



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 29, 2015

Ms. Claudene Marshall
Assistant General Counsel
System Office of General Counsel
The Texas A&M University System
301 Tarrow Street, 6th Floor
College Station, Texas 77840-7896

OR2015-22716

Dear Ms. Marshall:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 585124 (TAMU 15-681).

Texas A&M University (the "university") received a request for information pertaining to the care and treatment of a specified dog and any protocols for any project to which the dog at issue was assigned during a specified time period. You claim the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.¹

Initially, you assert some of the requested information was the subject of a previous ruling by this office, which was issued as Open Records Letter No. 2015-12015 (2015). In that ruling, the university had received multiple requests for information pertaining to several different dogs. Although you state one of those requests for information encompasses some

¹We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

of the presently-requested information, we find the current requestor has requested information pertaining to a different dog than those that were at issue in Open Records Letter No. 2015-12015; thus, the university may not rely on Open Records Letter No. 2015-12015 as a previous determination in this instance. *See* Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (so long as law, facts, and circumstances on which prior ruling was based have not changed, first type of previous determination exists where requested information is precisely same information as was addressed in prior attorney general ruling, ruling is addressed to same governmental body, and ruling concludes that information is or is not excepted from disclosure). However, we will address your arguments against disclosure of the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code exempts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses information protected by other statutes, such as section 801.353 of the Occupations Code. This section provides in part the following:

(a) A veterinarian may not violate the confidential relationship between the veterinarian and the veterinarian’s client.

(b) A veterinarian may not be required to release information concerning the veterinarian’s care of an animal, except on the veterinarian’s receipt of:

(1) a written authorization or other form of waiver executed by the client; or

(2) an appropriate court order or subpoena.

Occ. Code § 801.353(a), (b). Section 801.353 limits a veterinarian’s release of information concerning the veterinarian’s care of an animal to certain circumstances. *See id.* You state the submitted information consists of veterinary records that relate to “standard and incidental health care” of animals by veterinarians of the university. We understand the university does not consent to the release of this information. *See id.* § 801.351(a)(1) (defining “client” as “owner or other caretaker of the animal”). We also understand the requestor has not produced an appropriate court order or subpoena to release the information at issue. Based on your arguments and our review, we conclude this information consists of veterinary records that are subject to chapter 801 of the Occupations Code. Accordingly, the university may only release the submitted information in accordance with section 801.353 of the Occupations Code.²

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 585124

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)