



Humane
S O C I E T Y

TO: Special Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

FROM: Dr. Jennifer Stone, Lawrence Humane Society

DATE: November 19, 2013

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

Senator Love and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Stone, and I am the staff veterinarian at the Lawrence Humane Society. Prior to working there, I was the Medical Director for The Animal Foundation in Las Vegas, the largest intake animal shelter in the country. I am a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. My career has always centered on Shelter Medicine and I am an expert on cat and dog housing and care standards and herd health management. I am here today as a representative of the Lawrence Humane Society, the Pet Animal Coalition of Kansas, and most importantly, an individual who has dedicated her career to veterinary medicine and the humane treatment of animals.

The animal care standards outlined in the Kansas Pet Animal Care Act have not been updated in over 25 years. As you may imagine, there have been tremendous strides made in standards of care for caged dogs and cats in this time and today, you have the opportunity to play a vital role in the prevention of suffering and improvement of quality of life for thousands of dogs and cats throughout Kansas. I appreciate having the opportunity to share my recommendations with you, and I hope my testimony today provides the information you need to make decisions on this important topic.

1) Hydration: A vast array of medical problems can occur secondary to dehydration. Animals in a crowded environment can sometimes become dehydrated due to limited fluid intake from stress alone. For this reason, animals in breeding facilities, pet shops, and animal shelters should be provided with potable water at all times.

2) Temperature. In situations where animals are confined and unable to move freely, extreme temperatures can lead to severe medical conditions ranging from hypothermia and frostbite to heat exhaustion and heat stroke in a very short amount of time. Animals in shelters and breeding facilities are caged and cannot regulate their own temperature by changing their location. Optimal temperature in breeding facilities and shelters falls between 60F-80F, with 30-70% humidity. The current standards that allow these temperature requirements to be ignored for up to four hours are unacceptable and the provision to exceed the temperature standards must to be removed in order to prevent suffering.

3) Resting Surface. Sadly, many animals in breeding facilities live their entire lives in the same cage. Over time, wire flooring in cat and dog enclosures can cause abrasions and wounds to soft paw pads which often become infected. Other injuries such as painful bruising and broken bones can occur if a leg or tail becomes lodged between the wires. In

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addition, flooring made solely of wire is prone to bending and sagging which prevents the animal from standing up easily due to an uncomfortable, uneven and moveable surface. Over time this type of surface can lead to severe discomfort and exacerbation of medical conditions such as arthritis. In puppies and kittens constant exposure to uneven wire flooring can lead to severe developmental abnormalities such as the malformation of bone as the animal grows. We recommend that solid flooring be provided to every animal in every facility in Kansas. This solid flooring should be large enough for each animal to lie down fully in a natural position.

4) The Guidelines for Standards of Animal Care in Animal Shelters states that primary enclosures should allow enough space for each animal regardless of the species to easily stand with tail held erect with the ability to turn around freely in the cage. Each animal should be able to sit, stretch, and move his or her head in a normal fashion without touching the top of the enclosure. The animal should be able to lie down comfortably with all limbs extended and assume a comfortable position for normal bodily functions. Once again, for many animals, this cage is the only place they will ever live and the USDA standards do not currently meet these criteria. This needs to be changed in order to ensure humane living conditions for all animals.

5) Stacked Cages. While the stacking of animal cages is common in breeding facilities and is sometimes necessary in animal shelters especially when large impoundments occur, it is very important that this practice be done humanely and with the health of the population in mind. Population density has a direct effect on the health of the population. When animals are housed closely together in crowded conditions, poor ventilation and stress are very likely to lead to illness. Overcrowding contributes to direct transmission of disease from animal to animal and constant exposure to poor air quality due to lack of air flow coupled with high ammonia levels in the air caused by a build up of urine in the environment can lead to severe respiratory distress.

In addition to these other health concerns, some facilities have been known to stack cages in such a way that urine and feces are allowed to fall on to the animals below. Cross contamination with urine and feces poses serious health risks to dogs and cats alike, spreading serious illnesses such as parvo, distemper and panleukopenia virus both of which are often fatal. Constant exposure to urine can cause a burn on the skin known as urine scald, and prolonged exposure to feces can predispose animals to many types of bacterial infection. It is appalling to know that there are animals in Kansas living their whole lives lying in urine and feces, and it is the responsibility of the State to be sure that this kind of inhumane housing is eliminated.

6) FIV Cat Adoptions. FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) is a disease that is spread from cat to cat primarily through deep bite wounds. Cats with FIV may live long and healthy lives and can safely live in households with other cats without spreading the disease. Current Kansas law prohibits animal shelters from adopting out or transferring FIV positive cats to other facilities. This law is outdated and unnecessary and only results in the euthanasia of otherwise healthy cats who could easily be placed in homes. Shelters should be allowed to adopt out these animals or transfer them to other organizations for placement.

7) Annual Examinations. Over time, animals will develop medical problems as they age. In a housing situation where there are many animals housed together, it is easy to overlook problems that can become very serious over time. For example something as simple as a chipped tooth can lead to severe pain, infection, and can often cause animals to stop eating which can lead to additional more severe medical problems. Dogs in commercial breeding facilities may be rarely handled by people, and without regular examinations, painful medical conditions may go undiscovered for years. In addition, dogs used for breeding are at a higher risk for many life-threatening conditions such as mammary gland cancer and pyometra (severe uterine infection). It is imperative that animals in long-term housing situations be examined at least once per year to be sure that they do not have medication conditions that need attention.

I appreciate your time today and your careful considerations of these recommendations.