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ANIMAL CARE AMENDMENTS
2024 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Norman K Thurston
Senate Sponsor: Jen Plumb

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill addresses the care of animals.

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- defines terms;
- authorizes the Department of Agriculture and Food to impose civil penalties for certain violations;
- establishes requirements for animal care by an animal care facility;
- criminalizes a violation of the animal care requirements as an infraction; and
- makes technical and conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

ENACTS:

4-2-903, Utah Code Annotated 1953

76-9-301.9, Utah Code Annotated 1953

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **4-2-903** is enacted to read:

4-2-903 . Animal care violations.

(1) "Animal care facility" means the same as that term is defined in Section 76-9-301.9.

(2) The department may, in accordance with this section and as resources allow, respond to

- 28 a complaint that an animal care facility has violated Subsection 76-9-301(2)(a) or
29 Section 76-9-301.9.
- 30 (3) If the department determines that a person has violated Subsection 76-9-301(2)(a) or
31 Section 76-9-301.9, the department may:
- 32 (a) impose a civil fine of up to \$500 per violation;
33 (b) seek a temporary restraining order;
34 (c) seek an injunction;
35 (d) seek an order of seizure or condemnation for an animal that is the subject of the
36 violation, if the department has identified a suitable animal care facility that accepts
37 custody of the animal; or
38 (e) report the circumstances to law enforcement or a prosecutor.
- 39 (4) An action by the department under Subsection (3) may precede and does not preclude a
40 criminal penalty or criminal prosecution under Section 76-9-301 or 76-9-301.9.
- 41 (5) The department shall deposit a fine imposed under Subsection (3) into the General Fund
42 as a dedicated credit to be used by the department for enforcement of this section.

43 Section 2. Section **76-9-301.9** is enacted to read:

44 **76-9-301.9 . Animal care facilities -- Definitions -- Penalty.**

- 45 (1) As used in this section:
- 46 (a) "Animal care facility" means an animal rescue, animal sanctuary, or animal shelter.
47 (b) "Animal rescue" means a person that:
48 (i) accepts companion animals for the purpose of finding a permanent home for each
49 companion animal;
50 (ii) does not maintain a central facility for keeping companion animals; and
51 (iii) uses a system of temporarily fostering the companion animals in a private
52 residence or boarding facility.
- 53 (c) "Animal sanctuary" means a nonprofit entity, other than a government entity, that:
54 (i) harbors companion animals; and
55 (ii) is used exclusively for the purpose of indefinitely caring for, rehabilitating, or
56 housing companion animals.
- 57 (d) (i) "Animal shelter" means the same as that term is defined in Section 11-46-102.
58 (ii) "Animal shelter" does not include an animal rescue.
- 59 (e) "Boarding facility" means a facility where a companion animal is kept for the
60 purpose of caring for the companion animal.
- 61 (f) "Companion animal" means an animal that is a domestic dog or a domestic cat.

- 62 (g) "Facility" means a location other than a private residence.
- 63 (2) For a dog in an animal care facility's possession, the animal care facility shall ensure
64 that:
- 65 (a) a female dog does not produce more than one litter in any twelve-month period,
66 unless a licensed veterinarian has examined the female dog and has determined that it
67 is safe for the dog to produce more than one litter in a twelve-month period; and
- 68 (b) a dog under eight weeks of age or a dog not properly weaned is not sold.
- 69 (3) An animal care facility shall keep records:
- 70 (a) identifying, to the best of the animal care facility's knowledge, an animal's owner at
71 the time the animal care facility acquires the animal; and
- 72 (b) documenting dangerous behaviors, if any, health conditions, and medical care for an
73 animal in the animal care facility's possession.
- 74 (4) (a) An animal care facility's violation of a requirement described in this section is an
75 infraction subject to a fine of \$750.
- 76 (b) A prosecution under this section does not preclude a prosecution for any other
77 criminal offense.
- 78 (5) It is a defense to the penalty imposed under this section that the conduct of the actor
79 toward the animal was:
- 80 (a) by a licensed veterinarian using accepted veterinary practice;
- 81 (b) directly related to bona fide experimentation for scientific research, provided that if
82 the animal is to be destroyed, the manner employed will not be unnecessarily cruel
83 unless directly necessary to the veterinary purpose or scientific research involved;
- 84 (c) permitted under Section 18-1-3;
- 85 (d) by a person who humanely destroys any animal found suffering past recovery for any
86 useful purpose; or
- 87 (e) by a person who humanely destroys any apparently abandoned animal found on the
88 person's property.
- 89 (6) This section does not prohibit the use of animals in lawful training.
- 90 (7) A veterinarian who, acting in good faith, reports a violation of this section to law
91 enforcement or the Department of Agriculture and Food in accordance with Section
92 4-2-903 may not be held civilly liable for making the report.

93 Section 3. **Effective date.**

94 This bill takes effect on May 1, 2024.