

Alaska Rural Veterinary Outreach, Inc.

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March 30, 2015

Representative Liz Vasquez
Representative Max Gruenberg
Alaska State Legislature
Via email to Catherine.Simpson@akleg.gov
and Nicoli.Bailey@akleg.gov

Re: Support for HB 147 - An Act Relating to various provisions regarding the treatment of animals taken into protective custody in Alaska

Dear Representative Vasquez and Representative Gruenberg:

Please accept my strong support for HB 147.

I have nearly 3 decades of involvement in and commitment to animal welfare in Alaska, including as past president of Alaska Equine Rescue for many years, as a past member of Anchorage Animal Care and Control Advisory Board, as past Executive Director and a current board member for the Alaska SPCA, and currently as a co-founder and President of Alaska Rural Veterinary Outreach, Inc. I believe that HB 147 takes vital steps forward to address many problems I have seen over the years. I bring to your attention the following:

- The link between domestic violence and animal cruelty is well documented.
- In rural communities where there is an overpopulation of unwanted pets, especially dogs, and where there is no veterinary care to provide humane means to control this problem, many animals are routinely abandoned, shot, drowned, or have very short lifespans as a result of disease, hypothermia, starvation, or predation.
- Inhumane treatment and lack of protection for animals in rural communities is not uncommon. Young people grow up where this is just part of life. Without saying so specifically, HB 147 recognizes this and will go a long way towards showing youngsters that humane treatment of animals is important.
- Is it just a coincidence that Alaska has the highest rate of dog bites in the nation and the highest rate of domestic violence? Or are they all part of the same issue - lack of respect for living things. HB 147 helps to bridge this gap, and can only help both people and animals.

The current structure of rescuing animals taken into protective custody is costly to both the state and to foster homes that house animals on behalf of the state. Legal cases can go on for months, sometimes even years. For example, during my tenure with Alaska Equine Rescue, we spent thousands and thousands of dollars caring for horses in protective custody for nearly 2 years, waiting for the courts to make a determination. These were cases that were unquestionably extreme cruelty - emaciated horse carcasses on the ground, starved animals barely alive, no food or water on the property ... the list goes on. Had HB 147 been in place back then, it would have made an enormous difference to the organization, to the caretakers, and especially to the animals, whose chances of being rehomed would have been greatly increased, and in some cases, assured.

During my time with Alaska SPCA, I received numerous calls from pet owners who were in some sort of domestic dispute (violence, divorce, etc.) both in the Anchorage area and some in rural communities, who wanted their animals legally protected. However, without relinquishing the animals altogether, this was not possible. Again, had HB 147 been in effect, this would not have been a problem.

Your efforts to craft this proposed legislation are greatly appreciated. I urge you pass it for the benefit of the animals and the people it seeks to support. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Sally Clappitt
President