



## NAIA Trust for the Protection of Animals, Animal Owners and Animal Enterprises

*Educating the Public about the Critical Difference between Animal Welfare and Animal Rights:  
Supporting Animal Welfare Using Common Sense, Science and Reason.*

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February 21, 2005

Dear Committee Chairman:

**In re: OPPOSITION to AB 418, ear cropping ban, introduced February 15, Assembly member Koretz:**

The National Animal Interest Alliance Trust is a coalition of animal owners and public and private organizations dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of citizens to responsibly keep and enjoy pets. NAIA Trust backs reasonable laws designed to advance the well-being of animals and strongly opposes laws that ignore science and interfere with decisions that should be made by pet owners working in consultation with their veterinarians. We have members throughout the state of California.

**NAIA Trust opposes AB 418**, the proposed ear cropping ban because the bill ...

- establishes a precedent that replaces the professional judgment of veterinarians with laws based on the beliefs of special interest advocates.
- creates an enforcement climate in which activists could harass veterinarians and dog owners and breeders;
- represents an unwarranted intrusion in the relationship between dog owners and their veterinarians;
- could make dog owners liable even if the surgery is done in another state;
- is impossible to enforce without interfering in the practice of veterinary medicine; and
- carries a large and unfair penalty that may drive ear cropping underground;

NAIA Trust agrees with the words of Dr. Peter Weinstein, past president of the California Veterinary Medical Association: "The practice of veterinary medicine should be left to veterinarians with the best interest of the patient and animal owners in mind."\*

The pressure to ban this traditional husbandry practice comes from false and outdated beliefs and a lack of information about modern surgical techniques. Despite the rhetoric of groups like the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights, ear cropping can now be performed with so little risk or pain that there is no longer a legitimate reason to outlaw it and, in a free and diverse society, many reasons to allow it. Prohibiting ear cropping by licensed veterinarians creates such a low threshold for government to interfere in a person's ethical choices, passage of AB 418 would open the door to intolerance and persecution, allowing one group to impose its values on another without any requirement to serve the public good.

Historically, when ear cropping was associated with pit fighting dogs and abusive owners attempted to

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perform these surgeries at home without anesthetic or sterile conditions, there were legitimate reasons to oppose ear cropping. Unfortunately, the image of the fighting dog with cropped ears remains most vivid in the public's mind, but it's instructive to remember that cropping was also performed on military dogs, police dogs, and other protection dogs to prevent injury during work and to improve hearing acuity in breeds without natural upright ears. It should not be surprising that many pet owners want to maintain the traditional look of the breed they treasure. They like the appearance of a cropped dog, believe that a cropped dog has keener hearing, and think that dogs with cropped ears suffer fewer ear infections than uncropped drop-eared dogs.

In modern times, critics of cropping sometimes base their opposition on brutal images of past practices but also argue that even if done by a good veterinarian under anesthetic, the risk is unacceptably high. However, such criticism is no longer valid. Anesthetic drugs and techniques are so safe today that veterinarians anesthetize dogs for routine procedures such as teeth cleaning and treating deep ear infections. In addition there are new methods of cropping with lasers that are virtually bloodless and require less aftercare.

NAIA Trust believes that pet owners should be able to make animal husbandry decisions based on their own experience and that of the medical professionals they consult, and should not be bound by the values and ethics of radical special interest groups, operating with little practical knowledge of the subject. NAIA Trust also believes that veterinarians should have a choice to perform ear cropping just as they have a choice to specialize in other types of procedures. Therefore, we urge you to vote against AB 418 and so preserve the right for dog owners and their veterinarians to make animal care decisions.

Sincerely,

Patti L. Strand, Trustee

\* See "CVMA Defends the Practice Act," <http://www.cvma.net/doc.asp?ID=2469>. Dr Weinstein made his remarks to the West Hollywood City Council on February 7, 2005.