

**Testimony**  
**LB 25**  
Legislative Agriculture Committee  
January 16, 2007

Exh 1  
LB25  
Introducer

Good afternoon Senator Erdman and members of the committee. My name is Larry Williams. I am a veterinarian, retired, and residing at 7534 Sherman Street, Lincoln Nebraska. I am currently chair of the Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association's Legislative Committee and it's in their behalf that I am offering the following testimony today. Unfortunately, I am not able to be present at the time designated for the hearing; therefore, I am providing the following written testimony by email.

We appreciate Senator Langemeier introducing this Bill. I was in practice over 20 years ago and vaccination of hybrid animals was an issue then, and continues to be today. Although, LB25 does not enter into ethical principles or rational for keeping hybrid canines or hybrid felines as pets, it does set a much needed health standard for such animals, if they are kept in environments where they may have contact with humans.

The NVMA offers testimony in a neutral position today. Although, the NVMA supports what we believe to be the intent of LB25, we have a concern with the definition of hybrid animal. We believe the definition is too broad and could be interpreted to mean any animal that is not a dog or household cat. Such an interpretation would include domestic livestock and would not be acceptable to the NVMA. Therefore, the NVMA requests the definition be clarified. In its current form the NVMA can not fully support LB25.

The Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association (NVMA) is in concurrence with the National Association of State public Health Veterinarians' National Compendium of Animal Rabies and is in agreement with the American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) policy on vaccination of hybrid animals. Both documents are attached to this testimony.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on LB25.

Respectfully submitted,  
Larry L. Williams, D.V.M.  
Chair NVMA Legislative Committee

## Attachments

### **Compendium of Animal Rabies**

Prevention and Control, 2005

#### **WILDLIFE AND HYBRID ANIMAL VACCINATION:**

The safety and efficacy of parenteral rabies vaccination of wildlife and hybrids (ie, the offspring of wild animals crossbred to domestic animals) have not been established, and no rabies vaccines are licensed for these animals. Parenteral vaccination (trap-vaccinate-release) of wildlife rabies reservoirs may be integrated into coordinated oral rabies vaccination programs as described in Part I.C.1. to enhance their effectiveness. Zoos or research institutions may establish vaccination programs, which attempt to protect valuable animals, but these should not replace appropriate public health activities that protect humans.

#### **AVMA Position Statements**

As part of a 5-year review directive, numerous policies were reviewed and discussed by the Council. Listed below are the policies reviewed by the Council and retained without changes. The policies recommended for rescission or amendments are listed at the end of this report along with the report of Executive Board decisions. Canine Hybrids—The Council reviewed and retained the following policy:

##### **Canine Hybrids**

The AVMA recognizes that: a) wild canines crossbred with domestic animals (canine hybrids) are often maintained in captivity as companion animals, for breeding purposes, for research activities, and for exhibition; b) depending on the management and disposition of canine hybrids, they may constitute a significant hazard to human health, other animal species, the environment, or themselves; and c) there is much controversy with regard to the amount of genetic diversity between some wild and domestic canines and the suitability of canine hybrids as companion animals.

The AVMA strongly opposes keeping as pets any hybrids of wild canines crossbred with domestic animals. The AVMA believes that all commercial traffic in these animals for such purposes should be prohibited. Persons who own or are contemplating owning canine hybrids should be aware of the following:

1. Laws in their state or community that may prohibit canine hybrids or require a permit for their presence.
2. The existence of strong evidence from experts in animal behavior, animal control, animal welfare, and public health that canine hybrids can exhibit unpredictable behavior and pose a significant threat of severe attacks on humans.
3. Public health officials may require euthanasia of canine hybrids after they bite a person or are exposed to rabid animals, regardless of their rabies vaccine status, because presently there is no rabies vaccine licensed for canine hybrids and little scientific data on the pathogenesis of rabies in these animals.
4. The need for special housing, including secure fencing to prevent escape and to prevent direct contact with humans and other animals.
5. Owners or keepers of canine hybrids may be at increased risk for liability.

6. The importance of establishing a good relationship with a veterinarian who has some knowledge of canine hybrids and is willing to provide appropriate health care through treatment and preventive medicine.

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### Position statements

#### Position on Canine Hybrids

(Approved by the AVMA Executive Board November 1995; CPHRVM reviewed October 2003)

The AVMA recognizes that: a) wild canines crossbred with domestic animals (canine hybrids) are often maintained in captivity as companion animals, for breeding purposes, for research activities, and for exhibition; b) depending on the management and disposition of canine hybrids, they may constitute a significant hazard to human health, other animal species, the environment, or themselves; and c) there is much controversy with regard to the amount of genetic diversity between some wild and domestic canines and the suitability of canine hybrids as companion animals.

The AVMA strongly opposes keeping as pets any hybrids of wild canines crossbred with domestic animals. The AVMA believes that all commercial traffic in these animals for such purposes should be prohibited.

Persons who own or are contemplating owning canine hybrids should be aware of the following:

1. Laws in their state or community that may prohibit canine hybrids or require a permit for their presence.
2. The existence of strong evidence from experts in animal behavior, animal control, animal welfare, and public health that canine hybrids can exhibit unpredictable behavior and pose a significant threat of severe attacks on humans.
3. Public health officials may require euthanasia of canine hybrids after they bite a person or are exposed to a rabid animal; regardless of their rabies vaccine status, because presently there is no rabies vaccine licensed for canine hybrids and little scientific data on the pathogenesis of rabies in these animals.
4. The need for special housing, including secure fencing to prevent escape and to prevent direct contact with humans and other animals.
5. Owners or keepers of canine hybrids may be at increased risk for liability.
6. The importance of establishing a good relationship with a veterinarian who has some knowledge of canine hybrids and is willing to provide appropriate health care through treatment and preventive medicine.

Veterinarians should be aware of all of the above so that they can appropriately counsel their clients. In addition, each veterinarian should clarify the position of his or her liability insurance carrier to determine if protection will be available if the veterinarian accepts canine hybrids as patients.

Recognizing that some states allow canine hybrids to be owned, the AVMA encourages the development and licensure of drugs and biologicals that can be used on such animals.

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