

SUBJECT: Requiring a microchip scan of animals in the custody of an animal shelter

COMMITTEE: County Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Coleman, Stucky, Anderson, Cason, Longoria, Lopez, Spiller, Stephenson, J. Turner

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Cathy Gleason, Farmers to Felons; Stacy Sutton Kerby, Texas Humane Legislation Network; Katie Jarl, Texas Pets Alive; *(Registered, but did not testify:* Daniel Collins, El Paso County; Thamara Narvaez, Harris County Commissioners Court; Brian Hawthorne, Sheriffs Association of Texas; Julie Wheeler, Travis County Commissioners Court; Hilary Shurtleff; Jason Vaughn)

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 604 would require any animal shelter or releasing agency, including an animal rescue organization, to scan any animal placed in its custody for a microchip as soon as practicable.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 604 would help reunite families with their pets, protect property rights, and create significant savings for shelters and rescue organizations by legally requiring a common best practice of animal shelters.

Many Texans have invested in microchip technology to assist in locating their lost or stolen pets and assume that any shelter or rescue organization that finds a pet will scan it for a chip. Unfortunately, not all shelters do so. Since state law seals animal adoption records, owners whose pets are adopted out have no further recourse for recovery. HB 604 would help prevent the situation of a pet being adopted out or even euthanized before its owner was able to claim it by requiring the prompt scan of the animal for an identifying microchip.

While some have expressed concern that the bill will impose extra costs on smaller shelters that do not already have a scanner, purchasing a scanner will ultimately save shelters money by reducing the number of animals being housed for extended periods. Additionally, multiple private organizations are available to help cover the costs of purchasing scanners for shelters and organizations that do not already have them.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 604 would impose a financial burden on some animal shelters. Scanning a pet for a microchip is a best practice, but many smaller shelters do not already have a scanner. A better approach would be to start a program that provides scanners to these shelters before legally requiring microchip scanning.