

URGENT LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Legislators Return to Possible Vote on Rabies Tax

ISVMA veterinarians must continue to communicate with their legislators regarding their opposition to House Bill 315 and Senate Bill 2078 (Rabies Tax bills). Both bills can be voted upon as early as Wednesday of this week.

The supporters of the bills continue to organize a substantial lobbying effort - full of incorrect assumptions and misrepresentation. According to them, veterinarians oppose the bill only because they are against collecting the additional fee. They ignore our very serious reasons for opposition. To see an example of their propaganda, visit the PAWS website at:

<http://www.pawschicago.org/animalwelfare/legislation05.htm>

Please note that 5 of the 8 veterinarians that PAWS lists in support of the bill work for the ASPCA laboratories in Champaign.

Call Your State Legislators Today!

Even if you've already spoken to or written your legislators, it is important to follow up with them. Your legislator may have voted against the Rabies Tax Bill the first time it was called. However, the proponents of the bills are trying to persuade your legislators to change their votes!

Please call your State Senator and request that she/he oppose Senate Bill 2078 (Harmon D-Oak Park). Also contact your State Representative and ask her/him to oppose House Bill 315 (Burke D-Chicago).

Please contact the legislators that represent the district you live in and the district where your veterinary practice is located. ***Click here to find out who your legislators are and how to contact them.***

Understanding ISVMA Opposition to Rabies Tax Bills

1. House Bill 315 and Senate Bill 2078 increase the tax on rabies vaccinations \$3 per year, placing an unfair tax burden on responsible pet owners who properly vaccinate their animals. This additional tax on rabies vaccinations is a further disincentive for people to vaccinate pets against a dangerous and deadly disease. In many cases, the existing taxes imposed by local and county governments already exceed the cost of the vaccine.
2. During the past year, Illinois experienced a significant increase in the diagnosis of bat rabies. Skunk rabies was recently diagnosed

in two domestic animals in north-central Illinois (a cow and a horse). Raccoon rabies is also rapidly spreading west toward Illinois. Illinois veterinarians and public health officials are concerned about the convergence of these three separate strains of rabies in Illinois at a time when rabies vaccination compliance in the state is less than 50%. Any government program that relies upon funds generated by an increase in the tax on rabies vaccination is dangerous public policy.

3. House Bill 315 and Senate Bill 2078 exempt farm dogs from county registration requirements – creating a situation where those animals most likely to be exposed to rabies will no longer have to verify their compliance status with counties.
4. Any program aimed at reducing the stray population in Illinois must include a public relations campaign to educate pet owners about the benefits of spay / neuter because lack of education is the greatest barrier to population control. The ISVMA supports alternate funding proposals that would equitably generate funds to provide responsible pet ownership education and promote effective population control programs.
5. Illinois' veterinarians are committed to efforts to reduce the number of unwanted and abandoned animals in Illinois and to advance the well-being of animals and the public. All across the state, veterinarians participate in existing programs to provide low-cost spays/neuters, promote animal adoption, and encourage responsible pet ownership that includes appropriate vaccination, responsible pet ownership education and preventative health maintenance.
6. Proponents of the bills suggest that their proposal will raise money for no cost or low cost spay/neuter services and lessen the numbers of stray and vicious dogs. Those are admirable and appropriate goals. Taxing people for vaccinating their pets, however, is not a good way of accomplishing those goals. Medical doctors are not asked to collect a state tax on vaccinations that prevent diseases that kill humans. Why would the state require veterinarians to collect a tax on a vaccination that prevents a disease that kills humans?
7. It's true the proposed tax of three dollars per rabies vaccination may be affordable to many pet owners. However, this bill opens the door for the state to tax more medical services and leaves open the question of what the cost of obtaining quality health care for your pet will be in a few years.



ISVMA Puts Lobby Resources on Website

ISVMA has placed several resources on its website for members to utilize in their grassroots lobby effort. Position papers on HB315 and SB2078 are available for download.

Additionally, we suggest that you make postcards available for your clients to express their opposition to the rabies vaccination tax.

Click [here](#) to access these useful resources.



Remember Doodle for Wildlife is Friday!

Caring for native wildlife and teaching veterinary students are just two of the missions of the Wildlife Medical Clinic. We also strive, through our public education program, to teach the members of our community about the environment in which they live and the wildlife they share it with. With the help of the community and government agencies, we are able to identify trends in infectious diseases, provide important clues concerning disease transmission, and assist with many conservation initiatives.

As a non profit organization, the Wildlife Medical Clinic holds a fund-raising event called Doodle for Wildlife to raise money to care for our native wildlife. Please visit:

http://www.cvm.uiuc.edu/wmc/doodle_for_wildlife.htm

to learn more about Doodle for Wildlife and the Wildlife Medical Clinic.



About the Photo in This Issue...

As Catholic cardinals gather in the Vatican City to elect a new pope, it seemed like a good idea to highlight the bird named after their red robes.

More states have adopted the Northern Cardinal as their state bird than any other bird. These states are: Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. Their range is primarily in the South, East and Midwest, although a few have been reported in California.

The male's bright red plumage is matched by the clarity of his varied calls. The male has a black patch around his beak and a tufted crest. Even the female, whose plumage is a duller red with brown, is an accomplished singer. And they both will sing all year-long, brightening the snowy backyards as well as the warm spring mornings, sometimes singing a duet.

Cardinals mate for life. If you see one, look closely into the trees, bushes, or brush for the other. They prefer a dense area, such as a thicket or thickly branched tree to make their nest of twigs and grass. Mom will lay 3 - 5 eggs and incubate them, while Dad will bring her food.

When the young Cardinals can fly, Dad may watch over them while Mom may begin a second brood.

Cardinals have cone shaped bills adapted to eating seeds of all sorts. In the wild, this bird has a varied diet of fruit, seed, and insects. Attract Cardinals to your backyard birdfeeder by offering sunflower seed and cracked corn. Watch as they feed their mates at your feeder, especially during the spring and into the summer. As they offer each other a seed, the pair will touch beaks briefly, almost as if they were gazing longingly into each other's eyes. Also for your Cardinals, plant some shrubs with berries as well as some dense shrubs where they may nest and raise their young.

I took this photo near San Ygnacio, Texas in January, 2005.



Contact Us

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If you wish to add your name to the recipient list, send an e-mail to info@isvma.org and ask to receive the E-SOURCE newsletter.

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