

March 17, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

The Texas Animal Control Association does not support HB 3450. HB 3450 is drafted in such a way that the entities, defined as "Public Sheltering Agency" and "Private Sheltering Agency" that currently deal with unwanted, stray, animals that are a nuisance, will be penalized for addressing issues of public health and safety concerns, by the insurmountable restrictions and mandated expenses HB 3450 would place on them. "Public Sheltering Agencies" rely on tax dollars to fund their efforts of sheltering stray animals that are impounded. "Private Sheltering Agencies" must rely on donations and fund raising events to finance their efforts. HB 3450 does not take into consideration the additional burdens on tax payers and 501C3 nonprofits. Budgets are already stretched, and our state and national economies are struggling.

HB 3450 makes many unfounded assumptions.

- Animals in Shelters currently receive care as outlined in the Texas Health and Safety Code.
- Shelters make adoptable animals available.
- Shelters have partnerships with rescue groups, nonprofits, and for profit companies to rehome their animals.
- Owners have a reasonable time to redeem their animals.
- Provisions already exist for dogs and cats to be spayed and neutered. Dogs and cats are the two most common species seen at Shelters.
- Staff performing euthanasia must be certified to do so. Laws and rules currently exist regulating the methods, training, and certification course content in the Texas Health and Safety Code.
- Shelters are trusted to honor the requests of pet owners when they make a decision to have their pet euthanized. HB 3450 would violate that trust.
- Citizens have the right of property and the right to request or cause nuisance animals to be removed from their property. Shelters would not be able to assist them (going somewhere with TNR/feral) with all the restrictions HB 3450 would place on them. Both private and public would be forced to subsidize these activities with little to no provisions for funding. This seems to be a very arrogant attempt to extol control over many activities Shelters are already involved in dealing with society's animals. Shelters are not the problem, irresponsible pet owners are.
- Public Shelters may be subject to open record requests while Private Shelters are not. Amendment rights still apply.
- Shelters are capable of putting best practice policies in place.
- Revenue does not exist for every Shelter to offer low cost spay/neuter.
- Every Shelter does not have a Veterinarian on staff.

- Every Shelter does not have a Behaviorist on staff.
- Every Shelter must minimize liabilities in placing or rehoming animals.
- Staffs working at Shelters are compassionate people who are committed to caring for the animals in their care. No one gets involved in the sheltering of animals because they like euthanizing animals...quite the opposite. They all have a great affinity for animals.
- Shelters do not have an infinite amount of space to keep and care for "savable" animals for an infinite amount of time. This is not realistic given the number of animals that end up at our shelters because of irresponsible owners who do not keep their pets restrained or identified. Shelters are the best judge of their space requirements.

The Texas Animal Control Association would encourage the drafting of laws that would require pet owners to identify their pets. A very high percentage of animals coming into our Shelters do not have any form of identification on them. The few pets that do have identification, have a high success rate of being returned to their owners. Identification is key. Burdening and penalizing the Shelters with HB 3450 will not affect the change you desire very quickly. Drafting laws requiring breeder permits or that all owners of puppies and kittens, dogs and cats, must have their animals spayed and neutered, would enhance laws currently in place and address privately owned animals.

The Texas Animal Control Association does not support HB 3450. It does not address the issues in Texas and places unrealistic restrictions and mandated expenses on Shelters.

Sincerely,