

Report on Public Policy Position**Name of section:**

Animal Law Section

Contact person:

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Regarding:

The Montcalm County Animal Control Shelter

Date position was adopted:

February 23, 2009

Process used to take the ideological position:

Position adopted after discussion and vote at a scheduled meeting.

Number of members in the decision-making body:

15

Number who voted in favor and opposed to the position:

15 Voted for position

0 Voted against position

Position:

Oppose

Explanation of the position, including any recommended amendments:

ALS wishes to comment on three concerns regarding issues at the Montcalm County Animal Control Shelter and the shelter director and Commissioners' desires to make improvements. First, we approve the creation of an animal welfare committee to propose humane changes to the animal shelter. However, we are greatly concerned that two members of the committee have a financial relationship to the county that will be decided by the committee. The county's decision whether to renew the financial contract with James Woudenberg of R&R Research is a top priority of the committee.

Mr. Woudenberg and Dr. Lepley have a financial stake in the shelter's renewal of its contract with R & R. Their membership on the committee creates an obvious appearance of impropriety. That is, there is an inherent conflict of interest between the committee's role of reviewing the contract and these members' position as beneficiaries under it. The Animal Law Section, then, urges the Board to replace Mr. Woudenberg and Dr. Lepley with two independent representatives, who do not stand to profit from the committee's recommendation.

Second, we ask that the Commission deny renewal of the contract with R&R Research and cease the outdated practice of pound seizure. Pound seizure is an inhumane practice that violates the public trust and understanding that shelter cats and dogs will be adopted or humanely euthanized. The National Animal Control Association opposes the practice of pound seizure -- the selling or giving shelter animals to Class B Dealers for purposes of research.

There is a growing trend nationally and in Michigan to stop the practice. Currently, Michigan only has 4 counties (Gratiot, Mecosta, Montcalm and Osceola) that practice pound seizure. Ingham County banned the practice in 2003, Jackson County followed in 2006, and Eaton County placed a moratorium against pound seizure in 2007. Michigan communities have overwhelmingly rejected this practice.

Third, ALS supports the shelter director in her efforts to move away from euthanizing shelter animals via carbon dioxide gas, replacing this method with euthanasia by injection (EBI). Currently, only six Michigan shelters engage in euthanasia by carbon dioxide. It is our position that euthanasia by carbon dioxide is inhumane.