

From the Texas Department of State Health Services:

During the 2007 session, legislature passed SB 1562, which entailed the creation of Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 829, Animal Control Officer Training. Under this law, an animal control officer (ACO) is defined as a person (not including peace officers) who is employed, appointed, or otherwise engaged primarily to enforce laws relating to animal control.

Training requirements set forth in Chapter 829 include the satisfactory completion of an ACO basic training course, plus completion of continuing education. The law provides that, within a year of employment as an ACO, a person must satisfactorily complete an ACO basic training course; additionally, the person must complete 30 hours of continuing education during each 3-year period following the date the person completes the basic course. The law also states that an ACO who completed a basic training course before June 30, 2008, must complete 30 hours of continuing education during each 3-year period following June 30, 2008. Please note that these are requirements set forth in Chapter 829, not by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

As stated in Chapter 829, basic and continuing education courses must be approved by the DSHS; only courses approved by DSHS can count toward Chapter 829 training requirements. If an ACO plans to apply attendance at courses toward their Chapter 829 requirements, they should check with course sponsors prior to registering to verify if courses have been officially approved by the DSHS.

In the fashion of many professions, the DSHS will be ensuring training compliance through random audits. Therefore, ACOs need to remember that they are responsible for not only meeting Chapter 829 training requirements, but also for maintaining their records of this training. The ACOs should keep a folder of their training at their facility or their employers should keep a folder at the facility for each ACO documenting each individual's training; these folders should be ready to present to inspectors at any time upon request. Inspectors include for-hire veterinarians who are inspecting facilities and DSHS staff who are inspecting a facility or are visiting a facility. Documentation of satisfactory completion of an ACO basic training course is through a certificate of satisfactory completion furnished by the course sponsor. Similarly, certificates of attendance from course sponsors provide proof of completing continuing education training.

For facilities required to be inspected under Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 823.003 and/or Section 826.052, plus Texas Administrative Code Section 169.28, the inspector will check the appropriate box on the inspection form (Form Z-3) if the facility is in compliance with training requirements set forth in Chapter 829. This checked inspection form will then serve as the facility's certificate of compliance with Chapter 829 (Section 829.007).