

Memo to: Dallas City Council Health, Environment & Human Services Committee:
Lois Finkelman, Chair
Leo Chaney Jr., Vice Chair
James Fantroy
Elba Garcia
Veletta Lill

From: Andrea Allen, Chair, Dallas Animal Shelter Commission

cc: Commission Members
Kathleen Davis
Ade Williams
Kent Robertson

Date: March 3, 2005

Re: Proposed Revision of City Animal Code

The city's animal regulations, which comprise Chapter 7 of the City Code, are in dire need of revision. The current code is a patchwork of regulations that are sometimes confusing, sometimes contradictory, and sometimes unenforceable. Staff will be briefing your committee on a proposed revision to the City Code shortly – we hope next week.

On behalf of the Animal Shelter Commission, I respectfully urge you to support each of the recommendations in the proposal you will be hearing. This document represents over a year and a half of research, meetings, discussions, and compromises on the part of our staff, our Commission, and the City Attorney's Office. Everyone involved has reviewed and vetted each of these items, and the Commission endorses the entire document.

In addition, we ask that you consider further modifications to former Section 7-3.6 and Section 7-3.7 that I understand staff will be presenting to you in their briefing. Essentially, this additional language would extend protection against shooting and poisoning to feral cats and wildlife, with certain exceptions such as a rodent-control program. Currently, the protections afforded in the state statutes, which are enforced by the city, do not extend to wild animals, strays, or feral animals, but only to owned animals.

Also, we agree with staff's request for some wording changes to Section 7-6.1, which deals with Prohibited Animals. These changes would require that people who have permits to own dangerous wild animals must provide Animal Services with a list of those animals as well as their locations. We believe this is essential for the protection of city personnel such as police officers, fire and rescue workers, as well as Animal Services – all of whom should be alerted to the presence of these animals in the event they are called into those facilities.

Finally, we ask that you consider the attached language pertaining to commercial-breeding permits. The current language is unenforceable, and all parties to these discussions agree that it should be removed. However, on behalf of the Animal Shelter Commission, I ask that you replace it with language that is both specific and enforceable, and to do it now rather than hoping future City Councils will do it later.

We recognize that Animal Services could use additional staff members to enforce additional provisions such as our Commercial Breeder proposal, and we hope you will consider that when you consider their budget requests. Either way, however, we would like to see this very specific and very sensible provision incorporated into the City Code rather than failing to address the issue of breeding at all. We must find effective ways to address pet overpopulation or we will never be able to stop the proliferation of stray and homeless animals. Failing to even regulate commercial breeders is the wrong signal to send and would only contribute to the problem.

As always, we greatly appreciate your consideration, and we invite your comments and questions.