

Legislation – What's Hot

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Briefly Noted: Norway's "Unethical Breeding" Case

In an "unethical breeding" case, Norway's Oslo District Court has ruled the breeding of English Bulldogs and Cavalier King Charles Spaniels illegal under the country's Animal Welfare Act 25. In an [article](#) from Belfast Live, the complaining party argued there were no healthy examples of these dogs in the country that could ethically be used for breeding. The Norwegian Kennel Club, the Norwegian Cavalier Club, the Norwegian Bulldog Club, and six breeders were defendants in the case. Cat and dog breeders in the European Union will be watching to see if this case is appealed.

Houston, TX

The Houston City Council quietly and unanimously passed the only revision since 2014 of its animal ordinances, including mandatory microchipping, hold time reductions, community cat provisions, and sourcing restrictions on pet stores. All accomplished with a single reading and vote! In a practice dating back more than six years, all proposed ordinances are considered on an emergency basis, allowing them to be passed with a single reading. As a result, an ordinance comes before the Council only once, eliminating a second opportunity for public comment within a formal hearing following which Council members can publicly address issues raised and confer with staff and legal counsel if needed. Furthermore, the draft ordinance along with a link to submit comments was linked under Proposed Ordinance Changes on the sidebar of the [Administration and Regulatory Affairs Department](#) web page, not the City Council's web pages.

Houston is also replacing physical license tags and the entire licensing requirement provision with a microchip and registration requirement, a new practice spreading among communities when not prohibited by state law. CFA maintains that microchipping is one of several valuable tools for pet identification. However, there are many ways the microchip system can fail, especially in the United States. The decision to insert a foreign object into an animal's body is for the owner and their veterinarian, not one mandated by the government. To give people time to comply, the council said there would be an intensive education effort during the first year before enforcement.

Another change mandates that animals impounded for running at-large two or more times must be sterilized and have their unsterilized pet registration revoked (where applicable). Hold times for at-large unmicrochipped dogs are reduced from 72 to 48 hours.

Community cats will benefit from Houston's recognition that its feral cat policies were archaic. Embracing the concept that the unowned community cats extend beyond feral cats to socialized but unowned cats, Houston replaced the city's feral cat provisions in the prior municipal code with ones tailored for community cat programs.

Houston also jumped on the retail pet store ban by adding animal sourcing restrictions. Only sales of pets sourced from shelters and humane organizations will be allowed. Unfortunately, the city fell into the trap of adopting an overreaching definition of humane organization that excludes both an "entity that breeds animals" or "in exchange for payment or compensation, obtains any dog or cat from a person who either breeds dogs or cats or facilitates the sale of dogs or cats that were obtained from a person who breeds dogs or cats." Further, this definition is included with definitions of general applicability to the entire ordinance, creating unnecessary restrictions for humane organizations that do not supply pet stores, instead of limiting the restrictions to only those that do. The retail pet store sourcing restriction will become effective after one year allowing existing pet stores time to comply or cease sales.

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