

Animal License Program Restructuring

Information Document

During the 2013 legislative session, state lawmakers implemented changes to the companion animal licensing programs that were historically managed by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM).

The Governor signed Act 30, *An Act Related to the Sale, Transfer, or Importation of Pets*, on May 14, 2013. Passage of the Act 30 language into law resulted in a restructuring of some of the pet merchant licensing program. Please review the following information:

- 1. Retail and wholesale pet shops are required to license with VAAFAM.** Although the Pet Merchant licensing category has been eliminated, Act 30 requires that pet shops license with VAAFAM. Act 30 defines a “Pet Shop” as a place of retail or wholesale business, including a flea market, that is not part of a private dwelling, where cats, dogs, wolf-hybrids, rabbits, rodents, birds, fish, reptiles, or other vertebrates are maintained or displayed for the purpose of sale or exchange to the general public. Businesses that sell horses or livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, swine, and domestic fowl, are exempt from the pet shop licensing requirement. The Pet Shop license period is from April 1 to March 31 of each year, and the annual license fee is \$150.00.
- 2. Feed and agricultural supply stores that seasonally offer baby and/or adult rabbits for sale to consumers must obtain a pet shop license from VAAFAM.** The Pet Shop license period is from April 1 to March 31 of each year, and the annual license fee is \$150.00.
- 3. Some hobby pet breeders are required to obtain a pet dealer permit from their municipality.** Hobby pet breeders are no longer required to license with VAAFAM as Pet Merchants, but Act 30 mandates that hobby breeders who meet the Pet Dealer definition obtain a Dealer Permit from their town of residence. Act 30 defines a “Pet Dealer” as any person who sells or exchanges, or who offers to sell or exchange, cats, dogs, or wolf-hybrids, or any combination thereof, from three or more litters from cats, dogs, or wolf-hybrids in any 12-month period. Pet shops, animal shelters and rescue organizations are exempt from the Pet Dealer Permit requirement. Pet Dealers must apply to the municipal clerk of the town or city in which the cats, dogs, or wolf-hybrids are kept for a Pet Dealer Permit. The annual permit fee is \$25.00.
- 4. Rescue organizations are required to register with VAAFAM.** Act 30 does not change the requirement for rescue organizations to register with VAAFAM. “Rescue Organization” means any organization that accepts more than five dogs, cats or wolf-hybrids in a calendar year for the purpose of finding adoptive homes for the animals. Rescue organizations are required to be recognized and approved as a nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The “Rescue Organization” registration period is from April 1 to March 31 of each year, and there is no charge for the registration certificate. Any entity that is operating as a rescue

organization in Vermont that does not have nonprofit recognition/approval must either license as a Pet Shop or cease transacting business in Vermont until nonprofit approval is obtained.