

IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Proposed Tax Increase on Rabies Vaccination

House Bill 315 was recently introduced in the Illinois House of Representatives by Representative Daniel Burke (D-Chicago). The bill creates the Illinois Public Health and Safety Animal Population Control Act. It requires the Department of Public Health to develop and administer a program of reimbursements to veterinarians for the sterilization and rabies vaccination of dogs and cats of low-income owners and feral cat colony caretakers. The program would be funded through a voluntary individual income tax checkoff and a \$3 fee on each rabies vaccination required by the Animal Control Act. [Click here to see the entire bill text.](#)

The ISVMA is opposed to House Bill 315. We need every ISVMA member veterinarian to contact their state representative and state senator to explain our opposition. Please contact the legislators that represent the district you live in and the district where your veterinary practice is located. [Click here to find out who your legislators are and how to contact them.](#)

STATEMENT OF ISVMA POSITION

Illinois veterinarians are committed to efforts to reduce the number of unwanted and abandoned animals in Illinois and to advance the well-being of animals and the public. All across the state, veterinarians participate in existing programs to provide low-cost spays/neuters, promote animal adoption, and encourage responsible pet ownership that includes appropriate vaccination, preventative health maintenance.

House Bill 315 has a laudable goal of trying to reduce the number of unwanted animals in the State and Illinois veterinarians support this goal. However, ISVMA has very serious concerns about how the proponents attempt to achieve the objective:

1. House Bill 315 increases the tax on rabies vaccinations \$3 per year, placing an unfair tax burden on responsible pet owners who properly vaccinate their animals. This additional tax on rabies vaccinations is a further disincentive for people to vaccinate pets against a dangerous and deadly disease. In many cases, the existing taxes imposed by local and county governments already exceed the cost of the vaccine.
2. During the past year, Illinois experienced a significant increase in the diagnosis of bat rabies. Skunk rabies was recently diagnosed in two domestic animals in north-central Illinois (a cow and a horse). Raccoon rabies is also rapidly spreading west toward Illinois. Illinois veterinarians and public health officials are concerned about the convergence of these three separate strains of rabies in Illinois at a time when rabies vaccination compliance in the state is less than 50%. Any government program that relies upon funds generated by an increase in the

tax on rabies vaccination is dangerous public policy.

3. Any program aimed at reducing the stray population in Illinois must include a public relations campaign to educate pet owners about the benefits of spay / neuter because lack of education is the greatest barrier to population control. The ISVMA supports alternate funding proposals that would equitably generate funds to provide responsible pet ownership education and promote effective population control programs.

Please call your legislators to relate the ISVMA position on House Bill 315. Once you have made your call, please e-mail or fax ISVMA to let us know which legislators you spoke to and what, if anything, you learned from your conversation that will assist us in our effort to find a more appropriate solution to pet overpopulation.

E-mail ISVMA at info@isvma.org or fax contact information to (217) 523-7981.

What Do Your Clients Think?

Would the responsible pet owners that bring their animals into your practice support an additional state tax on the rabies vaccine? If you think they might have a position on the issue, ISVMA had prepared a notice that you may choose to post in your lobby.

Click here to download a copy of the notice in [Word](#) or [Adobe Acrobat](#)

About the Photo in This Issue...

The white-collared seedeater (*Sporophila torqueola*), is a very small, black and white finch about 4 inches in total length. Although the White-collared Seedeater was once fairly common in southern Texas, it has become increasingly rare in recent decades. The species has a distribution from western Panama to the Rio Grande valley of Texas (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). *Sporophila torqueola sharpei* occurs from the Rio Grande of Texas, south along the coastal plain of northeastern Mexico to northern Veracruz, and west to eastern Nuevo Leon and San Luis Potosi (American Ornithologists' Union 1957).

A highly variable species, its plumages appear quite different in different parts of its range. Breeding males in Texas are olive-brown above, unstreaked and buffy below; the head is blackish with a white crescent below eye; it has an incomplete buffy collar on hindneck; the wings are dark with two white wing bars and it has a white patch at base of flight feathers. Female and immatures are paler and buffier overall, lack the cap and collar; and the wing bars are buffy.

I photographed this male White-collared Seedeater in San Ygnacio, Texas in January 2005.



Contact Us

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