

Legislative Committee on HD 2645

My name is Kathleen Ware and I have been a trainer for Columbia Agility Team for 29 years and a training director for the club 2 times in that same time period. I am also a retired nurse that worked with toddlers and preschool children for 18 years with a strong interest in play therapy and behavior.

I am sorry if anyone feels uncomfortable that I might make some similarity in the child of that age and dogs, but most dogs maturity rages from that of a two-year-old in some breeds to a 10-12-year-old in the herding group.

1. In all the years of my teaching, our club has leased no less than 8 barns from farmer/ranchers with horses. There has NEVER been an incident where a dog has gone after a horse or any other live stock.

There have been horses, Llama, goats and sheep at the farms. We have been more concerned about the Llamas and horses being curious and looking over the wall when an urban dog is working that has never seen such an animal before.

2. The barns are used the same as they are with the horses, requiring nothing more than water to wet the dusty ground and lighting that is the same as the horse people would use, we have never had to really make any improvements to the barn or the property except maybe putting more footing down or gravel for parking. We usually lease a port-a-potty so other than water, not plumbing is required.
3. I have had up to 8 students at a time, but now 6 is the maximum because it is impossible to give the dogs and handlers enough time, for the money they pay to learn agility. A 6-hour day would be a maximum when there needs to be time to set courses for each level of training. It can be a very time consuming, body aching job.
4. Most Ranchers and farmers have dogs themselves. In fact, when we compete at an event, there frequently are horse events going on at the same time. There are usually Cattle dogs and Border Collies to help the ranchers with the cattle. I have seen a large number of terriers on the back to of saddles of the ranchers also.
5. None of the dogs in the Agility are concerned about the horses or the other way around.
6. Commercial dog training in a barn does not include dog boarding so the idea that there would be more dogs all the time is not true.
7. A commercial dog training facility in the Urban areas, that I have visited are about ¼ of a horse barn size. This does not give enough room for agility equipment that needs room about 80x 100 feet so that the dogs can stretch out for certain courses. Jumps should be about 15 feet apart.
8. Urban training is also a sterile environment. A dog that becomes competitive needs to learn to ignore the barn smells. This is especially important for nose breeds like beagles and hunting dogs. Most Agility events are preformed in County Fairground horse areas or on grass outside. Some groups require at least one event a year to be done on grass and the rest in a horse arena.
9. The rules of an agility barn require that even the most novice dog must have a sit, stay and recall. No dogs are to be off leash unless closed in the arena or a fenced pen. Only one dog off leash at a time while taking a class.

10. Noise is set to a minimum. Some dog make noise with the excitement of running, but would stop when the dog has finished exercising.
11. 6 cars or vans coming down the gravel road at a time are not near as dusty or damaging to a road than the poundage of several trucks with horse trailers coming down the same road. Also, I should say not as noisy either.

As the years have gone by, scientists are learning more and more about the intelligence and how stressors can affect our intelligent animals (not excluding, horses, pigs, even cats.). They have minds that need to be stimulated. They also need physical activity. A walk will help, but a dog really needs to run and use his nose and brain for good stimulation. A dog park is not the greatest form of stimulation, because novice dog parent does not really pay close attention to their dog's body language and fights can occur.

As with children, the above animals become grumpy and temperamental if not stimulated. That is the reason enrichment toys have become so popular. That is also the reason why dog activities have become so popular.

Agility gives an outlet to learn new activities, become a better partner for there person. The saying is "A tired dog is a happy dog" and that is so true.

We personally have 3 Border Collies and a Queensland Red Heeler. All were rescue dogs with issues of their own. Being able to give them an outlet and a better relationship with my husband and I have saved all of these dogs from could have been a very bad outcome. Our pack is given the physical and mental stimulation that they need.