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June 25, 2012

Re: Veterinary Support - SB 1221: A Bill Prohibiting Hounding of Bears and Bobcats

Dear California Assembly Member,

As licensed California veterinarians, we join with the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) in supporting SB 1221, a bill that would prohibit the use of hounds to pursue bears and bobcats in California.

As veterinarians, we strongly agree with the central premise of this bill—that ‘hounding’ should be banned because it is inhumane and unsportsmanlike. It is one of the most egregious methods of hunting. Houndsmen typically use packs of dogs to pursue their prey. A bear or bobcat may escape to a tree and is then shot down and viciously attacked by the dog pack. Bears and bobcats may be the targets, but packs of dogs can act unpredictably. Hounds often chase and kill *other* wildlife, as well as farm animals and pets.

Not only are we disturbed by the inhumane treatment of the hounded bears and bobcats; we are equally concerned about the dogs themselves. Bears, even while injured, can inflict serious defensive wounds on, or kill, attacking hounds. Because these dogs are typically treated as investments, rather than beloved companion animals, injured ones may receive inadequate—if any—veterinary medical care. If deemed substandard performers, injured hunting dogs may be abandoned. They may also run off, get lost during the chase, and become wandering strays.

Hounding dogs are frequent victims of neglect. They may be kenneled or tied outdoors for their entire lives, without much attention or exercise, between hunts. Animal shelters, particularly in rural areas, can become overburdened with abandoned hounds. Many of them enter shelters in poor condition, emaciated and parasitized by fleas, ticks and heartworms. Medically and financially, these dogs are more challenging for shelters to re-home.

SB 1221 is a common-sense measure that will ensure bears and bobcats in California are treated humanely, while providing a modicum

of protection for the dogs used to pursue them. We ask for your support of this important animal welfare legislation.

Signed by the following California veterinarians,

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Veterinary Signatures in Support of SB 1221 (continued)

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