

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R7077 LED-F

H.B. 1740
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Administration
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Rabies is endemic in the bat and skunk population in Texas. In 2005 a teenager from Humble, Texas, died of rabies as the result of a bat bite. More recently in 2015, a dog in Tomball tested positive for rabies and in Zilker Park in Austin, several residents had to be treated for rabies because they were exposed to a dog who tested positive for rabies.

For over 27 years, county and city run shelters have vaccinated animals against rabies under the direct supervision of a veterinarian per Section 826.023 of the Health and Safety Code to protect public health and safety. A rule under Section 573.10 of the Administrative Code was amended in 2012 by the Texas Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners requiring that a veterinarian-client-patient relationship be established before a rabies vaccine is administered.

The rule change means a licensed veterinarian must complete a full examination of an animal before it can be vaccinated for rabies. This creates a financial burden for pet owners, who may decide to ignore the law requiring the rabies vaccination.

Abrupt suspension of rabies vaccination services provided at shelters occurred as a result of the rule change. Prior to the change, shelters would provide large numbers of rabies shots per month, primarily for cats and dogs in areas underserved by veterinarians in which pet owners do not typically seek routine veterinary care.

H.B. 1740 amends Chapter 826 of the Health and Safety Code by exempting a veterinarian employed by a county or city with a rabies control program from the requirement that a full examination be given prior to a rabies vaccination.

H.B. 1740 improves community access to rabies vaccination services, an essential feature of an effective rabies control strategy employed by health departments to protect the public from rabies, a virus that is endemic in Texas.

H.B. 1740 amends current law relating to the administration of rabies vaccine under a local rabies control program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 826, Health and Safety Code, by adding Section 826.018, as follows:

Sec. 826.018. LOCAL RABIES CONTROL PROGRAMS. (a) Provides that this section applies to a veterinarian who:

(1) is employed by a county or municipality; and

(2) administers or supervises the administration of rabies vaccine as part of a local rabies control program established by a county or municipality under this chapter.

(b) Provides that a veterinarian described by Subsection (a) is not required to establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship before administering rabies vaccine or supervising the administration of rabies vaccine.

(c) Provides that to the extent of any conflict between this section and any other law or rule relating to the administration of rabies vaccine, this section controls.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.