

United Board of Health – Informational Item

Galveston County Animal Services Policy

Information Request – The Health District has drafted a new Animal Services policy for Galveston County that includes several significant changes from the previous policy. These changes are highlighted in the review below. The District respectfully requests that the United Board of Health review these high level changes to the Animal Services Policy and provide all feedback and/or questions to Ronnie Schultz, rschultz@gchd.org or by phone at 409-938-2314 by April 11, 2007. Anyone interested in a complete copy of the proposed Animal Services Policy should contact Ronnie. This initial review is in anticipation of bringing the entire policy to the Board at the April meeting.

High Level Review Items –

- Adoption and Sterilization – the adoption standards listed in the new policy require the spaying and neutering of all animals adopted from the shelter or the completion of a sterilization contract for puppies and kittens. Once of age, the puppy or kitten shall be sterilized in accordance with this signed agreement. In addition, all animals that are sterilized shall be microchipped or tattooed indicating the alteration status.

- Number of Dogs and Cats Unlimited with Exceptions –
 - The policy now allows an individual to keep, harbor, possess, maintain, or allow to be kept an unlimited number of dogs and cats as long as all of the dogs and cats are spayed or neutered. If an individual chooses to keep, harbor, possess, maintain, or allow to be kept dogs and/or cats that are not spayed or neutered, the policy limits that individual to four dogs, four cats or a combination of said animals not to exceed four.

 - Fosters shall be registered with the District and shall be allowed no more than two (2) unaltered animals over the limit described above.

- Dangerous Dogs –
 - Once a person has been notified that they are the owner of a dangerous dog, that person has ten (10) days to comply with all of the dangerous dog requirements instead of the thirty (30) days allowed in state law. The requirements include registration, obtaining liability insurance, posting of dangerous dog signs on the enclosure, etc.

- The dangerous dog shall be restrained when taken out of the enclosure with a high visibility collar marked with the word “dangerous dog” on the collar.
 - Following the required spaying or neutering the dog shall be microchipped with information identifying it as a dangerous dog.
 - Dangerous dog appeals begin at the lowest level in the District’s management and moves through to the Health Authority, whose decision is final. The owner at that point has options to appeal the final decision to the Galveston County Animal Services Advisory Committee or file a petition in any court with jurisdictional authority.
- Keeping of Dangerous Wild Animals Prohibited with Exceptions – The policy shall not allow for the importation of any dangerous wild animal into the jurisdictional area covered by this policy. Currently registered dangerous wild animals can remain until time that they are removed from the county or they pass away.
 - Permits Required for Animal Establishments and Kennels – Due to the changes in the policy that allows an individual to keep an unlimited amount of altered animals, many of our currently permitted kennels will no longer need to be permitted under this policy. Exact fiscal impact not known at this time.

The Health District has expended a large amount of time and effort in drafting a policy that we hope will provide for an effective level of safety for the citizens in Galveston County against the spread of rabies, the reduction of nuisances caused by animals at large, protection from dangerous dogs, etc. This draft policy has been and continues to be reviewed by members of the Galveston County Animal Services Committee including Dr. Cleary, committee member representing the United Board of Health.

Dr. Dana Beckham reviewed current state rules and regulations for the control of rabies and the control of animals to make certain that our proposed policy is in compliance with all state requirements. In addition, current municipal animal control ordinances were reviewed for consistency with this policy.

As we move through the formal approval procedure, Board members will have additional opportunity to provide comments on the policy along with our member cities and the citizens of Galveston County during the public hearing.