



March 15, 2013

The Honorable Rogers Anderson
Mayor of Williamson County
1320 W. Main St.
Franklin, TN, 37064

Via e-mail: rogersa@williamson-tn.org

Dear Mayor Anderson,

We hope you are well. Our office has been contacted by Williamson County—area citizens who are deeply concerned about pressure being placed on the county and its animal shelter to release pregnant animals from the shelter to self-professed, and evidently misguided, "rescue" groups. **We share their concern and urge you to maintain the county's policy of spaying pregnant animals before release.**

PETA wholeheartedly supports the often thankless work of open-admission animal shelters and their staffs. Placement groups must be required to pay the tab for the sterilization of all animals released to them. Animals considered for transfer to placement groups should also be tested for common diseases, including heartworm, lyme, and ehrlichia for dogs and feline AIDS and leukemia for cats, before being released.

Some groups calling themselves "[rescues](#)" have also been known to try to gain custody of badly injured animals, whose photos are then used in fundraising [schemes](#). Williamson County is not the only jurisdiction struggling with issues such as how to determine if a placement group is [legitimate](#), which animals make good candidates for release to placement groups, etc. Thankfully, national animal control and sheltering experts have proposed guidelines for handling these issues, and I hope the attached materials and details below will be of help.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) has these uncompromising recommendations for choosing animals for foster/transfer programs: **"Don't place pregnant animals in foster care unless special circumstances demand it.** We do not want the public to add to pet overpopulation ... so why would we? Spay the animal and abort the litter, if you can" [**emphasis added**]. HSUS is clear in its recommendations regarding sick and injured animals: "Animals needing extensive care should not be fostered because their medical needs can drain limited resources and because few foster parents are trained to provide intensive nursing. Also, avoid placing an animal with a contagious disease in a foster home that already has pets." Finally, **aggressive animals should never be released to transfer programs:** "Never place into foster care an animal who shows aggression. The dangers to the foster family, owned pets, and the general public simply are not worth it, and the liability risks to your shelter are enormous."

PETA also recommends a ban on the adoption/release of dangerous dogs and fighting breeds (commonly known as "pit bulls"). Dogfighting is a widespread criminal activity that usually involves—in addition to cruelty to animals—illegal gambling and the presence of illicit drugs and weapons.

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According to the National Animal Control Association (NACA), any plan developed to transfer animals from an open admission animal shelter to a placement group, "should not over extend the resources of the entities involved and [should] be developed with animal health, sterilization, and education as principle elements involved in procedures." NACA asserts that "the long-term results [of transfer programs] do not appear to offer any genuine solutions to the homeless pet problems associated with typical municipal animal facilities and may induce the spread of certain health problems for both people and animals."

Finally, when pregnant animals are picked up as strays and must be held for the legal holding period of three full business days, we suggest providing them with bedding and a whelping box, if that is not already done.

Based on Animal Control Director Doug Brightwell's statements in the news media, the county's animal sheltering program is run with the animals' and public's best interests at heart. Pressure from groups of laypeople, most of whom have never even worked at or spent any significant time in a high-intake animal shelter, is making a hard job even more difficult for professional animal sheltering personnel. We urge you to support your hardworking, compassionate staff and provide any assistance needed to maintain the shelter's professional policies.

Thank you for your hard work for the citizens of Williamson County.

Respectfully,



Teresa Chagrin
Animal Care and Control Specialist
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cc: Doug Brightwell, Director of Animal Control
Josh Adams, *The Tennessean*