

Pierce County Council likely to look into bird farms

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Bob Vincent, who co-runs a parrot farm, denies reports his birds are not healthy.



BRUCE KELLMAN/THE NEWS TRIBUNE

Bob Vincent, left, gives a tour Tuesday to Pierce County Councilman Dick Muri at Scudder's Parrot Depot, which is south of Roy. Muri, who didn't see inside all the buildings on the farm, says the birds look healthy. He did, however, advise Vincent to clean up derelict equipment and a mobile home to help 'front-door image'

The Pierce County Council likely will take up in January a revised ordinance that could lead to inspections and licensing of bird-breeding facilities in the county, council member Barbara Gelman said Tuesday.

"I do believe this is an important issue, a timely issue and one that we need to pay close, close, attention to and make sure it gets taken care of," said Gelman, chairwoman of the council's Public Safety and Human Services Committee.

I'm very excited about making sure that it happens," Gelman said, adding that she will move to take up the matter as soon as the council returns from a break in late January or early February.

[Both Gelman's concern and excitement over the "timely issue" of providing protection for breeder birds rapidly dissipated after the issue was tabled at a meeting of the Public Safety and Human Services Committee on February 14, 2006. As of May 19, 2006, there had been no sign that the measure was still under consideration. However, Ms. Gelman recently introduced a draft ordinance to "provide for the humane care and treatment of animals" and include commercial aviaries under the revised Ordinance. Its exact fate and especially its reception by other Council members are unknown at this time; however, Mr. Muri and Mr. Bush have co-sponsored a competing proposal which would, in effect, once again table an Ordinance.—*Editors.*]

On Monday, Gelman indicated she wanted to find funds for inspections before revisiting the county's ordinance, which now covers kennels, catteries, grooming parlors and pet stores.

On Tuesday, the executive director of the Humane Society for Tacoma and Pierce County said the agency would help the county with any additional costs stemming from the expanded ordinance if that would help get it passed.

The Humane Society would pay any expenses that exceed the money raised from licensing bird breeders, said Executive Director Steve Pierce.

"Money is not an issue," he said.

An expanded ordinance should be self-supporting, and an annual fee of \$250 would cover a yearly aviary inspection, Pierce said.

He estimated each inspection would take about 2 1/2 hours of field time.

Discussion of revising the ordinance came after a News Tribune story on Sunday reported allegations of poor conditions for hundreds of parrots living at Scudder's Parrot Depot in Roy.

Martha Scudder, who runs the facility with Bob Vincent, has denied her birds are mistreated or diseased.

On Tuesday, County Councilman Dick Muri, escorted by Vincent, spent about an hour touring the Parrot Depot.

Before going to Scudder's, Muri was asked whether he intended to take an avian expert with him.

"I don't need a vet," he said. "If I'm going to make decisions as far as regulations and changing the way things get done, it's up to me. It's my decision.

"Sure I'm not a veterinarian but I'm still somewhat qualified. People elected me because of my decision-making process. I have two eyes and two ears and a wide variety of experiences so hopefully I'll be able to gather some good information and I'll be able to report back.

Asked if he would call an animal control officer to accompany him to Scudder's, Muri said: "I don't call staff, they call me."

After the tour, he and Vincent then met with a reporter and photographer from The News Tribune at the entrance to Parrot Depot.

Muri, who toured the facility about a year ago, said he found the place in better condition this time.

Basing his opinion on the birds's appearance, he said the ones he saw seemed healthy.

"The farm is in good working order, and the birds are real healthy," said Muri, a retired Air Force pilot. "Their feathers look good. They look normal, like a bird you'd see in someone's home."

[These comments of Mr. Muri are even more disturbing than the very similar comments of his Personal Assistant Leslie Swalley (see Declaration of Leslie Swalley in "Court Case"). While both represent statements in support of the Scudder Parrot Depot based on no documented knowledge of, or experience with, parrots or their proper husbandry, Muri is an elected Councilman whom one expects to make decisions based on objective fact, not ignorance disguised as fact.—*Editors.*]