

Companion Animal Licensing Procedures Work Group Meeting Summary

Meeting date and time: 10a-2p, 8/15/2016

Meeting place: Perimeter Center
9960 Mayland Drive
Henrico, Virginia 23233
Board Room #3

Julia Murphy welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the meeting's agenda and goals. The meeting started with an introduction of attendees around the room.

Attendees:

Dr. Julia Murphy, Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
Dr. Terry Taylor, Virginia Veterinary Medical Association (VVMA)
Heidi Meinzer, Virginia Federation of Humane Societies (VFHS)
Debra Griggs, VFHS
Robin Starr, Richmond SPCA
Jamie Hawley, Piedmont Health District, VDH
Sharyn Hutchens, Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders
Dr.Carolynn Bissett, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
Dr. Jodi Collins, VDACS
Rob Leinberger, Virginia Animal Control Association (VACA), Richmond Animal Care & Control
Scott Miller, Hanover County Treasurer, Treasurers' Association of Virginia (TAV)
Sharon Adams, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters (VAAS)
Kathy Strouse, VAAS
Benny David, VAAS
Larry Land, Virginia Association of Counties (VACO)
Wilmer Stoneman, Virginia Farm Bureau (VFB)
Pat Duttry, Three Rivers Health District, VDH
Melissa Velazquez, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
April Rogers, DMV

After introductions, Dr. Julia Murphy distributed the following handouts to all meeting participants: "Animal Control Officer Survey Summary" draft and the "Virginia Federation of Humane Societies Proposal for VDH Study Group on Dog Licensing Under HJ160." She noted that since it was unclear about how the first round of surveys were received by Animal Control Officers (ACOs), it was re-sent via other means. She noted that Dr. Carolynn Bissett had gone through the ACO survey and made a summary of the information which she would discuss with us later in the meeting.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted that there were a few items she wanted Scott Miller to clarify regarding the TAV's overview of cats and FOIA (Freedom of Information Act). At the April meeting, it was decided by the group that the group would focus on dog licensing instead of cats. She also noted that FOIA as it pertains to a statewide database was discussed at the May meeting, when Robin Kurz gave a presentation about FOIA. Dr. Murphy indicated Scott Miller wanted to offer some further thoughts from the TAV to the group to clarify previous statements.

Scott Miller stated there were two items or statements from the April meeting minutes he wanted to clarify. He noted that at that meeting someone had asked if the group was going to revisit cats. He noted that in previous meeting minutes he had used some words that indicated the subject may be revisited later. To clarify, TAV feels the group should not address cats this year. He noted he did not mean to imply that it should be addressed later. He noted that when he had said to table it, it was meant as a friendly way to kill it. He emphatically stated TAV recommends no action on cats at this time.

Scott Miller further noted he wanted to clarify the FOIA comments and the FOIA exposure aspect. He stated last month in the presentation of TAV comments to the group that there had been a bullet item that could be read two ways. He noted he continues to get asked to discuss the way it was intended. He also noted that he was not recommending any changes to FOIA exposure of dog licensing information, but if others want to discuss that, that is fine. He repeatedly noted that TAV does not propose any changes to the FOIA requirements. He stated it might have sounded like he was trying to reduce exposure based on the wording of his comments in previous meeting minutes, but that was not his intent.

Dr. Julia Murphy opened the floor for further questions or comments. Seeing none, she moved on to the written proposal submitted by VAAS. She noted her appreciation for VAAS working on this. She then asked Sharon Adams to give an overview of and thoughts on VAAS's proposal.

(Refer to "Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters' Proposal as part of the 2016 Virginia Animal Licensing Procedures Study (HJ160)" document which was submitted to the group via email prior to the meeting)

Sharon Adams noted they had sent it to the group a couple weeks ago in the hopes everyone in the working group would have already had an opportunity to read it over. She stated VAAS's intent to organize their thoughts and establish some goals. She noted honoring some of the concerns expressed by the Treasurers is a goal. Increasing compliance is a goal, extending rabies protection is a goal, and returning animals to their owners is a goal. Another goal was to continue the process of animal welfare over the last 80 years to improve owner responsibility as it relates to companion animals. VAAS believes an improvement of responsibility would be a positive thing. Ms. Adams noted VAAS had looked at reducing the burden placed on Treasurers and reducing the burden to ACOs. VAAS would like to enable them to use new technologies that are available. She further noted that because animals move across counties, towns/cities, returning them to their rightful owner is an important and lawful expressing of the role of animal control. VAAS used the DGIF presentation with regard to their database and the DDR database as a basis for their proposal. VAAS proposes the use of a statewide database with incremental levels of access which can be developed with direct access to input and view information. Sharon Adams suggested VAAS's proposal would make it easier for veterinarians, as they would just enter the information one single time. If the veterinarian did it correctly, it would eliminate the need for the treasurer to have to enter it. The owner could have access to that information for the purpose of renewing the license, thereby saving time at the veterinarian's office. This proposal would create a broader ability to identify the animal through a tag or microchip. VAAS would like to encourage TAV members to reduce administrative time by offering multi-year licensing. Sharon noted VAAS looked at compliance measures, for ACOs and treasurers, and tried to make licensing compliance more like a traffic ticket. For animals identified as having a rabies vaccination, the database would be designed in such a way that if someone does not get a license it would alert the treasurer. At the time the license is expired, it would alert both the treasurer and the owner that the license or rabies vaccine had expired.

This would give the owner an opportunity to correct that, or give the treasurer an opportunity to follow up in whichever way they deem necessary. Ms. Adams further noted that VAAS also had the intent of looking for other ways to save cost. She stated that since animals are considered property in Virginia, VAAS would like to see treasurers utilize the current way in which they assess property tax specifically when dealing with dog licensing and would like them to consider licensing dates to align more with property taxes and other bills that go out at the same time. She additionally noted she would like “us” accept the technologies where they are today and address those four goals.

Sharon Adams further noted she thought the ACO survey responses were fascinating. She stated that based on the numbers reported to VDACS in 2015, there were 45,678 stray dogs in shelters. She noted she did not include rescues, just shelters. If, based on the ACO survey summary, it costs on average \$17.50 per dog for one night in a shelter, which equates to \$799,365.00 in costs to the taxpayers of Virginia to keep those dogs in a shelter for just one day. For a second day, Ms. Adams used an average of \$9 a day and calculated it would cost an additional \$411,912.00. Thus the total cost of two days would be \$1,211,277.00. Ms. Adams highlighted that this is what taxpayers of Virginia are absorbing for a shelter to house dogs that are not licensed and not returned to an owner. She also noted VAAS’s belief that when we talk about this, we need to approach it from the broader perspective, instead of from a single prospective. She thinks that will enhance our view of the importance of returning the animals to their owner and having a way to identify them. She finished by adding that this was VAAS’s first 3-page approach to doing this and then she stated she was happy to answer questions.

Heidi Meinzer asked if Ms. Adams could clarify if the lifetime licensing would be only for microchipping. Ms. Adams responded that VAAS’s proposal could be modified. She further replied that the intent was to incentivize the behavior to license.

Heidi Meinzer restated VAAS’s proposal that the cost not exceed \$1/animal then asked how this approach would work with dog kennel licensing.

Sharon Adams noted that yes, a kennel license is for the kennel and not just a specific animal so there is a challenge in tying a specific dog to a kennel. She noted there may be zoning issues related to that. It was her understanding that the threshold is a flat number which is not the same for every locality; the kennel license is for one year but it all depends on the locality.

Benny David said each locality has different requirements for kennel licenses and addresses kennel licenses in a variety of ways.

Wilmer Stoneman noted there are different reasons for getting kennel licenses. He noted that with the hunting community, a kennel license can help them get their dogs back. He suggested that the group look at the definition and purpose of hunters having a kennel license. He also suggested looking at the economics of those.

Sharon Adams noted it is a way to alert regulatory agencies and manage breeding facilities. It also has a waste management aspect to consider. Wilmer Stoneman noted it does become a zoning issue.

Sharon Adams noted she wanted to say one more thing, because she tends to be economically focused. VAAS had chosen \$1 in their proposal to fund the data just because it was easy to pick it. She noted she had worked with Virginia Beach when they started using PetData. She suggested that if one were to

look at the number of dog licenses done currently in the state of Virginia, she believes there is enough money there to create a database, especially if you look at the information from DGIF.

Dr. Terry Taylor wanted further clarification so he could understand and bring information back to his constituents (veterinarians). He noted he had brought the topic to the VVMA executive board for discussion. He further noted that they are small-business minded. They are concerned that they may be burdened further with administrative work. He wanted to clarify with the VAAS proposal, that they (veterinarians) would just have to put a license or vaccination number on the rabies certificate. Ms. Adams responded that yes, he understood correctly. She further noted it was correct that if there was a database, they would not have to mail in anything anymore, nor would there be any real additional administrative burden, they would just enter the information directly into the database. Dr. Taylor's follow-up question was if the clinic didn't have a computer, like some offices do not, then what would they do? Ms. Adams responded that if the veterinarian's office wasn't computerized they would still transfer the documents as they do now, via mailing them to the treasurer's office.

Scott Miller asked who would be collecting the \$1 then and would localities be giving up that \$1.

Sharon Adams responded that the proposal suggests you could get the license in a variety of ways, such as online or directly from the veterinarian at the point of vaccination. Sharon Adams noted that yes was the short answer. To Mr. Miller, she noted there would be a variety of ways. She noted her shelter sells more licenses in her locality than even the treasurer. She pointed out there are a variety of access points. She then asked who sells hunting licenses.

Scott Miller said it depends. A hunter can get one from his office, but they have sold only one in about five years. He further noted hunters can get them from a variety of sources.

Sharon Adams restated that it then still depends on the locality. She noted she was impressed, as she suspects many others in this group were as well, by how DGIF gets this done with hunting licenses to decrease the burden on the local treasurer's office. She restated her belief that offering a multi-year license and having a database are multiple ways of reducing the burden on the TAV.

Benny David noted that another reason the hunters purchase a kennel licenses is so that they can buy, sell, and trade more easily.

Sharon Adams noted that there are a variety of activities in a community where a locality can establish a fine for failure to do something, such as not mowing grass. She repeatedly pointed out the need for the locality to incentivize the act of buying a license. If a fine gets imposed for failure, it becomes increasingly more expensive to ignore it. She stated eventually it gets to a level that gets serious enough that someone will pay. She suggested that based on human behavior, if that happens a few times, then people start to take it seriously. She noted that NACA is starting to see it is an important thing to purchase dog licenses. She further suggested that in making it a civil violation, it could ease the burden on the courts. Many such cases currently go to court and take up time in court. This would be like a parking ticket, where most people will just pay and not go to court.

Rob Leinberger recommended considering assessing a late fee. He used the example of a 10% late fee for his county for his property/car tax if it is a day late. It incentivizes him to pay on time so he does not get that 10% late fee. He suggested that people may be incentivized if there were late fees on dog licensing.

Sharon Adams noted that part of the obligation of a locality is to provide for its citizens in some form the purpose of the license. It may not go directly to animal control but it goes to offset the cost of animal control. She noted it is a legitimate educational opportunity for the community to say this service costs taxpayer money and as a "user"/dog owner they are more likely to use these services. She further noted that it is part of the social contract for anyone living in a community. She repeated the costs of dogs in shelters to Virginia taxpayers for two nights.

Larry Land noted he does not understand how the transaction (the \$1 that is sent to the Commonwealth of Virginia for the database) would occur based on VAAS's proposal and asked for better clarification. Sharon Adams noted it would not be the veterinarian that sends it in, it would be the locality, like with the Dangerous Dog Registry. She also stated that unless they renewed online, the money would be captured there at that moment.

Kathy Strouse noted that currently the state provides letters to localities when the Dangerous Dog Registry money is due.

There was a question from the group on how the probationary period would work.

Sharon Adams noted that VAAS had put that in there as a potential idea because many members of this group had stated concerns over the course of our meetings about the delay between when the animal is vaccinated and the time when they receive the notice to license. So VAAS offered up the idea that during that period of time between the first vaccination and the start of a licensing period, owners could get a probationary license. This was VAAS's attempt to react to something that was said in the group. It would give the owner something at the moment of vaccination.

Larry Land stated the obligation is on the owner. He suspected the transaction is where he would get the most questions. He also noted the need for communication and education for the owner.

Kathy Strouse noted the reason she likes the probationary license is for that reason-it puts the obligation on the owner. She noted that when a puppy gets its first license, the owner can get the probationary license, which will be good until the end of whatever the licensing period is, but they are still put into the database, thus the owner can be notified of when to get a license. She noted that one of the challenges now is that owners think when they get that rabies vaccination that their animals are licensed. They are also in the database, so they can now get notified, and they are already in the system.

Sharon Adams added that it was her understanding after speaking with a number of people, including veterinarians, that some veterinarians do not feel obligated or that it is part of their duty to educate owners on the importance of licensing their dogs, but that it is the owners' responsibility to do so. She then asked Dr. Taylor if that was a fair understanding. Dr. Taylor replied that he could not say for sure, but he suspects some would agree. Ms. Adams further noted that if you have a veterinarian who doesn't make that part of the education, then there needs to be a way to acquaint the owner with that obligation.

Larry Land noted he suspects most people are acquiring dogs from shelters and rescues.

Sharyn Hutchens stated that people are still buying dogs from breeders.

Wilmer Stoneman noted his perception of the dog license is to demonstrate to an ACO that the dog is current on rabies vaccination and to identify an animal so it can be returned to its owner. Dr. Julia Murphy noted that her understanding is in Code there are five different ways the money obtained from licensing can be used. Wilmer Stoneman replied that he is not really clear on that but he suspects it is a nuisance to the local government and thinks the real reason for a license is traceability. He stated that the way he understand how to address traceability is two ways: to microchip or to put something on their collar. He noted it seems inefficient for every locality to do different things. He noted that people, like farmers, comply and do the right thing with their land or animals but where they get tripped up is the bureaucracy and the paperwork. He thought it was a fair point to say the behavior you want to drive is to ensure animals are vaccinated for rabies. He also noted the most efficient way is to microchip but he understands this is not practical because of the perception of "big brother." He suggested making the best option of microchipping also the cheapest option, but if people want to put a tag on instead, then that can be the more expensive alternative option. Debra Griggs noted that his thoughts on traceability support the proposal from the VFHS that they would be discussing later.

Larry Land responded that he would like to be able to keep all this limited to traceability, but he has to look at it from the cost perspective to localities and how dog licensing funds local animal control programs. He suggested a cost avoidance method. Wilmer Stoneman replied that he should consider the idea that keeping dogs out of the shelter is saving cost. Larry Land responded that his belief is that there are always going to be requirements imposed on a locality due to animals in the shelter and that he doesn't foresee that going away.

There was further discussion back and forth between group members regarding this concept. Kathy Strouse noted that while localities may not have always done licensing the most efficient way, she does not think that means it should be abandoned.

Scott Miller pointed out that Virginia does not recoup all costs by outsourcing necessarily, and that treasurers are not required to send out a tax notice for items under \$20. He noted that he thinks the idea of a probationary license would still be an expense if localities still have to send out a reminder notice later. He then asked who would be managing that database.

Sharon Adams noted that VAAS proposed the database as the most efficient and competent way to address this issue, but they do not care who manages the database. She noted it could be a state agency or it could be contracted out like DGIF does, it did not matter in their proposal.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted that as someone from a state agency, even if it is contracted out like DGIF or VDH does, there will still need to be someone from the state managing it or acting as the responsible party at the agency for the database.

Scott Miller stated that when he read their proposal, he sent out a survey to TAV and got responses from 83 out 135 counties. From that, he stated that 57% noted they did not send out any notices right now and this concept would be a burden on them. He noted that attaching it to a car tax bill would be a mess, as a significant number of people will end up messing up.

Scott Miller noted he liked VAAS's idea in that it increases compliance. He noted that the reality is that a lot of citizens are upset that you are dumping on dog owners and not cat owners.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted that in defense of the survey, people can take things out of context. She suggested people may have thought we focused on dogs for a purpose other than we intended.

Scott Miller noted TAV's goal was not to complicate the process, but to make sure the vast majority of dogs are vaccinated and to be able to track it. He noted that the revenue is just not there and he does not think it is not worth the time based on the very little revenue it brings in.

Robin Starr pointed out that if citizens are paying online then there are credit card fees that need to be accounted for.

Scott Miller pointed out that in 1965 the minimum wage was around \$1.25 and that in 1965, the maximum amount for a dog license was \$10.00, thus it would take working all day for an owner to pay for that license. He pointed out that if you take into account the rate of inflation and current minimum wage, the license would need to be around \$60.00 now. He noted we cannot propose that as it would not be well accepted by the legislators or public. He stated his point was that the value of the money generated by dog licensing for a locality to help with clinics/programs and shelters has lost its function or purpose.

Discussion from the group centered on the potential to increase revenue via imposing fines like some localities do. One question posed by a member was where those fines currently go. Rob Leinberger noted that he did not think they were going to local animal control programs. Benny David said he thought fines by Code should be going back to animal control but where it actually goes depends on the locality. Another member asked if a locality could net more money from fines than with licensing in general. Sharon Adams noted that if you increase the compliance rate, and implement multiple ways to improve efficiency, then perhaps a locality could net more.

Susan Steward from Sussex County noted that their locality sends out dog license bills with property/car taxes. She suspects they can do so in Sussex County because there are only 10,000 people there. She noted she had to take approximately \$200,000.00 out of the general fund for animal control. Last year, she noted that they got in just under \$700.00, which did not even meet a minimal amount to support the program. She noted their treasurer has stated while it is not a revenue driver to send out notices for their county, he is still willing to send out notifications because of the public health implications. She does not know if a locality can't send out bills with other bills.

Wilmer Stoneman noted he was more afraid of a \$50.00 parking ticket than a 7% late fee for lack of compliance for a \$7.50 license.

Dr. Julia Murphy advised the group to move discussion on to the Virginia Federation of Humane Societies' (Federation) proposal.

(Refer to handout Virginia Federation of Humane Societies Proposal For VDH Study Group on Dog Licensing under HJ160)

Heidi Meinzer went over the Federation's proposal. She noted their proposal would like to do away with licensing and instead change regulations to mandate that dogs be readily identifiable, such as having a microchip or tag with an owner's address and contact information on it. She noted the Federation's belief that it would relieve the burden on veterinarians and on the TAV. Their thought was that the veterinarians could still provide the rabies tag, which most are doing anyway, so this would not be an

added step. She noted that it was Matt Gray's thought (though he was not present) to let the localities decide if they wanted to opt in or not. She noted the group thought that for those localities making significant revenue on licensing, they could opt to keep licensing. The Federation suggested that veterinarians send copies of rabies vaccination certificates to local animal control so they have a backup way to verify rabies certification. The Federation also suggested a requirement that every dog have some form of identification, even with a kennel license.

Sharon Adams noted that in Code section §3.2-6531 we already require a dog to wear a license tag, which would enable a locality to identify/trace it, but many are not. Thus, she noted it was not clear to her how this proposal would differ from the current requirements or what would incentivize owners to comply with this requirement versus their proposal.

Heidi Meinzer noted the Federation would need to put more thought into that question, and that perhaps there could be civil fines for noncompliance. She further stated that localities could keep their own system if they wanted, or go to just requiring licensing, as some localities it is not economical for them to go door to door and they are not going to spend the effort to do so. She did note that the license tag does not have owner identification on it.

Benny David stated that he did not think animal control can keep rabies certificates and that it would put an undue burden on them. He noted further that animal control is not allowed to keep those records currently and that most would not want to keep those records.

Scott Miller pointed out that most dogs are in rabies compliance but not license compliance, so if we put them into a system at the point of vaccination we could do better at having owners in compliance and having them traceable. He noted that there are a lot of dogs not getting traced. If there was a database, then animal control could look up the information right away. He understood that animal control would not want to have those records.

Heidi Meinzer pointed out that in the Federation's proposal that Code section would be changed to allow for shelters to be able to microchip.

Leslie Knachel from the Board of Veterinary Medicine quoted Code. Then she stated that it is her understanding that animal shelters are allowed to microchip currently.

A group member pointed out that shelters are but not rescues. There was confusion and discussion on the definition of rescues and owners. Sharon Adams pointed out there were certain institutions, such as vet clinics and shelters, that get inspected but rescues do not. Several group members chimed in that an owner can already microchip their own animal.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted that it may be similar to rabies in that it is not illegal to vaccinate a dog with rabies, but it won't be certified. Thus if the dog gets into a fight with an animal, the VDH would recommend proceeding as if it was not vaccinated. Sharon Adams noted that she thinks 60 -70% of animals do go through a private or public shelter before going to a rescue. She thinks most shelters would facilitate microchipping for a rescue.

Dr. Bissett pointed out that a home-based rescue is not an owner and we must be careful in defining these terms. A home-based rescue is an animal welfare organization that takes custody of an animal for the purpose of adoption. That is why there are different requirements for them versus shelters and

owners. She stated there is a difference between being an owner and being a rescue, and that we need to be clear when we say they are one versus the other.

Dr. Julia Murphy asked if there were any more thoughts or questions.

Debra Griggs stated she wanted to note a couple of observations and point out where groups were agreeing and disagreeing. First, she noted that the Federation's proposal does not embrace licensing. It does embrace rabies vaccination and identification requirements. She further noted the Federation proposal lets jurisdictions choose. Her understanding is that there is a question of revenue for some localities.

Larry Land thought it was a fair assessment, but would have to study it more.

Scott Miller stated that localities need to view revenues in a net profit versus gross revenue framework. He believed this was an opportunity to make government more efficient. He suggested that most people want government to be more efficient anyway. He used his "LaserFishe system" (an automated system of data entry) as an example of how to do this.

Group discussions focused on the merits of the LaserFishe program and its searchability. The group also debated the value of assessing fines/fees for non-compliance via rabies certificate or license. Larry Land asked how many violations of non-compliance there are and how one would issue the fee if an owner was caught out of compliance.

Rob Leinberger noted that it is a daily occurrence that someone does not have a dog license or rabies tag. He further noted that this is where the public education comes into play and ACOs have discussions with owners. He stated that a number of factors will affect if they assess fees, but it often comes down to the digression of the ACO on how to handle each situation. He noted that it can be a balancing act, and stressed that it was a daily occurrence to find people out of compliance.

Dr.Carolynn Bissett noted she had a question for Heidi Meinzer. She asked Ms. Meinzer to clarify her understanding of the Federation's proposal. As she understands it, the rabies certificate would come from the veterinarian and then go to animal control, and the dog would be required to have some form of identification. She asked what the link is between the rabies vaccination and the tag.

Heidi Meinzer responded that there could be a couple of options, one of which could include an owner picking up a license from a locality. Several members of the group pointed out their belief of the unlikelihood of this happening.

Robin Starr noted that she did not understand the purpose of licensing on top of the rabies vaccination requirement that is already in place. The public health issues relates to the rabies, which would still be required.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett noted that historically, an increase in rabies vaccination goes along with increases in licensing. She noted she had no opinion on this one way or another, but suggested the proposal to get some licensing is recommended by most veterinarians.

Heidi Meinzer pointed out that there will always be a small population of people that do not vaccinate for rabies and neither option is going to reach these people.

Dr. Bissett agreed but noted that she knows animal control interacts with a lot of those people. These people do not get a rabies vaccine until animal control catches them. She noted there is a lot of education by animal control to these people.

Dr. Bissett then said to Scott Miller that she understands TAV tried the barcode and LaserFishe method over in Hanover County. She was unclear what he would want to change with any sort of legislature.

Scott Miller replied they want to track the vaccination, not sell dog licenses. He noted that it does not generate revenue, and that some people will just throw the bill in the trash. He also noted that it's rare to hear of a dog getting rabies now, but that he understands the value of vaccination over licensing. Furthermore, he noted that it seems to him that ACOs take in a number of dogs that are vaccinated but not licensed.

There was a back and forth discussion on what is on an identification tag versus a license tag or a rabies tag. There were conflicting ideas as to which had more merit and which was more traceable or more likely to be worn.

Wilmer Stoneman asked what would be the estimated cost of a state database.

Dr. Julia Murphy stated she tried to work this up by making some generous assumptions, but that she would let Dr.Carolynn Bissett address this. She understood the goal would be to be funded by the licensing fee, it would be self-sustaining, and that this was not unprecedented. She acknowledged the system would need start-up funds and then would transition over several years to being funded solely by licensing fees.

Sharon Adams stated there are already some agencies capturing that data and having a state database would eliminate their need for their own databases.

Wilmer Stoneman used the license plate analogy. He repeated his belief that the real purpose of licensing was looking for validity of rabies vaccination.

Sharon Adams noted that the VAAS proposal suggested doing this.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett estimated the cost to build a database such as the Dangerous Dog Registry (which was built in 2006, thus VDACS records do not go back far enough to know the actual cost) was approximately \$400,000.00. It would cost \$100,000.00 annually to maintain, not including the cost for personnel to manage it. For one person to manage it, the cost is almost \$70,000.00 per year. She further pointed out that the Dangerous Dog Registry only houses about 400 dogs. To scale up, the costs will go up.

A member of the group pointed out that there are an estimated two million dogs in Virginia.

Dr. Julia Murphy pointed out that one of the things TAV suggested early on was to minimize the fiscal impact to the consumer and the state. She stated that a database would not have minimal impact in the beginning, but would in theory be minimal later on. She would like to have a robust buy-in and input into the database. She noted that 29% of respondents to the treasurers' survey indicated their locality would want to opt out of a statewide system and another 49% are not sure if they would want to opt in

or out. Also, there was a mix of responses when the treasurers were asked if they would be willing to forgo or contribute funds to a statewide system. She suggested the final analysis could include how the group would balance these aspects in order to have minimal fiscal impact and significant participation in the system. She further noted the intent to try to just bring together the various stakeholders.

Benny David stated that he liked the Federation's suggestion of giving more options to the localities. He stated that if we do that we may be able to get a better idea of what method works better by comparing the localities that choose different options.

Larry Land stated that this Friday, the Virginia Association of Counties was going to devote some time to discuss dog licensing. He noted they tend to like the local option but he suspects some localities do not want to give up the option to license and the revenue that it brings in.

Kathy Strouse stated that revenue from dog licensing funds 1.5 positions at her organization every budget year. A member of the group asked if she could clarify if that was gross or net revenue. She replied that it was gross revenue.

Scott Miller stated that if it was gross revenue, then it might not be actually be paying for the full 1.5 positions.

Sharon Adams replied then she thought she could still say it was funding one position and she does use the licensing fee revenues as a factor in her budget proposals.

[Break for lunch]

Dr. Julia Murphy called the group back to attention after lunch. She then turned to Dr. Bissett to give the group an overview of the ACO survey. She also stated that, after that, she wanted to review a list of major concepts for the TAV's consideration that she thinks could be included in the discussion/conclusions section of the report. Dr. Murphy's stated goal is to get a complete draft of the final report out to the group for review as soon as possible after the last meeting on September 9.

Dr.Carolynn Bissett proceeded to provide an overview summary of the ACO survey responses.

(See Animal Control Officer Summary" draft handout)

Dr. Bissett noted that the first time the surveys were sent out, there was a low return rate and perhaps only about 12 responses were received. In retrospect it was unclear which Animal Control Officers received the survey. She stated that next she utilized the available contact information for animal control agencies which VDACS has on file to resend the ACO surveys out via email. For localities without an email, she noted that her office tracked down other information to send it out via fax. She confirmed that all localities had received the survey. Dr. Bissett did note that they had not sent the survey to independent cities. In total, 52 surveys were submitted, which represented 48 localities. She noted that a few ACOs submitted their own surveys. For example, she received multiple responses from Chesterfield County. She further noted that two survey responses received were represented by more than one locality.

Dr. Bissett then proceeded to break down the survey responses. Question 1 of the survey was, "In what county or jurisdiction do you serve?" She noted she broke their answers down into 5 regions based on

their area designation from the Virginia Department of Health. She noted they did not receive a response from the City of Richmond Animal Control.

Dr. Bissett described the next two questions, which asked about dogs that have county or city tags. She proceeded to compare these two answers. Regarding the question, "On average, how many dogs does your locality pick up or shelter every year?" she noted she broke the response down into ranges (Refer to handout). She stated that for dogs with a county or city tag, the average range was 10 dogs or fewer per year, but had some responses that ranged up to more than 100 dogs per year. For dogs without a county or city tag, the majority of responses ranged in the 101-200 dogs per year range. Of note, for question 2, 12 localities answered that they do not have this information and two localities did not provide an answer. Six localities provided a percentage (40%, 25%, 30% 10%, 20%, 30%). And for question 3, 14 localities answered that they did not have the information and one did not provide an answer. Additionally, there were 12 localities that provided responses that could not fit into one of the range categories. Dr. Bissett stated that it was not surprising that ACOs are picking up more dogs without licenses versus dogs with licenses.

Dr. Terry Taylor asked whether this meant dogs which are picked up were wearing ID or not. He noted he thought it was perhaps left up to interpretation and not clear in the question.

Dr.Carolynn Bissett continued on to compare part B of questions 2 and 3. She noted that the average return rate was 91.3% if the dogs had a license and the average return rate was 34.2% if they did not have a license. She next compared the responses to part C of questions 2 and 3. Dogs picked up with a license spent an average of 2.5 days in the shelter, versus 18.6 days in the shelter for dogs picked up without a license.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett stated that question 4 asked, "What is the cost of your locality for one dog to stay in the shelter for one night?" Of the 42 localities that gave a discrete number, it cost an average of \$17.40 per night.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett stated question 5 asked, "What does your locality charge for a one year county/city dog license?" Of the 51 localities that answered with a discrete number, a license cost on average \$5.20 for a neutered/spay dog, and of the 49 localities that answered with a discrete number, a license cost on average \$8.70 for an intact dog.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett stated that respondents gave a wide range of answers for question 6. The question was, "How many county/city kennel licenses does your locality sell each year?" 36 localities provided an answer in the form of a discrete number of licenses sold, with the average being 2,195 licenses.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett stated that respondents gave a variety of answers to question 7 as well.. She noted that she subdivided the answers into most to least common. Thirteen localities charged a flat rate for a county/city kennel license, with a range of \$15-\$50 dollars and an average of \$40 (See handout for further details).

Dr. Carolynn Bissett noted that for question 8, approximately 94% of those that responded do have a microchip scanner. Question 9 aimed to break down the number of scanners for use in the shelter versus in the field (Refer to handout for further details).

Several members inquired if Dr. Bissett could get them the information on which respondents indicated they did not have access to scanners in the field. There was noted interest from several group members to identify those localities so that they might provide them with a scanner.

Dr. Julia Murphy stated that individual localities could use this survey as a template for assessing information or as a framework moving forward. She noted this might be the starting point for conversation on certain issues and data localities might want to start tracking. She also noted that animal control may have answered no to having access to a scanner in the field, because they are separated from it.

Question 10 of the survey asked, "What does your locality do regarding non-compliance with county/city dog licensing?" Dr.Carolynn Bissett noted that the majority of respondents indicated they only go to homes where there are complaints of non-compliance. 65.38% of respondents indicated they assess charges on a dog that is brought in without a county/city license, when claimed by an owner.

Question 11 asked, "How is the revenue from county/city dog licensing in your locality typically used?" 75% of respondents said funds are placed in a General Fund. 23% of respondents said it was allocated specifically to animal control salaries.

Jamie Hawley noted her concern that none of the respondents indicated it was going to rabies control.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett pointed out to the group that by Code those fees are supposed to go to animal control.

Question 12 asked, "On average per month, how many man hours are devoted to the tasks associated with county/city dog licensing in your locality?"

Question 13 asked, "Do you have direct access to your locality's county/city dog licensing information vs. asking someone at the Treasurer's Office?" Dr. Carolynn Bissett noted that the majority of respondents said no and 42% said yes.

Question 14 asked, "How does your locality maintain dog county/city license information?" Dr. Carolynn Bissett stated 86.54% of respondents indicated computer program and 23.08% used paper files.

Dr. Carolynn Bissett pointed out that she had not yet had a chance to go through all the "other" responses for this question and several others. This summary was the "quick and dirty" and just a draft version.

Question 15 asked, "How does your locality verify rabies certificate information?" Dr. Carolynn Bissett noted the majority (32.69%) answered via paper files.

Question 16 asked, "Do you have access in the field to any of the following?" Dr. Bissett noted that the majority of respondents had cell phones or radio only.

Question 17 asked, "Would you be interested in having rabies certificate and county/city dog licensing information from your locality included in a statewide database that could be accessed remotely?" Dr. Bissett pointed out that the majority of respondents said yes, with a few that responded they were not sure.

Question 18 asked, "Would you be interested in having rabies certificate and county/city dog licensing information from your locality included in a statewide database, even if you could not access it remotely from the field?" Dr. Bissett reported that the majority of respondents said yes.

Question 19 asked, "Would you be willing to participate in a statewide database that captured rabies certificate and county/city licensing information which animal control officers could access if, as a result, your locality received less money from licensing?" Dr. Bissett report that the majority of respondents said yes, 28.85% said no, and 30.77% were not sure.

Question 20 asked, "Would you be willing to participate in a statewide database that captured rabies certificate and county/city licensing information which animal control officers could assess if, all or part of the information contained in this database was exempted from Freedom of Information Act requests?" Dr. Bissett noted that 50% of respondent said yes and 42.31% were not sure.

Question 21 asked, "How would mandatory microchipping of dogs affect your locality?" Dr. Bissett noted the majority (51.92%) indicated it was to "save your locality money due to more animals being identified and returned to home, thereby reducing the total number of animal-hours in the shelter."

Dr. Bissett repeated that this was just a first glance at the raw data and she had not dived into the "other" information provided yet.

Dr. Julia Murphy then asked the group if there were any questions. Seeing none, she proceeded to set up the projector in order for her to put up her list of possible concluding statements/ideas so everyone could read it. She noted that she would send out a copy of the list to the group, and that it was a working list that the group could add to as we go along. She also stated that as we discuss the list, people could add comments in order to further build the final report. She stressed the importance of getting a draft of the report to the group no later than September 30, so that she could have her final report to her Commissioner by October 15. She again stated that the group can add to this list, and that she would like to think about it and discuss it.

(Dr. Julia Murphy's list as projected on the screen at the meeting and read out loud is indicated in italics)

Possible opportunities/conclusions from this study for the General Assembly's awareness and the Treasurers' Association of VA's consideration:

****TAV to encourage all localities to offer multiyear licenses***

- Scott Miller noted it was the board of supervisors, not the treasurers, who decide. The group suggested to Mr. Miller that perhaps TAV be an advocate encouraging multi-year licenses.
- Dr. Julia Murphy suggested that it would be less administrative burden to the TAV.
- Scott Miller agreed it would reduce work and help the citizens. He thought TAV could encourage or suggest this to localities.

****TAV to encourage all localities to use the treasurer and ACO as a template for economic analysis of cost/benefit of dog licensing in each locality***

- Dr. Murphy further noted to maybe consider technology infrastructure with regards to tracking. She also suggested putting a dollar amount to the cost savings of having a county metal tag versus not coming to a local animal county treasurer.
- Robin Starr suggested that perhaps we are not separating licensing and the wearing of the tags but that it is important to distinguish between the two.

-Dr. Murphy added that being more exact in questioning i.e. how many dogs have any form of personal identification on them when they are picked up, would help determine whether the tag is helpful or not. She further noted it might be reasonable to have ACOs track what form of identification is on dogs that come to their attention. She suggested that maybe some ACOs will find the county license tag is the linchpin as far as owner identification is concerned, and maybe other localities might find a high percentage would actually have just an owner's ID with information on tag or a microchip. Delving more into these questions will help determine dollars and cost/benefit.

**TAV to consider lifetime license with microchip*

-Dr. Murphy stated that this is not compulsory; that some examples were put forth at the last meeting that have used this option and she just wanted to offer thoughts and options. She believes this would decrease the burden on the treasurers. The intent is to have a dog licensed once, but at a perhaps at higher cost. She indicated a need to still provide evidence that the dog was current on rabies, and if they weren't then there would be consequences.

**TAV to consider concept of probationary license*

-This was the concept of no cost licensing that Scott Miller had proposed as an option; where licensing would occur at the point of vaccination, and treasurers would know that the licensing had occurred when the vaccination had occurred.

- No time & effort to the TAV to have to follow up; no time & effort issuing a license

-Probationary period would be a point of education for the owner

-Would be sort of like a grace period

-Robin Starr stated, shouldn't we add the option to this list of just using an ID tag?

-Debra Griggs stated she assumed Dr. Julia Murphy would be sending this out so that they can provide comments in writing for feedback; Dr. Murphy confirmed this

-Debra Griggs wanted to ask an operational question: "Do you expect these concepts will go to the TAV first?" Scott Miller replied that they will designate at least an hour of their upcoming October meeting to this subject, but that these are not concrete suggestions.

**TAV to consider the concept of no cost licensing (i.e. tracing rabies vaccine documentation)*

**TAV to consider animal ID requirement*

-in lieu of licensing

Dr. Julia Murphy noted that no study is perfect. There were limitations in the survey study conducted by this group, but we can say based on the information gathered and the information we had, that we will suggest to the General Assembly to move forward. She acknowledged other people may read this report and formulate their own idea. She further pointed out that the completed report would be a formal way to address the treasurers.

**TAV to consider point of vaccination education/licensing (i.e. written information that would be supplied to all veterinarians in the locality that veterinarians are asked to give to dog owning clients when dogs are vaccinated for rabies; could include an envelope addressed to the local treasurer and information on options for remitting payment; could include tag up front).*

-A member of the group noted that survey respondents may be biased regarding consumers.

-A group member asked if TAV would be willing to have volunteers at local rabies vaccination clinics to issue licenses. Sharon Adams noted that in some localities and clinics they do already.

-Dr. Julia Murphy gave brucellosis as an example of tags issued by the federal government that are given to accredited veterinarians to distribute.

**TAV to encourage more localities to offer an online option for purchasing licenses*

-It was noted by Dr. Murphy that some have this already and some do not; will depend on what localities already have

**Increased automation of the licensing process/transfer of licensing duties to the state*

**TAV to encourage more localities to use automated systems or have a regional approach to sharing automated systems/contract with neighboring localities to process licenses?*

**Build a statewide system to process rabies vaccination certificates and licensing information to reduce locality administrative burden*

**Need robust and consistent locality participation and locality willingness to contribute funds to the system (either a portion of licensing fee or flat fee). Treasurer's responses to survey questions designed to understand locality willingness to contribute funds and/or consistently participate in such a system may indicate a need for the TAV to discuss these issues further with the association members.*

**State agency would need funding up front in order to build the infrastructure necessary for this system with a plan to transition to license fee/local government funding support solely within 3-5 years. Third party contractor may also require a per-transaction fee.*

**Localities would need to assess ACO information technology infrastructure vis a vis the system offered by the state.*

**May not meet the TAV's goal of having minimal fiscal impact. From TAV proposal dated July, 18: "The cost of any changes need to be held to a minimum, especially anything passed on to the public. Any recommendations from this committee containing cost increases to the State, local governments or the public only serve to make changes harder to achieve."*

**If statewide database is developed, TAV to consider seeking FOIA exemption for certain information contained therein to address privacy concerns*

Dr. Julia Murphy further noted the need for a state agency taking on the responsibility of a statewide system tracking rabies and licensing information to feel secure, and that if a database was built, it would be used. She additionally noted the intent to make sure that if there was a database, over time it would be a self-sustaining system. She further pointed out that on a big picture note, you would want an opt-out option. She noted that there were limitations in interpreting the received survey responses that addressed this issue.

Sharon Adams asked if there was there a profile on where the responses came from.

Drs.Carolynn Bissett and Julia Murphy both noted that they had broken down the survey responses by health department regions.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted the need to explore further with the TAV, as there were mixed reviews on whether they would be willing to give up some of the funds they receive from dog licensing if the system was modified to create less workload for treasurers.

Dr. Julia Murphy next opened the meeting for public comment.

Nina Stively introduced herself. She is a Director of Animal Services from Loudoun. She stated her locality receives approximately \$400,000.00-\$450,000.00 each year for licensing. Inputting the data into their own system is just one component of what ACOs do. They typically input the information during slower times of the week/month or season. She noted that they have a high return rate, which she estimated between 80-85%. She believes this is related to licensing.

She offered to provide information on their county's licensing program and how they approach/execute the program. She noted that they have fines for those that are non-compliant.

Sharon Adams asked Ms. Stively how their locality stores the data. Ms. Stively responded that they use two programs, Chameleon and LaserFishe. She further noted that there is someone who manually inputs the data.

A member of the group asked if they can search for specifics in the documents that are uploaded via Laserfishe. Nina Stively said yes, their program could do that and it included rabies certificate and licensing information. She noted that the population of Loudoun County was approximately 349,000. They estimate 44% of dogs are licensed in the county. A group member asked how they got those estimates and Ms. Stively noted it was based off of national statistics. Another group member noted that a door-to-door census would have to be done in order to get an actual number. Ms. Stively noted a \$60k salary for one person to input all the information, and that Loudoun County has a return rate of 80% for dogs with licenses.

Following the public comments, Dr. Julia Murphy thanked the public for coming and providing their comments. She further clarified that localities are instructed now to have rabies clinics at least once every other year to serve their jurisdictions. Localities can take a regional or local approach, since some localities do not have a veterinarian.

Dr. Julia Murphy noted her goals at this point going forward: she stated her intent to take Dr.Carolynn Bissett's work on the ACO surveys and put it into a narrative format. She also stated she would start building a list of general conclusions. These would be addressed to the TAV because they are the ones who first brought this issue forward, but it will ultimately be going to the General Assembly. She further stated her intent to provide the group with her working draft of this report by September 6 or before the final meeting on September 9. She stated that she intends for the conclusion section of the report to be mostly fleshed out before that meeting. She stated her desire that there not be anything unexpected by the working group members in the report. She further stated her intent for the report to include whatever the group had discussed throughout each meeting, and for it to be reflected in what was written in the report. She repeatedly stated her goal was that there are no surprises in the report. She strongly requested that all members read over the draft as soon as she gets it sent out and before the last meeting. She pointed out that the General Assembly would most likely just be reading the summary of the report, but she noted her belief that it is good to have this full report as a public record which will be kept long term and may be useful in the future, as a point of reference or to build from for future work.

Dr. Julia Murphy then closed the meeting stating she would be getting the meeting minutes and summary out as soon as possible.