Okotoks Town Council

PO Box 20, Station Main, 5

Elizabeth Street
Okotoks, AB T1S 1K1

Dear Town Councillor,

**Re:        Retail Dog and Cat Sales in Okotoks**

I write to express my concern and support for a ban on the commercial sale of dogs and cats in pet stores.  I also write to request that you take steps to make this issue a priority and make the requested bylaw a reality.

Over recent years, the pet industry has evolved such that many retailers have opted to cease the retail sale of dogs and cats for both ethical and economic reasons. They have chosen instead, to partner with local rescue groups. Recently, more and more concerns have been brought forward by the citizens of Okotoks around the unethical sale and unhealthy condition of puppies and kittens by a local business in your community (Animal House).

In recent years, several municipalities in Canada have enacted such measures to ensure the compliance and upholding of similar bylaws, including Rosemont-La Petite Patrie, QC, Hudson, QC, Beaconsfield, QC, Mount Royal, QC, Toronto, ON, Ottawa, ON, Mississauga, ON, Oakville, ON, Kingston, ON, Vaughan, ON, Cambridge, ON, Waterloo, ON, Richmond, BC, New Westminster, BC – **LET OKOTOKS BE NEXT ON THE LIST**!

Okotoks should proudly join this list, helping to combat the perception that companion animals are commodities, and promote the responsible adoption and ownership of dogs and cats.

In addition, a ban on the retail sale of dogs and cats will help curb impulse pet purchases, puppy mills and backyard breeders, and ensure those stores who have voluntarily implemented an adoption model do not later voluntarily switch back to retail sales when it’s no longer a public issue.

Further, the adoption model will help with Alberta’s homeless pet population, providing more visibility for adoptable dogs and cats, contributing to an increase in adoptions and a decrease in the euthanization of unwanted pets, as observed in other municipalities with retail bans. These benefits undoubtedly help Okotoks pet communities, local rescue organizations, and the town’s Animal & Bylaw Services.

Additionally, it should be noted that the commercial sale of pets is not permitted by breeding organizations such as the Canadian Kennel Club and the Calgary Associated Dog Fanciers; each explicitly prohibit their members from providing puppies to stores, auctions, or other retail outlets. Therefore, the question remains: if not members of these established organizations, where do retail stores get their animals from?

The point of the bylaw is not to limit one’s ability to obtain a pet, nor to handicap retailers but rather to improve the way the residents of Okotoks think and act with respect to pet ownership and care. Between reputable breeders and rescue agencies, even with a ban there will still be no shortage of available dogs and cats. There are multiple successful pet stores in our town that thrive without having to profit off the sales of commercially bred pets.

Thank you very much for your consideration and I look forward to finally seeing some real action on this issue in the near future.