



NAIA TRUST Trust for the Protection of Animals, Animal Owners and Animal Enterprises

Supporting pet owners and communities in responsible animal ownership

June 25, 2006

The Honorable Phil Hardberger
Mayor, City of San Antonio and other San Antonio Officials
PO Box 839966
San Antonio, TX 78283

Dear Mayor Hardberger:

I am writing today on behalf of the Texas members of the NAIA Trust a not-for-profit organization of pet owners, trainers, breeders, veterinarians and other animal professionals and organizations, dedicated to animal welfare and maintaining the rights of citizens to responsibly keep and enjoy pets. We support enforceable laws that are based on well-researched knowledge of the issues at hand, which advance responsible pet ownership, protect public health and safety, and improve animal welfare.

We have read a copy of your 5-year strategic plan for animal control and support your efforts to create a community that protects its citizens from irresponsible animal owners and its animals from irresponsible, dangerous and inhumane practices. We agree with your goals and many of your ideas for implementing them. In particular, we believe in public education efforts because we've seen and helped such methods succeed all across the US. We are concerned about a few items, though.

In particular, we are strongly opposed to mandatory spay-neuter and breeder licensing laws. They do not work and invariably turn into unenforceable scofflaws. Laws that charge exorbitant fees for intact animals have proven to have an opposite effect. They lower intact pet licenses!^{i ii} In combination with humane relocation (something which is also suggested in the plan), breeder licensing and mandatory spay-neuter laws, lowers the local availability of well-bred, healthy, socialized purebred dogs and pedigreed cats, which leads American consumers to obtain these pets from distant, even foreign suppliers.ⁱⁱⁱ

There is no silver bullet for solving the problem of surplus shelter animals, but some laws passed elsewhere have made matters worse. The assumptions behind mandatory spay-neuter/breeder licensing schemes only take into account some of the facts. To be effective they need to recognize that only a small number of pet owners – ones who don't license their pets now and are unlikely to license them in the future without added enforcement – are responsible for the overwhelming majority of the problems. Successful programs will find creative ways to target those offenders. On the other hand, breeders who work with the organized dog sports or the cat fancies, belong to kennel or cat clubs that contribute mightily to your community's economy, and their members provide support to animal welfare and control efforts by doing breed rescue, maintaining feral cat colonies, giving training classes, funding and/or hosting microchip and neuter clinics, and providing a host of other community benefits.^{iv} One 4-day dog show cluster (and you have 2 such AKC clusters in San Antonio), will each generate millions of tourism dollars. Because these breed enthusiasts have such a positive effect on your economy, NAIA Trust asks that you consider recognizing and rewarding them for their activities, instead of punishing them.^v

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Animal control advisors may believe that they can diminish the number of animals entering shelters by licensing breeders, but the evidence suggests otherwise. When responsible dog breeders quit breeding, the animals they once produced are simply supplied by less conscientious breeders. This is true because: 1) Good breeders who are committed to breeding programs and work within kennel or cat clubs are the ones most committed to obeying laws and therefore they are the ones most likely to quit breeding when burdensome laws are passed. 2) In today's global economy, regulating local supply only assures that demand will be filled by suppliers outside the local area. Restrictions on local breeders do nothing to diminish supply. Demand drives supply! 3) Most animals in shelters result from problems on the demand side of the supply and demand equation: they are in shelters because their adopters or purchasers didn't select, raise, confine, socialize or train them properly and/or because they are sick or bad tempered.

On another score, please think long and hard before you accept funding from outside sources. Such funding seldom comes from disinterested benefactors and the integrity of your programs depends on your agency being able to act on its mission without outside pressure. Pet ownership is a high-prized community value. More than 60% of your citizens have a dog and/or a cat and many more have other kinds of pets. Thus animal control should be funded through the general fund and only supplemented through licensing funds.

On another issue, although we support strong animal protection laws, we are unequivocally opposed to the concept of granting rights to animals. Perhaps the goal is to raise consciousness about the need to treat animals humanely, but animal rights proponents are very savvy in using semantics to blur issues. They are working now to change the language surrounding animal ownership.^{vi} Many of the terms they use, like guardian, have dual meanings, one that is commonly understood to mean one thing, and another, a legal meaning. Ambiguity serves their purposes. Their specialty is suing on behalf of animals to get laws reinterpreted. Please read and download the attached pamphlets and articles on guardianship for more information on how animal rights proponents are working to change the legal status of animals. Some are even opposed to pet ownership.^{vii} Please be stalwart in opposing efforts to grant legal rights to animals, and alert to such attempts when they are presented in "feel good" formats.

Finally, reducing shelter animals through multi-state relocation efforts may offer some relief if you do not have enough adoptive homes in your area. NAIA Trust does not oppose humane relocation within the US so long as safeguards are implemented. Here are the procedural safeguards that NAIA Trust would require.

1. Participating shelters at both ends of the transfer must be required to disclose their participation and the source of their animals so that consumers are fully aware of what they are getting. Katrina dogs brought whip and hook worm to all corners of the US when they were relocated.



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2. Before animals are moved through the system they must be examined, receive appropriate vaccinations, parasite treatments, and in some cases be held long enough to develop immunity following vaccination against zoonotic diseases such as rabies.
3. A formal system for tracking animals needs to be developed and implemented to protect against pet theft and disease outbreaks.
4. Because of public health concerns, NAIA Trust is not in favor of brokering animals back and forth and we strongly oppose the emerging shelter practice of accepting dogs from foreign countries and territories.^{viii} In addition to the indisputable health risk associated with such practices, and the additional tax burden imposed on Americans from such importation, NAIA TRUST opposes foreign and offshore imports on ethical grounds as long as the US has surplus shelter animals anywhere within its boundaries.
5. If local laws require breeders to pay higher license fees than other pet owners, shelters must not be allowed to bring in out-of-state animals. Otherwise, the net result of humane relocation would be to convert humane and municipal shelters into retail pet stores, in which case they should be regulated as part of the pet industry.^{ix}

We offer these comments in the most constructive spirit possible. We hope you find them valuable. They spring from years of experience working with similar issues in numerous settings. Please contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Patti Strand, National Director

ⁱ <http://www.fanciers.com/npa/sanmateo.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.NAIAonline.org/body/articles/archives/kingcty.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ http://www.NAIAtrust.org/resources/foreign_strays.htm

^{iv} http://www.NAIAonline.org/about/policy_dogs.htm#dog

^v <http://www.NAIAonline.org/pdfs/petfriendlyguide.pdf>

^{vi} <http://www.NAIAonline.org/body/articles/archives/animalrightsquote.htm#Own>

^{vii} http://www.NAIAonline.org/pdfs/guardianship_final.pdf

^{viii} <http://www.NAIAonline.org/body/articles/archives/guardian.htm>

^{ix} http://www.NAIAonline.org/body/articles/archives/humane_insane.htm