

June 1, 2015

RE: HB 3494-A OPPOSE UNLESS AMENDED

Ms. Hernandez and others to whom it may concern,

My name is Laura Magruder, DVM and I am a veterinarian and clinic owner licensed and practicing in Oregon. I am a member of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association. The following is a written testimony of my thoughts on HB 3494-A. I OPPOSE this Bill with the current amendments in place because they negate any potential for effectiveness in preventing the declaw and devocalization procedures performed on cats and dogs in Oregon. The amendments must be removed from this Bill if it has any hope of protecting animals. Otherwise, the procedures will continue to be performed unchecked at the sole discretion of the veterinarian.

I am fortunate to run my own clinic, and we do not offer either procedure. In fact, it rarely comes up. I have never been asked to debark a dog, but I do start early in my behavior discussions to counsel pet owners on training options for their dogs. Similarly, with cat owners, I start with their very first visits discussing nail trims and I train owners how to perform them safely. Most owners who ask about declawing only do so because prior pets had been declawed or they don't understand the gravity of the procedure.

Once they are educated on what the procedure entails, they are equally concerned about it being an inhumane practice. Once they realize it is amputation of the entire distal phalange of the digit, and that cats walk bearing weight only on these digits, they understand that it completely changes the alignment of the joints of the limbs. This creates not only severe pain at the site of the amputation but also immediately begins the process of arthritis formation within all the limbs. Not just the limbs that endured the amputations, but the other limbs (if rear feet were not done) that now have to support more weight and compensate for the abnormal front limb gait.

Cats are often so quiet about chronic pain, that this may go unnoticed by owners for years. Some of the most common things owners notice are the behavior problems that may develop. First, many cats become more apt to bite, which in most cases can be far more of a human health threat than a cat scratch. And second, they often start to urinate outside the litter box as they get older. This is because it is too painful for them to jump over the lip of the litter box. Sadly, these cats are often euthanized by their owners or relinquished to already burdened animal shelters. Older pets with behavior issues are not highly adoptable and often decline rapidly in shelters. I work closely with several shelters in the Salem area who see this scenario constantly.

For the record, I am a surgeon at heart. Early in my career, I was taught how to perform declaws on cats, by a skilled mentor, using a surgical laser and had excellent technique. It is an easy procedure to perform with a lot of financial gain. Yet, I only did one. I immediately regretted performing the procedure. The tips of the digits swelled up within minutes and the guilt of likely issues to come for the cat weighed heavily on me. From then on, I did what I could to advocate against declaws for my patients and educate my clients about behavior modification measures instead. I encouraged my employer at the time to require a consultation exam prior to dropping off the pet the morning of the procedure. This was loosely applied. In her own words... "We do any procedure that is legal".

This is what concerns me about the amendments attached to this Bill HB 3494-A. Attitudes like hers are shared among many of my colleagues and the amendments will allow them to justify continuing the procedures. The amendments must be removed.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Magruder, DVM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura Magruder, DVM