

To: The Public Health Committee of the Connecticut Legislature

From: Marian Beland, 27 Maple St., Somers, CT 06072 (860-749-6431)

Date: February 20, 2017

Re: Bill #HB 5659 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE VACCINATION OF ANIMALS

I am writing to support An Act Concerning the Vaccination of Animals. This bill will bring CT law current with evidence-based, best clinical practice, and these practices will protect public health by ensuring animals are protected from rabies with appropriate vaccination dose and frequency, which can include titer monitoring by their treating veterinarians.

Current evidence-based recommendations for animals exposed to rabies include a booster vaccination with 45 days in-home observation, even if their prior rabies vaccination was considered out of date. This is per the 2016 edition of the Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control (*J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2016;248:505-517) from the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians and has already been adopted by the CT Department of Health as well as the adjoining state of Massachusetts.

Vaccine dosage and frequency has to date been determined by their manufacturers, whose own packaging inserts dictate the vaccine can only be given to “healthy animals” but offer no alternatives for veterinarians who are treating pets with illness. Veterinarians have been mandated by law to vaccinate animals based on one-year or three-year intervals, which do not take into account the animal’s state of health at the end of the interval or the size of the animal (of note, the same dose of rabies vaccine is given to 10-pound cats and 100+-pound dogs).

Although CT now has a rabies exemption law, it is too demanding for veterinarians to secure approval from the CT Department of Agriculture to obtain a certificate for their clients. Without the certificate of vaccination or exemption, it is not possible to obtain a dog license in CT. The determination of rabies exemption needs to be returned to the treating veterinarian as was the intent of the original rabies exemption law proposed in 2005, which also included titer testing to monitor immunity.

Changing the law will protect the public from rabies by removing the incentive to not license dogs, to not seek medical care after a rabies exposure, to forge rabies certificates, and/or take animals across state lines to states that do not require vaccination of sick animals (NY and MA. only require a letter from a veterinarian to exempt ill animals).

Thank you for your time and support updating the rabies vaccination law to incorporate the best clinical recommendations.