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As for new news at the Board, our Enforcement division has been active, with their second undercover operation involving the unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine. This case was worked in conjunction with the Hidalgo County Constable's Office. The Constable's office arrested Hugo Alberto Flores for the unlicensed practice of veterinary medicine following information found in the McAllen Craigslist. We appreciate all of the help the local constable's office provided in resolving this matter. Enforcement also hired a new investigator, Jackie Tennison. He is from Clyde, Texas and has a Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture Education and a Master's in Education from Tarleton State University. He retired from the education field as the Superintendent of Schools for the Cross Plains Independent School District in 2009.

WORKING IN A NON-PROFIT OR MUNICIPAL SETTING

Reminder to veterinarians: when you are working in a non-profit or municipal setting, the Veterinary Licensing Act and the Board's Rules of Professional Conduct still apply to the same extent they do in all other practice settings.

Recent complaints have revealed a common misconception among veterinarians that the Board's Rules—covering everything from supervision to rabies vaccinations and certifications to the standard of care—do not apply when a veterinarian is working for a non-profit or a municipality rather than for a veterinarian-owned clinic. This is false.

A veterinarian who works in a non-profit or municipal setting, even if only temporarily, is just as responsible for supervising non-licensed employees and volunteers that are practicing veterinary medicine as he or she would be in his or her own clinic. Board Rule §573.71 provides that veterinarians working for non-profit or municipal corporations are liable for any violations of the Veterinary Licensing Act or the Board's rules that occur there as a result of the practice of veterinary medicine, including violations that occur due to the acts or omissions of non-licensed employees or volunteers of the non-profit or municipal corporation.

Rule §573.51, regarding rabies vaccination and certification by non-licensees, still apply in non-profit and municipal practice settings. Non-licensees may only administer rabies vaccines under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. Only the vaccinating veterinarian can issue a rabies certificate, with the exception that a non-licensee may use the veterinarian's signature stamp and license number on a rabies certificate if they are under the direct supervision of the vaccinating veterinarian. If the non-profit or municipality staff is issuing the certificates, the licensed veterinarian still has the obligation to directly supervise the staff, and to ensure that the certificates have all of the information required by law.

Moreover, offering veterinary services at a discount, or even for free, does not excuse a veterinarian from meeting the standard of care. Veterinarians working for non-profits and municipalities, or in temporarily clinics offering discounted rates, still must provide treatment that meets the standard of care for their community under Board Rule §573.22.

The Board appreciates the work and service that veterinarians provide to non-profit organizations and municipalities; without such work, many more animals would suffer and go without needed services. But regardless of the altruistic motive of the veterinarian, the Board's rules still apply in all practice settings.