State Legislative Update

The State Legislative Update for September 2019 includes select summaries tracked by the AVMA Division of State Advocacy between mid-August and mid-September. For more information on bills and regulations, please see our full listing or contact AVMA.

Euthanizing healthy companion animals

A healthy dog was euthanized in Virginia during March 2019 at the direction of its deceased owner’s wishes outlined in her last will and testament. To ensure something similar doesn’t happen in New Jersey, bill sponsors introduced bicameral legislation, A 5691 and S 4060, prohibiting enforcement of any provision in an individual’s will directing a healthy pet to be euthanized and buried with an owner.

It is notable that Virginia Cemetery code 54.1-2310 forbids pets to be buried with humans in commercial cemeteries; however there are exceptions for private and family owned cemeteries. At least one Virginia state lawmaker is reportedly considering legislation to close the loopholes to end the practice altogether in that state.

One Health Task Force

In recognition that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the shared environment, several federal agencies—the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, the Environmental Protection Agency—partner together to maintain or reduce health risks to animals, humans, the environment and society.

New Jersey legislators in August introduced bicameral legislation, A 5734 and S 4003, to ensure a collaborative effort also occurs in that state. The legislation would establish the "New Jersey One Health Task Force" within the Department of Health. The Task Force, which would include two veterinarians, would be charged with developing a strategic plan to promote inter-disciplinary communication and collaboration between veterinarians, physicians, and other scientific professionals and State agencies, with the goal of promoting the health and well-being of New Jersey residents, animals, and the environment.