



The "Half-a-Loaf" Problem Arises Again

More than once ISAR has confronted what we call the "Half-a-Loaf" problem, highlighting the dilemmas faced by serious people in the animal protection movement -- especially those who recall Voltaire's famous observation that "the perfect is the enemy of the good," meaning that while one seeks utopia, "the perfect," in human affairs, "the good," doesn't get done.

This principle applies to animal protection. While we wait and work for much better laws than those now being proposed ("the perfect"), the benefits that could have accrued from current proposals ("the good"), are lost if we oppose them.

We were reminded of this problem last year when ISAR was asked to support anti-tethering legislation pending in Pennsylvania. (Tethering is the cruel practice of chaining a dog to a stationary object, thus severely restricting its freedom of movement.)

Should we not have supported the proposed legislation because in doing so we would be accepting the *existence* of that cruel, indefensible practice, even though the law would ameliorate some of the more egregious conditions under which tethered dogs live? In other words, should we have sought "the perfect," with not even a nod to reality?

Or should we have supported the proposed legislation precisely *because* of the amelioration, abjuring "the perfect" to gain "the good"? In other words, should we have accepted the reality that "the good" meant reducing suffering, at the expense of "the perfect," which in a utopian world would be an outright prohibition of tethering?

After much soul-searching, ISAR concluded that half-a-loaf was better than none.

To paraphrase what we have written before, as to tethering in particular: Is half-a-loaf better than none? Much better--if you're a dog chained to a stationary object and whose entire universe consists of several square feet (at best), primitive shelter (at best), almost no human contact (at best), and little interaction with your own kind (at best).

But to make our position unequivocally clear, we concluded with two paragraphs that bring us to the subject of this current blog. We wrote:

This said, however, ISAR insists on making unmistakably clear that *we unequivocally oppose the practice of tethering both as a moral and humane imperative*, and that our support of the pending Pennsylvania legislation is not intended, nor should it be

construed as, our sanction, approval, or any other kind of endorsement of the cruel practice of tethering.

If ISAR had its way, Pennsylvania and every other state would immediately enact laws making tethering of dogs illegal, with severe penalties. Let there be no mistake about ISAR's position!

California appears poised to enact a statute (AB 2743) that would prohibit landlords from requiring tenants to declaw or devocalize their animals. According to Legislative Counsel's Digest of the bill, it "would prohibit a landlord, that allows a tenant to have an animal on the premises, from advertising or establishing rental policies in a manner that requires a tenant or a potential tenant with an animal to have that animal declawed or devocalized, for nontherapeutic purposes, as a condition of occupancy."

All well and good, and ISAR supports the effort.

But AB 2743 illustrates the half-a-loaf problem, yet again. Yes, it is "the good" that some few companion animals will be spared the barbaric practices of devocalization and declawing. But what about the rest, mutilated in the name of annoying barking and scratched couches? If devocalization and declawing are objectionable (let alone immoral) and so to be prohibited by California in the relatively minor landlord-tenant context, *it is not possible to justify the imposition of those practices on any animals in any context whatsoever.*

Yes, ISAR supports AB 2743, but with the same reservation we have expressed as to tethering and other animal protection legislation. We insist on making unmistakably clear that *we unequivocally oppose the practices of devocalization and declawing, both as a moral and humane imperative* and that our support of the California legislation is not intended, nor should it be construed as, our sanction, approval, or any other kind of endorsement of those barbaric practices.

If ISAR had its way, California and every other state would immediately enact anti-devocalization laws, as Massachusetts recently did, making devocalization (and, while they're at it, declawing) of companion animals illegal, with severe penalties. Let there be no mistake about ISAR's position about both of these practices!

We will have much more to say about devocalization and declawing in the near future.

ISAR's International Homeless Animals' Day is August 21, 2010



In 1992, ISAR introduced International Homeless Animals' Day® and Candlelight Vigils as an innovative educational vehicle, with the purpose of informing society about a global tragedy that overwhelms animal shelters each year - pet overpopulation. For all these years, ISAR has on the third Saturday of August commemorated the countless companion animal victims of overpopulation and continued to promote new campaigns, programs and ideas relating to the solution to the pet overpopulation epidemic: spay/neuter.

ISAR's International Homeless Animals' Day and Candlelight Vigil events are so successful, in fact, that as a direct result of this worldwide effort, countless shelter animals are spayed or neutered and find permanent and loving homes.

ISAR offers many opportunities for people to participate in this year's International Homeless Animals' Day Candlelight Vigil observances.

If you are interested in attending an International Homeless Animals' Day observance, ISAR has an up-to-date listing of [confirmed events](#) on our website. If there is currently not an observance in your area, we encourage you to check ISAR's website often as we continually add new events when they are

made available to us. *Please note, not all International Homeless Animals' Day observances take place on August 21st.*

ISAR once again offers and invites everyone to participate in our [9th Annual Virtual Vigil](#) and light an online candle in memory of the animals that lost their lives due to pet overpopulation.

ISAR's website hosts online button designs for you to link to ISAR and advertise this special Day. Simply visit ISAR's webpage displaying our [International Homeless Animals' Day 2010 Buttons](#) and copy and paste the codes into your online community page or website.

One of ISAR's major tools in our efforts to educate about the moral and other necessity of spay/neuter of companion animals is through our billboard campaign. ISAR now offers a new design in honor of International Homeless Animals' Day and Candlelight Vigils that proclaims "Shed Light On A Global Tragedy - Pet Overpopulation" and "Spay/Neuter, It Stops Killing" with space to advertise your own candlelight vigil event. Please visit ISAR's website to view all of ISAR's spay/neuter billboard designs and for more information on how you can purchase a billboard through [ISAR's Spay/Neuter Billboard Campaign](#).

Also new this year is ISAR's [video tribute](#) including previous International Homeless Animals' Day Candlelight Vigil events. To help set the tone for your own candlelight v

igil, ISAR invites all coordinators to use our International Homeless Animals' Day video during their own observances, perhaps by playing it on a laptop computer.

By coming together in spirit with like-minded people throughout the world on International Homeless Animals' Day you can support ISAR in letting the world know we will not tolerate the senseless killing that continues to take the lives of innocent dogs, cats, puppies and kittens simply because there are not enough good homes for them.

Together, we do make a difference!