



Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

Richard F. Cortez
County Judge

David L. Fuentes
Commissioner, Precinct 1

Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu
Commissioner, Precinct 2

Everardo "Ever" Villarreal
Commissioner, Precinct 3

Ellie Torres
Commissioner, Precinct 4

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Approach of February's Responsible Pet Owners Month serves as reminder of new state law protecting dogs

EDINBURG – The Hidalgo County Commissioners Court this week proclaimed February Responsible Pet Owners month, an apt time to remind local pet owners of a new state law governing dogs that are kept outdoors.

Called the Safe Outdoor Dogs Bill, the law replaces and strengthens existing law governing how dogs may be restrained while outdoors. The new law creates a criminal offense for dog owners who chain or use other restraints on their pets that unreasonably limits the animal's movements between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The law also prohibits the following:

- Leaving a dog outside and restrained unattended without shelter, water, and shade to protect from direct sunlight as well as prevent from exposure to the dog's waste.
- Using chains or weights to restrain the dog
- Is shorter in length than the greater of 10 feet or five times the length of the dog.
- Is attached to an improperly fitted collar or harness.

There are exceptions to these provisions such as restraining animals in public camping or recreational areas, hunting or field training, certain types of herding or shepherding work and certain types of agricultural work.

"The intent of this law was to strengthen a 15-year-old law that many found unenforceable," Cortez said. "I urge dog owners in Hidalgo County to responsibly accommodate the needs of their pets knowing how hot and how cold it can get in the Rio Grande Valley."

The bill specifically allows owners to walk their dogs using restraints. Violation of this law is a Class C misdemeanor.

"Unfortunately, too often our deputies come across situations in which dogs are chained outdoors and surviving extreme conditions," said Hidalgo County Sheriff Eddie Guerra. "My intent is to enforce this new law for the good of the pets."

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Hidalgo County is home to one of the fastest growing regions in the nation. We provide health and justice to the over 800,000 residents of our county. We strive to be accessible and responsive to our citizens by providing excellent public service through the values of leadership, transparency, fairness, collaboration, respect and fiscal responsibility. Follow our social media feed at www.co.hidalgo.tx.us/followus