

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

Connecticut General Assembly

2009 Session January 7 to June 3

Twenty-six bills affecting dogs and their owners were introduced to various committees. Some of them were companion bills in the House and Senate, and were subsequently combined. As of April 20, only six bills had been placed on the House or Senate calendars:

S.B. 291 Homeowners Insurance Policies for People Who Have Dogs that Have Bitten a Person. Senate Calendar No. 148. No vote by House or Senate.

S.B. 497 Reimbursement of Municipal Advertising Costs and Pet Adoptions. Senate Calendar No. 323. No vote by House or Senate.

S.B. 499 Pet Lemon Law. PASSED by House on June 2; by Senate on June 3. Effective July 1, 2009.

S.B. 650 Creation of a Trust for the Care of an Animal. PASSED by Senate on May 28; by House on June 2. Effective October 1, 2009.

S.B. 743 Increasing Owner or Keeper Liability for Damage Caused by a Dog. Senate Calendar No. 324. No vote by House or Senate.

H.B. 6565 Policy Regarding Dissections in Classrooms. (This bill was formerly named "Concerning Humane Education"). No vote by House or Senate.

S.B. 499 and S.B. 650 will pass into law on their effective dates unless vetoed by the Governor.

S.B.499 Details As originally introduced to the Environment Committee by Senator Meyer, Co-Chair, the bill put a “commercial kennel” under the current requirements for a pet shop, added “congenital defect” as a permitted reason for a customer to seek refund of cost or replacement of an animal (in addition to the current reason of illness or death), added the requirement for a certificate of origin for any dog or cat offered for sale in a pet shop or commercial kennel, and set penalties for violations. An amendment approved by the Senate on April 30 (introduced by Environment Committee co-chairs Sen. Meyer and Rep Roy) deleted the word “commercial”, thus making the bill applicable to all registered kennels and private breeders. The bill then went back to the House for approval. At that point, we began the campaign to contact House and Senate members to alert them to the unwarranted adverse impact on private breeders. That stopped the offending bill very quickly. Six amendments were filed in the House in an attempt to find a satisfactory solution to the private breeder problem and save the original intent of the bill. Amendment No. 8728 (introduced by Rep. Cafero/Camillo/Hornish/Hurlburt/Mushinsky/Urban) was approved by the House on June 2 and put on the fast track to the Senate, which approved it on June 3. Both chambers approved it almost unanimously. As approved and sent to the Governor, the amended bill:

a. **APPLIES ONLY TO PET SHOPS**

b. contains new wording on congenital defects

c. changes time limits for registering purchaser complaints

d. pet shop licensee not bound by bill provisions when a cat for sale has been spayed/neutered

e. includes requirement for a certificate of origin (dogs only) be provided to purchaser, plus a copy to be filed with Dept of Agriculture within two days of sale

f. maximum of \$100.00 fine or imprisonment of not more than 30 days, or both, for each violation

Unfortunately, this bill does not affect those who truck dogs into the state for sale in parking lots, or certain “rescue” organizations that import dogs into the state for “adoption”.

S.B. 650 Details Connecticut has finally recognized the need for legal trusts for the benefit of animals. This bill permits a testamentary or inter vivos trust to be created for the care of an animal or animals alive during the settlor's or testator's lifetime. Trusts would be similar to those for people. It calls for the trustee to render an annual account to a designated trust protector, all under the jurisdiction of a superior court or probate court. The usual wording regarding proper use of trust funds and the handling of any fraudulent activity is included. Hopefully, the Governor will allow this bill to pass into law.

CDF extends a well-done to everyone who contacted legislators by letter, email and phone to identify our problem with S.B.499 and offer comment on what should be done to solve it. The effort was remarkably successful in defeating onerous legislation. It also revealed how little most legislators know about pure bred dogs, and their reputable and responsible owners and breeders. We have opened a storehouse of professional information to them, and we find that they value our knowledge and willingness to enable them to make better informed legislative decisions. Maintain and improve those connections to the legislature, and we will all benefit in future sessions.