

Animal shelter, veterinary association encourage responsible pet ownership

The Brazos Animal Shelter, the Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association and *The Battalion* are combining their efforts to promote responsible pet ownership. Their goal is to promote knowledgeable pet care, kindness, public health and civic responsibilities by publishing weekly articles, which will help A&M students and faculty become more informed pet owners.

However, with this pleasure goes a tremendous amount of responsibility. It is this aspect of the bond that should be carefully thought about before you become a pet owner.

Nothing is quite as irresistible as that cute little ball of fur called a puppy or kitten. They are so cute, in fact, that impulse or spur-of-the-moment buying is most common.

Then comes the reality. The enjoyment of the physical and behavioral cuteness is still there, but the reality of the responsibility begins.

The puppy is not completely house-trained yet, so there are messes on the floor to clean up. The furniture is no longer safe from puppy teeth or kitty claws. Litterboxes must be changed.

The youngsters need fresh water all the time and good quality food two to three times a day. Many pets need occasional to daily brushing to maintain a healthy haircoat. Obedience lessons teach the pet to obey.

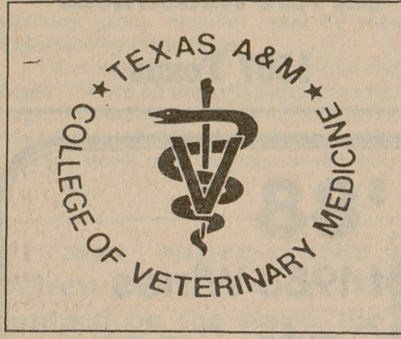
Then there is the routine health care such as proper vaccinations, worming, surgical ovariohysterectomies ("spays") or castrations, and parasite control.

Responsible pet ownership involves sharing. In return for health care and a home, the pet gives unconditional love, companionship and loyalty.

But often there is a sad part to the story. Americans think of most things as disposable. Soft drink cans are thrown away. Clothes change with fads. Television sets are replaced when they stop working.

Puppies and kittens grow up and lose their cuteness, so often they are dumped out along the roadside to "fend for themselves" or surrendered to the animal shelter to "go to another home." The sad fact is that most domesticated animals cannot fend for themselves and die of starvation or a car accident — most that are surrendered to a shelter never leave.

Euthanasia is a humane death for the animal, but it is a terrible result of the



thoughtlessness of a pet owner who does not want to continue to accept responsibility. For a few minor sacrifices of some time and money, the pet owner can have many years of a truly unique interaction — the mutual respect between two different species. The responsibility for a pet's life and well-being is nothing compared to the benefits received.

Brazos Animal Shelter

Pet ownership brings great rewards such as a warm greeting in the morning, unquestioning devotion even when times are bad, laughter and companionship. These are but a few of the factors considered as part of the human/animal bond.

Hearing begins for consultant in tax theft case

HOUSTON (AP) — A Harris County grand jury began hearing testimony on a Fort Worth-area property tax consultant who officials say skimmed \$90 million from the county's tax rolls for a national drug store chain over the last two years.

Officials said Tuesday they plan to adjust the assessments for Walgreen's Drug Stores, the first step in collecting about \$2 million in taxes owed to the county and other local governments.

"We know of potentially six or seven unrelated tax agents," said Eric Hagstette, an assistant Harris County district attorney. "Each of them may have a number of clients."

A former employee of the Fort Worth-area firm, which represents property owners before the appraisal districts in Houston and elsewhere, told authorities that the consulting firm was understating the values of its clients' inventories of business equipment.

Hagstette, appraisal district Deputy Chief Appraiser Jim Robinson and a Walgreen's spokesman all said Walgreen's did not know that the tax consultants were shaving values from the drug store chain's tax assessment.

"It is under-reporting of inventory, it is that simple," Hagstette said. "They under-reported the original costs, which lowered current value and resulted in a lower tax assessment."

In addition to taxes on real estate and improvements, businesses are required to pay taxes on the value of their inventory and other property. The businesses are required to submit annual statements to the appraisal district concerning the value of the property.

Hagstette said a grand jury heard testimony from appraisal district officials Tuesday, and five employees of the tax consulting firm have been subpoenaed to testify Thursday.

Hagstette said the Walgreen's case could be the tip of an iceberg that may have deprived local governments

across Texas of tens of millions of dollars in revenues from business per-

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sonal property taxes. In 1987, Walgreen's Harris County assessed values will be increased from \$40.3 million to \$82.8 million. For 1988, the value will be increased from \$40.8 million to \$87.8 million, Robinson said.

Some businesses may have known about the tax agents' methods, Hagstette said. "But we don't feel there was any guilty knowledge on (Walgreen's) behalf. We're not saying they looked the other way. They simply didn't look."

"They have cooperated down the line even with the knowledge they are going to be hit with some back taxes," he said.

Thomas Mammoser, director of corporate communications in Walgreen's Chicago headquarters, said the company is cooperating fully with the Harris County district attorney and the grand jury.

The tax agents sign up clients by telling them they are paying too much in taxes and agree to handle it for a share of the money saved in lower taxes, usually 50 percent, Hagstette said.

The investigation, which has been under way for about a year, is expected to continue for several months, but Hagstette said he may soon ask the grand jury to return as many as a dozen indictments.

Naturalization service fines family for employing alien

HARLINGEN (AP) — A family that was caught employing an undocumented alien as a live-in maid will be fined for violating the immigration reform law, officials said Wednesday.

Immigration and Naturalization Service investigators on Oct. 13 visited the residence in the Lower Rio Grande Valley city of San Benito after receiving a telephone tip on the "Employer Sanctions Hotline," said Virginia Kice, a spokeswoman for the INS' Harlingen District at the southern tip of the state.

"This family conceded that they were in violation of the law, and agreed to pay the fine," said Kice, adding that hiring undocumented maids from Mexico is a long-standing, common practice along the border.

INS officials on Tuesday mailed the notice of intent to levy the violators \$350 in fines, including \$250 for hiring the illegal maid and \$100 for not having a

completed Employment Eligibility Verification Form, known as Form I-9, for her.

"If members of Congress had wanted to exclude domestic workers from this law, they would have written the legislation differently."

— Patrick B. Dale

It is the minimum fine possible under the law, which provides for penalties in the thousands of dollars.

The 24-year-old maid, who was earning \$40 per week and had lived with the family since July, was returned to Mexico on "voluntary departure," Kice said.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which provides amnesty for certain illegal aliens, also makes it illegal

to hire people not authorized to work in the United States and does not differentiate between the commercial sector and

domestic workers, such as maids and those performing yard work.

Anyone employing someone regularly is required under the immigration law to ensure that the employee is authorized to work in the United States, and must have them complete an I-9 Form if they were hired after Nov. 6, 1986.

"The only time an individual is freed from the responsibility of filling out an I-

9 on a domestic worker is if that worker only works on a sporadic or irregular basis," Kice said. "If they live in your home, or if they come in every week, or every other week on a prescribed schedule, you need to have an I-9 on that individual."

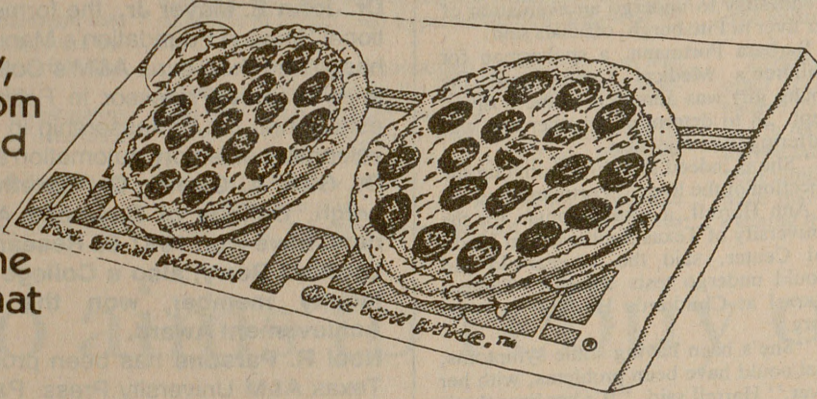
If a person does not have the documents needed to complete the form, the employer violates the law by hiring that individual.

While this was the first employer sanctions case in the Valley involving an undocumented maid, INS officials predicted there will be others.

"If members of Congress had wanted to exclude domestic workers from this law, they would have written the legislation differently," said INS Supervisory Special Agent Patrick B. Dale. "As it stands, maids do fall under the law and we intend to enforce it."

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