

King County Government Accountability & Oversight Committee
Regarding briefing No. 2014-80121
Regional Animal Services of King County, Mandatory Rabies Vaccination Reporting by Veterinarians

July 22, 2014

Council members Reichbauer, Upthegrove, Dembowski & Dunn,

Mandatory rabies vaccination reporting by veterinarians will *reduce* the number of rabies vaccinations administered to our counties dogs and cats, which can threaten public health.

The simplest way for owners to avoid being turned in to King County by their veterinarian is to decline future rabies vaccinations. Why would someone want to avoid being reported?

Here are a few:

1. Residents of our region covet their privacy and resent government intrusion. Recent case in point: the Seattle Police Department was forced to give away drones they purchased because of citizen backlash about privacy issues. Drones are legal but citizens objected. Loudly.
2. Some pet owners have difficulty paying the \$30 *per pet per year* along with properly maintaining their pets' health. Multiply \$30 for each pet and this total becomes a hardship for many households. Many have already paid for a microchip, so the license as a form of ID is no value.
3. Many of my clients have more animals than the legal limit. All are cared for impeccably, but they fear that licensing each would expose them and possibly lead to Animal Control showing up to confiscate their pets. The fear is real and similar to gun control opponents who fear that licensing their guns could result in the government taking them away.
4. Some owners resent paying for an animal control system that is provided to all residents, not just pet owners. They've voiced anger, sometimes at the reception desk of veterinary hospitals trying to sell licenses, over the fact that only the most responsible owners are the ones paying for animal control costs. People without children pay for public schools; similarly people without pets should pay for animal control services.

Where's the data for predicting that rabies vaccinations will decline? An online petition at Change.org against this proposal elucidated many responses supporting this prediction. Even some of my own long-term clients stated that they would consider declining rabies vaccinations to avoid being reported. Simply, if this proposal passes, many pet owners will avoid licensing enforcement by declining rabies vaccinations.

State and county public health veterinarians worked hard over recent years to pass new state and county laws requiring rabies vaccination of all cats and dogs. With increasing numbers of rescue dogs being imported from rabies epidemic countries, such as Thailand, India and the Middle East, our public must be *encouraged* to rabies vaccinate their pets. Any obstacle, such as mandatory rabies reporting by veterinarians, reduces rabies protection in our community and threatens public health. The public health veterinarians agree.

This proposal is a bad idea. King County must find another way to repair the budget gap.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,
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