



# **BULLDOG CLUB OF AMERICA**

## **Position Statement**

### **ESTABLISHING PUBLIC POLICY**

The Bulldog Club of America supports the use of appropriately constituted expert bodies to establish public policy on animal welfare. Such standard-setting bodies should strive for continual improvement of animal care through comprehensive evaluations that are based on sound science, with appropriate consideration for the practical implementation of their recommendations and societal preferences regarding animal use.

We also believe that such standard-setting bodies, and related public policy, should be established through the regular legislative and regulatory processes, which, by design, include opportunities for appropriate stakeholder engagement.

Although the BCA recognizes the value of ballot initiatives, which provide an important opportunity for direct public engagement and help ensure the legitimacy of the democratic process, we have concerns about using ballot initiatives to establish public policy on issues that do not lend themselves to "yes" or "no" answers. Ballot initiatives are poorly designed for addressing complex issues (e.g., setting animal care standards) in that they are narrow in their mechanism of effect, limit the amount and detail of information that can be provided to the public, and offer minimal opportunities for expert input. To achieve their desired objectives, regulatory actions related to animal care and welfare need to arise from a consensus built via a greater public understanding of animal needs and industry practices,

and a greater industry understanding of public attitudes and ethical needs. The "yes" or "no" responses required by ballot initiatives may be destructive of this type of mutual understanding and the related campaigns tend to entrench opposing camps and focus attention on differences in opinion, rather than shared goals.

In contrast, legislative and regulatory processes typically engage multiple experts and viewpoints and facilitate discussion. The latter contributes to responsible recommendations that can be practically implemented, and the result benefits animals, those in the animal use industries and consumers.

Representation on standard-setting bodies established via regular legislative and regulatory processes should be well-balanced, both in technical expertise and viewpoint. Balance is essential to ensure good outcomes for animal care and to achieve public acceptability and support.

Technical expertise on standard-setting bodies allows animal care decisions to be made that appropriately address the variety of factors impacting animal well being, including access to quality food and water in appropriate amounts; protection of animals from disease, injury, predators, and adverse environmental conditions; provision of sufficient space and opportunity to allow animals to perform necessary species-typical behaviors; proper handling and transportation; and, when needed, timely euthanasia.

Varying constituencies and viewpoints also deserve representation on standard-setting bodies, because they facilitate and can help ensure complete discourse. Involving all stakeholders in the legislative or regulatory process raises more questions and concerns that help ensure all pertinent issues are addressed. Membership should include practical expertise from the animal use industries, as well as individuals representing animal protection groups and the public. The number of individuals from each community should be balanced to ensure appropriate representation of their respective interests.