

Somervell County Texas and Michael R. Jones DVM
Appointment as Local Rabies Control Authority
Recommendations

1. Somervell County Commissioners Court appoints Michael R. Jones, DVM, dba Glen Rose Veterinary Clinic to serve as the Local Rabies Control Authority under Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 826 (Rabies)
2. Remuneration for this position will be \$200 per month payable monthly or quarterly with an effective beginning date of May 10, 2017.
3. Length of appointment will be indefinite.
4. Appointment can be discontinued by either party with 30 days notice.
5. Duties and obligations of the Local Rabies Control Authority are outlined in Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 826 (Rabies)
6. Non-payment of rabies quarantine fees by owners shall be paid by the county at the rate of \$288 per quarantine.
7. Non-payment of rabies submission fees by owners or at county request shall be at the rate of \$150 per submission.
8. Reports to the Judge or Commissioners Court will be presented on request.



5/2/17

Michael R. Jones DVM
1404 NE Big Bend Trail
Glen Rose, Texas 76043
254-897-4339 Office
254-396-0884 Cell

Assignment of the Local Rabies Control Authority

Reference:

Texas Health and Safety Code

Title 10 Health and Safety of Animals

Chapter 826 Rabies

Subchapter A. General Provisions

Commissioners and Judge

Thank you for considering me for this position. I was the Rabies Control Authority during my terms in the military for four years. I was the Rabies Control Authority for Glen Rose when I had a shelter contract with the City and County many years ago. I am very familiar with the state statutes regarding rabies vaccinations, submissions, and quarantines.

This Texas statute guides the county in its obligations in the establishment of the Local Rabies Control Authority (LCRA) and the obligations of that position. The state statute is a solid document and does not need to be re-worded to continue its implementation at the county level. It is currently in force without the county acknowledging it. It can be superseded if the county becomes more strict regarding any aspect of the law. Somervell County does not have local county ordinances dealing with stray animals or vaccinations. Texas law regarding rabies is sufficient for our needs.

Sec 826.017 (a). The commissioners court of each county ... shall designate an officer to act as the local rabies control authority for the purposes of this chapter.

(b) Except as restricted by department rule, the officer designated as the local rabies control authority may be the county health officer, municipal health officer, animal control officer, peace officer, or any entity that the commissioners court or governing body considers appropriate.

Quarantine fees are assessed to the owner of the animal. The difficult part of this is the unwillingness or supposed inability of an owner to pay the quarantine fee. The veterinarian may bring suit to collect those fees, but in general they are collected up front to avoid a suit situation.

Expected fee is \$288.

1. \$53 Exam fee on the first day, daily observation, and exam on exit.
2. \$200 for quarantine (10 days secured boarding at \$20 per day, and it always goes over at least one weekend).
3. \$20 flea control administered on presentation
4. \$15 Rabies Vaccination
5. Other minimal medical charges may occur but depend on the case

Having the Sheriff's office deliver a dog/owner to the quarantine facility is good, but often as not there will not be any money unless the owner is responsible and brought a means to pay with them.

Section 826.022 Vaccination Criminal Penalty. A person commits an offense if the person fails to have each dog or cat owned by the person vaccinated against rabies (by several statutes or local ordinances).

This is a class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine not to exceed \$500.

My recommendation regarding payment is straightforward. Have the veterinarian charge and collect from the owner for the above expected fee. If the owner cannot or refuses to pay, then the above fee should be paid by the county. I do not expect this to happen often, but if it is, it is far easier for the county to immediately charge the owner with a class C misdemeanor with a threat of a \$500 penalty and a record to get them to pay their bill. With an owner payment, a generous court could drop the Class C misdemeanor charge. If the quarantine facility cannot expect payment from either the owner or the county, then this becomes a very expensive service to provide for free and will warrant discontinuing service. If the county must use the \$500 penalty, then it will cover the quarantine expense.

Rabies submission of heads.

Heads of suspected animals can be sent to Austin for diagnosis of rabies. The head is shipped overnight (bus/UPS/Fedex). While the state does not charge for this procedure, the preparation and shipping costs are substantial (\$150). This includes the disposal fee of the remains of the specimen.

- 1) If an "unowned" animal bites a person, it needs to be euthanized and sent off.
- 2) If an "unowned" animal bites a dog, it is not a requirement to be sent off. Recommended certainly, but cost would be borne by the owner of the dog.
- 3) If an animal under quarantine starts showing signs of rabies, it needs to be euthanized and sent off.
- 4) The fees associated with this should be paid by the owner, or the individual concerned with the risk of catching rabies. If the animal is owned, it goes into quarantine.
- 5) Wildlife carry rabies. If someone finds or shoots skunks, raccoons, etc and is just curious if it has rabies, it is NOT going to be submitted for testing. Generally, testing only is recommended if someone or a pet was exposed. This would not be an expense for the county. If the sheriff recovers a dead raccoon off the road and wonders if it had rabies, unless directed by the commissioners court, I would not be submitting it for rabies exam. (Expense involved with no human exposure). If that same sheriff was picking up a dead raccoon and sliced his finger on the raccoon's teeth, then yes the county should have that raccoon submitted.
- 6) I do not expect to submit many heads at all. Having done veterinary medicine in this county for 33 years, we don't submit much.
- 7) If at any time an owner of an animal wants to take their animal to another quarantine facility, it should and will be permitted to avoid a conflict of interest. Our facility has been inspected by the state as a quarantine location years ago, but the state permits veterinary clinics to quarantine without a state inspection.

Michael R. Jones, DVM

Action Recommendations:
Attached.