

## **Companion Animal Licensing Procedures Work Group Meeting Summary**

Meeting date and time: 10a-2p, 7/18/2016

Meeting place: Perimeter Center  
9960 Mayland Drive  
Henrico, Virginia 23233  
Board Room #3

Julia Murphy welcomed everyone and gave an overview of what was planned for today. The meeting started with introduction of attendees around the room.

### Attendees:

Dr. Terry Taylor, Virginia Veterinary Medical Association  
Debbie Condrey, Virginia Department of Health  
Wilmer Stoneman, Virginia Farm Bureau  
Paulette Dean, Danville Area Humane Society  
Rob Leinberger, Virginia Animal Control Association, Richmond Animal Control & Control  
Benny David, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters  
Willie Tydings, Virginia Animal Control Association  
Jamie Hawley, Piedmont Health District, Virginia Department of Health  
Scott Miller, Hanover Co Treasurer, Treasurers' Association of Virginia  
Robin Star, Richmond SPCA  
Debra Griggs, Virginia Federation of Humane Societies  
Alice Harrington, Virginia Federation of Dog Clubs and Breeders  
Heidi Meinzer, Virginia Federation of Humane Societies  
Melissa Velazquez, Department of Motor Vehicles  
April Rogers, Department of Motor Vehicles  
Dr.Carolynn Bissett, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Dr. Jodi Collins Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services  
Larry Land, Virginia Association of Counties  
Matthew Gray, The Humane Society of the United States  
Sharon Adams, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters  
Kathy Strouse, Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters  
Dr. Julia Murphy, Virginia Department of Health

After working group introductions, Dr. Murphy introduced the microchip technology panelists. The panel of experts here to talk about various microchip technologies included:

Jon Dyer, owner, 911 PetChip  
John Corgan, New Technology Manager, HomeAgain  
Tom Sharp, CEO, AKC Reunite  
Tom Troiano, Director, Smart Tag  
Cheryl Ann Fernandes, Shelter Care Representative, PetLink  
Miriam Laibson, Registry Program Manager, Found Animals Registry  
Mary Metzner and Sugar, Shelter Operations Service and Support, AVID Identification Systems, Inc.

Dr. Julia Murphy asked all of the guest panelists to give a brief overview of their products/company. Many of the working group members have been interested in microchip technology as it potentially relates to animal licensing in Virginia. Dr. Murphy appreciates the panelists for traveling and spending their time with the working group.

Miriam Laibson from Found Animals Registry gave a brief overview of their non-profit company. She is the CEO and Registry Program Manager for the company. Their headquarters are in Los Angeles. Their only source of income comes from the sale of microchips and scanners at a reduced cost. They use Datamars products and have a 100% free national registry. The registry can support a microchip number, all of the pet owner information, veterinary contacts, and a permanent contact for pet owners. The permanent contact, or guardian feature, can be a breeder, rescue or any other person. This feature allows any shelter or rescue group that adopts out an animal to remain a permanent contact for that animal, and the permanent contact is always attached to that account. The registry offers free daily uploads, which would be beneficial if the microchip is used as a license. Daily uploads would make sure the microchip number, all licensing information, rabies vaccinations and all other information are uploaded regularly. Found Animals Registry uses only ISO standard microchips (134.2 kHz) and only provide universal scanners. Universal scanners allow for the greatest capture of information from multiple microchip brands. The free registry account can be set up at [found.org](http://found.org). It is free to register, use and update. Ms. Laibson provided a handout/flyer of product/services. She then asked if anyone had any questions.

Dr. Murphy asked that all of the panelists speak first and then the group can have a general discussion with questions.

Cheryl Ann Fernandes represented Petlink/Datamars, which is also a manufacturing company. The company is 28 years old and is based out of Switzerland. Their US offices are in Temple, Texas and Boston, Massachusetts, where she is located. They have a universal database, which is a self-accrued funded database. Petlink also has a guardian feature, which allows any shelter or rescue group that adopts out an animal to remain a permanent contact for that animal, and the permanent contact is always attached to that account. The guardian's name will be attached to the record permanently; no matter how many times that animal is re-homed. She provided a microchip guide handout for all group members. Ms. Fernandes is not sure how microchipping would fit into the study, so she plans to listen and learn what she could possibly offer. Petlink.net is also tied into PetMaxx because the company manufactures globally. Ms. Fernandes would welcome any questions about the company.

Tom Troiano represented Smart Tag, a company that offers microchips, IDs and pet licensing. They now have 4 different types of microchips, each of which come with a metal ID tag and amber alert service if the pet is lost. They also now offer a data microchip. This is the first chip of its kind. Data on the microchip can be rewritten, so that you can store phone numbers and email addresses on the chip itself. With new scanners, one can update their information at any time, and can link the chip to a pet license tag, a rabies tag, and any other tag you may wish to add. A second generation microchip is coming out (~in about a month) with customizable data. Smart Tag is the only microchip company that offers a microchip with re-programmable data, which can be updated after implantation. All of their microchips include a lifetime registration so there are no annual fees. They do licensing tags for different municipalities and they can handle the processing of the tags, checking of the data, and actually engraving and mailing those tags out to each individual pet owner.

Debra Griggs asked Tom Troiano to clarify that his company was the only microchip company that has more than just the chip number appear when the animal is scanned. Tom Troiano confirmed and further elaborated that with their microchip they can program 2 phone numbers and an email address. The second generation chip that is coming out soon will be able to store about three times that amount of data. For example, one could store pet licensing number, rabies tag information, pet owner name, address, whatever information one wanted to store. The data can be customized, although there will be a set number of fields. Right now the data chip can hold 2 phone numbers and an email address.

Debra Griggs asked if the chip would be bigger in size. Tom Troiano said it would be standard size, but the company does offer a mini data chip. He handed out brochures and pointed out the information within the brochure about the mini chips. He also pointed out that they are coming out with a phone case for the android phone that will make the phone a microchip scanner.

Alice Harrington asked to clarify who can load the data on the chip. Tom Troiano replied that when the case comes out, anyone with an android phone and a case would be able to program the data on the chip. But right now, someone would have to have one of their scanners to program and read the data.

Alice Harrington asked if the data chip was pass code protected in case someone found a dog and decided to keep it. Tom Troiano confirmed that the data is password protected. Scanners other than their own will read the data chip as a standard ISO 15 digit microchip number. The data chips are available now, but the new phone case scanner will be available in a month. When Tom Troiano was asked about costs, he responded that he did not have a price yet on the phone case scanner but that it would be under \$200. Their standard scanner is \$299.00. The data microchips actually have 2 data chips in the microchip itself, and one is non-changeable (the microchip number). The rewritable chip is a separate data chip.

Tom Sharp represented AKC Reunite. AKC Reunite is a nonprofit founded in 1995. They register any microchip and currently have 4 million pets in the registry. They sell only ISO standard microchips, and do sell regular and mini chips. The mini chips have a smaller antenna and will not work effectively when used on animals with a thick fur coat, or in larger dogs. The smaller needle on the mini chip is nice but one sacrifices some performance with the smaller antenna. It can be great for small dogs with smooth coats. The company sells two types of universal scanners that read all four types of microchips sold in the US. They also participate in Pet Microchip Look Up, which is sponsored and hosted by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). It's free and can be accessed by anyone using the website [petmicrochiplookup.org](http://petmicrochiplookup.org). The user inputs a microchip number and the database searches all fifteen participating registries, both in the U. S. and Canada. His company, and he thinks most responsible companies, track every microchip sold and can trace a chip back to the shelter or veterinarian that purchased it. As the group considers using microchips as animal licenses in Virginia, Mr. Sharp advised that the group consider the large number of people who bring their pets into the state for travel. Owners will travel with their dogs for shows, vacations and other events. This can become problematic if each state begins setting up their own registries without communicating with a national registry.

John Corgan from HomeAgain gave an overview of their company/products. HomeAgain is the industry leader in microchipping and recovery services in the United States. They have reunited over a million pets with their owners over the course of 20 years. They distribute microchips and scanners that are manufactured by Destron Fearing. A full enrollment with their company provides one year of free member benefits to Home Again, as well as a lifetime registration in their database. It is important that the owner's contact information be kept up to date so that if a pet is found they can be reunited with

the owner. Maintaining up to date owner contact information is a struggle. Membership is renewable annually, after the first free year. Membership includes access to 24 hour recovery specialists, who can alert shelters, veterinarians and pet rescuers in the area if a registered pet is lost. HomeAgain maintains a network of over two million pet rescuers, who have signed up to receive alerts when a pet is lost in their area. HomeAgain operates a 24/7 medical hotline. Non-members will be charged \$65 for advice over the hotline, but members access the hotline for free. HomeAgain will also provide pet transport services up to \$500 to fly an animal back home if found more than 500 miles away. All HomeAgain microchips are ISO complaint and the company also supports the AAHA universal pet microchip look-up ([petmicrochiplookup.org](http://petmicrochiplookup.org)).

Jon Dyer from 911PetChip passed out sample microchips and brochures to the group before giving an overview of his company. His company conducts all of their microchip operations under the name 911PetChip. Under the name Free Pet Chip Registry, they manage their free online registry services and lost pet recovery services. The company is relatively low tech, but focuses on consumer friendly policies and procedures. Free Pet Chip Registry is the only for-profit company in the world that offers free registration with their system for any brand of microchip. This benefits owners (such as himself) that have multiple pets with multiple brands of microchips. They have a strict non-solicitation policy and only ever speak to registrants to either assist in returning their lost pet or updating registration information at no cost. If an animal control officer locates a dog with a microchip that is registered with Free Pet Chip Registry, he can input the microchip number on the website's homepage, which will initiate a series of automated pet alerts. The ACO can provide their name, phone number, and email, and the Registry will send two emails, two text messages, and two voice mail messages to the primary and secondary owner on that account.

Mary Metzner and Sugar with AVID Identification Systems gave an overview of their products and company. AVID is the oldest and the only USA based microchip company. Their products are manufactured and distributed from Southern California. The owner of the company invented the microchip. AVID provides all frequencies of ISO chips, a secure AVID chip, and a European FECAVA chip. Their scanner can read every microchip and is powered by a 9v battery, which is about the size of a TV remote control. Ms. Metzner provided several handouts detailing legislation in other states and localities that require microchipping of animals, including Pennsylvania and San Antonio, Texas. She also provided a handout with instructions on how to log in on to AVID's professional login page, which can provide owner information to ACOs immediately. ACOs can access this professional log in page from a cell phone, and any animal control or humane society can get free access to the professional portal by calling AVID sales. AVID also sells a secure AVID coded chip that cannot be altered or duplicated. All chips have a lifetime registration and AVID has people answering the telephone 24 hours a day. She then used her dog, Sugar, to demonstrate the ease of scanning. She was asked about the professional login and if ACOs can access all the owner information. ACOs can access the owner information and the alternate contact. This is only for animal control agencies, who have their own personal sign in which can be shared within an organization. Willie Tydings asked if this was an app one had to load on a smart phone in order to use. The professional log in is not an app but can be saved as a webpage link on a phone. She explained how to log in and use the page again. AVID is now a part of AAHA's universal registry. She mentioned she had been animal control for over 18 years, so she understands what they do every day. Mary Metzner also provides training and certification on the implantation of microchips, in states where non-veterinary personnel are permitted to place microchips.

Debra Griggs asked if owners can opt-in or opt-out of having their information available so that people who find lost animals can call them directly. Some companies do have that option available

(Datamars/PetLink and Smart Tag). Some do not for security reasons (Avid and Found Animal Registry). Several panelists noted security and safety issues with releasing owner information, especially with having an address public. Sometimes robberies occur. Mary Metzner noted that while she does not see her company ever changing to allow owner information to be made public, all the information is readily available for ACOs.

Jon Dyer noted that all AAHA affiliates have signed an agreement to not release owner information to the public; however, not all companies are as strict at enforcing this. He noted that with their terms of use, everybody within their database agrees to have their information released. However, the company does not release the information to anybody other than an ACO. All of the panelists are part of AAHA.

Miriam Laibson said that her company will not share any pet owner information with the public, but will share it with previously approved shelter and veterinary accounts and ACO accounts for field return-to-owner (RTO). Her company has an app where ACOs can log in and find the owner information to directly RTO.

Robin Starr asked Tom Sharp if his company was affiliated with the American Kennel Club. He stated that they were an affiliate but they were incorporated separately within the state of New York. Their operations are out of Raleigh, North Carolina. They will register any pet and have 35 different species in their database. He stated that AKCReunite was partnered with HomeAgain twenty years ago, but split off 10 years ago. Now they work very closely with breeders and rescue shelters. Tom Sharp reiterated that AAHA is a key stakeholder that operates petmicrochiplookup.org, and he wished they were present on the panel. He stressed again that all of the panelists here and all the other companies not here, have signed an agreement that stipulates that they will not directly reveal pet owner information to the public. He wanted to point out that, from what he is hearing today and what he knows about other companies, it is not being enforced.

Heidi Meinzer had two concerns about microchips' role in dog licensing. One was the cost for the day-to-day owner of the chip plus the registry. She asked what that would look like. Second, she wondered if there was a movement towards chips being a one step process where animal control does not have to hope they have internet access in the field but rather the owner's phone number pops up when it is scanned. She wonders if microchips can handle that much data and if that is going to be standard. Tom Troiano stated his company already has that technology so he sees the industry moving that way. Heidi Meinzer pointed out that another huge issue for animal control officers is the need to determine if the dog they have picked up has been vaccinated for rabies as soon as possible. She asked how ACOs can get owner information and rabies status fast. Cheryl Ann Fernandes pointed out that the ACO would need to have the particular scanner (Smart Tag) that could read the extra data in order for that to work. Tom Troiano agreed and said his goal was to donate 1000 scanners to larger organizations to jump start the value of the data chips. He stated that all new technology takes a little time. He added that if you order 50 or 100 chips, they give you a free scanner.

When asked about the average cost to an owner for a microchip and lifetime registration, it was noted by panelists that most pets acquired from a rescue or breeder are already microchipped. The typical microchip cost at a veterinarian's office is \$40-\$80. This all depends on the type of microchip and registry used.

Paulette Dean asked if it was easy to access or change data with a microchip. Panelists noted that some microchips have password protection (PetLink and Smart Tag).

There was a brief discussion on tattoos. This was discouraged from the panelists as an option because they can be easily altered and they may not be unique.

Scott Miller inquired if any localities in the US have mandates to microchip? Numerous panelists answered yes. Several examples of cities (San Antonio and the state of Pennsylvania) were given by the panelists. A handout from Cheryl Ann Fernandes had other examples. In San Antonio, there is no charge to owners for their pet to be microchipped. The owner has to register with the database associated with the type of microchip, because the city does not require a particular microchip. Cheryl Ann Fernandes pointed out that each and every microchip company has their own private database and asked the group several questions for consideration: what direction does the group want to go? Would the group want to have one of the companies host the state database? Or would the group want to look at something similar to what Virginia already has, like the dangerous dog registry. She further stated that the group may want to talk to a company that does dog licensing as another avenue.

Scott Miller asked if there were reactions from veterinarians in San Antonio to the microchip requirement. None of the panelists knew of any significant pushback from the veterinary community.

Scott Miller expressed concerns about the cost associated with microchipping to an owner with a large kennel of hunting dogs. The panelists responded that the cost could be zero depending on the program, or that the owner could get a better rate by buying directly from a company. John Dyer reminded the group to consider the cost of microchip registration, in addition to the cost of the microchip itself. A panelist recommended that the working group consider the relationship between the cost of license and the cost of microchip. Scott Miller supported the idea of protecting the public from increased costs and/or offering an incentive. Sharon Adams stated we must consider the cost is to the public, but also the cost to taxpayers for the care of stray animals in shelters. The number of stray dogs in shelters is very high, so as the group considers costs, she reminded the group to consider all costs, including those to taxpayers. Scott Miller agreed, but pointed out that increased cost to the public could kill any ideas the working group puts forth.

Rob Leinberger pointed out that he does not think a system that depends exclusively on microchips is necessary. It can be one tool, but ACOs can use other forms of identification and register them other ways.

Benny David asked if the manufacturers could supply special numbered chips specific to the state. The manufacturer companies said they could, but would need to come up with a unique number system that had not been used before. Benny thought that if the state ordered 1 million chips, they could designate certain ranges of numbers to certain localities to make it more traceable. However, some animals are already microchipped, and they would have to receive a second chip for this system to work.

Benny David mentioned that some states have various restrictions on who can and cannot administer microchips. The group referred to Leslie Knachel from Board of Veterinary Medicine (BVM) to elaborate. She stated that there would be a need to change regulations to allow anyone other than a licensed veterinary professional to implant microchips in Virginia. Alice Harrington asked if anyone had been prosecuted or charged for violating this regulation. Several group members adamantly responded in the affirmative. Leslie Knachel pointed out that regulation changes can take years. Benny David expressed concern that further discussion of utilizing microchips as licenses may not be a good use of the group's time, considering the need for regulatory change and the time associated with the regulatory process.

Julia Murphy said that these are still important ideas to discuss. She sees this working group as a brain trust of people that can come up with good ideas for the treasurers that can help them increase efficiency and licensing compliance. She stated that she thinks the group believes that licensing is important for the good of the public. Debra Griggs stated she thought it was important to the public to have more animals identifiable but not necessarily licensed. Julia Murphy agreed that the public benefits with faster identification of a loose dog, whether the identification is a microchip, tag, or tattoo, and recognized that each form of identification has limitations. She asked if the group agreed and there was general consensus. She stated that not everything requires a change in regulation or law for it to be a good idea worthy of inclusion in the final report. The treasurers can begin talking within their association, or start a framework for interacting with other groups that are like minded, to make things more efficient for licensing and animal identification. She thought this was a good conversation to have.

Mary Metzner stated that an animal with identification potentially saves a holding organization approximately \$200. If an animal with identification can be returned home quickly, then taxpayer costs associated with picking up the animal, caring for it daily and operating the facility could potentially be minimized. Sharon Adams added that faster return to owner minimizes that animal's risk of disease exposure.

Debra Griggs stated she would like to see whatever option(s) the group chooses inspire citizen compliance. She thought that if the group is not confident that the option(s) will inspire citizens to comply, then the group conversations are rhetoric.

The panelists pointed out that their industry is working to build awareness in shelters and consumers on the importance of microchipping. There are other ways to identify a dog, but microchipping provides permanent identification of the pet. There is an industry that is pushing that and getting education out there so the group would not be starting from square one.

Rob Leinberger wanted to go on the record as strongly encouraging microchipping as a tool, or a resource. He stated that over the course of 25 years as an animal control officer (ACO), having the ability to simply track is essential. He thinks microchipping is a valuable resource and that Virginia should be on the forefront in using this valuable tool. Getting back to what the general assembly has tasked for the group, he sees ACOs wanting the option to be simple and quick to use, so that the animal does not go to the shelter. He just wants the basic owner information (name, phone number, and address) in the field and feels that they can get the other information (rabies vaccine status) later. It must be a short, sweet and simple process, and something they can use very quickly in the field. Not all ACOs will have access to a smartphone. He pointed out that Virginia already mandates that dangerous dogs be microchipped.

Heidi Meinzer asked more about tattoos. Several members of the group and panel pointed out further limitations of tattoos, such as the ink spreading and fading, making it unreadable in some cases.

Tom Troiano stated that all of their microchips come with a metal ID tag and his company can customize the tags with information for municipalities with licensing programs, shelters with their logos, and animal care and control information. For example, in New York City every pet that is adopted out of their shelters is issued a custom ID tag. A matching tag with a microchip might be something the group considers.

Scott Miller asked if anyone tracked the vaccination number (such as rabies tag) and used that to track the animal in the US? Someone from the general public stated that the state of Georgia used to do that.

Kathy Strouse said she did not know the answer to Scott's question, but unless there is something in place where all veterinarians submitted the data to some centralized database, then there are likely to be some severe limitations. Rabies tags only work as a means to identify animals when veterinary clinics are open (Monday-Friday and before noon on Saturday). She also pointed out that the rabies tag numbers are not unique, and that would have to change for that number to be used in a statewide registry.

Debra Griggs asked that if the animal license is associated with the mandated rabies vaccination, then why can't veterinarians submit the information directly to animal control? Scott Miller thought veterinarians could benefit from having to electronically enter rabies vaccination information into a 24-hour accessible statewide database, instead of having to mail the rabies certificates to the treasurer's office. If the veterinarians input the rabies information directly into a database, then it does not need to be re-entered at the local or state level, and the state is tracking every dog that is vaccinated. The microchip companies could assure that every officer in the field has access to that statewide system. Terry Taylor added he thought a microchip number could be uploaded into the database at the time of vaccination. Julia Murphy noted you could have a tag number associated with the rabies vaccination as well, and that the ACO could enter the tag number. If there is not tag, then the ACO could scan the dog for a microchip. There would be a need for some type of identification on the dog. Because rabies tags, depending on where the veterinarian purchased that lot of tags, could have numbers that repeat multiple times, it would be necessary that the identification be a unique identifier.

Scott Miller noted that he did not think that would be insurmountable. One could coordinate with the vets and they could have designated numbers.

Heidi Meinzer asked the ACOs in the room, that if they pick up a dog with an ID tag, do they try contacting the owner with the tag information before they take the dog to a shelter? Willie Tydings said yes, that they would do that. Heidi Meinzer suggested having the code changed to require that dogs have identification rather than a license.

Jodi Collins asked the panelists if they knew the costs, upfront and maintenance, of their databases? The panelists did not know the costs.

Benny David asked why there are not microchip scanners that a dog can walk through as it enters a shelter. Cheryl Ann said that the industry had tried working on that technology, but the frequency of the microchips are so low and the sizes of dogs vary so much that it cannot be done reliably. If the scanner used a stronger frequency it would pick up everything and it could be dangerous for humans. Cinderblocks in a building could also then mess with the frequency. Mary Metzner added that it was also an FCC issue.

Brief discussion on scanners between the panelists followed. It was noted that with the older scanners would actually have to be put on the animal for it to read the chip. Now they can be 5-6 inches away and still read them. The microchip number will appear on the scanner and be visible for about 62 seconds. Some scanners have a longer reach (3-4 feet) and some have flexibility so handlers do not have to get



too close to an animal. Mary Metzner reiterated that her company's scanners are made in the US. Her company sells new and refurbished scanners and can fix broken scanners.

One of the panelists mentioned that their company has partnered with SureFlap, which uses a microchip enabled device to detect a unique microchip. Right now, the device does not display the number, but it has to know the number in order to allow only that animal access. Another panelist mentioned they have partnered with SureFlap and the device worked well. These types of devices work well for cats since they are all relatively the same height.

Alice Harrington asked how often and how much microchips move in an animal after implantation. The panelists agreed that if placed properly they are not going to move, hence the certification and training need to place them.

Lunch Break followed.

Dr. Murphy next stated that her plan for the afternoon was to discuss the surveys. The General Assembly required the group to assess the current state of animal licensing in VA. To accomplish this assignment, the group identified four major stakeholder groups that have something to do with licensing and wrote surveys directed at each group. With Scott Miller's help, the group sent a survey to treasurers in all 136 localities in Virginia that sell licenses. With the help of the Virginia Animal Control Association, the group sent out a survey to Animal Control Officers. With the help of the Virginia Veterinary Medical Association, the group sent out a survey to veterinarians. Responses to these three surveys were collected electronically. Several working group members worked to make a fourth survey available to the general public in a paper and electronic format. Dr. Murphy stated the paper forms of general public responses/data are getting inputted this week and she will send out the results before the next meeting in August.

Julia Murphy went over an outline and the major concepts associated with the Treasurers' Association of Virginia (TAV) thoughts in regards to dog licensing. The TAV thoughts were also informed by the Hanover county treasurer's office perspective & TAV 2015 pilot study of 9/136 (6.6%) of localities that sell dog licenses. (See outline below.) She stated she would get the electronic format of her summation of the concepts/results to everyone. She proceeded to read out loud her outline of the concepts and associations. She started with the Treasurers' Association's primary thoughts in regards to dog licensing and forms, but also a 2015 pilot study of 9 out of 136 localities that sell dog licenses.

- I. Administrative goals: license sales
  - a. Make 2-step a 1-step process.
    - i. Allow localities to offer licenses for free which would allow those licenses to be distributed by veterinarians when rabies vaccinations are given and not create any/any significant additional process for vets
    - ii. Allow a tag that a vet hospital may already supply when a dog is vaccinated to act as the license tag for the locality
    - iii. Pay veterinarians to assist with licensing (50 cents-1 dollar per vaccination)
  - b. Consideration associated with 2→1 step process
    - i. *Code of Virginia* section 3.2-6528 would need to be modified to reflect a locality's option to not charge for licensing
    - ii. Changes to *Code of Virginia* section 3.2-6529 would need to be considered in that, if a database (state or local) is created that animal control officers can

access remotely, the information contained on a county tag/tag issued already by the veterinarian that is serving in lieu of a tag issued by the county would need to be contained in the rabies certificate in order to assist animal control with return to owner. Would also need to be specific in regard to specific information which would need to be included on a tag issued by a veterinary hospital to be considered acceptable?

- iii. Would we need any change to the *Code of Virginia* to allow for a tag issued by a veterinarian to serve as the county tag?
- iv. What about those dog owners who live in localities that do charge for a dog license who seek routine vet care in a locality that does not charge for dog licensing? Would localities ever agree to recognize each other's licensing laws?

Robin Starr also added that a state tag be considered in order to assist with alleviating difficulties associated with the concerns articulated in (iv.) above. Julia Murphy responded that if the state had a data system within a bureau of dog licensing, that bought tags and distributed them, it could possibly alleviate this problem.

## II. Administrative process goals: data management

- a. Data should be manually entered once and system should be automated
  - i. Electronic transfer of data from veterinary hospital to treasurer's office so that info can be downloaded into a computer system at the treasurer's office
  - ii. Localities could issue bar codes to veterinarians to include on each rabies certificate and this could assist with a locality using an automated system to enter data
  - iii. Veterinarians could enter rabies certificate information into a state managed system
- b. Considerations in regard to data management concepts
  - i. Animal control officers would need access to whatever electronic system is developed; would require computer technology be provided/available for all animal control officers
  - ii. New or existing state computer system and existing or new state personnel to manage system; infrastructure would need to be determined

Julia Murphy added that if a state computer database is established, there would need to be new infrastructure and state employees to manage it. She did not think that other state agencies would necessarily be able to take that on with existing personnel.

## III. Fiscal considerations

- a. TAV's desire is to have minimal fiscal impact to general public, local and state governments
- b. If fees are collected for licensing, these fees could be split among veterinarians, localities and the state to support the participants in the process
  - i. Animal control officers would need computer systems/training necessary to access a computer system with rabies certificate and licensing information
  - ii. State agency would need financial support for personnel and computer system management if a statewide system was used
  - iii. DVMs do not want to collect money for the state or locality

- iv. VVMA microchipping could be used as a form of license if people chose to use a microchip
- IV. Microchip as a technology applied to licensing concepts
  - a. TAV would table
- V. FOIA considerations
  - a. Not TAV's goal to create a statewide system that was subject to FOIA

Wilmer Stoneman suggested that perhaps there would be a way to release aggregate data associated with any state database that is created as opposed to complete data.

How do these concepts/ideas/perspectives align with the thoughts of other stakeholder groups including the wider population of treasurers who were included in the surveys the HJ160 study work group distributed?

Julia Murphy noted that it is important to remember when sending out a survey, to know who you sent it out to and how many of those people responded, because you can only do so much with a low response rate and sometimes that means that more work needs to be done over a longer period of time to explore these concepts. She explained that the VVMA sent out the electronic 10 question survey that she did not feel was terribly arduous as it was only one page. Below is the summary of those responses.

- Veterinarians:
  - 2 step process to one step process-of the veterinarians who responded (75/886; 8.5%) the majority (73%) responded positively to licensing at the point of vaccination provided there was no/very little else they were asked to do (with 21/75 respondents in favor of being compensated for their efforts). Responding veterinarians indicated they already spend an average of 2.4 hours per week interacting with local treasurers' offices and vaccinate an average of 1275 dogs annually.

Leslie Knachel stated there are ~4200 licensed vets; some are out of state but do have mobile practice. The VVMA membership represents about 25% of the veterinarians licensed in Virginia.

Terry Taylor wanted to clarify that 50 cents to 1 dollar would not be considered compensation for most veterinarians. Julia Murphy noted that veterinarians were open to compensation, going from 2-step to 1-step, provided certain conditions were met.

- Database/FOIA: veterinarians generally in favor of statewide data base with 40-50% of respondents indicating support as long as ACOs found the system useful, it increased the likelihood of dogs being returned to owners quickly and the data in the system could not be released to the general public. Only 12/75 (16%) indicated they would not be in favor of this
- Microchipping: the majority of veterinarians who responded (90%) indicated they offer microchip implants as a clinical service. 25% responded indicated that their clients avail themselves of this service and veterinarians were evenly split in response to their thoughts on mandatory microchipping

Note: Terry Taylor stated that after the group's last meeting he asked the VVMA board of directors their thoughts on the three example options provided per the homework (this included 18 board members plus 5 directors. He got feedback /responses from 17 of them). 35% did not want to change anything.

Only 12% wanted option 2, using the vaccination as the license and collecting the fees for the county. 53% voted for option 3, which was the dogs licensing be treated as a government function.

Julia Murphy then stated Terry Taylor's poll of Board members is similar to the results from the 75 veterinarians who responded to the survey. Essentially they are fine with licensing at the point of vaccinations and the one-stop shop idea but they do not really want to do anything else. They do not want any additional administrative work or to handle public money.

Next Julia Murphy talked about the ACOs and their responses to their survey. She mentioned trying a second outreach to ACOs. She explained that the survey was trying to assess what kind of savings would empower their budgets and whether there is a difference between dogs that are licensed and dogs that are not licensed and how much money it costs to manage both of those populations of dogs. The survey inquired about the number of dogs with or without tags that were picked up and taken to the shelter and how many of those were returned to their owners and how many nights they stayed in the shelter. She pointed out that only 9 localities out of 131 responded. One of the limitations is this low response rate. She suggested trying another outreach since ACOs are important to understanding how things work. She asked the group if that would be acceptable.

Debra Griggs asked Julia Murphy to clarify what she meant by understanding the economics. Julia Murphy stated that she wanted to learn the cost to the locality to license animals and also to deal with dogs that are licensed versus dogs that are not. Her hope in reaching out to the ACOs again, is that if they do not know perhaps it could help prompt the conversation about the county budget associated with sheltering and what the economics are of the running the shelter, and that was what she was trying to understand. She also wanted to learn whether there is value, from an economic perspective, to the locality to have a dog licensed. For example, she stated, if we find out that on average a dog with a license stays in the shelter one night and that a dog without a license stays in the shelter 10 nights, then perhaps this concept of not charging a license may be offset by the savings to the locality for reducing shelter stays and therefore costs.

Sharon Adams suggested that ACOs may not be able to answer these questions. She thinks ACOs could tell the group what the cost per day that they would charge the owner who picks up their pet from the shelter. ACOs could tell us how much they collected and how many animals they picked up, but she is not sure they will get the numbers Dr. Murphy is talking about. Alice Harrington noted that they may record some of these things but they might not actually track that data or analyze it. Benny David noted that in defense of the ACOs poor response rate, perhaps a lot of ACOs just do animal control road work and they do not have the information from the shelters where they turn over the animals. Julia Murphy said she was open to suggestions on how to get these numbers. She wants to get at the cost benefits of licensing versus not. A suggestion was made to simplify the ACO survey. Julia Murphy appreciated the suggestion. She wants to bring the best information that she can in the time that we have in the report. Dr. Murphy stated that we are assuming/hypothesizing that licensing will cost less money for the county. This may not be a true assumption and we will not know unless we get a better handle on the economics.

- ACOs

2-step process into one step process: to try and assess what kind of savings to a locality's budget a licensed dog represented as opposed to an unlicensed dog, we asked ACOs about the number of dogs with and without tags that were picked up/sheltered by their locality each year and then, of those, how many were returned to their owners and how many nights did they stay in the shelter. Nine localities responded to the survey (7% of the 131 localities that have animal control offices). Two localities responded that they do not keep track of tag status in regard to pick up and 3 responded that they do not keep track of tag status in regard to return to owner. Of those that did respond, an average of 50 dogs per year are picked up with tags and 208 dogs without. An average of fifty dogs (100%) with tags are successfully returned to their owners and 115 (55%) of dogs without tags were returned to owner. Dogs with tags spend an average of 2 days in the shelter and dogs without tags spend an average of 18 days in the shelter. All localities also report that they spend some time and effort associated with follow up/action in regard to noncompliance with licensing and report an average of 37.5 man-hours per month devoted to licensing.

- Database/FOIA: 1/9 responding ACOs reported that they have computer access to county databases. Many (5/9) report computer with wifi access. 10/14 individual ACOs responded that they would be in favor of a statewide database that they could have access to and 9/14 responded positively to such a database even if they could not access it remotely from the field. A smaller majority (8/14) responded that they would be interested in a statewide database if all or part of it was exempted from FOIA requests.
- Microchipping: Officers responding indicated a generally favorable reaction to the concept of mandatory microchipping thinking that it would result in savings to the county in time and money
- Fiscal impact: When asked for their thoughts on a statewide database that would result in less money for their locality, 7/14 officers were in favor, with the remaining indicating a negative response or not being sure.

- Treasurers

- 2-step process into step process: 50/136 localities that sell licenses (36.7%) responded; Average of 40 man-hours of treasurer's office personnel are devoted to licensing each month. On average, 39% of dog owners purchase a license within 60 days of vaccination with 25% presenting after 60 days. Those responding indicate that selling licenses and following up with dog owners who do not purchase a license takes up about 40% of the administrative time associated with dog licensing. The majority of treasurers (60%) responded that they would be willing to have veterinarians license dogs at the point of vaccination and supply them with tags. The majority of treasurers (64%) indicated that they would be interested in transferring all of this responsibility to another entity such as a state agency. The majority of localities (53%) do not offer multiyear licenses.
- Database/FOIA: responses to questions about how much staff activity and local budget relates to licensing would indicate the data management of licensing information is about 60% of the administrative work associated with licensing and that data management associated with licensing is also the licensing process to which most of the money is dedicated (60%). The majority of those responding (62%) indicated support for a statewide database that could be accessed by ACOs remotely and the majority (60%) were supportive of a system if, as a result, administration time associated with licensing was reduced in the treasurer's office. Most treasurers were either supportive (40%) or

unsure (44%) about their participation in a statewide database if all or part of the information contained therein was exempt from FOIA requests. The majority of respondents responded either positively (25%) or were not sure (50%) about opting out of a statewide state system. Most treasurers responded that they use a computer system for managing licensing (82%) and rabies certificate (62%) information and report various (15 different) systems with all but 3/50 reporting that info is manually keyed.

- Fiscal impact: of the respondents, the average revenue associated with dog licensing was \$23,632 and average total program cost was \$14,866. The majority of treasurers responding also indicated that they were either not in favor (30%) or unsure about (36%) their willingness to participate in a state system if, as a result, their locality received less or no money from licensing. The majority (52%) also indicated that they would not be willing to pay veterinarians for licensing dogs. The majorities of treasurers responded negatively (40%) or were not sure (25) about their willingness to contribute funds to a statewide system. The majority of treasurers responding (78%) indicate that dog licensing fees are placed straight into the locality's general fund.
- The majority of treasurers responding (68%) indicated they would need to modify local ordinances if another entity like a state agency assumed complete responsibility for dog licensing.

Possible opportunities:

- Encourage localities to offer multiyear licenses
- Encourage more localities to use automated systemic/share automated systems?
- Encourage more localities to use the treasurer and ACO survey as a template for economic analysis of cost savings of having more dogs licensed

Discussions regarding the above outlined summaries followed.

Sharon Adams stated that currently information on licensing is already subject to FOIA.

Julia Murphy confirmed that information for dog licensing currently being collected and on record is currently subject to FOIA. Someone can go down to their local treasurer and ask to see that information now. She thinks that one of the reasons we were asking about FOIA and trying to understand more about it as a concept is that if we did move to a system where everything and every locality was listed, would the scope of that be of a concern for people who may be concerned about the scope of information that is obtained in the one-stop shop --that state agency who managed such a system would be subject to FOIA requests. Terry Taylor does not think that it would be something that could be exempt from FOIA.

Heidi Meinzer noted that from her perspective and coming from Alexandria, she noticed the Northern Virginia localities were very quiet in this survey. Based on conversations that she has had with people regarding licensing, money is not the issue as there is just not enough for them to worry about it.

Julia Murphy pointed out the group has talked about lots of types of feasibility. Financial feasibility, technological feasibility, political feasibility—there are all kinds of feasibility. As a group, we may say that this is technologically feasible but we think that there are some areas that we might need to do more work in order to understand how this would happen and what the impacts would be and what ways we could look ahead to try to manage any kind of downside.

Sharon Adams asked if there was a prohibition on or was it possible to include dogs in property tax bills. Scott Miller stated that theoretically it could be done, but several other group members voiced their skepticism in being able to do this.

Outreach and best practices and marketing discussion.

Wilmer Stoneman stated that his understanding of the overall study goals are to provide protection to animals and officers and allow officers to quickly identify a dog and its rabies status. He thinks that when we talk about taxes (using Scott's example of people with their dog boxes protesting over just a little increase in their license fee) and then go back to the general assembly discussing taxes and FOIA issues – he believes legislators will start to get nervous because they do not want to be on record for supporting an increase in taxes or public information, as there are many people in our society today that are anti-government and against having their information publicly available. He foresees these issues as hurdles to the program we are discussing. He believes simpler is better; that one-stop shop for getting the rabies and the license at the veterinarian's office and going into an electronic system is better. He thinks the public will look for what we are going to do with this information, and where is it going to appear, and that will cause some issues. So one of the bullet points that he suggests be put in this FOIA discussion is that perhaps aggregate data be available rather than individual data. He stated he thought there are other programs and common law that do that.

Scott Miller said he does not want to change what the current FOIA information is now. He has concerns for the scope. Dr. Murphy pointed out that the minutes would reflect those comments. She stated that Sharon was correct in things are currently FOIAable. She noted that one of the things that we learned to be sensitive to is the scope of the information available in one place. Because that was a discussion point in 2006 when the law was passed that required veterinarians to share rabies vaccination information with the local treasurer, the group thought that it was important to recognize this issue and maybe we should ask about it in some way.

Terry Taylor noted there is a feeling that government should be transparent and an individual should have access to the information that the government has. He also noted veterinarians do not want to be mandated to collect fees for the county or the state. He thinks microchipping could be used as a license ID. He does not think there is a reason to recreate these databases if these companies already have that data. He thinks a field on the rabies certificate should state whether the animal has a microchip or not.

Benny David stated he thought current license fees are not an efficient means of paying/compensating ACOs and/or treasurers to enforce licensing.

A member of the group stated we are trying to get the potential cost saving estimates of licensing vs non-licensing but that this data captured from the ACO survey may not quite represent cost, as many of the ACOs may not know the answers. Another challenge is that many shelters may record data but do not track or analyze it. They might just be in paper records.

Sharon Adams suggested extrapolating the data from VDACS. She believes what is not claimed can be assumed to have no id and then can extrapolate the data from every shelter. Shelters can give a range of per diem and they would need to estimate that for their facilities. If animals were returned to owner,

we could assume that they had a form of identification. She thought VDACS could get the numbers to get the economics.

Debra Griggs stated that she did not think it was necessarily the license that would reduce shelter stays. Rather it is quick and better ID on the dog that reduces stays. Robin Star followed by saying it is really about identification, not necessarily licensing. Julia Murphy then wondered if the treasurers would be interested in letting go of licensing all together. Scott Miller said they would cheer.

Alice Harrington suggested that perhaps the economics need to be the economics of not having the licensing. She also said it would have a beneficial election value. Julia Murphy noted that her thought was that sometimes the tag would be the only form of ID and because we do not mandate microchipping, we do not mandate that people have to have a life tag or have to have an id tag on their dog's collar. When asked if requiring identification could be easier than requiring microchipping, Julia Murphy responded by saying she did not know but thinks that we can include that in the final report. She does not think this group will be the last time we are going to be talking about licensing. We want to save all the ideas that come up unless we were going to champion the idea that all dogs have to have collar identification on them. She noted that the metal tag that comes from the county may be the only form of ID that animal has on them, as they are supposed to have one if running free. She stressed that the discussion of all these concepts is important to note and keep records of. She thought that what Sharon suggested about using VDACS data as a proxy to get the information would be potentially useful.

Debra Griggs noted her surprise that 33% of the ACOs which responded said they go door-to-door to check on licensing compliance.

A group member asked if it would be easier to mandate that all animals carry identification, as opposed changing statute on who can implant a microchip. The group had mixed thoughts on this.

Debra Griggs asked about the results of the consumer survey. Julia Murphy hoped to get the results out to the group in the next couple of weeks, hopefully before the next meeting which is scheduled for August 15th. She will summarize the consumer survey results like she did for the other surveys, breaking results down question by question. She noted she has started to write the final report. She has the introduction and most of the methods written. She asked that the group please read over what she has written thus far. Her goal for the next meeting is to have written up the results so that the group can start reviewing. After that the group can start on the discussion piece which will be very important.

Alice Harrington asked if she knew how many respondents there were for the general public survey. Julia Murphy replied she did not know for sure but estimated about 300 or 400 paper and somewhere between 1500-2000 electronic responses.

Alice Harrington asked if there were concerns about the low response rate. Julia Murphy noted that it would be addressed in the discussion section of the final report.

Dr. Murphy then opened the floor for comments from the general public:

Jason Abla introduced himself as the President of e-pet licensing.com from Pennsylvania. His company manages 39 counties in Pennsylvania, where currently fines are \$300/per dog without license. The



county works as an agent of the state. The city of Norfolk has 300,000 people, and at one time, only licensed 7000 dogs. With some effort, they currently license 14,000, which is estimated to be an 80% compliance rate. He thinks licensing is a need. If a county does not have funds, then they will not be able to support animal shelters. He suggested one online system that all can have access to. In Pennsylvania, over 4000 lost dogs have been reunited with their owners since implementing this system. The county treasurer still sends the tag to owners. The costs of tags are \$8.50 or \$6.50 for the state. Licensing is separate from rabies so no need to verify online. That is left up to the animal wardens (ACOs). When a dog is found, his company sends notice to ACO, owner, and county treasurer. They never give out the name of the owner—they contact the owner and send out the messages/calls. There is no ongoing charge to the county, but it does cost \$10,000 to start up. There is a \$2 admin fee to the company when owners register animal online but this is added to the \$6.50 or \$8.50 for consumers. The county are agents for the state (\$1.50 goes to the county). Registration is free (no \$2 add on) if it is done in person.

Terry Taylor asked Jason if it was the seller that puts the data in, not the client—thus it is either a government agent or veterinarian in Pennsylvania. Jason Alba said those two or the customer can go online through their system. Terry Taylor then asked if an owner with dogs can go in their system and buy a license. Jason Alba said yes, they login into their account, they click their account, and then they edit their information. Consumers click a button and the tag is made. Dog Wardens have access to their system 24/7 so they can go in and see. Scott Miller asked to clarify that the company could make an actual tag and send it directly to the owner. Jason Alba said yes, once the application is done.

Ann Campbell with PetData spoke next. PetData is a full service company and can do anything associated with licensing. They have been around for over 21 years. They average 1.7 million licenses on a yearly basis. They are serving populations of over 14.5 million across the nation. She stated that history has demonstrated that charging a license fee is critical to success. Not having a license charge often results in people minimizing the value of licensing. From her experience, the average cost of a county license is \$7. If it is less than that, you probably are not running the program properly. Since they are full service, they can take care of all send outs (email, mail, etc.). Her company runs a program for the state of Delaware. Data protection is important to them, but ACOs can still access the information. Their fee is \$4 per license. She can provide a fee chart for the group if there is interest. There is a \$16 fee on average to the consumer. PetData's licensing service pays for itself and their fixed fees help their clients achieve budget goals. They can run a licensing program from start to finish. She also stated their company was not an automated system. They can verify rabies vaccination status before issuing licensing if that is the requirement. They archive data and it is all searchable, but they do not sell the information. She noted her role in the company was sales and marketing, and that she was based out of Dallas.

Joe Kennedy, who works with Scott Miller and other TAV members, spoke next. He asked the group to answer how many non-vaccinated dogs are licensed. He said the answer is none. He suggested using the vaccination number as the animal licensing number. He thinks this can be very simple.

Julia Murphy stated there are animals that are vaccinated but do not have a license. Mr. Kennedy further suggested we start tracking animal at their origin, such as with breeders and shelters. His opinion is that licensing does not matter; rather, enforcing rabies vaccination is most important, especially from the public health perspective. He stated numerous times that vaccination should become the license for dogs.

Matt Gray from HSUS stated that perhaps there is not a statewide solution. He thinks about the idea that each locality should have freedom to choose how they want to implement licensing. He stated this may or may not be General Assembly friendly.

Terry Taylor noted it is usually favorable to contract out with private company because we like to put money in private sector/company. He said that we would need to check with legal people to determine how that would affect FOIA. The group thought it would still be required even if government privately contracted out based on previous presentation from OAG.

The meeting adjourned.