

To: Chair Rachel Talbot Ross and the Committee On Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

From: Kathy Hoppe, Central Aroostook Kennel Club Vice President

Date: March 8, 2025

Re: LD 528 An Act to Address the Rise in Rabies in Animals by Appointing Certified Rabies Vaccine Administrators

Request: Support with amendments to include certified rabies vaccinators also be required to be certified microchip administrators.

I ask that the Committee consider increasing access to both **microchipping** and **rabies** vaccination opportunities in Maine by requiring any “person appointed by commissioner to vaccinate animals” also be certified to microchip. They need be qualified to do **BOTH**.

Last year the Federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) released new regulations for people crossing the U.S. border with their dog. These regulations applied to resident dogs traveling with their owners for the day to visit family or obtain veterinary care or for vacations. They required not only that the dog be microchipped but that the dog be microchipped PRIOR to the rabies vaccination. The CDC was unwilling to accept rabies certificate unless the dog was microchipped prior to vaccination. This resulted in many legally vaccinated dogs unable to reenter the US because they weren’t microchipped. Simply getting microchipped was not enough. They need to be microchipped and then revaccinated, not because of a health risk but because the CDC required the microchip prior to vaccination in order to recognize the dog as vaccinated to reenter or enter the U.S.

This has had a huge impact on dog owners, dogs and veterinarians alike. We have a shortage of veterinarians in Maine, they don’t have the time to ‘waste’ on revaccinating and microchipping healthy dogs. Their time is better spent on caring for animals truly in need of medical care.

Dog owners have the added expense of an office visit, microchipping and an unnecessary rabies vaccination. The CDC has temporarily suspended their requirements till April 2025, the clock is running down before the requirement may once again be the law.

Because the CDC has now linked microchipping and rabies, it is disingenuous to offer a rabies clinic without offering microchipping. To offer to vaccinate for rabies and not offer to microchip prior to vaccinating, is setting dog owners up for frustration and added expenses should they wish to cross the border. Maine, with its long border with Canada and connected communities and economy, traveling with the family pet across the border is common. (One border patrol officer told me that over 50% of the vehicles that come across have a dog). To ensure opportunity to comply with the CDC laws, rabies clinics need easy access to the ability to microchip dogs at the same time.

Currently it is impossible to offer a combination of rabies-microchip clinic. I am not talking theoretically this actually happened in the fall of 2024. The Federation of Maine Dog Clubs, Central Aroostook Kennel Club and the Can-Am International Dog Sled race attempted to coordinate a rabies-microchip clinic in Aroostook County during the fall of 2024, only to be thwarted by the law preventing veterinarians from

conducting a rabies-microchip clinic. We attempted to identify qualified persons to microchip and a vet to administer the rabies but were completely unsuccessful even with the help of Maine's Animal Control program. The current system fails to offer a path to compliance with State and Federal Laws. By adding microchipping certification to this bill, allowing a person to do both microchipping and rabies vaccinations, we can open the door to better compliance with no undue risks.

Therefore, I ask that you consider adding the requirement that any persons "appointed by commissioner to vaccinate animals" also be required to be certified to microchip. We need 'certified rabies vaccinator' to also be microchip administrators.