

SUBJECT: Requiring notification of a shelter animal's exposure to certain diseases

COMMITTEE: Public Health — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Klick, Guerra, Allison, Campos, Jetton, Oliverson, Price, Smith
0 nays
3 absent — Coleman, Collier, Zwiener

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Thomas Parkinson)

Against — Tammy Embrey, City of Corpus Christi; (*Registered, but did not testify*: TJ Patterson, City of Fort Worth; Jon Weist, City of Irving; Rick Ramirez, City of Sugar Land; Daniel Collins, County of El Paso, Texas; Clifford Sparks, The City of Dallas)

DIGEST: CSHB 652 would require an animal shelter to provide written, electronic, or telephonic notice to a person who adopted an animal from the shelter if the adopted animal had been or could have been exposed to a bodily fluid of another animal in the shelter that was diagnosed with bordetella, distemper, kennel cough, leptospirosis, parvovirus, or rabies.

Notification would be required if the shelter learned of the exposure during the period beginning on the 15th day before the date the animal was adopted and ending on the 15th day after the adoption date.

An animal shelter that violated the bill's provisions would not be subject to a civil penalty for the violation.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 652 would protect pet health and new pet owners by requiring a shelter where an animal was adopted to issue prompt notification about recent disease outbreaks at the shelter. Adopting a pet is a financial and emotional investment in the animal's wellbeing. However, Texans who

adopt pets from shelters may not be made fully aware of recent disease outbreaks at the shelter. CSHB 652 would protect the health of pets by notifying owners of any pre-existing conditions and holding the shelter responsible for notifying owners within 15 days prior to or after adoption of illness at the shelter.

CRITICS
SAY:

CSHB 652 could discourage people from adopting pets from shelters by instilling fear in potential adopters about the health of shelter animals. The bill's requirement that public animal shelters issue notices for conditions, including treatable illnesses that are not a major health concern, would unfairly characterize animals from shelters as unhealthy and result in fewer adoptions. Adoptions are key to increasing live release rates for many public shelters.

The notification requirement would place a financial and administrative burden on staff and take time away from providing care to the animals. To comply with the bill's provisions, some shelters might have to hire additional staff to track exposure to disease and notify new owners.