

Ogle County releases letter addressing claims of permitting animal cruelty

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OREGON — The following is a June 26 letter by Ogle County Board Chairman Bruce Larson addressing claims of Ogle County permitting animal cruelty.

“The Ogle County Board believes it necessary to set the record straight on this issue.

In 2012 a permanent special use permit was issued to the property located at 16989 Ritchie Road, Rochelle, for a rodeo. The only conditions placed on the permit were that all activity ends by 1 a.m. and there is no loud activity after midnight.

The permanent special use stays with the property until the conditions of the special use have been violated or a request by the landowner to change or remove the permit. The special use permit cannot be removed for violations of the conditions prescribed without evidence the conditions were violated and must go through the due process of hearings before the special use permit can be revoked.

Ogle County contacted the Illinois Department of Agriculture’s Bureau of Animal Health and Welfare to get the department’s help with the issues raised by the outside entities making claims of animal abuse. The department’s humane investigator advised that they would not be getting involved and that it is very difficult to regulate rodeos under existing law because animals can get hurt in rodeos, shows and even in pastures.

The act of ‘steer tailing’ is not specifically illegal under Illinois law. In the just-concluded Illinois legislative session a law introduced that would make ‘steer tailing’ illegal failed to pass.

Another complicating factor is that the Illinois Attorney General Civil Rights Bureau sent a letter cautioning the Boone County Board against acting against ‘Mexican Rodeos’ after the board attempted to regulate said activity. The letter stated, ‘[t]he State of Illinois is committed to protecting the civil rights of all Illinois residents, which include the right to live free from unlawful discrimination. We urge the board to ensure that it is complying with its obligations under all applicable anti-discrimination laws, both with respect to special and temporary use permitting and related ordinances, and in carrying out all other aspects of its duties.’

Perhaps those people wanting Ogle County to do something they cannot do should channel their efforts in a direction that may become more fruitful such as lobbying their state representatives to specifically outlaw ‘steer tailing’ or completing a witness slip for SB 45. Unfortunately, rather than working on a solution to the issue, these out-of-county entities have engaged in the repeated

email and telephone harassment of the Ogle County Board, Sheriff, State's Attorney, Zoning, & Animal Control. Further, these same outside organizations have encouraged the making of false 911 calls which is illegal and could impact Ogle County residents receiving services in the event of a real emergency.

Ogle County does not condone animal cruelty. Ogle County cannot simply 'Deny the permit.' It was approved 13 years ago in perpetuity if the conditions of the permit have not been violated. Ogle County cannot simply 'arrest people' who have caused an injury to an animal. And Ogle County cannot 'simply ban' the activity as the Illinois Attorney General's office had made that abundantly clear."