



NAIA Trust for the Protection of Animals, Animal Owners and Animal Enterprises

Working with the People who Care for America's Animals!

March 28, 2006

Assembly Member Mark Leno, Chair
Assembly Committee on Public Safety
1020 N Street, Room 111
Sacramento CA 95814

By facsimile 916-319-3745

Attention: Kathleen Ragan, Committee Consultant

Re: 2110, as amended March 23, Animal Cruelty: dogs: field coursing. Oppose

Dear Members of the Committee on Public Safety:

The National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) is a national organization of animal owners and public, private and commercial organizations dedicated to animal welfare. We promote responsible animal ownership and support those who responsibly breed and sell pets. NAIA Trust deals with legislative matters affecting responsible animal owners and enterprises. NAIA and NAIA Trust members who reside in California have asked that we review and comment on AB 2119, the bill to amend California cruelty law to create a new crime of field coursing.

We oppose AB 2110 and request inclusion in the listed opposition for the Bill Analysis in your committee.

Section 597.4 (b) is contrary to current Fish & Game Department regulations that allow the use of dogs to hunt rabbits, hares, and foxes and therefore criminalizes an activity that has traditionally been considered lawful and appropriate as a hunting and game management activity. There is no logic to removing this function from the department charged with regulating hunting.

In its online article "Pests in Landscapes and Gardens," the University of California Department of Natural Resources notes that these species can cause considerable damage to gardens, parks, and crops and to plastic irrigation lines. Barring the use of dogs to control these pests is unrealistic, especially if other control methods are unfeasible or have already failed.

Section 597.4 (b) also goes far beyond prohibition of purposeful coursing into the back yards and barnyards of those who keep pets or livestock dogs that may chase and injure or kill the animals

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named in the bill. Rabbits and foxes pay no attention to property lines, even those that are fenced. Dogs will be dogs; their instinct to chase prey animals in and near their territory is ingrained and cannot be abolished by threatening their owners with fines, jail time, and a criminal record.

Section 597.4 (c) 4, an amendment added by the previous committee, will do little to assist property owners who are faced with damage caused by these animals. The amendment limits the use of dogs to one per pest animal to be taken, a condition that is impossible to enforce and impractical to carry out.

Hunting is a historical activity that puts food on the table both directly by providing meals and indirectly by providing products to sell. Hunting also serves the public good by controlling overpopulation of species, preventing undue pressure on the environment and helping protect private property. NAIA Trust believes that the California Fish & Game Department, the agency charged with wildlife protection and oversight of hunting, is the appropriate venue for discussion of any regulations regarding practices that result in injury or death to wildlife. Department biologists have the knowledge, expertise, and mandate necessary to regulate hunting and control of species that live in the state and already have regulations for dealing with animals that may become pests. Superseding that responsibility by passing laws that criminalize certain hunting practices is a slippery slope to chaos in wildlife management and control. Therefore, we restate our opposition to AB 2110 and respectfully request that it be withdrawn or defeated.

Sincerely,

Patti L. Strand, National Director