

Pending Ohio bills affecting animal ownership

(updated May 27, 2007)

Legislative bills don't have to directly affect dogs in order to have some long-term effect on dog breeding and ownership. Ohio has several bills under consideration that could ultimately cause hardship for dog breeders because they set bad precedents, erode private property rights, or expand on government oversight of various animal-related activities.



HB 45

This bill would regulate exotic animal ownership in the state. It places huge burdens on animal owners to construct new facilities, requires liability insurance of at least \$250,000 (insurance that may not be available), and opens the door to confiscation and killing of animals if conditions aren't met.

HSUS is currently campaigning to end ownership of exotic animals. HB 45 is the Ohio attempt to regulate owners out of existence. OVDO supports the Ohio Association of Animal Owners opposition to this bill.

HB 223/SB 173

The kennel licensing bills are back! These bills are a fraction better than the last offerings, but they are still bad for breeders. They regulate kennels according to the number of dogs they breed, charge high license fees, require surety bonds or insurance policies payable to the state, mandate fingerprinting and criminal background checks for license applicants, micromanage dog housing and care, and make it difficult and costly for a kennel owner to appeal revocation of a license or impoundment of dogs. The sponsor hearing on HB 223 was set for May 30. For more information, visit the Ohio Valley Dog Owners website at <http://www.canismajor.com/orgs/ovdo>

SB 79

This bill adds a special license plate to recognize horses in Ohio. One of two bills that would establish such a plate, this one allocates the \$15 donation fee to Horse Power Ohio, a nonprofit corporation, which must use the money to support equine programs in Ohio, including therapeutic riding programs, programs that promote the preservation and expansion of public bridle trails and facilities, and rider education and public equine awareness programs.

SB 37

The second bill to establish a horse license plate, SB 39 allocates the donation fee to the Ohio Coalition for Animals, Incorporated, and specifies that the money *may* be used to support educational, charitable, and other programs that provide care for unwanted, abused, and neglected horses.

Recipients of money from other special license plate donations *must* be used for specific purposes. This bill was introduced by Senator Robert Schuler and is co-sponsored by Senator Patricia Clancy, both from Cincinnati.

HB 124 is the companion bill in the House of Representatives.

HB 22

This bill increases the penalties for animal cruelty and requires court-ordered counseling for offenders under the age of 15.

Penalties for cruelty against dogs, cats, and other household pets were raised in 2002. This bill increases these penalties further so that a first offense is a felony. It also increases penalties for cruelty against other animals to a high level misdemeanor for a first offense and a felony for a second offense.

While it may seem like a good thing to increase penalties, support for such a law can backfire if practices such as cropping, docking, dewclaw removal, and bark reduction are added to the cruelty law. HSUS was thwarted in their attempt to ban cropping and docking in the 2002 bill that became law, but they will be back.