



September 28, 2015

VIA EMAIL

Robert Woodland
Director of Legislative and Regulatory Services
City of Victoria
RWoodland@Victoria.ca

Dear Mr. Woodland:

RE: Potbelly Pigs in the City of Victoria

I am writing on behalf of Animal Justice Canada Legislative Fund (“Animal Justice”), a national non-profit dedicated to securing legal protection for animals in Canada.

Animal Justice is concerned that the City of Victoria (“City”) is seeking to have pet pigs removed from family homes pursuant to an incorrect interpretation of City Bylaws.

Since 1985 when they were first introduced to North America, potbelly pigs have commonly been kept as family pets. Like all species of pigs, potbelly pigs are smart, loyal companions. They grow to approximately the size of a large dog.

The City of Victoria Animal Control Bylaw prohibits keeping farm animals in the City with limited exceptions.¹ “Farm animal” is defined as “any domesticated animal normally raised for food, milk or as a beast of burden and includes cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats, mules, donkeys, asses and oxen but does not include poultry or bees”.²

1. Potbelly Pigs are Not Food Animals

Potbelly pigs are not “normally raised for food, milk or as a beast of burden.” On the contrary, potbelly pigs are strictly considered pets. The North American Potbellied Pig Association (NAPPA)(whose website is, tellingly, www.PetPigs.com) provides guidelines for best practices of pet pig guardianship, from training to spaying and neutering. Nowhere does NAPPA even entertain the concept of potbelly pigs as

¹ City of Victoria, Animal Control Bylaw, Bylaw No. 11-044, s. 27(1)(a).

² City of Victoria, Animal Control Bylaw, Bylaw No. 11-044, s. 2.

agricultural animals. Instead, NAPPA considers potbelly pig guardianship to be a “long-term relationship” of “adding a pig to your family.”³

Thus, according to the City’s own definition of “farm animal,” potbelly pigs do not qualify as farm animals. Accordingly, they are not caught by the prohibition on the keeping of farm animals in the City of Victoria and cannot be removed from family homes.⁴

2. The City Must Consider the Purpose For Which the Animal is Kept

Even if potbelly pigs could be considered farm animals, the legislation requires the City to look beyond the species to the societal role of the animal. In Canada, we consider some animals to be food (e.g. chickens) and other animals to be friends (e.g. dogs).

However, in other cases it is not so clear. For example, rabbits are both “normally raised for food” and normally kept as pets. If the City is removing pigs because they are *sometimes* raised for food, the City would also be required to also remove rabbits because they, too, are sometimes raised for food. Yet, clearly this would be an absurd outcome that could never have been intended by the legislation.

Moreover, in some countries, animals like dogs and cats are “normally raised for food,” while in other countries animals like cows and pigs are *not* “normally raised for food.” It would be culturally insensitive for the City to deem certain animals but not others to be food without taking into account surrounding circumstances.

The only logical and culturally sensitive interpretation of the Bylaw must take into account the purpose for which the animal is being kept. When potbelly pigs are kept as pets, they cannot be removed under City legislation as it is currently written.

3. A City Environment can be Suitable for Potbelly Pigs

The City has expressed concern that small urban yards are not large enough for farm animals.⁵ Yet, the standard living conditions in modern agricultural facilities are anything but spacious.

Pigs used by the meat industry are confined in tiny gestation crates barely larger than their own bodies, or crowded into small, filthy pens where they are climbing on top of each other by the time they reach slaughter weight. And of course, ultimately,

³ North American Potbellied Pig Association, “Owning a Potbelly Pig?” online: <http://petpigs.com/resources/potbellied-pig-ownership/owning-a-potbelly-pig>.

⁴ City of Victoria, Animal Control Bylaw, Bylaw No. 11-044.

⁵ Personal Correspondence with Mike Downey.

they are killed. The life of a cared for potbelly pig is a dramatic improvement over these conditions.

The City has also expressed concern that pigs are unsanitary and odorous.⁶ This is untrue and based on inaccurate stereotypes about pigs. In fact, pigs are fastidious. They are so committed to cleanliness that they will separate their living quarters into areas for sleeping, eating, and excreting if allowed sufficient space.⁷

As with dogs, pigs kept as pets by responsible guardians are loved as members of the family. The City of Victoria has no authority to remove these animals from their homes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Yours truly,



Anna Pippus, B.A., J.D.
Director of Farmed Animal Advocacy
Animal Justice

⁶ Personal Correspondence with Mike Downey.

⁷ PBS Nature, "The Joys of Pigs: Smart, Clean, and Lean," November 10, 1996, online: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/the-joy-of-pigs-smart-clean-and-lean/2126/>