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Ms. Sherry Shivley
TheDogPress.com
hobbyhorseranchboxers@gmail.com

RE: Article "Dog Show Abuse and Neglect"

Dear Ms. Shively:

Last weekend at the Lake Matthews Kennel Club shows in California I was contacted by Gary Steele. I write this letter on the Steele family's behalf in regards to the above mentioned article. This article was brought to their attention and it misstates the stale allegations against them for animal neglect. First of all, I am familiar with the laws which protect journalism and reporters from lawsuits sounding in Libel/Slader and related Defamation Torts. However, for those Constitutional protections to come into play there are certain guidelines that journalists must follow. And according to the misstatements of fact relayed in your article, those protections would not be afforded to you by any Court in this particular instance.

It is your duty as a journalist to check the veracity of your sources and the accuracy of allegations relayed by them concerning the subject matter. In the article which came to my attention last weekend, the statement that the Steele family was suspended from the American Kennel Club (AKC) is plainly untrue. Mr. Steele was cleared of any and ALL allegations and complaints unwarrantedly waged against him in that administrative context.

Concededly, the Steele family was suspended from the *American Boxer Club*. The clubs are distinctly different entities and any suspension from one has no bearing on the other. However, that information is so stale that it hardly constitutes news and the article merely recites what transpired over two years ago. That incident is well behind our breed and has no bearing on the article you published so let it rest or your publication will find itself on the costly end of litigation which will benefit no party.

Professional handlers often find themselves in situations that many uninformed spectators can inflate into a scandalous situation. Just this last weekend a well-known professional handler showed and major pointed a dog that was obviously sneezing and coughing while in the ring. We exhibitors and spectators chose not to condemn that handler who was probably handed the dog by the owner, THE TRULY RESPONSIBLE PARTY. It was the owner of the dog who most likely carelessly or negligently delivered the dog to the show even though kennel cough can be highly contagious. The handler was put in an

awkward position and later did the right thing and pulled the dog, after the dog was pointed by a well-known breeder judge. The point is that situations like this happen all the time to Handlers. They should not be blamed; we owners should be blamed. Will you write an article about this? If you do not, your reporting is not even handed and must be slighted toward the unwarranted persecution of some and protection of others, thereby making it inaccurate, unverified, and worthless, and affording it no Constitutional protections and exposing you personally, and your publication, to civil liability.

Perhaps your aforementioned article should have mentioned that ultimately, we as the owners, breeders, and exhibitors of our beloved dogs are the real responsible parties. Seeking to make professional handlers the scapegoat serves no beneficial purpose. Professional handlers only do what they are paid to do, exhibit the dogs we hand to them. Even AKC is loath to become involved in determining what is too thin of a weight or what is to be considered *out of condition*. The owners and judges do that because it is such an arbitrary determination based in opinion and personal taste.

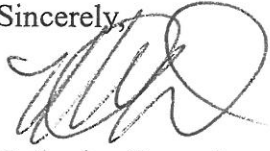
Your article is also intentionally misleading as you report an incident and use a different photo to support your allegations of a dog that has never been shown by the individuals you are slandering in the article. That is just sloppy, malicious journalism that is afforded no protection under the laws of any State or in Federal Court which is likely the jurisdiction in which you will be forced to litigate these issues should this onslaught continue.

The Boxer breed does not benefit from articles such as the one at issue herein. Our breed does not prosper by pointing the fingers at handlers; all handlers have found themselves in the uncomfortable position of showing a dog they really don't want to show because that is exactly what they are paid to do, make dogs that are less than perfect look better. The Boxer breed will only benefit if we exhibitors and breeders work together with the handlers, many of whom have devoted much of their lives to this sport and many breeds, to eliminate, or at least alleviate and mitigate, health issues which plague are beloved canines. While I appreciate your efforts as a journalist, exhibitor, and perhaps a breeder as well, I implore you to focus on the breeders who continue to breed dogs and bitches with known health issues and deplorable temperaments.

The purpose of this letter is to warn you to check your sources, discontinue using misleading photos which have nothing to do with the content of your articles, and realize that professional handlers are not the parties to focus on when dealing out blame for the poor state and condition of our breed. We as the owners, breeders, and exhibitors determine what, where and when our animals are shown, bred, and thrive or not. Your efforts will be better spent on exposing the ultimately responsible parties rather than using your publication for inappropriate, misleading and defamatory purposes. This letter is not intended to offend you, or accuse you personally. The letter is a plea for your efforts to be spent more effectively on the preservation of our breed, not the defamation of handlers.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to seeing you at a show soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Denevi', written in a cursive style.

Catherine Denevi
Attorney at Law
Boxer Owner, Breeder, Exhibitor