

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE ABLE TO EXERCISE YOUR RIGHTS TO CHOOSE THE KIND OF HEALTH CARE YOU WANT FOR YOUR ANIMAL?

By Katie Barr

DID YOU KNOW THAT in Florida.....

- The Florida Veterinary Medical Law is so vague that massage, farriery, aromatherapy, light therapy, herbal therapy, nutritional advice and more **could be** considered practicing veterinary medicine.
- Acupuncture, physical therapy and dentistry are considered veterinary medicine in Florida.
- If you are not a vet and not the owner of the animal, and you perform any therapies, render opinions or advice, provide services, or give any remedies or nutritional substances to someone's animal, you may be practicing veterinary medicine, because you may have made a "determination of health" (considered a diagnosis) in order to do so (s. 474.202[9], F.S.).
- If you are hiring anyone to administer therapies or advice to you about your animal that could be construed to be veterinary medicine, not only could you lose their services but also you both may be subject to a third-degree felony (s. 474.213, F.S.).
- The maximum penalty for practicing veterinary medicine without a license in Florida is a third-degree felony, which carries a maximum 5-year prison term and a \$5,000 fine (s. 474.213, 775.082, and 775.083, F.S.).
- Over 140 non-veterinarians have been investigated in the past 10 years for practicing veterinary medicine without a license and they include equine dentists, animal communicators, equine massage therapists, and energy workers.

WHAT IF YOUR VET:

- Told you he/she couldn't do anything else for your animal?
- Does not provide the services you want for your animal?

WHAT COULD YOU DO?

Legally you could either a) educate yourself to perform the services you want, b) hire a service provider at your own risk, or c) do nothing!

Wouldn't you like to know that you could choose the person and the advice or treatment that you felt was best for your animal? Unless the law changes in Florida, you are legally deprived the right to choose.

Following are Florida definitions:

The practice of veterinary medicine is diagnosing the medical condition of animals and prescribing, dispensing, or administering drugs, medicine, appliances, applications, or treatment of whatever nature for the prevention, cure, or relief of a wound, fracture, bodily injury, or disease thereof; performing any manual procedure for the diagnosis of or treatment for pregnancy or fertility or infertility of animals; or representing oneself by the use of titles or words, or undertaking, offering, or holding oneself out, as performing any of these functions. The term includes the **determination** of the health, fitness, or soundness of an animal. s. 474.202(9), F.S.

(There is not a definition of “determination of health” or “diagnosing” in the veterinary law. Webster’s Dictionary defines “diagnosing” as “the act or process of identifying or determining the nature of a disease through examination.”)

Veterinary Medicine includes, with respect to animals, surgery, acupuncture, obstetrics, dentistry, physical therapy, radiology, theriogenology, **and other branches or specialties of veterinary medicine.** s. 474.202(13), F.S.

What can we do?

- Tell your veterinarian you think the law should be changed;
- Tell your legislator you think the law should be changed;
- Join the Florida Alliance for Animal Owners Rights (FAAOR)

The Florida Alliance for Animal Owners Rights (FAAOR) was formed in July 2003 for the purpose of getting clarification and changes of law to grant owners the right to choose. Specifically:

FAAOR is seeking to:

- Allow knowledgeable individuals who are not veterinarians to provide certain healthcare services for your animals;
- Promote wellness for animals;
- Encourage well-rounded veterinary practices that offer more choices in the care of animals;
- Legally recognize a talented group of animal caregivers who can offer health care that may or may not be available from a veterinarian;
- Give you the right to choose all the providers who care for your animal and the type of care received;
- Put all the tools for healing in your tool kit so you can mix and match for the best possible healthcare for your animal;
- Promote more healthcare options for your animal;
- Educate animal owners on the restrictions of the law;
- Promote communication between animal healthcare providers and veterinarians;
- Open the door for educational opportunities in animal health care; and
- Bring about change for the health and welfare of all our animals.

For more information about FAAOR contact info@faaor.org