

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

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sHB-6504

AN ACT CONCERNING ANIMAL WELFARE.

As Amended by House "A" (LCO 9152)

House Calendar No.: 326

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 22 \$	FY 23 \$
Department of Agriculture	Animal Population Control - Acceleration of Costs	See Below	See Below
Department of Agriculture	GF - Potential Revenue Gain	Less than 20,000	Less than 20,000

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill makes various changes to animal-related laws.

It extends to animal shelter operators the same requirement that animal importers currently have (that dogs and cats be examined by a veterinarian within 48 hours of the animals entering the state). Currently, violators are subject to a fine of up to \$500 for each animal in violation. The bill instead subjects an animal importer or animal shelter operator to a \$250 fine per animal for a first violation and \$500 fine per animal for subsequent violations.

Additionally, the bill requires animal shelter operators or maintainers to keep records of certain veterinary services for each dog or cat for three years, as current law does for animal importers. The bill subjects an animal importer or animal shelter operator or maintainer

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who violates this provision to a \$250 fine for a first violation and \$500 fine for subsequent violations. These provisions may result in a minimal revenue gain, expected to be less than \$20,000 annually, to the extent violations occur.

Also, the bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) to develop a waiver request process and form for an animal's owner or veterinarian to request a reduction of a rabies quarantine period from six months to four months for animals exposed to rabies. The bill requires DoAg to post the process and form on their website. This is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact as the agency currently has expertise for this purpose.

It increases, from 10% to 20%, the maximum amount of funds that may be expended from the animal population control account, administered by DoAg, that may be used for sterilizing and vaccinating feral cats.¹

These sections update the reimbursement paid to veterinarians participating in the animal population control program up to 75% of the market rate for sterilization and vaccination services, plus \$30, instead of \$20 as under current law. Currently, a veterinarian receives, \$120 for a female dog, \$100 for a male dog, \$70 for a female cat, and \$50 for a male cat, per sterilization, which is expected to be less than market rate in most municipalities.

The increase in reimbursement rate would result in the animal population control account expending funds at a rate faster than it otherwise would under the bill. The current balance in the animal population control account is \$644,517. In 2020, there were 5,946 vouchers were issued under the animal population control program.

¹ DoAg's Animal Population Control Program: (1) provides low-income Connecticut residents discounted sterilization and vaccination options for dogs and cats, and (2) assists registered nonprofit rescue groups with the sterilization and vaccination of feral cats. DoAg uses a separate, nonlapsing APC account for these costs. Revenue is derived from a surcharge on municipal dog licenses, certain animal adoption fees for pounds' unsterilized cats and dogs, and proceeds from commemorative APCP "Caring for Pets" license plates.

The bill requires a veterinarian to establish a veterinarian-client-patient relationship with the animal and the animal's owner which has no impact on the state or municipalities, as it applies to private, third-parties.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes that have no fiscal impact.

House Amendment "A" removes certain provisions about service animals and adds the veterinarian-client-patient and veterinary telemedicine provisions. This has no fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of animals served under the program and the number of violations that occur.