

Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
*Stephanie Bryan*

I was woken up this morning with a gentle kiss on the cheek from my best friend Molly. Molly is my five year old boxer, who loves me unconditionally. When my father was in Iraq, Molly took care of all of us, she waited every day for my Dad to walk in the door. I think about how much my dad missed her companionship while he was fighting in Iraq. I think about how she was my mothers shadow and made her feel safe and secure at night. When I look at her I can't help but think about a story I heard on a radio show the other day, about the dogs that are suffering in Iraq and Afghanistan, and how military men and women can be punished if they befriend a sick or wounded dog, and try to save them.

Dogs in Iraq and Afghanistan are suffering greatly because of the war. Since the onset of the war, the amount of stray dogs has "soared" (Susman). Many dogs have lost their homes and owners due to the war. Many strays are having puppies, adding to the problem. They are starving and don't have clean water. They are infested with fleas, and filthy. They have no shelter to protect them from the elements. They are now being blamed for horrible attacks, and for eating the flesh off of dead bodies, which are simply their survival instincts. Weather you agree with the war, or don't agree, these dogs are victims, and are suffering, and they need our help.

"Culling- 1) To pick out from others; collect 2) to gather; select 3) To remove rejected members or parts from" (Webster Dictionary). The inhumane practice of dog culling was practiced during Saddam Hussein's regime, and the practice is in place again. In November of 2008, Iraq Security Forces began "dog-culling". The program consists of "two vets, a council official, and a police officer armed with a shotgun"

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
Bryan*

(CNN.COM/World). Meat is poisoned with strychnine and the dogs are lured in by the meat. After the dogs eat the meat it is a slow and painful death. Strychnine usually takes effect in 10-20 minutes in dogs. Symptoms include seizures, convulsions, and a rigid extension of all four limbs, respiratory paralysis, and then death. If this cruel and horrific "feast" doesn't work, after 15 minutes of watching these helpless animals suffer, the dog is shot.

The way of excusing, and justifying these killings seems easy to blame the victim. The stories of rabies and disease are often told and exaggerated. It has been argued that culling is not an efficient means of solving the problem. The dog culling in Iraq doesn't discriminate. All dogs are subject to the poisonings and shootings. Some of these victims have been vaccinated and are of no threat. On the other side, there are dogs that may have been exposed to rabies or other disease who are not in the areas of the culling.

In the United States if you poison a dog you can be prosecuted, but yet the Department of Defense (DOD) is aiding to the harsh and inhumane killing of dogs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

United States Central Command General Order 1a, section 2i "prohibits soldiers from befriending, adopting or providing food or water to either domesticated or wild animals" (Negron) As if the *aiding* of Iraq Security Forces isn't bad enough, it was confirmed by soldiers that the "US government had hired contractors to kill dogs found on American bases in Iraq." (The Humane Society of the United States). "Some military units were ordered to shoot animals on sight" (The Humane Society of the United States).

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
Bryan*

The President of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), Wayne Pacelle wrote a letter to Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, in March of 2005. His letter went into detail the importance of animal and human bonding and the fact that they “take comfort in their presence” (Pacelle). Mr. Pacelle also offered both suggestions and assistance in making it possible for service members to keep their adopted beloved companion. Mr. Pacelle also offered the suggestion of “an intelligent care and control system to be implemented” (Pacelle), as have been in other countries in disaster situations. Another concern Mr. Pacelle also addressed was that General Order 1a was so much as giving other service members a green light to torture and kill these dogs. Mr. Rumsfeld never replied.

Because of General Order 1a, “soldiers can face immediate court martial for befriending animals and some even see their animals brutally murdered by a direct gunshot to the head by commanding officers who will not bend the rules” (saveabull.com)

As we watch our televisions at night, we hear stories of American hero's, or soldiers who lost their lives for our country. We hear the political arguments. We seldom hear the horrors being imposed on the “Canine Hero's”. There are countless stories about these hero's, and more simple stories of companionship and camaraderie. These are the untold stories.

Rocky and Sam were found by a National Guard unit in Afghanistan, and adopted by them. One night Sam and Rocky wouldn't stop barking, so “one of the soldiers decided

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
Bryan*

to investigate” (Baghdad Pups). “Before the soldier could make it outside there was a loud, resonating Boom” (Baghdad Pups). Rocky and Sam were seen attacking a suicide bomber preventing him from entering the building. “Rocky was the epicenter of the explosion”. “Sam and Rocky more than likely saved the lives of their soldiers that night and greatly reduced injuries”. (Baghdad Pups) Sam and Rocky were injured badly. Sam didn't make it but Rocky was fortunate. This hero deserves to live a life without suffering.

Nubbs, a mutt in Iraq, was given his name from Major Brian Dennis, USMC. The Marine named him Nubbs because his ears had been “lopped off”. (Today msnbc.com) Iraqi soldiers performed the surgery, which is “common practice meant to give another dog less to grab hold of in a fight and also make the dogs tougher” (today msnbc.com). Major Dennis immediately bonded with Nubbs. Nubbs was part of a pack, and generally stayed outside the borders of the fort, but Major Dennis would frequently see him. One day, while on patrol Major Dennis found Nubbs “badly wounded” (today msnbc.com). An Iraqi soldier stabbed him with a screwdriver. Major Dennis took him and nursed him back to health. When it came time for Major Dennis to move to another “fort on the Iraq-Jordan border, some 70-75 miles away” (today msnbc.com) he said goodbye to his friend, not expecting to see him again. He was wrong. Nubbs showed up a few days later. The bond between the two was so strong, that Nubbs traveled 70-75 miles to find his friend.

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot*  
*Bryan*

While it has been told, and told again, the amazing healing power these dogs have for our Soldiers, you would think the solution would be simple. You find a dog, you adopt it, and you live happily ever after. This is not the case, the red tape that has to be cut through, makes it almost impossible. There are families and organizations that are willing to help. The DOD makes it almost impossible for this to happen. Soldiers feel threatened, they are forced to choose between punishment and a living breathing creature that they simply fell in love with. Considering the fact that these poor animals are suffering, it would also seem simple for the DOD to spend the money in treating, vaccinating, and healing these animals, rather than hiring people to kill them, and spending the money to poison them. Several organizations have offered to help with the treatment and movement of these animals. They have been ignored or refused.

The Marine Corps Base Camp LeJeune Brig, has a program in which confined prisoners train dogs to help our "Wounded Warriors". These dogs are taught to do laundry and many other things that a wounded soldier cannot do for himself anymore. In return the dog teaches these prisoners compassion and give them hope and a positive future. Some of these suffering dogs in Iraq can be used for such programs. A dog has the capability to do so much, they love, they feel, understand and heal. How can our country let them suffer, and just kill and discard them as if they were trash?

We need to put pressure on the Department of Defense to stop this now. The first step would be to write letters to as many people as you can, these stories need to be heard. I feel if more people were made aware of this situation, our Government would be forced

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
Bryan*

to listen and make the changes necessary to help. Donations can be made to the ASPCA and other organizations. Please let us do our part. They need our voices.

*Words-1,426*

*Man's Best Friend Poisoned with Strychnine or Shot  
Bryan*

Works Cited

1. Dennis, Major Brian "Marine Bends Rules to Save Dog in Iraq" today msnbc.com  
November 2, 2009  
[http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/33585208/ns/today-today\\_pets\\_and\\_animals](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/33585208/ns/today-today_pets_and_animals)
2. "Help a Soldier Save Dog Adopted in Iraq" saveabull.com. October 7, 2008  
<http://saveabull.com/2008/help-a-us-soldier-save-dog-adopted-in-Iraq>
3. Negrón, Vladimir "SPCA Program Transports Dogs from War-Torn Iraq to the US"  
Petmed. February 10, 2009  
[http://www.petmed.com/dog/care/nws\\_dg\\_operation\\_baghdad](http://www.petmed.com/dog/care/nws_dg_operation_baghdad)
4. Pacelle, Wayne, Humane Society of the United States "U.S. Military Treats Stray Dogs  
and Cats Befriended by Troop as Enemies of the State" May 27, 2005  
[http://www.hsus.org/pets/pets\\_related\\_news\\_and\\_events/enemies\\_of\\_the\\_state.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pets_related_news_and_events/enemies_of_the_state.html)
5. SPCA International "No Buddy Gets Left Behind" "Rocky A True Military Hero"  
March 09, 2010  
<http://www.spcai.org/about-us/in-the-news/item/401-rocky-a-true-military-hero.html>
6. "Stray Dogs Being Killed in Baghdad" cnn.com/world. February 12, 2009  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/02/12/baghdad.dogs>
7. Susman, Tina "Babylon and Beyond." Los Angeles Times. November 27, 2008  
<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2008/11/iraq-iraq-secur.html>
8. Webster Dictionary- "Culling"

