



APDT POSITION STATEMENT ON LICENSURE OF DOG TRAINERS

Recent allegations of animal abuse against two individuals have spawned proposed legislation on a statewide level in New York and in Hillsborough County, Florida. As with any issue, APDT cautions against reactive legislation, and encourages a careful and in-depth consideration of the pros and cons of imposing a licensing requirement on dog trainers.

In order to allow full and fair consideration of the necessity and pros and cons of licensing, APDT strongly recommends that states or localities establish a study group or work group that will elicit public comment and input from professionals and stakeholders and public comments prior to adopting legislation that would require dog trainers to be licensed.

Some of the benefits to requiring dog trainers to be licensed include:

- Imposing standards for dog training that will protect public, consumers and animals
- Identifying trainers for the public
- Identifying disqualifying conditions for trainers, which should include convictions for animal related offenses

Some of the cons of requiring dog trainers to be licensed include:

- Licensing may give dog owners the impression that a particular trainer is competent when that may not be the case
- Inadvertently detracting from the need to zealously prosecute abuse or neglect, or other animal related offenses
- Added expense to state or locality, trainers, and the public
- Risk that licensing is seen as a revenue resource for the state or locality without achieving the goals of welfare, health and safety
- Allowing easy identification of trainers for improper purposes, including for spamming and blast marketing efforts

If a state or locality carefully weighs these pros and cons and decides that licensing of the dog training profession is appropriate, APDT sees the following as vital components of a successful licensing structure:

- Implementation and oversight by a proper state or local agency with experience in licensing of other professions and trades (for instance, the New York Department of Education, which is the agency that oversees licensing for other professions, rather than the New York Department of Agriculture)
- Ethical standards, including adherence to Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) methods of training
- Minimum education and training to qualify for licensing
- Continuing education and training requirements
- Disciplinary system
- Legal prohibition from practicing dog training without meeting the licensing requirement
- Legal prohibition from eligibility for a license (or revocation of the license if already licensed) for individuals convicted of cruelty, neglect or abuse of humans and/or animals, as well as other animal related offenses including abandonment and animal fighting.
- Protection of the identity of licensees to protect companies and individuals using identity and contact information for improper purposes, such as exemptions from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and similar laws.

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