



2026 Acts Affecting Animals and Agriculture

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Notice to Readers

This report provides summaries of new laws (public acts and special acts) significantly affecting animals and agriculture enacted during the 2026 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) or special act (SA) 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 [General Assembly's website](#) or the Connecticut State Library.

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Animals

Animal Population Control Program Working Group

A new law requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) commissioner to create, by July 1, 2026, a working group to study the state's animal population control program, which funds spaying or neutering for dogs and cats. The group must make recommendations about the program, including ways to increase and stabilize its funding, and the commissioner must submit them to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-112](#), § 3, effective upon passage).

Companion Animal Placement Study

This session, the legislature passed a law requiring the DoAg commissioner, in consultation with the Office of Victim Services, to study how the need for companion animal placement affects domestic violence victims and report on the study and recommendations to the Environment Committee by January 1, 2027. The study must (1) include currently available resources for placements; (2) identify at least one contact person for victims who need to place their companion animal in another person's care due to a domestic violence situation; and (3) examine the feasibility of establishing a phone number or other electronic communications line accessible 24 hours a day for victims who need placements for their animals ([PA 26-112](#), § 1, effective October 1, 2026).

Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Compact Repeal

During this session, the legislature repealed a statute creating the Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Compact and therefore removed Connecticut from the defunct Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Commission. This commission has since been replaced by the Connecticut River Migratory Fish Restoration Cooperative, which Connecticut has joined ([PA 26-124](#), §§ 5 & 16, effective upon passage).

Disease Prevention Among Animals

This session, the legislature passed a law that expands the state veterinarian's authority to issue orders for preventing disease spread among animals and poultry by allowing her to issue them for any disease, rather than just for those that are contagious and infectious. It correspondingly allows her to protect the public from this broader category of diseases ([PA 26-112](#), § 2, effective October 1, 2026).

Fish Passages

New laws change who may petition the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to require a fish passage be installed at a dam, changes which dams a petition may

apply to, and changes the criteria DEEP uses to decide on a petition. Previously, 10 or more people owning property above a dam or artificial obstruction could file one of these petitions with DEEP. The new laws instead allow any 10 or more people to petition DEEP for a fish passage at a hydroelectric dam that is not federally regulated. (Currently, three such dams exist in the state.) The new laws sets (1) a process the DEEP commissioner must follow if she receives a petition and (2) actions she must take if she determines a dam does not have an adequate fish passage ([PA 26-101](#), § 6, as amended by [PA 26-124](#), § 15, effective upon passage).

Hunting

This session, the legislature passed a law that, among other things, (1) allows DEEP to authorize corporate entities to take (kill) resident Canadian geese; (2) modifies the requirements for certain people to hunt on Sundays; and (3) amends the definition of “muzzleloader” in the context of deer management ([PA 26-124](#), §§ 6-8, October 1, 2026).

Lobster Sales

New legislation allows Connecticut food service establishments to sell consumers lobsters greater or less than the minimum and maximum shell lengths (3.375 inches and 5.25 inches) for the lobster management area (LMA) that includes Connecticut, if the (1) lobster is within the legal length for the LMA where it is taken and (2) establishment keeps certain required documentation for the lobster. Additionally, the new law allows any Connecticut licensed seafood dealer to sell food service establishments lobsters in compliance with these restrictions ([PA 26-12](#), § 64, as amended by [PA 26-68](#), § 253, effective July 1, 2027).

Service Animal Nondiscrimination Requirements for TNCs

Among other things, a new law requires transportation network companies (TNCs, such as Uber and Lyft) to adopt, maintain, and enforce a service animal nondiscrimination policy. The policy must meet certain requirements, such as (1) prohibiting drivers from cancelling or refusing prearranged rides based on the potential rider being accompanied by a service animal; (2) requiring the TNC to investigate and respond to each report of a driver canceling or refusing a prearranged ride based on the rider being accompanied by a service animal; and (3) requiring the TNC to permanently ban drivers who violate the company’s service animal nondiscrimination policy from accessing its digital network ([PA 26-63](#), § 19, effective October 1, 2026).

Shellfishing Requirements

By law, DoAg must classify areas for shellfish taking and may restrict or prohibit shellfishing from areas that fail to meet specified standards to minimize health risks. A law passed this session

eliminates the requirement for DoAg to post shellfishing area closure notices in local newspapers and instead requires the department to post these notices on its website. Similarly, the law eliminates DoAg's requirement to notify the general public about shellfishing area closures due to a health emergency by publishing the notice in a local newspaper and instead requires the commissioner to notify any applicable shellfish commission in the affected area, in addition to the area's municipal or district health authority as required under existing law.

Additionally, the new law eliminates DoAg's authority to appoint and commission shellfish police to patrol privately owned oystering areas at the request of specified entities, including oyster businesses, associations, and property owners. In practice environmental conservation officers serve this function through a memorandum of understanding with DoAg ([PA 26-75](#), §§ 7 & 22, effective upon passage).

Striped Bass Fishing

This session, a new law limits striped bass fishing to catch and release between December 1 and March 31 annually. It also makes it an infraction to violate any regulation on striped bass taking and imposes a fine of (1) \$150 for a first offense, (2) \$350 for a second offense, and (3) \$500 for subsequent offenses. People fined for these violations must generally follow the law's procedure for infractions. However, if a municipal law enforcement officer issues an infraction in Derby, Milford, Orange, Shelton, or Stratford, the fine must be paid to the municipality where the infraction occurred ([PA 26-101](#), §§ 1 & 2, effective upon passage, except the provision on catch and release fishing is effective October 1, 2026).

Temporary Veterinary Permits for Foreign-Educated Individuals

A new law allows the Department of Public Health to issue a temporary veterinarian permit to graduates of veterinary schools located outside of the U.S., its territories, or Canada, who are working toward a specified certification. The permit allows the individual to work under direct supervision of a state-licensed veterinarian who has been licensed in the state for at least two years. The permit is good for up to two years and can be renewed once under certain conditions ([PA 26-13](#), § 9, effective October 1, 2026).

Traditionally Non-Harvested Species Conservation Program

A new law changes DEEP's traditionally non-harvested species conservation program by:

1. expanding it to (a) implement the state's most recent federally approved wildlife action plan and (b) include provisions on wildlife health, monitoring climate change, and biodiversity conservation;

2. eliminating a requirement for the DEEP commissioner to annually report to the legislature on the program and instead creating a working group to determine how the program should be funded and implemented; and
3. requiring any money donated to the state for the program be deposited into the General Fund and allocated to the program, as existing law requires for any revenue from DEEP's program to sell wildlife stamps and other artwork or publications ([PA 26-101](#), §§ 3-5, effective October 1, 2026, except the provision on the working group is effective July 1, 2026).

Veterinary Providers and Third-Party Financing

Beginning January 1, 2027, a new law prohibits health care and veterinary care providers from:

1. promoting or offering to consumers third-party financing in certain ways;
2. receiving financial incentives or compensation related to promoting or offering third-party financing to a consumer;
3. completing any part of a consumer's application or submitting a consumer's application for third-party financing;
4. charging a third-party financing account for a service, or a portion of it, before the date the service is provided, unless the cost is incurred earlier;
5. discussing third-party financing terms and conditions with a consumer without providing a written disclosure form; and
6. charging a third-party financing account for all or a portion of the cost of an ancillary product under certain circumstances (it also specifies a 30-day period for the return and refund of most ancillary products).

The new law defines third-party financing as a line of credit, loan, or open-end credit plan (such as a credit card) that is offered or extended by a third party ([PA 26-6](#), as amended by [PA 26-100](#), § 38, effective January 1, 2027).

Veterinary Telehealth Working Group

A new law creates a working group to (1) evaluate whether it is feasible to allow a veterinarian-client-patient relationship to be created through telehealth when an animal needs medical care or treatment and (2) if so, make related recommendations. By January 1, 2027, the group must report to the Public Health Committee on its evaluation and recommendations. Under existing law, a veterinarian-client-patient relationship cannot be established through telehealth, but after an initial in-person appointment, veterinarians generally may use telehealth if it is not medically necessary for them to examine the animal in-person ([PA 26-13](#), § 10, effective upon passage).

Agriculture

Agricultural Land Preservation Program

Existing law requires DoAg's commissioner, in consultation with the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board, to adopt regulations implementing a program for acquiring development rights to agriculture land. A new law passed this session removes a requirement that these regulations set (1) a \$20,000 per acre cap on the state's contribution to individual landowners applying for the program and (2) the contribution for the joint purchase of development rights with municipalities accordingly ([PA 26-75](#), § 6, effective July 1, 2026).

Agrivoltaics Projects Study

A new law requires DEEP, in consultation with the DoAg commissioner, to study the feasibility of implementing an incentive program for agrivoltaics projects (generally, solar facilities on agricultural land) in the state. The study must consider potential project benefits and consequences and make recommendations on various things, including project size restrictions, permitting processes, and preserving core forest. DEEP must report its study to the Energy and Technology and Environment committees by January 1, 2027 ([PA 26-127](#), § 11, effective October 1, 2026).

Dairy Farming

A law passed this session creates the Dairy Modernization Grant Program within DoAg to help Connecticut's dairy farmers invest in equipment, infrastructure, and operational upgrades. The new law requires DoAg to, by January 1, 2027, set the program's parameters, including, among other things, eligibility criteria and an application process.

The new law also creates a Dairy Farming Sustainability Working Group within DoAg to develop long-term recommendations to support Connecticut's dairy industry. The working group must make recommendations to the legislature on the potential use of tax credits and property tax exemptions for dairy farmers, in-state dairy processing capacity, and the use of Community Investment Act funds for dairy sustainability ([PA 26-75](#), §§ 1 & 3, effective July 1, 2026, except the working group provision is effective upon passage).

Farm Investment Tax Credit Program

Last session, the legislature created a refundable corporate and income tax credit program for farmers' investments in eligible machinery, equipment, and buildings to use in specific types of agricultural production. Under that law, Connecticut taxpayers can qualify as an eligible farmer under the program if their federal or gross income from farming for the income or tax year is at least two-thirds of their federal gross income from all sources over \$30,000. A new law passed this

session expands who qualifies as an eligible farmer under the program to include Connecticut taxpayers whose federal gross income from farming for the income or tax year is at least \$250,000 ([PA 26-75](#), § 2, as amended by [PA 26-76](#), § 70, effective upon passage and applicable to income or tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2027).

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program Modifications

This session, the legislature made many minor changes to DoAg's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to conform with current practices and align with program modernizations, including a transition to electronic benefits and expansion to eligible benefit redemption locations. By law, the FMNP generally gives low-income families and older adults funds to buy eligible Connecticut-grown fresh produce and chicken eggs. The new law also allows participants to use program benefits to buy honey ([PA 26-75](#), §§ 8-21, effective upon passage).

Food Resource Grants

In 2022, the legislature authorized \$10 million in general obligation bonds to DoAg for making grants for food resource organization capital improvements. A law passed this session also allows DoAg to use these funds to make grants to (1) these organizations for food system enhancements and (2) food systems for capital improvements or food system enhancements ([PA 26-76](#), § 71, effective July 1, 2026).

PA 490 Forest Land Values and State Property Classification

By law, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary, in consultation with the DoAg commissioner, must develop every five years a schedule of unit prices (land use values per acre) for property subject to the PA 490 program. The PA 490 law allows farm, forest, open space, and maritime heritage land to be assessed at their current use value, rather than their fair market value. These schedules are made available to the public, and municipalities may adopt them. A law passed this session directs OPM to reinstate the 2025 land use value for forest land (\$200 per acre) over the 2020 value (\$390 per acre), which was reinstated by the governor on January 19, 2026. The 2025 value will remain in effect until the next valuation date of October 1, 2030 ([PA 26-75](#), § 4, effective July 1, 2026).

Another new law requires OPM to collaborate with state agencies to identify state property that qualifies as PA 490 land and have local assessors classify and value it that way for purposes of making the grand list. (While the state is not subject to property taxes, under existing law, the state must fully or partially reimburse municipalities for their forgone revenue on state-owned property, based on the property's assessed value.) ([PA 26-137](#), § 2, effective upon passage and applicable to assessment years beginning on or after October 1, 2026).

Study of Natural Gas Rates for Agricultural Customers

A new law requires the DEEP commissioner to study natural gas rates for agricultural customers to determine whether demand charges cause a significant number of them to be charged rates that do not fairly reflect their gas usage. If the commissioner determines that the demand charges are unfairly increasing their rates, she must make detailed recommendations for how the charges may be recalculated or otherwise applied ([SA 26-4](#), effective October 1, 2026).

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