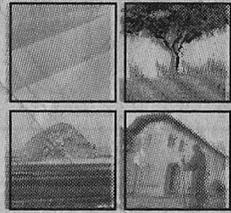


Letters and Commentary from Central Coast Readers



VOICES

B6 THE TRIBUNE

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIF.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2003

SANLUISOBISPO.COM

VIEWPOINT NEW PET CARE LAW

Pet buyers beware: Are you worthy caretakers?

By JOY GREENBERG

It was one of those irony-of-life moments. I had finished shopping for my weekly supplies of pet food: crickets for the frogs and gecko, worms for the platies, and goldfish for the turtle. Just as I was about to leave, the clerk said, "Oh, and would you please sign this form that says you know how to take care of your goldfish?"

"What?" I said, starting to laugh, thinking it must be a joke. He must have noticed my incredulous expression.

"Sorry," said the clerk, "but it's the law now. Every time we sell a pet we

have to pass out information about how to take care of it."

"But I'm not 'taking care' of these fish; I'm feeding them to my turtle," I said, shaking my head in wonder.

"Yeah, I know, but the new law applies to all animals that leave the store, regardless what they're for."

The store owner walked up to the counter just then, shaking her head in agreement and saying, "It's a New Year's present from our government."

Yep, that's right, folks. Our California Legislature has done it again: pushed through another amazing law. We're now required to attest publicly that we are knowledgeable pet own-

ers. I looked at the sheet the clerk handed me titled "Caring for a Goldfish." I learned that, contrary to their name, goldfish bowls are "not suitable for a goldfish and your pet's health will decline, resulting in an untimely death."

Not as untimely as when they end up in my turtle's stomach, I snickered under my breath.

Of course, there are many ironies about this. The obvious one is that anyone would care about what happens to feeder goldfish. What's next? Will someone want to know if the goldfish had humane executions, if they were aware of their fates before-

hand and thus traumatized?

A more sobering irony is that the ones who might benefit the most from caretaking instructions are probably those least likely to read it, like the people who support the smuggling of illegal animals by buying them from smugglers. You can bet they aren't provided with caretaking instructions.

And will it stop the number of animals released into the wild and left to fend for themselves when their owners no longer want them? Doubtful.

Yet another, subtler, irony is that we have to sign forms now to become caretakers for animals, but what about children? Would we be better parents

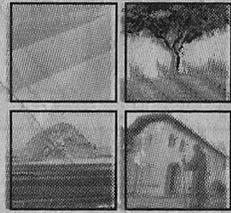
if we had to sign similar forms?

It seems to me that no one, including the animals, benefits from this new law. On the other hand, the pet shop owners have just been handed a bunch of paperwork to deal with, at their own cost.

It doesn't take an economist to figure out who will ultimately pay the price for this new bill: the consumer. Sacramento, what were you thinking

Joy Greenberg lives in Atascadero and is a freelance writer who authored "Confessions of a New Age Music Groupie." E-mail her at greenshadow@fix.net

Letters and Commentary from Central Coast Readers



VOICES

B6 THE TRIBUNE

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIF.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2003

SANLUIsobispo.com

VIEWPOINT NEW PET CARE LAW

Pet buyers beware: Are you worthy caretakers?

By JOY GREENBERG

It was one of those irony-of-life moments. I had finished shopping for my weekly supplies of pet food: crickets for the frogs and gecko, worms for the platies, and goldfish for the turtle. Just as I was about to leave, the clerk said, "Oh, and would you please sign this form that says you know how to take care of your goldfish?"

"What?" I said, starting to laugh, thinking it must be a joke. He must have noticed my incredulous expression.

"Sorry," said the clerk, "but it's the law now. Every time we sell a pet we

have to pass out information about how to take care of it."

"But I'm not 'taking care' of these fish; I'm feeding them to my turtle," I said, shaking my head in wonder.

"Yeah, I know, but the new law applies to all animals that leave the store, regardless what they're for."

The store owner walked up to the counter just then, shaking her head in agreement and saying, "It's a New Year's present from our government."

Yep, that's right, folks. Our California Legislature has done it again: pushed through another amazing law. We're now required to attest publicly that we are knowledgeable pet own-

ers. I looked at the sheet the clerk handed me titled "Caring for a Goldfish." I learned that, contrary to their name, goldfish bowls are "not suitable for a goldfish and your pet's health will decline, resulting in an untimely death."

Not as untimely as when they end up in my turtle's stomach, I snickered under my breath.

Of course, there are many ironies about this. The obvious one is that anyone would care about what happens to feeder goldfish. What's next? Will someone want to know if the goldfish had humane executions, if they were aware of their fates before-

hand and thus traumatized?

A more sobering irony is that the ones who might benefit the most from caretaking instructions are probably those least likely to read it, like the people who support the smuggling of illegal animals by buying them from smugglers. You can bet they aren't provided with caretaking instructions.

And will it stop the number of animals released into the wild and left to fend for themselves when their owners no longer want them? Doubtful.

Yet another, subtler, irony is that we have to sign forms now to become caretakers for animals, but what about children? Would we be better parents

if we had to sign similar forms?

It seems to me that no one, including the animals, benefits from this new law. On the other hand, the pet shop owners have just been handed a bunch of paperwork to deal with, at their own cost.

It doesn't take an economist to figure out who will ultimately pay the price for this new bill: the consumer. Sacramento, what were you thinking

Joy Greenberg lives in Atascadero and is a freelance writer who authored "Confessions of a New Age Music Groupie." E-mail her at greenshadow@fix.net