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Good Evening, I am Dr. Margaret Morris, Associate Director of Public Health and Spay and Neuter Initiatives at Charleston Animal Society. I have worked at Charleston Animal Society for the past 2 years. I am a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association, South Carolina Veterinary Medical Association and Trident Veterinary Medical Association.

Thank you for this opportunity to be a part of the discussion about the animal issues in South Carolina. Please consider all of the pressing issues that will and have been discussed today.

The issue I am setting forward is the overpopulation of unwanted animals in South Carolina's shelters, particularly breeds such as pit bull type dogs. I surmise that every organization that takes in unwanted animals in South Carolina have a large percentage of their population consisting of pit bull type dogs. At Charleston Animal Society, during the summer months, about 80 - 83% of dogs in our shelter are pit bull type dogs.

These dogs end up in shelters for various reasons and fortunately many are adopted. Most pit bull type dogs are high energy and require proper training, socialization and enrichment. Any breed of dog, not just pit bull type dogs, whom are not properly trained, cared for and socialized can deteriorate and be a danger to humans and other animals.

It is our responsibility as veterinarians and adoption centers to educate owners about caring for any particular breed. We worry about those that are breeding and are not providing the proper education to the new owners about proper housing, training and veterinary care.

We need stronger laws regulating such breeders, often referred to as "backyard breeders." Such a law will help our current efforts of outreach for spay and neutering to decrease overpopulation of unwanted pets.

Backyard breeders can lead to detrimental outcomes such as the spread of deadly contagious diseases, development of dangerous behavior abnormalities and often result in relinquishment of pets to a local animal shelter.

We have reached out to a local underserved community in Charleston County and have found that there is a significant population of pit bull type dogs being bred. Fortunately, due to our outreach efforts we are providing appropriate education to these owners and these puppies are provided veterinary care, vaccinations and dewormings needed to maintain their health. We have also found that many of the pets in this area have never seen a veterinarian and would never see a veterinarian if we were not available to them.

Since offering our help, most of these families have reached out to us for help and really want to do best for their animals.

We are concerned about others that may not be seeking help and continue to breed and sell puppies without providing proper education or care. Without proper vaccinations for these animals have a high chance of dying and spreading deadly diseases. Unfortunately, these animals often end up in the shelter when it is too late.

Another issue I would like to address is the chaining of dogs. In the past several years, studies have presented the negative psychological effect chaining has on dogs and in turn this has resulted in many tragic stories of dog attacks.

Dogs are social animals and require interaction with other dogs and humans. Chained dogs can become aggressive due to intense confinement and lack of socialization. They feel trapped and unable to escape which increases their fear drive.

Also, dogs can choke to death when their chains became entangled with other objects, or develop infections and severe wounds when collars become embedded in their necks. We see several 100 embedded collars a year that often require surgical removal.

Inhumane animal restraint is more than an animal cruelty issue it is a public safety issue.

According to a study conducted by individual investigators from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Humane Society of the United States, and the American Veterinary Medical Association, chained dogs are 2.8 times more likely to bite than unchained dogs.

Last year, in Effingham South Carolina, a 5-year-old girl was attacked and killed when she approached a chained pit bull in her family's backyard. In the last couple years, York and Rock Hill experienced similar dog attacks between a chained chow chow and a neighbor's child and a chained pit bull type dog and a child.

ASPCA states in an article titled, Dealing with Reckless Owners and Dangerous Dogs in Your Community, 78 percent of dogs involved in fatal dog attacks in 2006 were not pets, but rather maintained for guarding, image enhancement, fighting or breeding. Also, 84 percent were maintained by reckless owners. These dogs were abused or neglected, not humanely controlled or contained, or allowed to interact with children unsupervised.

Many states have laws or ordinances about chaining or tethering dogs. ASPCA supports laws that prohibit chaining or tethering (taking care also to prohibit unreasonable confinement once a dog is removed from a chain), coupled with enhanced enforcement of animal cruelty and animal fighting laws.

By addressing each issue of backyard breeding and chaining of dogs, we can help prevent the transmission of deadly diseases, overpopulation and deadly attacks from dogs inhumanely confined by a chain.

Thank you for your attention and I have attached related articles and studies combined in your packet.