



# 2024 Acts Affecting Animals and Agriculture

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## Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts) significantly affecting animals and agriculture enacted during the 2024 regular legislative session. OLR's other Acts Affecting reports, including Acts Affecting Environment, are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Each summary indicates the public act (PA) number. Not all provisions of the acts are included. The report does not include vetoed acts unless the veto was overridden. Complete summaries of public acts are, or will soon be, available on [OLR's website](#).

Readers are encouraged to obtain the full text of acts that interest them from the Connecticut State Library, House Clerk's Office, or [General Assembly's website](#).

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## **Animals**

### ***Animal Neglect or Cruelty***

By law, if an animal control officer reasonably believes that an animal is being neglected or cruelly treated, the officer may take custody of the animal and petition the court to remove the animal from its owner. The court may order temporary custody to a person or agency, at which point the owner may either relinquish the animal or pay a bond to the custodial person or agency. If the court makes a neglect or cruelty finding within 30 days after the temporary custody order, a portion of the bond must be returned to the original owner. Prior law calculated this at a daily rate of \$25, or \$30 for certain larger animals, for the days less than 30 that the person or agency had temporary custody of the animal, less any veterinary costs and expenses incurred for the animal's welfare. After the court makes its finding, if it does not order the animal euthanized, it may vest ownership to the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner or a municipality and they may publicly auction the animal or vest ownership of it in an individual or a public or private nonprofit animal rescue or adoption organization.

A new law (1) increases, by \$5, the daily rate at which the return of the bonds must be calculated and (2) establishes confidentiality protections for the animal's new owner ([PA 24-108](#), § 27, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Animal Population Control Program***

A new law allows a municipal pound to use a voucher from the Animal Population Control Program to get any dog or cat, rather than only ones with pyometra, sterilized and vaccinated before the animal is purchased or adopted from the pound ([PA 24-69](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

### ***Animals as Prizes or for Solicitations or Business Attractions***

This session, the legislature passed a law that changes existing gaming and solicitation laws regarding the use of animals. The act (1) specifies that bazaars and raffles may not use animals as prizes; (2) prohibits reptiles from being a prize or award for operating any game or device; and (3) specifies that an animal includes a fish for the purposes of certain prohibited solicitations, gaming prizes and awards, and business attractions ([PA 24-142](#), §§ 89 & 90, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Decanting of a Trust for an Animal's Care***

This session, the legislature adopted the Connecticut Uniform Trust Decanting Act. Generally, a trust decanting occurs when a trust's authorized fiduciary, in line with authority granted under the trust, modifies the trust's terms or distributes property from it to another trust. The act allows decanting to be used in an animal trust if it would otherwise be allowed under the act as if the

animals were people and the protector consents in a signed record. A “protector” is someone appointed in the trust, or by the court, to enforce the trust on the animal’s behalf.

In a decanting, if a first trust is an animal trust, the second trust must provide that trust property may be applied only to its intended purpose for the period the first trust benefitted the animal ([PA 24-104](#), § 23, effective January 1, 2025).

### ***Department of Agriculture Licenses***

A new law requires businesses to get separate commercial kennel, grooming facility, and training facility licenses from DoAg by removing current exemptions in the definitions of grooming facility and training facility. It also specifies that a grooming facility, which is a place maintained to groom dogs, includes a vehicle or trailer used for a dog grooming business ([PA 24-69](#), § 1, effective upon passage).

### ***Dog Bite Statute***

This session, the legislature passed a law that generally replaces the prior dog bite statute with provisions that, among other things:

1. establish new procedures for owners, keepers, animal control officers, police officers, and injured people when a dog bites or attacks someone or causes damage to another animal;
2. specify factors an animal control officer must consider in deciding whether to issue an order to restrain or dispose of a biting or attacking dog; and
3. exempt military and service animals if the animal is in the custody and control of the U.S. military or a government agency or a person with a disability, is currently vaccinated for rabies, and is subject to routine veterinary care.

The new factors an animal control officer must consider are (1) the ability of the dog’s owner or keeper, if any, to control the animal; (2) the severity of the injury and viciousness of the bite or attack; (3) any history of past bites or attacks by the dog; (4) the location where the attack occurred; and (5) whether the dog was provoked or protecting its owner or keeper ([PA 24-108](#), § 28, effective October 1, 2024).

### ***Dog Racing Prohibition***

The legislature repealed the statutes authorizing dog tracks and dog racing in Connecticut, but explicitly allows off-track betting operators to conduct betting on out-of-state dog races. There has not been an active dog racetrack in the state since 2006 ([PA 24-1](#), effective October 1, 2024).

## ***Equine Health***

New legislation removes a requirement that the state veterinarian sign a health certificate that a state-licensed veterinarian issues for an equine (e.g., horse) being brought to public auction and defines “Coggins test” as the official test for equine infectious anemia (for which equines being auctioned must test negative by law) ([PA 24-69](#), §§ 4 & 5, effective upon passage).

## ***Injuring, Killing Police Animal or Volunteer Search and Rescue Dog***

A new law requires anyone convicted of intentionally injuring or killing a peace officer’s animal or a volunteer canine search and rescue team’s dog to pay restitution to the animal’s owner. The restitution may include the cost of veterinary services and, if the animal or dog is killed or rendered unable to perform its duties, the costs and expenses of purchasing and training a replacement. The restitution is in addition to the criminal penalties under existing law ([PA 24-65](#), effective October 1, 2024).

## ***Joint Appointment of Municipal Officials***

This session, the legislature authorized regional councils of governments and municipalities acting jointly to make appointments on a municipality’s behalf for municipal functions that are subject to a shared services or regional services agreement. Under the act, these municipal functions include the administrative and regulatory activities under the laws on municipal animal control officers and town clerks issuing dog licenses and tags, among others.

These appointments must apply jointly to each municipality that is a party to the agreement and be instead of the municipality’s individual appointment. Under the act, this authority supersedes state and local law, local charters, and home rule ordinances that would prohibit or limit the ability to make these joint appointments ([PA 24-151](#), § 127, effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Liability for Damage to Person or Property by a Dog***

A new law makes a dog’s owner, keeper, or both liable for any damage a dog causes to a person’s body or property, unless the injured person was trespassing or committing another tort, or was teasing, tormenting, or abusing the dog. Under prior law, either the keeper or the owner is liable. By law, if the dog’s owner or keeper is a minor, his or her parent or guardian is liable for the damage. The new law also makes a dog’s owner, keeper, or both liable if the dog attacks and injures a service animal. By law this includes the cost of veterinary care, rehabilitation or replacement of the injured animal, and reasonable attorney’s fees ([PA 24-108](#), §§ 40 & 41, effective October 1, 2024).

## ***Rabies Vaccinations***

Under a new law, dogs and cats generally must be vaccinated for rabies when they are between 12 and 14 weeks old, or at the age the vaccine manufacturer recommends ([PA 24-69](#), § 8, effective upon passage).

## ***Roaming Dogs or Livestock***

Existing law prohibits owners or keepers of dogs or livestock from allowing their animals to roam at large on another's land or a public highway when not under their control. A violation is an infraction. Under a new law, animal control officers may seek an order enforcing the law, including an injunction, from Superior Court. Additionally, the new law requires land proprietors to install fences sufficient to contain their livestock to prevent them from roaming at large.

The new law also establishes a nine-member task force to study enforcement of the law prohibiting dogs and livestock from roaming at large. The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 24-105](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Service Animals***

This year, the legislature generally broadened the applicability of current protections and provisions related to guide dogs or assistance dogs by replacing references to guide dogs or assistance dogs with a federal definition for "service animals" and extended other provisions to service animals in training as well. The law also broadens the coverage for many of these provisions to include individuals with physical, intellectual, mental, or learning disabilities as defined under state law.

Among other various provisions, it eliminates requirements that (1) service animals wear a harness or an orange-colored leash and (2) service animals in training be identified through tags, tattoos, bandanas, coats, leashes, or collars. Further, it requires the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities to post educational materials on service animals, emotional support animals, and therapy animals ([PA 24-18](#), effective July 1, 2024).

## ***State Dog & State Insect***

A new law designates the Siberian Husky as the state dog and creates a working group to study redesignating the state insect from the praying mantis to an alternative that is native to the state, such as the spring azure butterfly or autumn meadowhawk dragonfly ([PA 24-121](#), §§ 1 & 3, effective October 1, 2024, except that the state insect working group provision is effective upon passage).

## **Agriculture**

### ***Annual Harvest Season***

Under a new law, the agriculture commissioner must study the need to establish an annual harvest season for vehicles transporting agricultural products and report his recommendations to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2025 ([PA 24-100](#), § 4, effective upon passage).

### ***Apiary Inspector***

A new law removes the minimum qualifications to be appointed as an apiary inspector by the state entomologist. Previously, to be appointed, a person had to have at least five years of beekeeping experience or three years of experience as a bee inspector and meet the qualifications of an Agricultural Research Technician II at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station ([PA 24-69](#), § 6, effective upon passage).

### ***Connecticut-Grown for Connecticut Kids Week***

The legislature modified the State Department of Education's (SDE) responsibilities regarding the Connecticut-Grown for Connecticut Kids Week. Among other things, this annual, week-long event promotes Connecticut agriculture and foods to children through school meal and classroom programs, farmers' markets, farms, and other community locations. Prior law required SDE to arrange for interaction between students and farmers, including field trips to farms and in-school presentations by farmers. A new law instead requires SDE to provide technical assistance and support for schools to do this ([PA 24-78](#), § 11, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Eelgrass Working Group and Seagrass Coordinator***

Under a new law, the eelgrass working group convened under Special Act 23-7 must reconvene by January 1, 2025, to review the Long Island Sound Eelgrass Collaborative's work on permitting and eelgrass restoration policies in Connecticut, among other things. The new law also requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to select a Connecticut Seagrass Coordinator in collaboration with both DoAg's Bureau of Aquaculture and UConn ([PA 24-12](#), effective upon passage).

### ***Farming Program Consultation***

A new law eliminates a requirement that the DoAg commissioner consult with the DEEP commissioner before approving a request to remove a development rights restriction from agricultural land preserved under either the Farmland Preservation Program or Community Farm Preservation Program ([PA 24-100](#), §§ 1 & 2, effective upon passage).



## ***Hemp Cultivators and Social Equity Cultivator Applicants***

A new law establishes a nine-member task force to study the effect of allowing certain social equity cultivator applicants to (1) enter into business agreements to cultivate cannabis on a hemp cultivator's lots and facilities outside disproportionately impacted areas and (2) form other business arrangements to facilitate market entry for, and the commercial viability of, their prospective businesses ([PA 24-95](#), effective upon passage).

## ***Hemp Products***

The legislature created two new categories of hemp products: THC-infused beverages and moderate-THC hemp products. For both, the new law requires them to meet many of the same requirements for existing manufacturer hemp products, limits the places that may sell them, and only allows those age 21 and above to buy them.

Additionally, the law, among other things:

1. simplifies the THC thresholds for when a product is considered a high-THC hemp product by imposing a uniform threshold regardless of the product type;
2. specifies out-of-state hemp licensees are eligible for a manufacturer hemp license; and
3. removes certain manufacturer hemp product violations from being Connecticut Unfair Trade Practices Act violations ([PA 24-76](#), §§ 1, 4, 6, 23, 24 & 26-35, various effective dates).

## ***Invasive Plants***

A new law adds seven plants to the list of invasive or potentially invasive plants that are generally banned in the state, regardless of any municipal ordinance: Porcelainberry, mugwort, quackgrass, Japanese angelica tree, Japanese wisteria, Chinese wisteria, and callery pear ([PA 24-11](#), effective October 1, 2024).

## ***Milk Regulation Board***

Under a new law, the governor's eight appointees to the Milk Regulation Board (which is responsible for adopting regulations on the sale and production of milk and milk products) no longer must be confirmed by either General Assembly chamber, allowing them to be seated without legislative review ([PA 24-69](#), § 7, effective upon passage).

## ***Nuisance Classification***

A new law makes the following prima facie evidence that a farming operation constitutes “agriculture” and “farming” for excluding these practices from being deemed a nuisance due to things like odor, noise, or dust:

1. an advisory opinion from the DoAg commissioner stating that land is “farm land” or “open space land” or
2. inspection and approval by the DoAg commissioner or his designee of an agricultural or farming operation, place, establishment, or facility ([PA 24-70](#), §§ 1-3, effective July 1, 2024).

## ***Nutrition Assistance Programs for Children and Families***

This session, the legislature created new state agency responsibilities and reporting requirements to increase access to and enrollment in nutrition programs for children and families, including the (1) federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); (2) federal Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); and (3) Connecticut Farmers’ Market nutrition program for women, infants, and children (CT Farmers’ Market WIC).

Among other things, the act requires (1) the Department of Public Health to create a plan to streamline cross-enrollment of children receiving Medicaid in WIC, SNAP, and CT Farmers’ Market WIC; (2) DoAg to annually develop and distribute to the state’s farmers’ markets educational materials on participating in CT Farmers’ Market WIC; and (3) certain state agencies to jointly develop a plan to create a common application, share data, and increase automatic enrollment in nutrition programs they administer ([PA 24-82](#), most provisions effective upon passage).

## ***Property Tax Exemptions for Farm Machinery and Buildings***

A new law increases the cap on the local option property tax exemption for (1) farm machinery, from \$100,000 to \$250,000 in assessed value, and (2) buildings actively and exclusively used in farming or used as housing for the farmer’s seasonal employees, from \$100,000 to \$500,000. By law, a municipality may adopt these exemptions, by vote of its legislative body, in any amount up to the cap ([PA 24-151](#), § 70, effective upon passage).

## ***Property Tax: PA 490 Program***

A new law makes the following prima facie evidence of land being classified as “farm land” or “open space land” for the state’s PA 490 program and qualifying for the program’s reduced property tax rate:

1. an advisory opinion from the DoAg commissioner stating that land is “farm land” or “open space land” or
2. inspection and approval by the DoAg commissioner or his designee of an agricultural or farming operation, place, establishment, or facility ([PA 24-70](#), §§ 2 & 3, effective July 1, 2024).

### ***Repealed Agriculture Statutes***

The legislature repealed various agriculture-related statutes that did the following:

1. require the DoAg commissioner to establish and administer Connecticut Farm Fresh Market and Connecticut Farm Fresh Restaurant certification programs and make grocery stores’ access to economic development grants contingent on their certification as a farm fresh market (CGS § 22-38b);
2. allow the Seafood Advisory Council to use funds and enter into contracts, both of which it can already do under other statutes (CGS § 22-457); and
3. limit DoAg’s aquaculture industry resource assessment permits to no more than 100 acres of assessed area per permit, require buoys to be placed to identify the area, and require DoAg to notify abutting shellfish ground owners or lease holders about the permit (CGS § 26-237e) ([PA 24-100](#), § 5, effective upon passage).

### ***Soil Amendments With PFAS***

The legislature passed a law regulating the sale and use of certain products containing per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS are a class of man-made chemicals that are resistant to heat, water, and oil. They bioaccumulate (i.e., concentrations increase over time) and do not break down. Among other things, the new law bans using, selling, or offering for sale as a soil amendment any biosolids (i.e., residue from treating domestic sewage) or wastewater sludge that contains PFAS ([PA 24-59](#), effective October 1, 2024).

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