

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma is one step closer to inspecting all of the state's large dog breeders and puppy mills. The Board of Commercial Pet Breeders adopted an inspection fee scale at its Monday evening meeting in Oklahoma City. The fee is based on the number of dogs a breeder owns, and it applies to all breeders with 11 or more nonspayed females. State regulations do not apply to breeders with 10 or fewer nonspayed females. The annual inspection fees range from a minimum of \$75 for some breeders with 50 or fewer animals to a maximum of \$600 for some breeders with more than 200 animals, the board decided. The fee applies regardless of whether breeders are members of the American Kennel Club or voluntarily submit to U.S. Department of Agriculture inspections. "This is just how we're going to generate the revenue to support this organization," said Christy Counts, board member and president of the Central Oklahoma Humane Society. The inspection fees would help make the Board of Commercial Pet Breeders self-sufficient by placing its funding pressures on breeders. It will operate without state funding. Gary Phillips of G+M Kennels in Adair will pay up to \$450 for his state inspection next year. He'll also pay the \$300 license fee the board approved Monday as well as his regular membership dues to the USDA. On top of that, it costs about \$30,000 a year to feed his dogs, Phillips said. "With the economy the way it is and the prices of puppies the way they are, I'm not even buying my grandkids anything for Christmas this year," Phillips said. "Dog food is my Christmas present." Phillips, who raises 14 breeds, including beagles, Chihuahuas and dachshunds, said he was upset that breeders who already voluntarily pay for USDA inspections would also have to pay for the state's inspections. He said the additional fees wouldn't close his business, only because "I'm too stubborn for that." Barney Hawkins of Hulbert breeds 54 dogs, mostly boxers. Hawkins said he has already invested \$150,000 of his retirement funds into his business, and he said many breeders can't afford another expense. "Most of the people in the commercial pet-breeding

industry are working for minimum wage,” Hawkins said. The inspection fees cover everything from travel time to pay for the person inspecting the operation. That person could be a local veterinarian, registered veterinary nurse or state agent. In some cases, that person might be accompanied by a police officer. Also during Monday’s meeting, board members adopted USDA standards for shade coverings, cage temperature, ventilation and travel requirements, among other issues. Read more in Tuesday's Tulsa World.