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Article 5. Rabies Control and Licensing of Dogs and Cats.

§ 3.2-6521. Rabies inoculation of companion animals; availability of certificate; rabies clinics.

A. The owner or custodian of all dogs and cats four months of age and older shall have such animal currently vaccinated for rabies by a licensed veterinarian or licensed veterinary technician who is under the immediate and direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian on the premises unless otherwise provided by regulations. The supervising veterinarian on the premises shall provide the owner or custodian of the dog or the cat with a rabies vaccination certificate or herd rabies vaccination certificate and shall keep a copy in his own files. The owner or custodian of the dog or the cat shall furnish within a reasonable period of time, upon the request of an animal control officer, humane investigator, law-enforcement officer, State Veterinarian's representative, or official of the Department of Health, the certificate of vaccination for such dog or cat. The vaccine used shall be licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for use in that species. At the discretion of the local health director, a medical record from a licensed veterinary establishment reflecting a currently vaccinated status may serve as proof of vaccination.

B. All rabies clinics require the approval by the appropriate local health department and governing body. The licensed veterinarian who administers rabies vaccinations at the clinic shall (i) provide the owner or custodian a rabies vaccination certificate for each vaccinated animal and (ii) ensure that a licensed veterinary facility retains a copy of the rabies vaccination certificate. The sponsoring organization of a rabies clinic shall, upon the request of the owner or custodian, an animal control officer, a humane investigator, a law-enforcement officer, a State Veterinarian's representative, a licensed veterinarian, or an official of the Department of Health, provide the name and contact information of the licensed veterinary facility where a copy of the rabies vaccination certificate is retained. However, the county or city shall ensure that a clinic is conducted to serve its jurisdiction at least once every two years.

C. Vaccination subsequent to a summons to appear before a court for failure to do so shall not operate to relieve such owner from the penalties or court costs provided under [§ 16.1-69.48:1](#) or [17.1-275.7](#).

D. The Board of Health shall, by regulation, provide an exemption to the requirements of subsection A if an animal suffers from an underlying medical condition that is likely to result in a life-threatening condition in response to vaccination and such exemption would not risk public health and safety. For the

purposes of § 3.2-6522, such exemption shall mean that the animal is considered not currently vaccinated for rabies. For the purposes of §§ 3.2-5902, 3.2-6526, and 3.2-6527, such exemption shall be considered in place of a current certificate of vaccination.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.67; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.97; 1988, c. 538, § 3.1-796.97:1; 1992, c. 294; 1993, c. 817; 1994, c. 636; 1996, c. 351; 1998, c. 817; 2006, c. 836; 2008, c. 860; 2009, c. 756; 2010, cc. 182, 834; 2013, c. 286.

§ 3.2-6522. Rabid animals.

A. When there is sufficient reason to believe that the risk of exposure to rabies is elevated, the governing body of any locality may enact, and the local health director may recommend, an emergency ordinance that shall become effective immediately upon passage, requiring owners of all dogs and cats therein to keep the same confined on their premises unless leashed under restraint of the owner in such a manner that persons or animals will not be subject to the danger of being bitten by a rabid animal. Any such emergency ordinance enacted pursuant to the provisions of this section shall be operative for a period not to exceed 30 days unless renewed by the governing body of such locality in consultation with the local health director. The governing body of any locality shall also have the power and authority to pass ordinances restricting the running at large in their respective jurisdiction of dogs and cats that have not been inoculated or vaccinated against rabies and to provide penalties for the violation thereof.

B. Any dog or cat showing active signs of rabies or suspected of having rabies that is not known to have exposed a person, companion animal, or livestock to rabies shall be confined under competent observation for such a time as may be necessary to determine a diagnosis. If, in the discretion of the local health director, confinement is impossible or impracticable, such dog or cat shall be euthanized by one of the methods approved by the State Veterinarian as provided in § 3.2-6546. The disposition of other animals showing active signs of rabies shall be determined by the local health director and may include euthanasia and testing.

C. Every person having knowledge of the existence of an animal that is suspected to be rabid and that may have exposed a person, companion animal, or livestock to rabies shall report immediately to the local health department the existence of such animal, the place where seen, the owner's name, if known, and the signs suggesting rabies.

D. Any dog or cat for which no proof of current rabies vaccination is available and that may have been exposed to rabies through a bite, or through saliva or central nervous system tissue, in a fresh open wound or mucous membrane, by an animal suspected to be rabid shall be isolated in a public animal shelter, kennel, or enclosure approved by the local health department for a period not to exceed six months at the expense of the owner or custodian in a manner and by a date certain as determined by the local health director. A rabies vaccination shall be administered by a licensed veterinarian prior to release. Inactivated rabies vaccine may be administered at the beginning of isolation. Any dog or cat so bitten, or exposed to rabies through saliva or central nervous system tissue, in a fresh open wound or mucous membrane with proof of current vaccination, shall be revaccinated by a licensed veterinarian immediately following the exposure and shall be confined to the premises of the owner or custodian, or other site as may be approved by the local health department at the expense of the owner or custodian, for a period of 45 days. If the local health director determines that isolation is not feasible or maintained, such dog or cat shall be euthanized by one of the methods approved by the State Veterinarian as provided in § 3.2-6546. The disposition of such dogs or cats not so confined shall be at the discretion of the local health director.

E. At the discretion of the local health director, any animal that may have exposed a person shall be confined under competent observation for 10 days at the expense of the owner or custodian, unless the animal develops active signs of rabies, expires, or is euthanized before that time. A seriously injured or sick animal may be euthanized as provided in § 3.2-6546.

F. When any suspected rabid animal, other than a dog or cat, exposes or may have exposed a person to rabies through a bite, or through saliva or central nervous system tissue, in a fresh open wound or mucous membrane, decisions regarding the disposition of that animal shall be at the discretion of a local health director and may include euthanasia as provided in § 3.2-6546, or as directed by the state agency with jurisdiction over that species. When any animal, other than a dog or cat, is exposed or may have been exposed to rabies through a bite, or through saliva or central nervous system tissue, in a fresh open wound or mucous membrane, by an animal suspected to be rabid, decisions regarding the disposition of that newly exposed animal shall be at the discretion of a local health director.

G. When any animal may have exposed a person to rabies and subsequently expires due to illness or euthanasia, either within an observation period, where applicable, or as part of a public health investigation, its head or brain shall be sent to the Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services of the Department of General Services or be tested as directed by the local health department.

1984, cc. 492, 527, § 29-213.68; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.98; 1988, c. 538; 1991, c. 380; 2003, c. 479; 2008, c. 860; 2010, c. 834; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6523. Inoculation for rabies at public or private animal shelters.

Dogs and cats being adopted from a public or private animal shelter during the period an emergency ordinance is in force, as provided for in § 3.2-6522, may be inoculated for rabies by a certified animal technician at such shelter if the certified animal technician is under the immediate and direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian.

1984, c. 384, § 29-213.68:1; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.99; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6524. Unlicensed dogs prohibited; ordinances for licensing cats.

A. It shall be unlawful for any person other than a releasing agency that has registered as such annually with local animal control to own a dog four months old or older in the Commonwealth unless such dog is licensed, as required by the provisions of this article.

B. The governing body of any locality may, by ordinance, prohibit any person other than a releasing agency that has registered as such annually with local animal control from owning a cat four months old or older within such locality unless such cat is licensed as provided by this article.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.55; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.85; 1988, c. 538; 1993, c. 817; 2007, c. 640; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6525. Regulations to prevent spread of rabies.

A. The governing body of any locality may adopt such ordinances, regulations or other measures as may be deemed reasonably necessary to prevent the spread within its boundaries of the disease of rabies. Penalties may be provided for the violation of any such ordinances. If the ordinance declares the existence of an emergency, then the ordinance shall be in force upon passage.

B. The governing body of any locality may adopt an ordinance creating a program for the distribution of oral rabies vaccine within its boundaries to prevent the spread of rabies. An ordinance enacted pursuant to this subsection on or after July 1, 2010, shall be developed in consultation with the Department of Health and with written authorization from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in accordance with § 29.1-508.1 and shall contain the following provisions:

1. Notice shall be given to the owner or occupant of property prior to the entry upon the property for the purpose of the distribution of oral rabies vaccine or the use of any other methods to place oral rabies vaccine on the property. Notice shall be given by: (i) sending two letters by first-class mail, at successive intervals of not less than two weeks set forth in the ordinance; and (ii) printing a copy thereof, at least once, in a newspaper of general circulation in the locality concerned. Written notice shall be in a form approved by the governing body and shall include a description of the purpose for which entry upon the property is to be made, the time and method of rabies vaccine distribution at the property, and the submission deadline for requests by any owner or occupant of property who wishes to be excluded from the oral rabies vaccine distribution program.

2. The owner or occupant of property may refuse to allow the distribution of oral rabies vaccine upon such property. The ordinance shall establish procedures to be followed by any owner or occupant who wishes to be excluded from the oral rabies vaccine distribution program, including the time and method by which requests for nonparticipation must be received. If the governing body receives a request for nonparticipation by the owner or occupant of property for the distribution of oral rabies vaccine, no further action shall be taken to distribute oral vaccine, on such property for a period of one year.

Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to limit any authority for the distribution of oral rabies vaccine otherwise provided by law.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.69; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.100; 2001, c. 674; 2008, c. 860; 2010, c. 834.

§ 3.2-6526. What dog or cat license shall consist of.

A. A dog or cat license shall consist of a license receipt and a metal tag. The tag shall be stamped or otherwise permanently marked to show the jurisdiction issuing the license and bear a serial number or other identifying information prescribed by the locality.

B. No license tag shall be issued for any dog or cat unless there is presented, to the treasurer or other officer of the locality, or other agent charged by law with the duty of issuing license tags for dogs and cats, satisfactory evidence that such dog or cat has been inoculated or vaccinated against rabies by a currently licensed veterinarian or currently licensed veterinary technician who was under the immediate and direct supervision of a licensed veterinarian on the premises.

1984, c. 492, §§ 29-213.60, 29-213.67; 1987, c. 488, §§ 3.1-796.90, 3.1-796.97; 1993, c. 817; 1996, c. 351; 1998, c. 394; 2006, c. 836; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6527. How to obtain license.

Any person may obtain a dog license or cat license if required by an ordinance adopted pursuant to subsection B of § 3.2-6524, by making oral or written application to the treasurer of the locality where such person resides, accompanied by the amount of license tax and current certificate of vaccination as required by this article or satisfactory evidence that such certificate has been obtained. The treasurer or other officer charged with the duty of issuing dog and cat licenses shall only have authority to license dogs and cats of resident owners or custodians who reside within the boundary limits of his county or city and may require information to this effect from any applicant. Upon receipt of proper application and current certificate of vaccination as required by this article or satisfactory evidence that such certificate has been obtained, the treasurer or other officer charged with the duty of issuing dog and cat licenses shall issue a license receipt for the amount on which he shall record the name and address of the owner or custodian, the date of payment, the year for which issued, the serial number of the tag, whether dog or cat, whether male or female, whether spayed or neutered, or whether a kennel, and deliver the metal license tags or plates provided for herein. The information thus received shall be retained by the

treasurer, open to public inspection, during the period for which such license is valid. The treasurer may establish substations in convenient locations in the county or city and appoint agents for the collection of the license tax and issuance of such licenses.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.56; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.86; 1991, c. 77; 1993, c. 817; 2006, c. 836; 2008, c. 860.

§ 3.2-6528. Amount of license tax.

The governing body of each county or city shall impose by ordinance a license tax on the ownership of dogs within its jurisdiction. The governing body of any locality that has adopted an ordinance pursuant to subsection B of § 3.2-6524 shall impose by ordinance a license tax on the ownership of cats within its jurisdiction. The governing body may establish different rates of taxation for ownership of female dogs, male dogs, spayed or neutered dogs, female cats, male cats, and spayed or neutered cats. The tax for each dog or cat shall not be less than \$1 and not more than \$10 for each year. If the dog or cat has been spayed, the tax shall not exceed the tax provided for a male dog or cat. Any ordinance may provide for a license tax for kennels of 10, 20, 30, 40, or 50 dogs or cats not to exceed \$50 for any one such block of kennels.

No license tax shall be levied on any dog that is trained and serves as a guide dog for a blind person, that is trained and serves as a hearing dog for a deaf or hearing-impaired person, or that is trained and serves as a service dog for a mobility-impaired or otherwise disabled person.

As used in this section, "hearing dog," "mobility-impaired person," "otherwise disabled person," and "service dog" have the same meanings as assigned in § 51.5-40.1.

1984, cc. 248, 492, § 29-213.57; 1986, c. 169; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.87; 1993, c. 817; 1994, c. 108; 2006, c. 836; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 616.

§ 3.2-6529. Veterinarians to provide treasurer with rabies certificate information; civil penalty.

A. Each veterinarian who vaccinates a dog against rabies or directs a veterinary technician in his employ to vaccinate a dog against rabies shall provide the owner a copy of the rabies vaccination certificate. The veterinarian shall forward within 45 days a copy of the rabies vaccination certificate or the relevant information contained in such certificate to the treasurer of the locality where the vaccination occurs.

The rabies vaccination certificate shall include at a minimum the signature of the veterinarian, the animal owner's name and address, the species of the animal, the sex, the age, the color, the primary breed, whether or not the animal is spayed or neutered, the vaccination number, and expiration date. The rabies vaccination certificate shall indicate the locality where the animal resides.

B. It shall be the responsibility of the owner of each vaccinated animal that is not already licensed to apply for a license for the vaccinated dog. Beginning January 1, 2008, if the treasurer determines, from review of the rabies vaccination information provided by veterinarians, that the owner of an unlicensed dog has failed to apply for a license within 90 days of the date of vaccination, the treasurer shall transmit an application to the owner and request the owner to submit a completed application and pay the appropriate fee. Upon receipt of the completed application and payment of the license fee, the treasurer or other agent charged with the duty of issuing the dog licenses shall issue a license receipt and a permanent tag. The treasurer shall retain only the information that is required to be collected and open to public inspection pursuant to the provisions of this Chapter and shall forthwith destroy any rabies vaccination certificate or other similar record transmitted by a veterinarian to a treasurer pursuant to this section.

The treasurer shall remit any rabies vaccination certificate received for any animal owned by an individual residing in another locality to the local treasurer for the appropriate locality.

Any veterinarian that willfully fails to provide the treasurer of any locality with a copy of the rabies vaccination certificate or the information contained in such certificate may be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed \$10 per certificate. Monies raised pursuant to this subsection shall be placed in the locality's general fund for the purpose of animal control activities including spay or neuter programs.

2006, c. [836](#), § 3.1-796.87:1; 2007, c. [270](#); 2008, cc. [16](#), [860](#).

§ 3.2-6530. When license tax payable.

A. The license tax as prescribed in § [3.2-6528](#) is due not later than 30 days after a dog or cat has reached the age of four months, or not later than 30 days after an owner acquires a dog or cat four months of age or older and each year thereafter.

B. Licensing periods for individual dogs and cats may be equal to and may run concurrently with the rabies vaccination effective period. Any kennel license tax prescribed pursuant to § [3.2-6528](#) shall be due on January 1 and not later than January 31 of each year.

1984, cc. 248, 492, § 29-213.58; 1986, c. 169; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.88; 1990, c. 365; 1993, c. 817; 2006, c. [836](#); 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6531. Displaying receipts; dogs to wear tags.

Dog and cat license receipts shall be carefully preserved by the licensees and exhibited promptly on request for inspection by any animal control officer or other officer. Dog license tags shall be securely fastened to a substantial collar by the owner or custodian and worn by such dog. It shall be unlawful for the owner to permit any licensed dog four months old or older to run or roam at large at any time without a license tag. The owner of the dog may remove the collar and license tag required by this section when: (i) the dog is engaged in lawful hunting; (ii) the dog is competing in a dog show; (iii) the dog has a skin condition that would be exacerbated by the wearing of a collar; (iv) the dog is confined; or (v) the dog is under the immediate control of its owner.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.62; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.92; 1990, c. 365; 1993, c. 817; 1998, c. [817](#); 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6532. Duplicate license tags.

If a dog or cat license tag is lost, destroyed or stolen, the owner or custodian shall at once apply to the treasurer or his agent who issued the original license for a duplicate license tag, presenting the original license receipt. Upon affidavit of the owner or custodian before the treasurer or his agent that the original license tag has been lost, destroyed or stolen, he shall issue a duplicate license tag that the owner or custodian shall immediately affix to the collar of the dog. The treasurer or his agent shall endorse the number of the duplicate and the date issued on the face of the original license receipt. The fee for a duplicate tag for any dog or cat shall be \$1.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.61; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.91; 1993, c. 817; 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6533. Effect of dog or cat not wearing a license tag as evidence.

Any dog or cat not wearing a collar bearing a valid license tag shall prima facie be deemed to be unlicensed, and in any proceedings under this chapter the burden of proof of the fact that such dog or cat has been licensed, or is otherwise not required to bear a tag at the time, shall be on the owner of the dog or cat.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.59; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.89; 1993, c. 817; 2006, c. [836](#); 2008, c. [860](#).

§ 3.2-6534. Disposition of funds.

Unless otherwise provided by ordinance of the local governing body, the treasurer of each locality shall keep all moneys collected by him for dog and cat license taxes in a separate account from all other funds collected by him. The locality shall use the funds for the following purposes:

1. The salary and expenses of the animal control officer and necessary staff;
2. The care and maintenance of a public animal shelter;
3. The maintenance of a rabies control program;
4. Payments as a bounty to any person neutering or spaying a dog up to the amount of one year of the license tax as provided by ordinance;
5. Payments for compensation as provided in § 3.2-6553; and
6. Efforts to promote sterilization of dogs and cats.

Any part or all of any surplus remaining in such account on December 31 of any year may be transferred by the governing body of such locality into the general fund of such locality.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.70; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.101; 1993, c. 959; 1998, c. 817; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6535. Supplemental funds.

Localities may supplement the dog and cat license tax fund with other funds as they consider appropriate. Localities shall supplement the dog and cat license tax fund to the extent necessary to provide for the salary and expenses of the animal control officer and staff and the care and maintenance of a public animal shelter as provided in subdivisions 1 and 2 of § 3.2-6534.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.71; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.102; 1998, c. 817; 2008, c. 860; 2014, c. 148.

§ 3.2-6536. Payment of license tax subsequent to summons.

Payment of the license tax subsequent to a summons to appear before a court for failure to pay the license tax within the time required shall not operate to relieve such owner from the penalties or court costs provided under § 16.1-69.48:1 or 17.1-275.7.

1984, c. 492, § 29-213.72; 1987, c. 488, § 3.1-796.103; 2008, c. 860; 2009, c. 756.

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