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## **Ag Secretary Reminds Dog Owners of Licensing Responsibilities During 'Love Your Dog Month'**

**Lancaster, PA** – Today, Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding recognized Love Your Dog Month in Pennsylvania, reminding dog owners that a dog license is key to the safety and security of their dogs, their families and their communities. Sec. Redding was joined by Rachael Eshleman and her dog Riley, who were victims of a dog attack in 2018, and others whose work and lives intersect daily with the department's work to enforce Pennsylvania's dog law.

"Rachael Eshleman and Riley should never have been attacked," Secretary Redding said. "The work of our dog wardens helps ensure that no one else suffers from the terrifying injuries caused by an irresponsible dog owner and a dangerous dog.

"The most important responsibility is to license your dog. That ensures that they won't end up in a shelter if they get lost, but it also ensures that dog wardens will continue to protect our communities and the animals we all love."

Licenses are available through country treasurers' offices, and many counties offer licenses through sub-agents like veterinarian offices or online. The fee for an annual dog license is \$6.50, or \$8.50 if the animal is not spayed or neutered. Lifetime licenses are available for dogs that have permanent identification like a microchip or tattoo. Older adults and persons with disabilities may be eligible for discounts.

Pennsylvania law requires a current license for all dogs at least three months old, but according to estimates from the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement, fewer than half of all dogs in the commonwealth are licensed, although rates vary by county. Owners who fail to license their dogs could face a fine of up to \$300 for each unlicensed dog.

Lancaster County Treasurer Amber Martin, whose office issues dog licenses to county residents, and Pennsylvania SPCA Director of Law Enforcement and Shelter Services Nicole Wilson, who receives animal cruelty referrals from dog wardens, were among speakers touting the importance of the work funded by dog license purchases. Senator Scott Martin, Representative Mike Sturla and others joined them to remind Pennsylvanians that the best way to love your dog is to license your dog.

“Through the collaboration and partnership with the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement, we are continuing to rescue animals from cruelty and neglect and bring their abusers to justice,” said the Pennsylvania SPCA’s Nicole Wilson. “Dog Law does such important work to ensure the safety of the dogs in our state, and our communities, and through our relationship they are also making an impact on animals who are victims of abuse.”

Revenue provided by the sale of licenses help the department’s Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement protect Pennsylvanians and their pets. Fees pay for inspecting licensed kennels, investigating complaints of illegal kennels and kennel conditions, state veterinarian visits to kennels, monitoring dangerous dogs, returning stray dogs to their owners, compensating shelters to care for stray dogs, and compensating farmers for attacks on livestock.

While licensing fees have not increased in 24 years, bureau personnel and operating costs have increased 112%. Increasing fees would require legislation. Senate Bill 663, sponsored by Senator Judy Schwank and House Bill 1504, sponsored by Representative Eddie Day Pashinski are pending in the legislature, and would ensure that the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement can continue to protect both dogs and the public.

“We have made far-reaching changes to operate more effectively and efficiently. We have kept positions vacant and postponed critical IT upgrades. We have worked with counties to increase license sales,” Sec. Redding said. “But we still have a major uphill battle when it comes to adequate funding.”

A fee increase would benefit county treasurers, shelter owners, and communities that are made safer by the dog wardens’ work.

To find your county treasurer, dog warden, and a database of shelter and kennel inspections, visit [licenseyourdogpa.pa.gov](http://licenseyourdogpa.pa.gov) or call the Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement at 717-787-3062.

Find [Governor Wolf’s proclamation of February as Love Your Dog Month here](#).

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