



Humane  
S O C I E T Y

TO: Special Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

FROM: Dori Villalon, Executive Director

DATE: October 11, 2013

RE: Support for Updating the Kansas Pet Animal Act (KPAA)

Senator Love and Members of the Committee:

I am the executive director of the Lawrence Humane Society and acting President of the Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas, a nonprofit organization representing animal shelters and rescue organizations. I am an Animal Welfare Professional with more than twenty years of experience directing shelters in California, Colorado, and Ohio.

Responsible and humane animal shelters and rescues in Kansas, like the Lawrence Humane Society, are the organizations that accept and care for this State's unwanted, abused, over-bred, surplus, and abandoned cats and dogs. We are nonprofit organizations that are not funded or reimbursed by the State or any national animal organizations.

~~We are able to save animals because our communities generously support us with their donations and their volunteer time.~~

In addition to the recommendations made by my colleagues this morning, I am here to respectfully encourage you to consider the following:

1. Foster Care Fee: In Kansas, volunteers who take our orphaned and injured shelter animals temporarily into their homes to heal are called 'Foster Volunteers'. These people directly save the animals that cannot thrive in the shelter environment. Volunteers are currently charged an annual State fee capped at \$10 per year. The Department of Agriculture has recommended raising this cap to \$50 a year. As someone who continually works to recruit and keep volunteers, I can tell you this fee will prevent families and students from volunteering their time. As a result, fewer animals will have the opportunity for rehabilitation and we will have to euthanize more treatable animals. Our volunteers are people dedicated to helping the homeless animals, but like most of us, they have animals of their own- and children, and other responsibilities- that will have to take priority over what is essentially a State volunteer tax. I would be appalled, and frankly embarrassed for Kansas, if I had to tell a family that in order to take home and raise an orphaned litter of kittens for my shelter, they will need to give me a check for \$50. This fee cap is simply incompatible to encouraging volunteerism and protecting homeless animals in Kansas.
2. Other License Fees: It has been proposed that the annual State fee for animal shelters be raised from \$300 to \$750 a year, a 150 percent increase. \$750

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small Kansas animal welfare groups doing vital work, it will be the difference between saving animals and shutting down. Kansas should be encouraging nonprofit animal shelters to succeed, not charging us more for cleaning up everyone's mess. If you are looking to raise license fee revenue, I recommend you look to the breeders and pet shops who profit off the lives of cats and dogs, not those of us who are committed to saving them. Please don't raise the annual Shelter License Fee cap.

3. Gas Chambers: The word euthanasia is Greek for 'good death' and I think we can all agree that a good death is one that is quick and painless. Putting a dog in a box and filling that box with carbon monoxide gas does not provide that struggling and frightened animal with a good death. In fact, it is a slow death whereby the animal remains conscious while the gas starts to affect his internal organs. A painless injection of sodium pentobarbital, the same process your own veterinarian would use on your pet, is clearly the far more humane, and only, option. Kansas still allows using carbon monoxide to end an animal's life. It is time to update the law and outlaw gas chambers.
  4. Adoption Events: Homeless animals are marketed for adoption for a variety of ways, including taking them to local community events where they can meet prospective families. However, under the current law, the actual adoption must be completed at the animal shelter facility. There is simply no logic in requiring a family to get into their car and drive for miles simply to sign a piece of paper. This requirement has no basis and is an unnecessary inconvenience to the well-intentioned public. This is not a matter of discouraging impulse adoptions as we have trained staff or volunteers at events to conduct adoption counseling. We also have our laptops, supplies, and the animals are already altered and ready to go home. Mobile adoption a widely accepted practice throughout the country. Animal shelters and rescues in KS should be able to conduct off-site adoptions.
  5. Annual Inspections of Licensed Facilities: It simply doesn't make sense to require breeders and nonprofit organizations to comply with animal housing standards if no one ever inspects and ensures their compliance. I was shocked to learn there are licensed breeding facilities and shelters in Kansas that have never been inspected. Clearly the Department of Agriculture is not going to voluntarily conduct annual inspections. Therefore, we encourage you to compel them to inspect every facility by the wording from 'may inspect' to 'shall inspect'. Facilities with no violations can then be inspected every 18-months or on a complaint basis.
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I truly appreciate this opportunity to help you make decisions that will impact thousands of animals in Kansas. Thank you for your time and consideration.