

HEALTH & SAFETY CODE

CHAPTER 826. RABIES

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 826.001. SHORT TITLE. This chapter may be cited as the Rabies Control Act of 1981.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.002. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1) "Animal" means a warm-blooded animal.
(2) "Board" means the Texas Board of Health.
(3) "Cat" means *Felis catus*.
(4) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of health.
(5) "Department" means the Texas Department of Health.
(6) "Dog" means *Canis familiaris*.
(7) "Epizootic" means the occurrence in a given geographic area or population of cases of a disease clearly in excess of the expected frequency.

(8) "Licensed veterinarian" means a veterinarian licensed to practice veterinary medicine in one or more of the 50 states.

(9) "Quarantine" means strict confinement of an animal specified in an order of the board or its designee:

(A) on the private premises of the animal's owner or at a facility approved by the board or its designee; and

(B) under restraint by closed cage or paddock or in any other manner approved by board rule.

(10) "Rabies" means an acute viral disease of man and animal affecting the central nervous system and usually transmitted by an animal bite.

(11) "Stray" means roaming with no physical restraint beyond the premises of an animal's owner or keeper.

(12) "Livestock" means an animal raised for human consumption or an equine animal.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 1, eff. May 5, 1995.

SUBCHAPTER B. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Sec. 826.011. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD. (a) The board or its designee, with the cooperation of the governing bodies of counties and municipalities, shall administer the rabies control program established by this chapter.

(b) The board shall adopt rules necessary to effectively administer this chapter.

(c) The board or its designee may enter into contracts or agreements with public or private entities to carry out this chapter. The contracts or agreements may provide for payment by the state for materials, equipment, and services.

(d) Subject to any limitations or conditions prescribed by the legislature, the board or its designee may seek, receive, and spend funds received through appropriations, grants, or donations from public or private sources for the rabies control program established by this chapter.

(e) The board or its designee may compile, analyze, publish, and distribute information relating to the control of rabies for the education of physicians, veterinarians, public health personnel, and the public.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.012. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR RABIES CONTROL. This chapter and the rules adopted by the board under this chapter are the minimum standards for rabies control.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.013. COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES MAY ADOPT CHAPTER. The governing body of a municipality or the commissioners court of a county may adopt this chapter and the standards adopted by the board.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.014. COUNTIES MAY ADOPT ORDINANCES AND RULES. (a) The commissioners court of a county may adopt ordinances or rules that establish a local rabies control program in the county and set local standards that are compatible with and equal to or more stringent than the program established by this chapter and the rules adopted by the board.

(b) County ordinances or rules adopted under this section supersede this chapter and the rules of the board within that county so that dual enforcement will not occur.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.015. MUNICIPALITIES MAY ADOPT ORDINANCES OR RULES. (a) The governing body of a municipality may adopt ordinances or rules that establish a local rabies control program in the municipality and set local standards that are compatible with and equal to or more stringent than:

(1) the ordinances or rules adopted by the county in which the municipality is located; and

(2) the program established by this chapter and the rules adopted by the board.

(b) Municipal ordinances or rules adopted under this section supersede ordinances or rules adopted by the county in which the municipality is located, this chapter, and the rules of the board within that municipality so that multiple enforcement will not occur.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.016. CONTRACTS. The governing body of a municipality and the commissioners court of a county may enter into contracts or agreements with public or private entities to carry out the activities required or authorized under this chapter.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.017. DESIGNATION OF LOCAL RABIES CONTROL AUTHORITY. (a) The commissioners court of each county and the governing body of each municipality shall designate an officer to act as the local rabies control authority for the purposes of this chapter.

(b) Except as restricted by board rule, the officer designated as the local rabies control authority may be the county health officer, municipal health officer, animal control officer, peace officer, or any entity that the commissioners court or governing body considers appropriate.

(c) Among other duties, the local rabies control authority shall enforce:

(1) this chapter and the board rules that comprise the minimum standards for rabies control;

(2) the ordinances or rules of the municipality or county that the local rabies control authority serves; and

(3) the rules adopted by the board under the area rabies quarantine provisions of Section 826.045.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 2, eff. May 5, 1995.

SUBCHAPTER C. RABIES VACCINATIONS

Sec. 826.021. VACCINATION OF DOGS AND CATS REQUIRED. (a) Except as otherwise provided by board rule, the owner of a dog or cat shall have the animal vaccinated against rabies by the time the animal is four months of age and at regular intervals thereafter as prescribed by board rule.

(b) A veterinarian who vaccinates a dog or cat against rabies shall issue to the animal's owner a vaccination certificate in a form that meets the minimum standards approved by the board.

(c) A county or municipality may not register or license an animal that has not been vaccinated in accordance with this section.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.0211. CONFIDENTIALITY OF CERTAIN INFORMATION IN RABIES VACCINATION CERTIFICATE; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) Information contained in a rabies vaccination certificate or in any record compiled from the information contained in one or more certificates that identifies or tends to identify an owner or an address, telephone number, or other personally identifying information of an owner of a vaccinated animal is confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code.

(b) The information may be disclosed only to a governmental entity for purposes related to the protection of public health and safety. A governmental entity that receives the information, including a county or municipality that registers dogs and cats under Subchapter D, must maintain the confidentiality of the information, may not disclose the information under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may not use the information for a purpose that does not directly relate to the protection of public health and safety.

(c) A person commits an offense if the person distributes information that is confidential under this section. An offense under this subsection is a misdemeanor punishable by:

(1) a fine of not more than \$1,000;

(2) confinement in the county jail for not more than

180 days; or

(3) both the fine and confinement.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1069, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.
Amended by Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 1235, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.

Sec. 826.022. VACCINATION; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if the person fails or refuses to have each dog or cat owned by the person vaccinated against rabies and the animal is required to be vaccinated under:

(1) Section 826.021 and board rules; or

(2) ordinances or rules adopted under this chapter by a county or municipality within whose jurisdiction the act occurs.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor.

(c) If on the trial of an offense under this section the court finds that the person has been previously convicted of an offense under this section, the offense is a Class B misdemeanor.
Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 3, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.023. USE AND SALE OF RABIES VACCINE. (a) Rabies vaccine for animals may be administered only by or under the direct supervision of a veterinarian.

(b) A veterinarian may not administer or directly supervise the administration of rabies vaccine in this state unless the person is:

(1) licensed by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to practice veterinary medicine; or

(2) practicing veterinary medicine on an installation of the armed forces or National Guard.

(c) A person may not sell or distribute rabies vaccine for animals to any person except a licensed veterinarian or to a person working in a veterinary clinic who accepts the vaccine on behalf of the veterinarian.

(d) This section does not prohibit a pharmacy licensed by the Texas State Board of Pharmacy from supplying rabies vaccine for animals to a licensed veterinarian.

(e) This section does not prohibit a veterinarian licensed by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners from selling or dispensing rabies vaccine to an individual with whom the veterinarian has a veterinarian-client-patient relationship as described by Chapter 801, Occupations Code, for the sole purpose of allowing that individual to administer the rabies vaccine to that individual's own livestock.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 5, eff. May 5, 1995; Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1420, Sec. 14.810, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

Sec. 826.024. USE AND SALE OF RABIES VACCINE; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if the person:

(1) administers or attempts to administer rabies vaccine in a manner not authorized by Section 826.023;

(2) dispenses or attempts to dispense rabies vaccine in a manner not authorized by Section 826.023; or

(3) sells or distributes rabies vaccine for animals in violation of Section 826.023(c).

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor.
Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.025. PROVISION OF VACCINE AND SERUM. (a) The department may provide vaccine and hyperimmune serum in accordance with board policies or procedures for the use and benefit of a person exposed, or suspected of having been exposed, to rabies.

(b) In accordance with board rules and eligibility standards, the department is entitled to be reimbursed by or on behalf of the person receiving the vaccine or serum for actual costs incurred in providing the vaccine or serum.

(c) At the written request of the department, the attorney general or the county or district attorney for the county in which the recipient of the vaccine or serum resides may bring suit or start other proceedings in the name of the state to collect the reimbursement owed the department for the vaccine or serum.

(d) A suit or other proceeding may be brought against:

(1) the recipient;

(2) the parent, guardian, or other person legally responsible for the support of the recipient; or

(3) a responsible third party.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

SUBCHAPTER D. REGISTRATION AND RESTRAINT OF DOGS AND CATS

Sec. 826.031. REGISTRATION OF DOGS AND CATS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. (a) The governing body of a municipality and the commissioners court of a county may adopt ordinances or rules under Section 826.014 or 826.015 requiring the registration of each dog and cat within the jurisdiction of the municipality or county.

(b) A dog or cat may not be subject to dual registration.

(c) The enforcing agency may collect a fee set by ordinance for the registration of each dog or cat and may retain the fees collected. The fees may be used only to help defray the cost of administering this chapter or the ordinances or rules of the enforcing agency within its jurisdiction.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.0311. CONFIDENTIALITY OF CERTAIN INFORMATION IN DOG AND CAT REGISTRY; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) Information that is contained in a municipal or county registry of dogs and cats under Section 826.031 that identifies or tends to identify the owner or an address, telephone number, or other personally identifying information of the owner of the registered dog or cat is confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code.

(b) The information may be disclosed only to a governmental entity for purposes related to the protection of public health and safety. A governmental entity that receives the information must maintain the confidentiality of the information, may not disclose the information under Chapter 552, Government Code, and may not use the information for a purpose that does not directly relate to the protection of public health and safety.

(c) A person commits an offense if the person distributes information that is confidential under this section. An offense under this subsection is a misdemeanor punishable by:

(1) a fine of not more than \$1,000;

(2) confinement in the county jail for not more than 180 days; or

(3) both the fine and confinement.

Added by Acts 1999, 76th Leg., ch. 1069, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 1999.

Sec. 826.032. REGISTRATION; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if:

(1) the person fails or refuses to register or present for registration a dog or cat owned by the person; and

(2) the animal is required to be registered under the ordinances or rules adopted under this chapter by a county or municipality within whose jurisdiction the act occurs.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor. Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.033. RESTRAINT, IMPOUNDMENT, AND DISPOSITION OF DOGS AND CATS. (a) The governing body of a municipality and the commissioners court of a county may adopt ordinances or rules under Section 826.014 or 826.015 to require that:

(1) each dog or cat be restrained by its owner;

(2) each stray dog or cat be declared a public nuisance;

(3) each unrestrained dog or cat be detained or impounded by the local rabies control authority or that officer's designee;

(4) each stray dog or cat be impounded for a period set by ordinance or rule; and

(5) a humane disposition be made of each unclaimed stray dog or cat on the expiration of the required impoundment period.

(b) A jurisdiction may not be subject to dual restraint ordinances or rules.

(c) The enforcing agency may adopt an ordinance setting a fee for the impoundment and board of a dog or cat during the impoundment period. The animal's owner must pay the fee before the animal may be released.

(d) The enforcing agency shall deposit the fees collected in the treasury of the enforcing agency. The fees may be used only to help defray the cost of administering this chapter or the ordinances or rules of the enforcing agency within its jurisdiction.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 6, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.034. RESTRAINT; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if:

(1) the person fails or refuses to restrain a dog or

cat owned by the person; and

(2) the animal is required to be restrained under the ordinances or rules adopted under this chapter by a county or municipality within whose jurisdiction the act occurs.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor. Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

SUBCHAPTER E. REPORTS AND QUARANTINE

Sec. 826.041. REPORTS OF RABIES. (a) A person who knows of an animal bite or scratch to an individual that the person could reasonably foresee as capable of transmitting rabies, or who knows of an animal that the person suspects is rabid, shall report the incident or animal to the local rabies control authority of the county or municipality in which the person lives, in which the animal is located, or in which the exposure occurs.

(b) The report must include:

(1) the name and address of the victim and of the animal's owner, if known; and

(2) any other information that may help in locating the victim or animal.

(c) The local rabies control authority shall investigate a report filed under this section.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 7, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.042. QUARANTINE OF ANIMALS. (a) The board shall adopt rules governing the testing of quarantined animals and the procedure for and method of quarantine.

(b) The local rabies control authority or a veterinarian shall quarantine or test in accordance with board rules any animal that the local rabies control authority or veterinarian has probable cause to believe is rabid, may have been exposed to rabies, or may have exposed a person to rabies.

(c) An owner shall submit for quarantine an animal that:

(1) is reported to be rabid or to have exposed an individual to rabies; or

(2) the owner knows or suspects is rabid or has exposed an individual to rabies.

(d) The owner shall submit the animal to the local rabies control authority of the county or municipality in which the exposure occurs.

(e) A veterinarian shall quarantine an animal that:

(1) is in the possession of the veterinarian; and

(2) the veterinarian knows or suspects is rabid or has exposed an individual to rabies.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 8, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.043. RELEASE OR DISPOSITION OF QUARANTINED ANIMAL. (a) If a veterinarian determines that a quarantined animal does not show the clinical signs of rabies, the veterinarian or local rabies control authority shall release the animal to its owner when the quarantine period ends if:

(1) the owner has an unexpired rabies vaccination certificate for the animal; or

(2) the animal is vaccinated against rabies by a licensed veterinarian at the owner's expense.

(b) If a veterinarian determines that a quarantined animal shows the clinical signs of rabies, the veterinarian or local rabies control authority shall humanely destroy the animal. If an animal dies or is destroyed while in quarantine, the veterinarian or local rabies control authority shall remove the head or brain of the animal and submit it to the nearest department laboratory for testing.

(c) The owner of an animal that is quarantined under this chapter shall pay to the veterinarian or local rabies control authority the reasonable costs of the quarantine and disposition of the animal. The veterinarian or local rabies control authority may bring suit to collect those costs. The county in which the veterinarian is located may reimburse the veterinarian in a reasonable amount set by the county for the costs of the quarantine and disposition of an animal whose owner is unable to pay.

(d) The veterinarian or local rabies control authority may sell the animal and retain the proceeds or keep, grant, or destroy an animal if the owner or custodian does not take possession of the animal before the fourth day following the final day of the quarantine period.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended

by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 9, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.044. QUARANTINE; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if the person fails or refuses to quarantine or present for quarantine or testing an animal that:

(1) is required to be placed in quarantine or presented for testing under Section 826.042 and board rules; or

(2) is required to be placed in quarantine under ordinances or rules adopted under this chapter by a county or municipality within whose jurisdiction the act occurs.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor. Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.045. AREA RABIES QUARANTINE. (a) If rabies is known to exist in an area, the board or its designee may declare an area rabies quarantine to prevent or contain a rabies epizootic.

(b) On the declaration that a quarantine exists, the board shall:

(1) define the borders of the quarantine area; and

(2) adopt permanent or emergency rules.

(c) The rules adopted under Subsection (b)(2) may include conditions for the restraint of carnivorous animals and the transportation of carnivorous animals into and out of the quarantine area.

(d) The quarantine remains in effect until the 181st day after the date on which the last case of rabies is diagnosed in a dog, cat, or other animal species that caused the board or its designee to declare a quarantine, unless the board or its designee, by declaration, removes the quarantine before that date.

(e) While the quarantine is in effect, the rules adopted by the board supersede all other applicable ordinances or rules applying to the quarantine area and apply until the board or its designee removes the quarantine by declaration or until the rules expire or are revoked by the board.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.046. VIOLATION OF AREA RABIES QUARANTINE; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if the person violates or attempts to violate a rule of the board adopted under Section 826.045 governing an area rabies quarantine.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor. Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.

Sec. 826.047. LIMITATION ON LIABILITY. A veterinarian performing duties under this chapter is not liable to the owner of an animal for the death of or injury to the animal except in a case of wilful misconduct or gross negligence.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 11, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.048. EXEMPTION FROM QUARANTINE REQUIREMENT FOR POLICE SERVICE ANIMALS. (a) In this section, "handler or rider" and "police service animal" have the meanings assigned by Section 38.151, Penal Code.

(b) A police service animal is exempt from the quarantine requirement of this subchapter if the animal bites a person while the animal is under routine veterinary care or while the animal is being used for law enforcement, corrections, prison or jail security, or investigative purposes. If after biting the person the animal exhibits any abnormal behavior, the law enforcement agency and the animal's handler or rider shall make the animal available within a reasonable time for testing by the local health authority.

Added by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 979, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2001.

SUBCHAPTER F. QUARANTINE AND IMPOUNDMENT FACILITIES

Sec. 826.051. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR QUARANTINE AND IMPOUNDMENT FACILITIES. (a) The board shall adopt rules governing the types of facilities that may be used to quarantine animals.

(b) The board by rule shall establish minimum standards for impoundment facilities and for the care of impounded animals.

(c) In accordance with board rules, a local rabies control authority may contract with one or more public or private entities to provide and operate a quarantine facility.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 12, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.052. INSPECTIONS. An employee of the department, on the presentation of appropriate credentials to the local rabies control authority or the authority's designee, may conduct a reasonable inspection of a quarantine or impoundment facility at a reasonable hour to determine if the facility complies with the minimum standards adopted by the board for those facilities.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 13, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.053. HEARING. (a) A person aggrieved by an action of the department in amending, limiting, suspending, or revoking any approval required of the department by this chapter may request a hearing before the department.

(b) The department shall conduct the hearing held under this section in accordance with Chapter 2001, Government Code and the department's formal hearing rules.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 76, Sec. 5.95(49), eff. Sept. 1, 1995.

Sec. 826.054. SUITS TO ENJOIN OPERATION OF QUARANTINE OR IMPOUNDMENT FACILITY. (a) At the request of the commissioner, the attorney general may bring suit in the name of the state to enjoin the operation of a quarantine or impoundment facility that fails to meet the minimum standards established by this chapter and board rules.

(b) The suit shall be brought in a district court in the county in which the facility is located.

(c) When a court issues an order to a facility to cease operation, the local rabies control authority shall remove all animals housed in the facility to a shelter approved by the department. The county or municipality within whose jurisdiction the facility is located shall pay the cost of relocating the animals to an approved shelter.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 44, Sec. 14, eff. May 5, 1995.

Sec. 826.055. QUARANTINE OR IMPOUNDMENT FACILITY; CRIMINAL PENALTY. (a) A person commits an offense if the person operates a facility for quarantined or impounded animals that fails to meet standards for approval established by:

(1) board rules; or

(2) ordinances or rules adopted under this chapter by a county or municipality.

(b) An offense under this section is a Class C misdemeanor.

Acts 1989, 71st Leg., ch. 678, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1989.