

# OHIO VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



1472 Manning Parkway • Powell, Ohio 43065  
614.436.1300 phone • 800.662.6862 toll-free • 614.436.1301 fax  
www.ohiovma.org • ohiovma@ohiovma.org

## Testimony of Tod Beckett, DVM on HB 263 President, Ohio Veterinary Medical Association October 31, 2017

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Lepore-Hagan and members of the House Economic Development, Commerce and Labor Committee, my name is Tod Beckett. I'm a veterinarian practicing primarily small animal medicine in the Columbus area and the current President of the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association. On behalf of the 2,700 veterinarian and 500 student members of OVMA, thank you for this opportunity to provide interested party testimony on HB 263.

The goal of HB 263 affirms the growing strength of the human-animal bond. Animals, dogs, in particular, are increasingly considered a part of the family. Beyond the simple joy of having a dog or cat, numerous studies point to the positive human health benefits from pet ownership. As the medical professionals entrusted by society to care for and protect animals, veterinarians fully endorse spending time with animals. However, certain precautions should be considered when animals, people and food comingle as envisioned in HB 263.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 70 percent of emerging human diseases begin in animals. Examples of zoonotic diseases – diseases transmitted from animals to humans and vice versa – range in severity from certain forms of the flu virus to Ebola. Dog specific zoonotic diseases include campylobacter, salmonella and staphylococcus infections and rabies, to name a few. Many of these diseases are easily spread through casual contact or unintentional and unknown contact with waste products.

While the likelihood of a human or animal disease originating on a restaurant patio is low, it could happen. Safeguards need to be put in place to give the directors of the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Agriculture the ability to temporarily restrict the presence of dogs on dining patios during a disease outbreak. The restrictions would be temporary and allow the disease source to be identified and the disease contained. Both agencies have veterinarians on staff to specifically monitor animal and human diseases. Local health departments should also be given the same authority.

This simple yet important modification would give those empowered to protect public health the tool they need to address a potential disease outbreak. Without it, human and animal health would be unjustly vulnerable to the myriad of known and yet to emerge disease risks. The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” rings true in this circumstance. Preventative medicine is a cornerstone of veterinary medicine and a responsibility my colleagues

and I take very seriously. This change is not meant to prevent dogs from joining their owners for dinner on a beautiful fall evening, it is meant to simply ensure public health is protected.

Veterinary medicine is a diverse profession that impacts not only animal health but human health as well. Large animal veterinarians provide care to livestock ensuring the animals that ultimately end up on our plates are healthy and free from disease. Veterinarians can also be found in government agencies, in the military, and in research settings. Your local health commissioner could also be a veterinarian. On behalf of my veterinary colleagues, thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.