

Sponsor Statement for HB 372

Practice Of Veterinary Medicine

An Act amending the definition of 'practice of veterinary medicine.'

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Contact: Representative Scott Ogan's office at (907) 465-3878

It took many years for the practice of human medicine to recognize the value of alternative medicine, and the significant amount of healing that it can provide to human beings suffering from a variety of illnesses and ailments.

This increased acceptance has had the additional benefit of encouraging patients' rights to choose from among various therapies. Whether a person believes alternative medical therapy works to actually heal a medical condition, or merely has a placebo effect encouraging them to believe they are getting better, the bottom line is that the patient gets to choose the type of treatment they want as an autonomous human being.

This same opportunity, however, does not extend to an individual's pets or farm animals, for which they are largely responsible under state law, which considers a persons' animals as personal property. State law now prescribes a single model of medical care to animals, and, except for limited treatments administered by the owner only, limits to licensed veterinarians the right to provide all medical treatment to animals.

House Bill 372 is an effort to allow an individual the same "choice of treatment" to the human owner of an animal under state law as is now afforded to that owner. The bill would grant people the right to offer alternative medical therapies to their animals, provided if desired by alternative therapists. It goes without saying that treatment should be performed with the least amount of stress to the animal and that the animal is still protected against cruelty by Alaska Statute 11.61.140.