

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 or a dog breeder;
- ▶ 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:



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

29 **4-2-903. Animal care violations.**

30 (1) "Animal care facility" means the same as that term is defined in Section
31 [76-9-301.9.](#)

32 (2) "Dog breeder" means the same as that term is defined in Section [76-9-301.9.](#)

33 (3) The department may, in accordance with this section and as resources allow,
34 respond to a complaint that a dog breeder or an animal care facility has violated Subsection
35 [76-9-301\(2\)\(a\) or Section 76-9-301.9.](#)

36 (4) If the department determines that a person has violated Subsection [76-9-301\(2\)\(a\)](#)
37 or Section [76-9-301.9,](#) the department may:

38 (a) impose a civil fine of up to \$1,000 per violation;

39 (b) seek a temporary restraining order;

40 (c) seek an injunction;

41 (d) seek an order of seizure or condemnation for an animal that is the subject of the
42 violation, if the department has identified a suitable animal care facility that accepts custody of
43 the animal; or

44 (e) report the circumstances to law enforcement or a prosecutor.

45 (5) An action by the department under Subsection (4) may precede and does not
46 preclude a criminal penalty or criminal prosecution under Section [76-9-301](#) or [76-9-301.9.](#)

47 (6) The department shall deposit a fine imposed under Subsection (4) into the General
48 Fund as a dedicated credit to be used by the department for enforcement of this section.

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

50 **76-9-301.9. Animal care facilities and breeders -- Definitions -- Penalty.**

51 (1) As used in this section:

52 (a) "Animal care facility" means an animal rescue, animal sanctuary, or animal shelter.

53 (b) "Animal rescue" means a person that:

54 (i) accepts companion animals for the purpose of finding a permanent home for each
55 companion animal;

56 (ii) does not maintain a central facility for keeping companion animals; and

57 (iii) uses a system of temporarily fostering the companion animals in a private
58 residence or boarding facility.

59 (c) "Animal sanctuary" means a nonprofit entity, other than a government entity, that:

60 (i) harbors companion animals; and

61 (ii) is used exclusively for the purpose of indefinitely caring for, rehabilitating, or
62 housing companion animals.

63 (d) (i) "Animal shelter" means a person that operates a facility for the impoundment or
64 care of companion animals.

65 (ii) "Animal shelter" does not include an animal rescue.

66 (e) "Boarding facility" means a facility where a companion animal is kept for the
67 purpose of caring for the companion animal.

68 (f) "Companion animal" means an animal that is a domestic dog or a domestic cat.

69 (g) (i) "Dog breeder" means a person that breeds dogs for the primary or express
70 purpose of selling, trading, bartering, or otherwise transferring dogs to another person for
71 profit.

72 (ii) "Dog breeder" does not include a person that:

73 (A) produces no more than one litter per calendar year;

74 (B) breeds only livestock guardian dogs as defined in Section [76-6-111](#); or

75 (C) breeds only dogs raised to work on a farm or ranch.

76 (h) "Facility" means a location other than a private residence.

77 (2) For a dog in a dog breeder's or an animal care facility's possession, the dog breeder
78 or animal care facility shall ensure that:

79 (a) a pregnant dog receives at least one prenatal or postpartum visit with a licensed
80 veterinarian;

81 (b) a female dog does not produce more than one litter in any twelve-month period,
82 unless a licensed veterinarian has examined the female dog and has determined that it is safe
83 for the dog to produce more than one litter in a twelve-month period; and

84 (c) a dog under eight weeks of age or a dog not properly weaned is not sold.

85 (3) An animal care facility shall keep records:

86 (a) identifying, to the best of the animal care facility's knowledge, an animal's owner at
87 the time the animal care facility acquires the animal; and

88 (b) documenting dangerous behaviors, if any, health conditions, and medical care for an
89 animal in the dog breeder's or animal care facility's possession.

90 (4) (a) A dog breeder's or an animal care facility's violation of a requirement described
91 in this section is an infraction subject to a fine of \$750.

92 (b) A prosecution under this section does not preclude a prosecution for any other
93 criminal offense.

94 (5) It is a defense to the penalty imposed under this section that the conduct of the actor
95 toward the animal was:

96 (a) by a licensed veterinarian using accepted veterinary practice;

97 (b) directly related to bona fide experimentation for scientific research, provided that if
98 the animal is to be destroyed, the manner employed will not be unnecessarily cruel unless
99 directly necessary to the veterinary purpose or scientific research involved;

100 (c) permitted under Section [18-1-3](#);

101 (d) by a person who humanely destroys any animal found suffering past recovery for
102 any useful purpose; or

103 (e) by a person who humanely destroys any apparently abandoned animal found on the
104 person's property.

105 (6) This section does not prohibit the use of animals in lawful training.

106 (7) A veterinarian who, acting in good faith, reports a violation of this section to law
107 enforcement or the Department of Agriculture and Food in accordance with Section [4-2-903](#)
108 may not be held civilly liable for making the report.

109 **Section 3. Effective date.**

110 This bill takes effect on May 1, 2024.