

Testimony Concerning Raised Bill 5443
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I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of Raised Bill, 5446, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PAYMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE STERILIZATION AND VACCINATION OF CERTAIN DOGS AND CATS AND PROVIDING FOR ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER TRAINING.

I am a registered voter in Sherman, and I am the president of the Board of Directors at the New Fairfield/Sherman Animal Welfare Society.

Connecticut is in many ways in good shape as far as the pet overpopulation problem. However, we can go much further, especially with respect to the pit bull overpopulation problem, which is far from under control. Pit bulls are by far the most common breed seen in our state's municipal animal control facilities. This breed is known to deteriorate in animal shelter environments. This breed is also commonly misunderstood by the public, so finding adopters for this breed can be difficult. The combination of these 2 issues often leads to euthanasia of these wonderful dogs. Therefore, we need to reduce the number of pit bulls entering our municipal dog pounds. The way to do that is to spay/neuter all dogs and cats (not just pit bulls) before they are adopted. This eliminates all risk of the animals procreating following adoption.

In my experience at my organization, adopters are not always responsible about using the spay/neuter voucher that is given to them when they adopt. If this voucher is not used promptly, the inevitable result is puppies, and these puppies often end up being brought to shelters when the owner cannot find homes for them. Therefore, we have instituted a policy that we do not let animals leave our shelter unaltered. That way we know that we will not have to take the unwanted progeny into our facility in the future.

I am also in favor of vaccinating all animals before they leave municipal facilities. Adopters are often excited about their new pet, and sometimes taking the new pet to a vet for altering and vaccination is the last thing on an adopter's mind. Therefore, the safest thing to do is to provide that vet care BEFORE the animal leaves the facility.

On a more general note, I strongly support improved education for animal control officers. Animal control officers need to be trained to see themselves as "animal services directors", providing service to the public, but more important, to the animals themselves. It does an animal no service if you lock it in a cage and don't tell potential adopters that it is there. Those of us who follow these issues closely are seeing some improvement at some facilities, but not at others. ACO's need to learn to accept help from "outsiders", and not see that help as a threat to their power, but rather as a way to help get the animals to safety.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify, and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you,

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