

SUBJECT: Requiring animal shelters notify adopters of epizootic infectious diseases

COMMITTEE: Public Health — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — S. Thompson, Wray, Allison, Coleman, Frank, Guerra, Ortega, Price, Sheffield, Zedler

0 nays

1 absent — Lucio

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; Lorena Campos, City of Dallas)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Imelda Garcia, Department of State Health Services; Aimee Bertrand, Harris County Commissioners Court)

BACKGROUND: Health and Safety Code sec. 826.002 defines "epizootic" as the occurrence of cases of a disease in a given geographic area or population clearly greater than the expected frequency of the disease.

DIGEST: CSHB 3092 would require an animal shelter to notify each person who adopted an animal of an epizootic infectious disease that occurred among animals in the shelter 15 days before or after the adoption.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 3092 would help protect the animal population of Texas by ensuring that adopters were aware of disease outbreaks from animal shelters. The bill also would ensure adopters of pets were fully aware of a pet's health and could take steps to address any health concerns.

The bill would not impose a burden on animal shelters because it would allow notice to be submitted to adopters electronically. Furthermore, the

bill would not introduce the term "epizootic" into statute, but would merely reference it. This is not a subjective definition since it is already defined in the Health and Safety Code.

CSHB 3092 would not discourage adoptions, but simply ensure that adopters of pets from shelters were fully informed of any disease outbreaks and potential health problems in their pets.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 3092 would impose a burdensome and expensive requirement on animal shelter staff and could negatively impact adoptions by creating fears surrounding epizootic infectious diseases.

The bill would impose a burden on animal shelters by requiring them to divert staff attention to notify adopters. Additionally, since the definition of "epizootic" hinges on the expected frequency of a disease, this bill could create confusion by not specifying who would determine this frequency.

CSHB 3092 could create fears around adopting pets by notifying adopters of outbreaks of epizootic diseases in shelters. This could have a negative effect on adoption rates, increase the time animals stay in a shelter, and increase the cost of caring for these animals.