THE T-N-R IS NOT ABANDONMENT LAW OF 2023

BACKGROUND

- In 2022, confusion erupted over whether Trap-Neuter-Return (T-N-R) of unowned community cats is “abandonment” under Section 42.092 of the Texas Penal Code, better known as the Texas animal cruelty law.

- The legislative intent of abandonment under Texas’ animal cruelty law was not meant to include T-N-R programs. T-N-R programs have never been subject to the Texas animal cruelty law as originally passed, or the five times it has been strengthened since 1997.

WHAT IS T-N-R?

- T-N-R is a method of humanely trapping community cats, transporting them to veterinary clinics for sterilization and vaccination, tipping their ear as a sign that they are part of a T-N-R program, and returning them to their communities.

- T-N-R is widely regarded as a humane method of managing unowned feral cats that live outside year-round, while improving their health and stabilizing their population. T-N-R programs save tens of thousands of Texas cats annually, preventing new litters and creating healthier communities through vaccination.

WHAT THE LAW DOES

- HB 3660 codified a "Trap-Neuter-Return Program" as a means of nonlethal population control and added a defense to prosecution for returning T-N-R cats to their homes under Section 42.092(a) of the Texas Penal Code.

- The law now clearly distinguishes between abandoning an owned companion animal versus releasing a T-N-R cat without weakening the penalty for actual abandonment.

- HB 3660 was authored by Representative Cody Vasut and Senator Judith Zaffirini. The law goes into effect September 1, 2023.

WHO SUPPORTS T-N-R?

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