

Louisiana Animal Control Advisory Task Force

Meeting date: December 15, 2021

Veterans Memorial Auditorium

5825 Florida Blvd

Baton Rouge, LA 70806

***Meeting was held both virtually and in personal
Minutes**

Call to Order

Dr. Brent Robbins, State Veterinarian of Louisiana called the meeting to order at 10.00AM

Pledge of Allegiance

Kevin Wofford, Assistant Commissioner

Roll call

Present: Robbie Averett

Brent Robbins, DVM

Ashley Delrie

Shelly Fontenot, DVM

Ellen Abington

Chalyn Fayard, DVM

Henry Wimberly

(absent): Chip Fitz

Quorum: Yes.

Commissioner of Agriculture, Mike Strain, DVM

Dr. Strain wishes everyone a Merry Christmas, and thanks the board for their work and gives special recognition to Mrs. Robbie Averett for the remarkable strides made in the LACATF over the past years. The positive steps made by the Task Force has been seen and have made measurable results. This has been a team effort and we will continue to support your hard work and are excited about what next year will bring.

The Task Force thanks the Commissioner for his kind words as well as his support in their mission.

Public comment

None.

Dr. Brent Robbins introduced Kevin Wofford to the Task Force, as the new Assistant Commissioner of the Animal Health and Food Safety division. Kevin Wofford has been with the state of Louisiana for 28 years and came to Animal Health and Food Safety from the LDAF Pesticide division. Dr. Robbins also commented on how competent

Kevin Wofford has been not only in the Animal Health Division, but also being sent to the incident command center during hurricane season.

Minutes of the last meeting

Motion to approve the minutes as written made by; Ashley Delrie. Second to the motion to accept the minutes as written is made by; Henry Wimbely. Motion to approve the minutes is passed.

Inspection report

In 2021 we identified 86 shelters; 79 shelters are open, 7 shelters are closed, 79 inspections were completed, and 2 re-inspections were conducted. Of those 79 shelters inspected, 59 met the requirements or minimum standards, 22 needed improvements, of all 79 facilities, 39 submitted an emergency plan, and the task force received 50 parish emergency pet plans.

Continuing Education Proposal

The proposal was created a year ago; asking that continuing education credits be given to veterinarians who volunteered their time at shelters. Unfortunately, the Louisiana Board of Veterinary Examiners declined the proposal. Dr. Robbins spoke to the task force members prior to this meeting about possibly assisting in the re-wording of the proposal to better explain to the board of examiners the education portion of the proposal. Ashley Delrie took on the wording of the proposal starting in March of last year and informed the task force about the areas of improvement that are needed to satisfy the board of examiners and will address the board's feedback. Mrs. Delrie asks that she partner with another Task Force member, Shelley Fontenot, DVM, to be able to have a veterinarian's perspective. Dr. Fontenot agreed to work with Mrs. Delrie on the proposal and considers it a very worth wild piece of literature and although the Board of Examiners seems against the possibility that she feels the Task Force should continue to try and get the board's approval. Dr. Robbins agreed and added that they should work together to make it either hard to say no to or easy to say yes.

Legislative Audit

Legislative internal auditor, Corey Marino, provides the Task Force with the summary findings. There were no formal findings of the task force. Though it was reported that 90% of stakeholders surveyed found the shelter inspections to be valuable, the report also showed the inspections marked an increase in the minimum standards overall. The report also supports the task force's recommendation that local governments implement mandatory licensing or registrations into their ordinances to increase both funding, and compliance. Ultimately, the audit lists five formal findings. These findings speak directly to the legislature. The first of these findings are state entities do not have enough regulatory authority or animal welfare and control and suggests that the legislature may want to consider giving these entities more authority in these areas. Second, the audit finds that minimum standards, adoption, and compliance is voluntary in the state of Louisiana and many of those standards do not reflect the standards of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians which it uses as a comparison for best practices. For this the legislature may want to consider making the minimum standard of care for adoptions and compliance mandatory as well as making those standards in line with the standards of the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. Third, the audit concludes that state and local authorities lack consistent and reliable funding for animal welfare and control activities. The audit suggests that the legislature may wish to identify consistent and reliable funding sources. Fourth, the audit concludes that more should be done to improve the investigation of animal cruelty and abuse and that the extent of cruelty and abuse in Louisiana is unknown due to the lack of requirements to make those reports available to a centralized database. For this, the legislature may wish to make law enforcement and animal control agencies report all cases of neglect and abuse to the Louisiana incident-based reporting system. Finally, Louisiana does not have a state-wide initiative to reduce it's stray and homeless animal population. The audit mentions the Louisiana Pet Advisory Council, which Robbie Averett has a seat, does not have sufficient grant money to address

this issue. The audit does not offer a matter for consideration to address this finding, but it does suggest that a state-run and state-funded spay and neuter program with a public education component would be beneficial. That concludes the remarks on the audit.

Ashley Delrie, voiced concerns that the task force should with the Commissioner's assistance look those considerations and possibly into bringing a bill to the legislature this next session to address the funding and costs issues. Dr. Robbins and Commissioner Strain have read the audit findings and hope to start creating legislation within the next years and ask that any ideas, or suggestions be made so that they can bring them to the legislation team. Ellen Abington praised the audit and their findings. Copies of the audit and the findings can be provided to the members if needed.

New Business

Emergency Support

Robbie Averett gave a report on the impact of the emergency support role taken on during Hurricane Ida. The support team coordinated with impacted parish shelters, to support their resource needs, provided logistical support for those parish shelters needing to get help to pets and their owners in those affected parishes. They were also encouraged to de-populate their shelter populations prior to the storms to allow for more space and allow their staff to be freed up to support their local communities. The emergency support activated national humane organizations to provide pet related resources as needed to the affected areas and as requested by the parishes. There was also the activation of a feed in place program in the affected parishes. LSART, which is contracted with LACATF, provided veterinary support with low-cost vaccinations, worming, and flea treatment for those affected in a state-supported shelter operation.

Training

Training is next on the agenda; part of our mission is to provide training for animal control and shelter staff. LACA conference was November 1-5th and LACATF participated by giving a presentation on our shelter inspection program. St Charles parish has done so much training; not only just for their parish, but also for the state. They received an ASPCA grant for sixty-two thousand dollars and conducted numerous training seminars with that grant funding.

Sexual Harassment and Ethics Training

Amy McInnis, attorney for LDAF asks that all board members complete their training by December 31st. The ethics training needs to be registered through the Board of Ethics website. The link for the Preventing Sexual Harassment was sent out in an email by Robbie Averett. Dr. Robbins reiterated the importance of completed this training by the deadline of December 31st.

Public Comments

Dr. Robbins asks that those present introduce themselves: Baleigh Olah, attorney for LDAF, and Doug McKean, program liaison.

The time and date for the next meeting is TBD.

Motion to adjourn the LACATF meeting made by Ashley Delrie, motion to adjourn is seconded by Ellen Abington. Motion is approved, LACATF meeting is adjourned.