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Michigan's Pound Seizure Bill Koda's Law - HB 4663

Drafted by the American Humane Association, with the assistance of the State Bar of Michigan Animal Law Section, and the endorsements of the Mid-West Animal Blood Services, Inc., the American Anti-Vivisection Society, and the New England Anti-Vivisection Society, Rep. John Espinoza filed HB 4663 on March 19, 2009. The bill was also co-sponsored of Rep. Jeff Mayes, Rep. Terry Brown and Rep. Mike Huckleberry.

This bill prohibits the practice of pound seizure in Michigan. Pound seizure involves the taking of shelter cats and dogs for experimentation. The bill contains 3 important exemptions that protect the interests of shelter animals:

- It allows a facility to obtain shelter cats and dogs for purposes of spay-neuter training clinics before the animal is placed for adoption. This provision will help Michigan to combat its pet overpopulation problem;
- It allows a facility to assist shelters that receive cats and dogs with pre-existing medical conditions and to correct those conditions so that the pet can be placed for adoption. A pre-existing medical condition may consist of an illness, disease, or other condition that impairs the health of the pet.
- It allows blood service agencies to obtain shelter cats and dogs for purposes of maintaining the necessary work of obtaining blood to help other pets in need. Since pets, like humans, need a supply of blood for surgical and other life-saving purposes, these facilities then place the cats and dogs for adoption after the pets have completed their donor services. For information about a blood service facility in Michigan and their adoption successes, please visit <http://www.midwestabs.com>.

This bill will not end legitimate medical research. If a facility chooses to utilize live animals, they can still obtain pets from USDA Class A dealers (that breed pets for research), from in-house laboratory breeding facilities, or from people who knowingly donate their pet to research. This bill simply stops former pets arriving at shelters from being used in experiments.

The District of Columbia and 17 other states have passed laws banning the practice of pound seizure. Only 4 counties in Michigan still allow shelter cats and dogs to be given to USDA Class B dealers for resale to research facilities. Thus, Michigan counties and shelters have overwhelmingly rejected this practice. Passing Koda's Law would ensure this rejection is safeguarded by official law.

Pound seizure betrays the public's trust in a shelter and is often kept secret. People who surrender their pets, or turn in stray or abused animals, to shelters often do not know that the shelter may practice pound seizure. This bill is named after a 3-year-old Malamute named Koda who was surrendered to the Gratiot County Animal Control Shelter on June 13, 2007. ***Unbeknownst to his owner, Koda was never allowed any opportunity to be adopted.*** Instead he was taken by a Class B dealer on June 19, 2007 and sold to University of Michigan's Advanced Trauma Life Support Class, where he did not survive. Due to overwhelming public outrage from an investigation and complaint filed by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine regarding practices in this class, the University of Michigan stopped using live pets in that course in February 2009.