

*Paula Kislak, DVM  
2260 Ortega Ranch Road  
Santa Barbara, CA 93108-2267  
Telephone: (805) 565-7789  
Fax: (805) 565-7790*

November 11, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

I was recently made aware of the guardian campaign from both a client (who supports it) and my local veterinary association (which hesitates to do so). This difference of opinion is a symbolic microcosm of our society regarding this issue: while the public generally supports greater respect for animals as beings with inherent interests, the veterinary profession as a whole resists recognizing the intrinsic value of animals as companions, not mere property, commodities or things. In this sense, the veterinary profession's present position unfortunately reflects the least enlightened segment of society.

This is not altogether surprising, given that our veterinary schools consumptively and insensitively utilize animals as mere training tools for students without regard for their interests or well-being. In addition, there is widespread concern within the field that the guardian campaign's aims may threaten veterinarians' professional interests. However, speaking as a veterinarian, I strongly believe that we can best serve our clients, patients and profession by taking a leadership role that advances a deeper understanding of the value of animals in people's lives. The guardian campaign is a brilliant tool by which to achieve this goal because the art of language, and vocabulary specifically, has powerful implications for shaping perception and crafting public policy.

Numerous research studies in the fields of mental and physical health show that our bond with companion animals enhances the longevity and quality of life far in excess of any material possession. Moreover, cultural and forensic research demonstrates that violence toward non-human animals is a common harbinger of crimes against people. In raising the bar for better care and treatment of companion animals by promoting respect for all life, the guardian campaign also strengthens the delicate fabric of society.

I therefore strongly urge you to support the guardian campaign by amending your community's ordinances to reflect a more compassionate view of animals as companions and people as their guardians. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,



Paula Kislak, DVM