



## 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:*

January 4, 2006

Senate Judiciary Committee, Chairman, Senator. Richard W. Sears  
State Capitol  
115 State St  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
Phone: 802-828-2231

### **Letter in OPPOSITION to S 250, a bill to ban ear cropping, introduced in January 2006 by Senator Ann Cummings:**

To the honorable Senator Richard Sears, Chairman, Judiciary Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the National Animal Interest Alliance Trust (NAIA Trust), 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 in every state. We are asking you to oppose S 250 because it is unnecessary, unreasonable, unscientific and coercive.

#### **NAIA Trust opposes S 250, because the bill ...**

- represents an unwarranted intrusion in the relationship between dog owners and their veterinarians;
- carries a large and unfair penalty that may drive ear cropping underground, making it dangerous;
- is written in such a way that it could make dog owners liable even if the surgery is done in another state;
- allows one group to impose its values on another without having to demonstrate that a significant public good is served;
- creates a climate in which activists can harass veterinarians and dog owners and breeders;
- establishes a precedent that replaces the professional judgment of veterinarians with laws based on public opinion and the beliefs of special interest advocates.

The pressure to ban this traditional husbandry practice comes from false and outdated beliefs and from a lack of information about modern surgical techniques. Ear cropping can now be performed with so little risk or pain that there are no compelling reasons to outlaw it and, in a free and diverse society, many reasons to allow it.

Prohibiting ear cropping by licensed veterinarians creates a low threshold for government to interfere in private ethical choices, and it would open the door to intolerance and persecution,

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allowing one group to impose its values on another with virtually no requirement that doing so serves any public good.

There were legitimate reasons to oppose ear cropping in the past, when owners sometimes performed these surgeries at home without anesthetic or sterile conditions. The techniques once used for cropping were abusive. NAIA Trust fears that passage of S 250 would actually cause a resurgence of these home surgeries and make the procedure dangerous.

Historically, cropping has been performed on military dogs, police dogs, search and rescue 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 who treasure these breeds want to maintain their traditional appearance.

Many owners believe that a cropped dog has keener hearing, and think that dogs with cropped ears suffer fewer ear infections than uncropped drop-eared dogs. On this score, S 250 disagrees with the judgment of many veterinarians and experienced owners who have discovered from owning many cropped and uncropped dogs of the same breed that cropped dogs have significantly fewer ear infections.

Critics of cropping sometimes argue that the risk from anesthetic is unacceptably high. However, such criticisms are no longer valid. Anesthetic drugs and modern veterinary techniques are so safe today that veterinarians anesthetize dogs for routine procedures such as teeth cleaning and treating deep ear infections. New methods of cropping with lasers are virtually bloodless and require less aftercare.

NAIA Trust opposes S 250 because we believe that pet owners should be able to make animal husbandry decisions based on their own experience and that of the medical professionals they consult. They should not be bound by the opinions and values of people who lack personal experience with the practice.

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 elective procedures. **Therefore, we urge you to vote against S 250 and to preserve the right for dog owners and their veterinarians to make informed animal care decisions.**

Sincerely,

Patti L. Strand, Trustee