



Animal Protection Voters

P.O. Box 11651

Albuquerque, NM 87192

Phone: 505-265-2322 Fax: 505-265-2488

www.apvnm.org

January 22, 2009

Dear Friend of the Animals,

In the past year the number of animal cruelty cases reported through animal cruelty hotlines has increased dramatically due in part to a suffering economy. Animals who are severely neglected, or who are being starved or abused, need to be removed to a shelter or sanctuary where they can be treated and sheltered until prosecutions of the owners are resolved. Animal Protection Voters and the Office of the New Mexico Attorney General will work during the 2009 legislative session to pass a measure that will make animal owners responsible for the cost of care for their animals if they are seized, until a court hears the cruelty case and makes its ruling.

The proposed legislation is referred to as "Animal Indemnities: Creating State Indemnity Law to Facilitate the Seizure of Cruelly-Treated Animals," and is a joint legislative initiative by the Attorney General's Animal Cruelty Task Force and Animal Protection Voters.

The proposed legislation is not meant as a punishment to owners of animals, but as a source of desperately-needed relief for New Mexico agencies burdened with the responsibility of seizing and caring for animals who are typically in extremely poor condition, or within danger of dying. Preference by law enforcement and other authorities to seize cruelly-treated animals, especially in livestock cases, is often confounded by the reality of not being able to remove animals due to a shortage of resources: funding for veterinary care, feed, general maintenance, and availability of shelter space. Sometimes, seized animals have to stay in protective custody for periods that range from a few months to *years*. Sheltering costs can climb into tens of thousands of dollars.

Horses in New Mexico would benefit immediately from passage of this legislation. The number of starving horses being reported to APV's sister organization, Animal Protection of New Mexico and the Attorney General's Animal Cruelty Task Force hotline has risen alarmingly over the last year, and the state's nonprofit shelters and sanctuaries that can accommodate horses are being called upon to help more and more animals.

The enclosed fact sheet on the Animal Indemnity legislation provides background on why this measure is necessary in New Mexico. To support this legislation, please immediately sign the attached statement of support and return by e-mail, fax or regular mail.

Show your support for the animals by joining us in Santa Fe for APV's rescheduled Lobby Day and press conference on Friday, February 27. Please see apvnm.org for detailed information.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Ferguson".

Heather Ferguson
Legislative Director

Indemnity for Animals Coalition Statement

Whereas not providing adequate food, water and shelter to an animal, resulting in great bodily harm or death, is extremely cruel; and

Whereas the expense of caring for animals seized in cruelty cases is the responsibility of animal shelters and livestock agencies; and

Whereas the cost for food, veterinary care, staff time and shelter space can reach into the tens of thousands of dollars and this expense is a tremendous burden on animal shelters' current budget limitations; and

Whereas animals seized in cruelty cases can be kept for long periods of time, taking up much needed space in shelters for adoptable animals; and

Whereas if a judge determines that there is rightful cause, those who commit crimes against animals should be held responsible for the cost of their medical rehabilitation and care,

Therefore, we the undersigned, support Animal Indemnity legislation that will allow authorities to seize and care for animals who have been treated cruelly without additional financial burden to their agency. Cruelty to animals has no place in New Mexico. We urge the 2009 legislature to pass the Animal Indemnity legislation to help animals throughout the state of New Mexico.

Printed Name

Signature

Title

Organization

Immediate Action Requested

Please return this form to:

Animal Protection Voters, Inc.
Attn: Laura
P.O. Box 11651
Albuquerque, NM 87192
Fax: 505-265-2488 — Attn: Laura
laura@apvnm.org

Please RSVP to Laura if you plan to attend Lobby Day on Friday, Feb. 27.