

Public Workshop for Proposed Animal Care Standards

Workshop Minutes

October 27, 2011

Scope of Workshop:

The purpose of the workshop is to begin development of animal care standards. We want to do that by establishing working groups for various animal categories to further develop initial concepts; garnering public input on the initial concepts developed; set up a timeline for each group to meet; and develop a list of groups or individuals who would be interested in future meetings.

1. Introductions

- 50 attendees, approximately 50% in person and 50% by phone. Included representatives from the Iditarod Trail Committee, Alaska Farm Bureau, numerous Borough Animal Control Authorities, veterinarians, numerous animal rescue and care organizations, dog mushers, Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, UAF Cooperative Extension, Musk Ox Farm, and other interested citizens
- Hosted by Kristin Ryan, DEC Environmental Health Division Director Robert Gerlach, VMD, State Veterinarian, Jay Fuller, DVM, Assistant State Veterinarian and Rebecca Colvin, Facilitator.

2. What prompted ADEC to propose animal care standards?

- The purpose of the animal care standards is to provide more detail to the Alaska Statute Sec.03.55.100. Minimum standards of care for animals. The goal is to provide clear standards for what constitutes adequate feeding, watering, and environment for common livestock and pets. This animal care standard will be included as a section within the Animal Health Regulations, Title 18, Chapter 36. The entire Chapter 36 is under revision and a draft will be published for public comment after the animal care section is drafted with the input from public workshops.
- Peace officers are responsible for conducting animal cruelty investigations, but are required to consult with a veterinarian, if possible before taking protective custody of an animal.
- Peace officers and veterinarians need clear and objective criteria to determine whether animal care is adequate.
- Standards are needed for courts to make decisions on animal cruelty cases

3. Define animal care versus animal cruelty

- Alaska Statute Sec. 11.61.140 Cruelty to animals - refers directly to the animal care statute. It states that failure to meet the minimum animal care standards constitutes cruelty.

4. Explain regulations process

- For animal care standards, a series of working meetings will be held to address different aspects of animal care. These will be grouped by animal types. Public participants may provide input by telephone, e-mail, hard copy mail or in person. The minutes from each meeting will be posted on the Website.
- After hearing inputs and developing the standards, the DEC will put the proposed regulations out for formal public comment.
- More can be found on the public comment process at:
http://dec.alaska.gov/commish/regulations/how_to_comment.htm

5. Limits of the regulation

- The regulation may not conflict with statute and may not repeat what is already written into statute.
- The regulations will not provide for civil or criminal penalties. Those are already provided for in statute.
- By statute, the following activities are not considered animal cruelty:
 - i. Scientific research governed by accepted standards
 - ii. Humane destruction of an animal
 - iii. Conformance to accepted veterinary or animal husbandry practices
 - iv. Activities incidental to lawful fishing, hunting, or trapping
 - v. Activities that conform to professionally accepted training and discipline standards
 - vi. Generally accepted dog mushing or pulling contests or practices or rodeos or stock contests
- Statute (AS 03.55.010 – 03.55.070) also allows for the killing of vicious dogs, dogs annoying animals either domestic or wild, or loose dogs in an organized borough.
- Some needs may not be addressable through this process, but these items can be identified, discussed and passed on to lawmakers.

6. Work groups will be organized for the following animal categories:

- Avian (to include poultry)
- Captive/Exotic (reindeer, elk, musk ox, llamas, zoo/exhibition animals)

- Domestic pets (working dogs or performance animals)
 - Horses
 - Livestock (bovine, swine, sheep/goats)
 - General standards (these will be addressed later, after other categories have been refined)
7. Establish meeting timelines for each animal category
- Meeting times will be posted on the website and in newspapers
 - Meetings will be scheduled beginning in mid-late November
 - The overall goal is to produce a proposed regulation by summer 2012
8. Public comments and topics of discussion. Specific topics were not discussed at length or debated, but the major issues of concern and answers to questions are listed below.
- Lack of ability for local animal control authorities to investigate cruelty cases (*beyond the scope of this effort*)
 - Overpopulation of animals in rural areas, leading to inhumane living conditions and euthanasia methods
 - Dog care. Need for different rules based on breed, usage, i.e. sled dogs need small shelters for warmth, not bigger ones for space
 - American Veterinary Medical Association policy statements on various animal welfare issues are not binding in this regulation process. They do provide valuable references for scientific knowledge as well as incorporate many of the relevant factors into thoughtful discussions of the issues.
 - Need for law enforcement representation in the process