

Durbin Puppy Imports Amendment **2007 Farm Bill**

Background

According to representatives of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), a significant volume of imports of puppies from Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Columbia, Mexico, and several other source countries arrive in the United States each year. Unfortunately, many of these animals are shipped at 8 weeks of age or younger, before their immune systems are developed and before they can be safely vaccinated.

Although definitive statistics are not available, large numbers of buyers and veterinarians report that imported puppies suffer from higher than normal incidences of pneumonia, parvovirus, and severe congenital defects. Because puppies under 3 months of age are too young to be vaccinated for rabies, they may be imported without the vaccination.

The CDC requires importers to complete a confinement agreement (form CDC 75.37) agreeing to confine the animal until it is old enough to be vaccinated, and to confine the animal for 30 days after vaccination. Under this regulation, most imported puppies would not be eligible for sale until at least 4 months of age, but complaints indicate that they are routinely imported and sold at a much younger age.

The CDC has acknowledged a large volume of puppies are imported without their knowledge and that they do not have the staff or resources to properly handle this problem. The CDC does not have law enforcement powers and can't screen every flight or shipment. When violations are found, the CDC can only issue warnings, except in extreme cases that require law enforcement assistance.

A 2005 Border Puppy Task Force study estimated that 10,000 puppies enter San Diego County from Mexico annually. Many of them are smuggled in without health records or vaccinations. Many of the puppies carry contagious diseases, are infested with parasites, and are too young to be weaned. Common diseases included distemper, rabies, parvovirus and ringworm.

Amendment

This language addresses the problem of unscrupulous commercial importers of live dogs by providing USDA APHIS with enforcement authority and tightening and clarifying minimum health requirements for commercial imports of live dogs destined for resale. At a minimum, this language will require that all dogs imported to the United States for resale be properly vaccinated and in good health. In addition, the amendment requires dogs entering the United States for resale to be at least 6 months of age. Exceptions are provided so as not to interfere with veterinary treatment or research purposes. Violations of these provisions are subject to the enforcement mechanisms in the Animal Welfare Act.

The language has the support of The Humane Society of the United States, The American Kennel Club, and The American Veterinary Medical Association.