

Public Workshop for Proposed Animal Care Standards

Workshop Minutes July 2, 2011, 3:30 – 5 PM

Scope of Workshop:

The purpose of the workshop was to discuss general care standards for all species (Section **18 AAC 36.560** in the working draft posted online). Humane euthanasia was also discussed.

Approximately 15 people attended by phone with four people present in person.

Representatives were present from the Fairbanks Animal Control, the Alaska SPCA, Anchorage Soil and Water Conservation District, animal owners, the Alaska Division of Agriculture Director, and Representative Alan Dick and staff. All comments listed are from participants except those noted as DEC responses.

- Division of Agriculture: Does the humane euthanasia standard allow shooting of dogs? DEC: Yes, if the only practical way to alleviate suffering.
- Should there also be an exemption for gunshot in other species? DEC: For most livestock, gunshot is acceptable under American Veterinary Medical Association Guidelines. Therefore, an exemption is not needed to allow that. This would apply to custom slaughter or home consumption situations.
- Rep Dick: Do these standards apply to domesticated animals only? DEC: Yes
- Rep Dick's office: What requests has DEC had from law enforcement agencies about developing Animal Care Standards? How do we get information about contact from the Humane Society to your office concerning Animal Care Standards? DEC: We will provide that via e-mail.
- Is DEC including comments from other law enforcement and examples from other states in development of regulations? DEC: Yes, we have had participation from law enforcement and animal control agencies and have considered their inputs. We have reviewed many other states' regulations during this process to see how they address specific issues.
- Rep Dick: What ways might a person perform euthanasia that are not humane? DEC: Strangulation, crushing, suffocation, decompression, or a poorly placed gunshot are examples.
- What about poison? DEC: This is already covered by statute (Sec. 11.61.140 (4) and is not allowed.
- Rep Dick: How are pigs slaughtered? DEC: In an inspected slaughterhouse facility, captive bolts are used to render the animal unconscious and then they are bled out.
- In Sec 510 (c) (4), what is the definition of "excessive" when referring to feces, mud, urine, standing water or other waste products? DEC: Previous workshops have addressed the issue of further defining "excessive". Many ideas were considered. There are numerous

pros and cons to writing a more objective definition. Terms such as reasonable, unnecessary, and excessive are commonly used in other state regulations. We recognize that using such language leaves it up to the veterinarian to make the determination, as required by law. Different species have different needs when it comes to sanitation and society has varying perceptions about what is acceptable for various species. Further comments on sanitation are welcome.

- Rep Dick: Excessive feces is too vague and subjective. There should be a more concrete definition.
 - o If a person was found in violation, what would happen? Enforcement attitudes may vary in different locations. DEC: If an officer investigating a complaint has any question as to what is excessive they can consult a veterinarian who may render a professional opinion on the circumstances.
 - o Why do some body condition scoring systems use different numerical scales? Is a passing score the same for all? DEC: Body Condition Scoring measures the amount of body fat and muscle present. The body condition scoring system and the numeric scales were determined by the original author of the standard. Condition Scoring Systems are science based and an objective measurement system. Different species have different sets of criteria for their scales. A passing score number may vary depending on the scale that was developed for the species in question.
 - o Who hires and pays for the veterinarian giving an evaluation of a case? DEC: Presumably, the investigators. This is not defined in statute.
 - o The standards used to evaluate a case should be consistent. DEC: That is the purpose of developing this document, to make an objective set of standards that may be used to evaluate each case in question. The licensed veterinarian will make an assessment basing their decision on the care standards and their professional training. The veterinarian will be held accountable by the veterinary licensing board.
- Participant thanked DEC for working on the standards.
- Sec 510 (c) (3) and (e), recommends that the word “reasonably” be inserted regarding freedom from hazards for horse enclosures and shelters and transport vehicles. (OPEN)
- Regarding transport time for horses...
 - o there should be provision for food and water for horses transported on the barge (OPEN)
 - o the “lie down” clause is unnecessary because they will be on a trailer on the barge and cannot do so anyway. (OPEN)
- In regard to the section 36.540 Dogs and Cats, “Cats” should be added to several headings and opening statements to make it consistent throughout the dogs and cats section. DEC: We will correct that. (OPEN)

- Rep Dick: Subjective terms such as reasonable and excessive seem like they could be applied inconsistently. What does “reasonable medical care” mean? DEC: “Reasonable medical care” is required in the statute. The current draft of care standards does not attempt to further define it. We have considered options for further definition, but have found no other useful examples from other states. Most other states’ rules say something very similar, with no further detail. As with all care standards, the veterinarian’s opinion determines whether that standard is met.
- Participant: How are animal cruelty rules related to animal care? DEC: According to law, failing to provide the minimum standards of care for an animal equals cruelty to animals.
- Rep Dick: The problem is enforcement. It won’t be consistent. Adding regulation won’t change the situation. DEC: Our role is to define the minimum standard of care, which will minimize inconsistency in veterinarian’s opinions and make it clear to the public what constitutes adequate care. Complaint investigation procedure is prescribed in statute. We do not have authority to alter that. We do not decide which cases to prosecute or what penalties might be assessed by the courts.
- Division of Agriculture: What about ballot initiatives? Will the standards protect owners? DEC: Standards such as these that are derived from a public process, that incorporate science with societal values and that are comparable to other states’ rules, can be defended as appropriate. Ballot initiatives have occurred in many states over various aspects of animal care. Stakeholders who might oppose a ballot initiative could argue that the standards in place are the most appropriate.
- Rep Dick: Regarding the “reasonable medical care clause”, Alaska is hostile to veterinary care in the bush. We need help with that.
- The Body Condition Standard scores need to be consistent (either with or without a decimal point). (OPEN)
- DEC: Representative Wilson is hosting a meeting on the animal care standards and has invited Dr Fuller to attend this public meeting in Fairbanks July 18th at 6 PM at the City Hall. Details will be posted on the state web page.