



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 23, 2022

Ms. LaNetra S. Lary
Assistant County Attorney
Fort Bend County
401 Jackson Street, 3rd Floor
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2022-29440

Dear Ms. Lary:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 974203 (ORR# 0851).

The Fort Bend County Animal Services Department (the "county") received a request for records related to a specified incident. The county states it is releasing some of the requested information. The county claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the county claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This exception encompasses information protected by section 801.353 of the Occupations Code, which provides, in relevant part, the following:

- (a) A veterinarian may not violate the confidential relationship between the veterinarian and the veterinarian's client.
- (b) A veterinarian may not be required to release information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal, except on the veterinarian's receipt of:
 - (1) a written authorization or other form of waiver executed by the client; or
 - (2) an appropriate court order or subpoena.

Occ. Code § 801.353(a), (b). Section 801.353 limits a veterinarian's release of information concerning the veterinarian's care of an animal to certain circumstances. *See id.* The county informs us the submitted information consists of veterinary records that were provided to the county. The county informs us it has not obtained permission from the owner or caretaker of the animal whose records are at issue to release the animal's records. *See id.* § 801.351(a)(1) (defining "client" as "owner or other caretaker of the animal"). Further, the county states the requestor has not produced an appropriate court order or subpoena to release the information at issue. Based on these arguments and our review, we conclude the submitted information consists of veterinary record information that is subject to chapter 801 of the Occupations Code. Accordingly, the county must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 801.353 of the Occupations Code.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/mo

Ref: ID# 974203

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)