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Dear Governor Blanco, Dr. Lea, and Dr. Littlefield:

I respectfully request the continuation of Executive Order KBB 2005-35, which allows licensed veterinarians from other states to temporarily practice in Louisiana. Although this order was extended one month under KBB 2005-43, its October 25 termination means incoming veterinarians risk jail time and fines.

In essence, the Louisiana Governor, under advisement from the Assistant State Veterinarian, has told relief workers to go home. The state's unrealistic grasp of the animal crisis overlooks thousands of companion animals still fending for themselves in the aftermath of Katrina and Rita.

Some burrow under broken homes or linger in debris-filled yards. Starving dogs roam in packs in St. Bernard Parish, a hard hit area with no functional animal control system.

New Orleans' existing stray population now includes displaced pets, many unsterilized and set to yield even more homeless puppies and kittens. One study shows a dog and her young can produce 67,000 puppies in six years. A cat and her litter can create 420,000 kittens in seven years.

The beleaguered LA SPCA, head of animal control in Orleans Parish, simply doesn't possess the people power or accommodations to feed, trap, and shelter this many animals.

With guardian requests to save lost animals still pouring in, a ban on *any* out-of-state animal relief workers is an affront to hurricane victims as well as animals.

In early November, rescuers discovered two dead cats alongside empty food and water bowls. A third died alone on a barren porch. These animals survived hurricane and flood only to succumb to starvation. There are many more like them, some huddled under structures slated for demolition. Local animal control agencies cannot manage this emergency situation alone.

Rather than turn down outside aid, please embrace out-of-state rescue organizations and veterinarians willing to devote their time and skills to Louisiana's animals. Let's work toward a common goal: Saving animals and reuniting them with their families.

Thank you,

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **State of Louisiana blocks animal rescue while thousands of pets face starvation in New Orleans**

**Bogalusa, Louisiana, November 8, 2005**—Two animal rescue groups are issuing a call for the state of Louisiana to stop blocking attempts to save the thousands of sick, injured, and traumatized dogs and cats who still wander the streets of New Orleans.

The state has announced that the Hurricane Katrina rescue phase is over. Out-of-state veterinarians are banned from volunteering their services on behalf of the animals of greater New Orleans. Rescuers have been threatened with arrest if they attempt to give food and water to animals in Orleans Parish. Outside rescue groups are told they should turn all operations over to local authorities and leave the state.

Meanwhile, the pets who survived Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath are dying on the streets—sometimes right next to food and water bowls that the handful of remaining rescuers couldn't fill in time.

AnimalRescueNewOrleans.com and Alley Cat Allies (<http://www.alleycat.org/>) are calling for the state to reverse its course and accept outside help in the form of veterinarians and more volunteers.

"We are literally seeing animals on the streets starving to death," says Jane Garrison, director of AnimalRescueNewOrleans.com, one of a handful of rescue organizations still in the city. "We need more volunteers to feed and water the thousands of traumatized animals still on the streets, we need to keep trapping animals so we can reunite them with their guardians, and we need a massive spay/neuter program."

Garrison coordinated the animal rescue program for six weeks as a volunteer for the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Since HSUS pulled out October 1st, she has been running her own program. With a steadily dwindling force of volunteers, Garrison races against time trying to provide food and water at more than 2,000 sites in the New Orleans area, as well as fielding a constant stream of owner rescue requests.

"Many of these animals are people's companions who escaped their homes when doors and windows blew open. It would be completely unethical to allow them to die on the streets," she says. The state claims that local authorities can handle the problem, but rescuers on the ground know this is not the case. One of the hardest hit areas, St. Bernard Parish, has no active animal control agency or functioning animal shelter. The Louisiana SPCA, in charge of animal control in Orleans Parish, does not have anywhere close to the staff, space, or resources required to address a problem of this magnitude.

As bad as the situation is now, in a few months it will be even worse. Despite the horrific conditions, the dogs and cats on the streets are still breeding, and rescuers are starting to see puppies and kittens born after Katrina. Statistics show that one unspayed female cat and her offspring can produce more than 59,000 cats in five years.

"If the state government doesn't allow us to feed, treat, and find homes for the thousands of animals struggling to survive now, it is in for a rude awakening the beginning of next year," says Becky Robinson, national director of Alley Cat Allies (ACA). "The number of free-roaming cats and dogs will be devastating."

ACA, a national cat advocacy group now running a cat rescue operation from a base in Bogalusa, Louisiana, has plans for an immediate, large-scale spay/neuter program for the street cats of New Orleans. This program requires the services of about a dozen veterinarians experienced with high-