



## For Immediate Release

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January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025; Ellis County Joint Office Reports

News Provided by:  
Ellis County Commissioners' Court  
Ellis County Sheriff's Office

### **“SPCA of Texas Terminates Sheltering Services to Ellis County”**

**Summary:** The SPCA of Texas has given Ellis County notice that it will exercise the termination clause in its contract with Ellis County.

**Ellis County, TX:** On January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the SPCA of Texas sent a letter notifying the Ellis County Sheriff's Office and the Ellis County Commissioners' Court of their desire to terminate their contract to provide services to Ellis County. The letter specifies their facility, located at 2570 FM Road 878, Waxahachie, TX 75165 with an effective cancellation date of April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

The SPCA of Texas began assumed services to Ellis County around June 2020. The contracted services that the SPCA provided to Ellis County were integral to the county's overall animal control plan.

After consulting with concerned parties in Ellis County, the Commissioners' Court voted to rescind the county's current animal control order, which a previous court penned on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1996. At that time, the county's population was 94,013. The order has been revised over the years to align with Texas state law. Today, the population of Ellis County is estimated by the North Central Texas Council of Governments to be 235,910. This population growth has seen an associated increase in domesticated animals, specifically homeless or at-large canines.

At the time of this writing, Ellis County animal control officers are bringing in, on average, five (5) canines to the shelter daily. Other than the contractual sheltering services provided to the unincorporated areas of Ellis County, the shelter also accepted animals from Alma, Bardwell, Ennis, Ferris, Garrett, Italy, Maypearl, Milford, Palmer, Pecan Hill, and Venus. The number of animals received by the shelter has always been of concern to the SPCA of Texas because the number of animals received continually exceeded their capacity. This overcrowding phenomenon was due to language contained in the county ordinance and the SPCA of Texas' euthanasia policy. However, this problem is not unique to Ellis County.

To reduce the number of animals brought to the shelter, Ellis County animal control officers work every day to find new and innovative ways to find the animal's home (e.g. utilizing scanners in the field to determine if the animal has been chipped), using social media as a force-multiplier to increase awareness of an animal, etc. However, animal control officers could not be as successful as they have been without the many Ellis County residents who have championed the needs of homeless animals. Many of these citizens stepped in to fill the gaps when they saw the need. This cooperative mindset will ultimately allow the Commissioners' Court to adopt a workable order allowing the Sheriff's Office animal control officers to provide the service that Ellis County citizens and animals deserve.

Although a county's commissioners' court can adopt an order to regulate or vaccinate animals within its jurisdiction, this order is in addition to Texas state laws. Until the language of the new Ellis County animal control order is determined, the Sheriff's Office will continue to investigate violations of and enforce Texas state laws. These laws include, but are not limited to:

- The Treatment of Animals (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 821): Chapter 821 governs the treatment of all living nonhuman creatures and authorizes certain county officials to seize an animal that is being “cruelly treated.”
- Dogs that Attack or Are Dangerous to Persons (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 822, Subchapters A & D): Subchapter A of Chapter 822 governs the seizure and disposition of a vicious dog that causes death or a serious bodily injury to a human.
- Unlawful Restraint (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 821, Subchapter E65): Subchapter E of Chapter 821 provides criminal penalties for unlawful dog restraint.
- Rabies Control (Health & Safety Code, Chapter 826): The “Rabies Control Act of 1981” establishes the minimum standards for the control of rabies and requires the periodic vaccination of dogs and cats against the disease.
- Rabies Control (Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 169): Chapter 169 of the Texas Administrative Code establishes rabies control and eradication measures, including quarantine and testing methods.

The Ellis County Commissioners’ Court and Sheriff’s Office appreciate the public’s understanding of this unfortunate series of events. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Sgt. Brad Elliott at 972-825-4957 or [animalcontrol@elliscounty.texas.gov](mailto:animalcontrol@elliscounty.texas.gov).

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