



**DELAWARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

Division of Public Health

Office of Animal Welfare

March 19, 2015

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals  
501 Front Street  
Norfolk, VA 23510

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in response to a statement made by a spokesperson from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in a media story concerning new ordinances in St. Paul, MN establishing increased opportunities for animal adoptions. In the statement, the spokesperson misrepresented Delaware animal laws and shelter capabilities by stating that similar “legislation has essentially closed Delaware animal shelters to scores of lost or abandoned animals”. This is simply not true. PETA does not have local representation in Delaware and is obviously not familiar with our sheltering system.

The Delaware Shelter Standards Law, which was drafted in coordination with all Delaware animal shelters and passed in 2010, established common-sense statutes to improve the health and wellbeing of animals temporarily housed in shelters. In addition to provisions that require vaccination upon intake, mandatory access to veterinary care for sick or injured animals, regulated training for euthanasia technicians, and standardized reporting, the law defined holding periods to allow owner reunification or transfer. Similar to the new ordinances in St. Paul, Delaware shelters must hold animals for two additional days over the mandatory stray hold period in order to communicate their availability to local rescue groups and potential adopters.

Contrary to PETA’s statement, the Shelter Standards Law has improved the quality of care animals receive in shelters and has saved thousands of animals that would have otherwise been euthanized due to outdated policies and practices. Prior to this law, healthy dogs and cats were euthanized very quickly, sometimes while their owners were looking for them. Cats that free-roamed, either as outdoor pets or managed cat colonies, were indiscriminately rounded up by animal control and euthanized, much to the dismay of pet owners and colony caretakers. Today owners have a better chance of finding their lost pets, rescue groups can access animals they can find homes for, and shelters more effectively manage intake according space availability, limiting overcrowding or unnecessary euthanasia. All Delaware animal control laws are also fully enforced.

Additionally, like in St. Paul, Delaware shelters are permitted to euthanize animals as necessary and euthanasia decisions are made by shelter directors and their staff. Longer hold periods do not eliminate euthanasia; they only allow the animal to have a better chance for placement before euthanasia is used as the last resort.

If you would like additional information about the Delaware Shelter Standards Law or its impact on local animal shelters, please do not hesitate to contact me at 302-255-4620.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hetti Brown".

Hetti Brown  
Executive Director, Office of Animal Welfare