

## **TAMPA LAWYER JENNIFER A. DIETZ OPENS PRACTICE FOCUSING ON ANIMAL LAW**

*Founding Member, Chair of the Florida Bar's Animal Law Committee finds niche practice ideal for her litigation experience and the emerging area of animal law*

**TAMPA, Florida – August 30, 2007** - Jennifer A. Dietz, founding member and Chair of the Animal Law Committee of The Florida Bar, has opened a practice focusing on Animal Law throughout Florida. She can be contacted by phone at (813) 789-8029 or by mail at 3225 South MacDill Ave., Suite 129-297, Tampa, Florida 33629.



Jennifer A. Dietz

Dietz, who is currently handling over 40 animal law cases throughout Florida, said starting her own practice combines her personal interest in animal law and welfare with her expertise in litigation. She recently successfully defended three high profile dog bite cases in Sarasota and St. Petersburg on behalf of the dog owners, one involving a German shepherd named “Zeus” where she successfully argued that the state statute requiring “Zeus” to be destroyed is unconstitutional.

The University of Florida law school graduate began her legal career as an insurance defense litigator. She spent fifteen years in court litigating cases ranging from asbestos exposure to wrongful death caused by a falling wall. Dietz is a former civil litigator for Kemper Insurance Company, Liberty Mutual Insurance Company, and the Office of the State Attorney General where she was hand-selected by Former Attorney General Robert Butterworth to handle civil litigation matters on behalf of the State of Florida and its agencies.

Dietz’s animal law practice includes cases of individuals whose animals have suffered or died due to veterinary malpractice, poisonous pet food or medicines, and mishandling by animal care professionals such as groomers and animal trainers. Dietz’s practice also prepares Pet Trusts, fights to save dogs slated for destruction by counties, provides assistance to individuals with service animals, litigates pet custody disputes, and represents individuals whose pets have suffered injuries or death as a result of defective products such as bark collars or chewable bones. The firm also defends veterinarians in disciplinary hearings when there is no evidence of any wrong-doing on the part of the veterinarian.

Dietz, 43, is a charter member of The Florida Bar's Animal Law Committee, and was appointed by the President of The Florida Bar to serve as Chair of the Animal Law Committee of The Florida Bar in 2006-2007. She was re-appointed as Chair by the President of The Florida Bar for 2007-2008. She is a frequent speaker at Bar Association meetings, television talk shows and animal-related organizations around the nation.

For more information, visit [www.jenniferdietz.com](http://www.jenniferdietz.com), contact The Law Office of Jennifer A. Dietz, 3225 South MacDill Ave, Suite 129-297, Tampa, FL 33629, call (813) 789-8029, fax (813) 835-6801, or send email to [jdietz@jenniferdietz.com](mailto:jdietz@jenniferdietz.com).

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## **BACKGROUND ON ANIMAL LAW IN FLORIDA**

According to the Torts and Insurance Practice Section of the American Bar Association, Animal Law is the fastest growing legal discipline in the country.

Florida Attorney Jennifer A. Dietz began organizing the Animal Law Committee of The Florida Bar in 1999, but it was not until 2003 that the Animal Law Committee became official, according to Dietz, the Animal Law Committee's Chair.

Today, the Animal Law Committee is capped by The Florida Bar at 68 attorneys, she said, and Florida ranks third, behind New York and Texas, in the number of attorneys who practice Animal Law. She expects those numbers to rise in the coming years based on interest shown by law schools around the country in offering animal law courses. This year, Dietz is petitioning The Florida Bar to grant the Animal Law Committee "section" status, thereby opening the door for an unlimited number of Florida attorneys to join.

According to Dietz, there are at least 86 animal law courses being taught at law schools nationwide, including Harvard, Yale, the University of California, Lewis and Clark School of Law, the University of Michigan, the University of Oregon, the University of Texas, Florida State, Nova Southeastern, the University of Florida, Stetson School of Law, the University of Miami and Florida Coastal School of Law.

In the last three years, animal-centered litigation appears more routinely on court dockets as pet owners sue to recover damages, to determine custody of their pets, or to seek the release of their pets that are slated for destruction by counties. Prior to the enactment of stricter legislation against animal abuse and cruelty, most people accepted the fate of their pet even when it was the result of the wrong-doing of another. As more civil courts hear cases involving animals, the area of Animal Law is becoming a well-recognized specialty area of the law. While most states still provide that animals are "chattel" or "property," there are some courts which provide damages for the emotional distress suffered by a human owner for the wrongful injury or death of a pet.

Dietz has handled animal law cases throughout Florida, including pet custody issues, landlord/tenant disputes, pet trusts, veterinarian malpractice, tainted animal foods and treats, animal cruelty and animal seizure cases. "The recent pet food contamination scare, which may have killed numerous animals nationwide, is a good example of why animal law is so important," she said.

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