



Date: April 3, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair

From: Emily Lewis
Humane Investigations Staff Attorney, Oregon Humane Society

Re: Senate Bill 883

Established in 1868, the Oregon Humane Society is the state's largest and oldest animal welfare organization with over 50,000 supporters statewide. We are not affiliated with any local or national organization. **We are here today to ask you to support SB 883.**

In 2013 the Oregon Legislature recognized the need to instill protection in the law for the vulnerable population of animals being cared for by a growing number of animal rescue entities. Now, six years later, it is clear that the existing law needs to be amended in order to maximize its effectiveness. The single change of granting licensing and enforcement authority to the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) has the potential to positively impact thousands of animal lives.

The original law put the onus on counties to create a licensing scheme for animal rescue entities but that has not proven to be universally successful. Even if it were successful with respect to implementation and enforcement, there are still important reasons for transferring authority to ODA. Many counties have their own animal control shelters or contract with other shelters to care for their animals, thus creating an inherent conflict of interest when issues arise with inspections or licensing revocation. Going forward with an agency with statewide jurisdiction would ensure that every animal rescue entity is held to the same standard, same fee schedule, and same penalty for noncompliance. This prevents the phenomenon of bad actor rescues relocating to counties that are more lenient or have less expensive licensing fees (or have not implemented the licensing scheme at all).

The State of Oregon currently has a pending case against an Oregon "animal rescue entity" for, among other things, breach of fiduciary duty. The Complaint filed with the court indicates that revenue from the rescue operation was used for personal assets. Without oversight, individuals can fly under the radar and take advantage of adopters and donors while exploiting the animals for personal profit.

We encourage you to vote 'yes' on SB 883.

Sincerely,

Emily Lewis
Humane Investigations Staff Attorney, Oregon Humane Society