



NATIONAL ANIMAL INTEREST ALLIANCE

Supporting the people who care for America's animals

Senator Bill Montford
214 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee F 32399-1100
Sent via Fax 850-487-5086

March 4, 2013

Letter in support of SB674

Dear Senator Montford:

I am writing on behalf of the National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) to thank you for sponsoring SB674. NAIA is a broad-based, national animal welfare organization that strives to provide a balanced, fact-based perspective on animal welfare issues. We have several thousand active supporters in the state of Florida, and every one of them will be happy to learn about the introduction of this much needed legislation.

Even though this bill is very moderate and restrained in its approach, its passage will produce a very positive effect on Florida's pet marketplace. SB674 will ensure a degree of transparency that is lacking today and badly needed. Its passage will improve animal welfare; reduce threats to public health; increase consumer protection; and lead to more responsible management of our public and private shelters.

Here's the problem: Even though most animal shelters operate responsibly, just like all other industries, their ranks also include a few black sheep who don't live up to industry standards. But unlike other businesses that operate in the pet marketplace, animal shelters are unregulated so there is no way to distinguish the actions of irresponsible players from the majority. Pet stores and breeders who place as few as 20 animals a year are closely licensed as pet dealers and regulated. By contrast, the animal shelters and the rescues that place the majority of dogs in the pet marketplace – some placing more than a thousand a year – are not even required to disclose their activities. Some private shelters are little more than unregulated pet stores today.

Unfortunately, victory over dog overpopulation in some parts of the country has led to unintended consequences in other areas. In particular, it has spawned a venture which is variously called "humane relocation" or "dog trafficking." This activity continuously transports massive numbers of dogs from areas of high supply to low supply and works through shelter and rescue networks to connect with consumers. This underground business fosters a number of serious problems including animal abuse and consumer fraud, and it threatens public health. The potential for disease transmission to animals and even people should be of special concern to Floridians because Florida has become a destination state for dog

shipments from distant states, territories and even foreign countries. Life-threatening parasites and diseases like rabies that can kill livestock and people have been introduced into other states from imported dogs.

That is why SB674 is so important and why we so strongly support it. SB674 asks only for shelters to be a little more transparent; but if passed it will go a long way toward stopping the most irresponsible practices happening in the pet marketplace today. It will also enable the responsible shelters to distinguish themselves from the fly-by-night operations that have emerged since the advent of humane relocation.

In closing, I want to encourage you to please call on us if you need any more information on this topic. A number of states have already passed similar laws and can provide information about their experiences. Virginia, in particular, has an excellent program. In addition, we can send you detailed and footnoted articles on this subject as well as reports from a number of state and federal agencies that contain excellent backup information. We'd be happy to share our extensive files on this issue with your office.

Thank you again for sponsoring this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Patti Strand". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patti Strand, Chairman

References:

<http://www.naiaonline.org/naia-library/articles/humane-or-insane/> Article describing humane relocation.
<http://www.naiaonline.org/uploads/WhitePapers/ImportationCDCRabies.pdf> Report from CDC estimating number of foreign dogs entering US.
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/03/nyregion/03rabies.html?_r=1& Article mentioning imported dog carrying rabies.