



1240 Airport Park Blvd. • Ukiah, CA 95482

January 30, 2009

As veterinarians serving the greater Ukiah area and as community leaders in the care of animals, we support the growing awareness of the importance of the human-animal bond in our daily lives. As our society has begun to recognize the intrinsic value of animals as companions, we have seen the positive effects of improved care and more humane treatment that results. However, there is still much work to be done before all members of our community recognize the level of care and responsibility required by the animals they bring into our homes.

We support changing the word "owner" to "guardian" or "guardian and/or owner" in ordinances that relate to dogs and cats as a significant step toward meeting that goal. We understand the meaning of the word "guardian" would be clearly defined in the revised code, as it has been in the many other communities across the United States and Canada where this change has been adopted. We also understand that, with that definition in place, the laws and their application would remain essentially unchanged.

By changing the language to include vocabulary that better reflects the role so many of us play in caring for companion animals, a subtle yet significant message can be offered in support of a more compassionate and respectful view of animals for all members of our community. Seeing ourselves as guardians creates a perceptual shift away from viewing animals as disposable property. We believe this bolsters the efforts of our local humane and rescue organizations, Animal Care and Control, veterinarians and educators in our community as they continue to deliver their important messages about responsible care of animals.

Sincerely,

Katy Sommers, DVM, CVA

Sara Rice, VMD

Lauren La Rue, DVM, professional dog breeder

Jim Plumb, DVM

Charlotte Burns, DVM, CVA

Frank Merritt, DVM

Kerry Levin, DVM, CVA