animal Welfare, and asked lawmakers to look into the HSUS agenda and its connections to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and other Animal Rights (AR) groups. The group, speaking in support of Animal Welfare, pointed out that HSUS is a national lobbying group, it is not affiliated with any of the humane societies or shelters in Nevada, and does not represent the interests of Nevada voters. The group requested that lawmakers look to Nevada animal owners and caretakers, those who are hands on with animals, to help shape any proposed legislative measures put forth by national animal rights groups such as HSUS or PETA.

Animal rights is the concept that animals should not be used by, or regarded as the property of humans and therefore should not be used as food, clothing, research subjects, or entertainment. In contrast, the Animal Welfare viewpoint is that it is morally acceptable for humans to use animals for food, in animal research,

as clothing, and for entertainment, so long as animals are treated in a reasonable, humane manner.

Kukol, president of Rexano, a nonprofit organization based in Henderson, Nevada, which supports responsible exotic animal ownership, explained the importance of animals staying labeled as property, "The US Constitution guarantees American citizens property rights. Animals are considered property under our legal system and rightly so. Even though we think of our animals as our beloved family members, legally, they need to stay property. If animals have rights and we are their guardians, we can no longer buy and sell pets and food animals, and if somebody takes your animals from you, it wouldn't be considered stealing if we get rid of the legal status of animals as property.

Many animal rights groups have an agenda of removing the status of animals as property and they will not be satisfied until everybody is a grass-grazing carrot-eating vegan. We need to be vigilant and stop the insane lunatic animal rights legislation that has been introduced in many states and on the federal level."

According to Vaught, who owns and works with Australian Kelpies, a herding breed of dog; Nevada animal owners, caretakers, and enthusiasts are organizing via an online yahoo list, NVPetLaw, to respond to anticipated AR legislation that may be introduced now that HSUS has made Nevada one of its targets.

After spending the day with lawmakers, Vaught said, "I think we did good and I am positive we can work together effectively to fight whatever might come our way."



Pictured above is the lobbying group, who met with lawmakers on Monday to represent Nevada's animal owners and animal industry. From left to right are Tim Stoffel, Scott Shoemaker, Zuzana Kukol, Chris Vaught, and Deeanna Croasmun. The photo was taken by David P. Bobzien Jr, Nevada Assemblyman District 24, which turned out to be a surprise to the group when they later discovered the good-natured person that Kukol stopped to ask to take a group photo outside the legislative building ended up being the assemblyman at their 1:15 appointment.

After returning to Wendover on Tuesday, Croasmun, pet owner and exhibitor, said, "This was an important first step. It was a good learning experience for us and gave us the opportunity to introduce ourselves and our position to our lawmakers. An interesting point I noticed during the meetings is that many of the lawmakers we talked to said they hunt and fish, and a couple were also ranchers. I think HSUS and other AR groups may find Nevada lawmakers a hard sell."