

# Pets fill emotional needs, serve as friends, prof says

## Owner-animal relationship little understood

By Sondra McCarty  
Reporter

Until recent years, the emotional attachment pet owners feel toward their animals has been neither appreciated nor understood. But every year, Americans spend \$9 billion on their pets, an A&M professor says, so animals obviously fulfill some need.

Dr. William McCulloch, professor of veterinary public health and director of the A&M Center for Comparative Medicine, says the closeness people have for animals is a result of the alienated society they live in.

"To many people, a pet as a companion is like a child," McCulloch says. "There is a nurturing feeling in us, and we want to feel responsible (for a living thing)."

"We see a need for companionship, and in many ways the pet is unique on its own for companionship."

He says the needs vary from person to person, but are primarily intimacy, companionship and loyalty.

Patty Arreola, humane educator at the Brazos Valley Animal Shelter,

says pets are always positive. She says pets give unconditional love and are always there to cheer up and comfort, regardless of the owner.

Not only do pets give joy as companions, they also cause sorrow when they die.

"It is OK to cry over a lost companion animal," Arreola says. "Grief

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is a natural thing to feel."

McCulloch believes a major role of a veterinarian is to alleviate guilt feelings pet owners have at a time of loss.

Marc Rosenberg, a veterinarian in

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, outlines a four-stage grieving process in his pamphlet, "Companion Animal Loss and Pet Owner Grief":

The pet owner denies the situation.

The pet owner gets angry at himself and sometimes at the veterinarian.

The owner suffers grief.

The owner resolves the loss.

However, coping with feelings of loss and sorrow can be minimized by the veterinarian.

Dr. Neil Van Stavern, a local veterinarian, says a professional should show true concern for pet-owners' feelings when they lose an animal, and that pet owners should be educated on euthanasia — putting an animal to sleep.

"We do not need to allow the animal to suffer," Van Stavern says. "Society does not know what euthanasia is. They need to know it isn't painful and it isn't a bad thing."

## Loan program goes unused, officials say

ABILENE (AP) — A program created 15 months ago to help young farmers buy their own land has not yet given a loan, officials say.

State Rep. L.P. "Pete" Patterson, a co-sponsor of the program, said the Texas Land Commission's Farm and Ranch Program is designed to attract youth into an aging agriculture community and encourage them to stay with it during hard times.

The program allows the Veterans Land Board to loan up to \$100,000 to a farmer or rancher whose net worth is less than \$250,000.

The program has yet to make a loan.

Patterson said he is confident the program will eventually begin giving loans.

The program ran into problems last year when officials learned the federal tax reform law prohibited using tax-free bonds to finance loans to people who wanted to buy land from family members.

At least 40 percent of the more than 230 requests for the land loans in the last six months have involved sales between family members, such as a son or daughter wanting to buy from parents, he said.

## Bullock's proposal for state includes new services tax

AUSTIN (AP) — State Comptroller Bob Bullock released a plan Thursday that would cut the state sales tax rate while making Texans pay the tax on many services as well as goods.

Bullock also called for changes in the state's business franchise tax system.

"Restructuring the state's major taxes will assure tax equity and fairness and junk an outmoded tax system," he said.

Any changes in Texas' tax laws would require legislative approval.

The state sales tax is now 5.25 percent, a temporary rate set last year by lawmakers in response to the state's fiscal crisis. The sales tax is scheduled to roll back to 4.12 percent in September, but Gov. Bill Clements and many legislative leaders say the 5.25 percent rate should be made permanent.

Under the Bullock plan, the sales tax would be set at 4.5 percent and be extended to services such as fees for lawyers, architects and other professionals. Bullock also called for continuing the 15-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax, which is scheduled to be rolled back to 10 cents per gallon in September.

Overall, Bullock said, his plan adds up to a \$3.3 billion biennial revenue increase for the state. Continuing the temporary tax increases now

in effect would mean about \$2.9 billion.

Bullock said his plan meets Clements' no-new-taxes stand because it is "virtually revenue neutral."

The Bullock plan would not solve the projected \$5.8 billion deficit the comptroller has said the state faces. But Tony Proffitt, Bullock's spokesman, said the tax plan provides a "new and better base that should grow with the economy," as opposed to the current plan, which depends heavily on oil and gas revenue.

Bullock's proposed revisions in the 80-year-old business franchise tax is aimed at encouraging new investment by corporations through a formula he said would lower taxes. The tax is paid by businesses and is based on a rate of \$5.25 for each \$1,000 in capital the corporation holds in Texas.

The comptroller said the current tax, because it is based on capital investment, does not collect fair revenue from lightly capitalized companies. It also discourages investment in the state by taxing it, according to Bullock.

He said his plan would remove 90,000 small corporations from the tax rolls by basing tax collections on the ratio between a firm's capital and receipts. The lower the ratio, the less tax the firm would pay.

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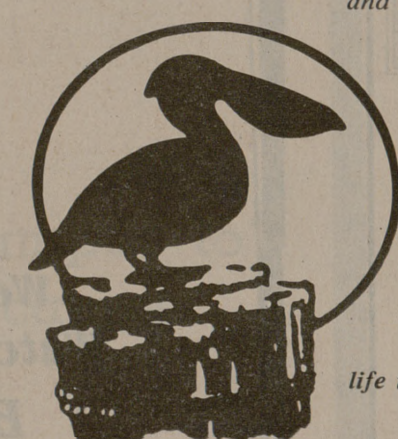
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