
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6231

AN ACT RESTRICTING THE EUTHANIZATION OF FERAL CATS, PROHIBITING CERTAIN EMPLOYMENT AS AN ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICER AND STUDYING THE INVOLVEMENT OF OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS AT ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITIES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes a number of unrelated changes regarding animal control officers (ACOs), cats, and animal rescue organizations.

First, the bill prohibits a person from being a municipal or regional ACO if he or she is convicted of animal abuse or neglect or enters a no contest plea or plea bargain on such a charge (§ 2). Under existing law, if convicted, a person cannot, for five years (and in addition to any other sentence imposed), (1) harbor, own, possess, reside with, adopt, or serve as a foster placement for any animal or (2) be employed by, or volunteer for, any entity in any position that involves care for, or regular contact with, any animal (CGS § 53-247(f)).

The bill prohibits a municipality or its ACO from euthanizing a feral cat for any reason except for when the cat (1) poses a public health danger or (2) is so injured that a Connecticut-licensed veterinarian decides euthanasia is the only humane action. It requires ACOs to consult an animal rescue organization when trying to control the feral cat population in a municipality, and it revises the allowed subject of municipal ordinances on cat ownership generally (§ 1). It also repeals the law that permits ACOs to impound and dispose of certain cats (§ 4).

Lastly, the bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner to convene a working group to develop legislative recommendations for various things, including shortening the length of time seized animals are kept in custody at the animal control facilities and protocols for using volunteers in the facilities. The commissioner must report recommendations to the Environment Committee by

February 1, 2026 (§ 3).

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except that the provision prohibiting someone convicted of animal abuse or neglect from being an ACO is effective October 1, 2025.

§§ 1 & 4 — LOCAL ACTIONS INVOLVING CATS

Euthanizing Feral Cats

The bill prohibits a municipality or a municipal or regional ACO from euthanizing a feral cat for any reason other than the cat (1) poses a public health danger (e.g., has a communicable disease, including rabies) or (2) is so injured that a Connecticut-licensed veterinarian decides euthanasia is the only humane course of action. By law, a “feral cat” is a free-roaming domestic cat that is not owned.

Animal Rescue Organization Consult About Feral Cats

The bill requires an ACO to consult an animal rescue or feral cat organization when trying to control the feral cat population in a municipality. The consult is to possibly place feral cats with the organization.

Municipal Ordinances on Cats Generally

By law, municipalities may adopt ordinances prohibiting anyone from owning or keeping a cat that (1) substantially damages someone else’s property or (2) causes an unsanitary, dangerous, or unreasonably offensive condition. The bill eliminates the “unreasonably offensive condition” element from the permissible ordinances. By law, a violation of such an ordinance is an infraction.

Repealed Section on Impounding and Disposing of Certain Cats

The bill repeals a current law that, among other things:

1. allows an ACO for a municipality that has adopted an ordinance about cats generally to impound cats that are damaging another’s property or causing an unsanitary, dangerous, or unreasonably offensive condition;
2. requires the ACO to notify the cat’s owner or keeper, if known,

- about its impoundment or publish notice in a local newspaper;
3. makes it an infraction not to collect a cat one owns or keeps after receiving notice that the ACO impounded it;
 4. allows the ACO, if the cat is not claimed by its owner within seven days, to have a veterinarian spay or neuter the cat and sell the cat as a pet; and
 5. requires the ACO to have the cat mercifully killed if it remains unclaimed.

§ 3 — WORKING GROUP

Charge

The bill requires the DoAg commissioner, by July 1, 2025, to convene a seven-member working group within the department to develop legislative recommendations on the following:

1. guidelines and best practices for animal rescue organizations and the public to provide mutual aid to animal control and dog pound facilities,
2. ways to shorten the length of time seized animals are kept in custody at the facilities,
3. ways to improve ACO training through enhanced continuing education requirements, and
4. protocols for using volunteers in animal control facilities.

Membership

The working group consists of the DoAg commissioner and the chief state's attorney, or their designees, and five members the DoAg commissioner appoints, as follows:

1. three representatives of an organization representing ACOs that represent, respectively, urban, suburban, and rural municipalities;

2. a municipal police department representative; and
3. an animal rights organization representative.

Public Forums and Report

The bill requires the (1) working group to hold at least two public forums and (2) commissioner to report the group's recommendations to the Environment Committee by February 1, 2026.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 31 Nay 2 (03/28/2025)