

HCS HB 1441 -- LARGE CARNIVORE ACT

SPONSOR: Myers (Sutherland)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Agriculture Policy by a vote of 19 to 0.

This substitute establishes the Large Carnivore Act which prohibits the owning, breeding, possession, transferring of ownership, or transporting of "large carnivores," defined as certain nonnative cats of the Felidae family or any species of bear except as provided in the substitute.

Any person who owns or possesses a large carnivore is liable in a civil action for the death or injury of a human or another animal and for any property damage caused by the large carnivore. If a large carnivore escapes or is released intentionally or unintentionally, the owner is required to immediately notify law enforcement and is liable for all expenses associated with the efforts to recapture the large carnivore.

Requirements for the permitting, confinement, handling, sanitation, feeding, transporting, identification, veterinary care, seizure, and euthanasia of large carnivores are specified. The requirements are in addition to any applicable state or federal law and do not preclude any local political subdivision from adopting more restrictive laws. Certain entities, law enforcement officials, animal control officers, and veterinarians are exempt from the substitute.

The penalty for violations varies according to the severity of the offense.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that ownership of a large carnivore is a privilege not a right; and with that privilege, there must be responsibilities. The bill provides a reasonable balance between public safety and a responsible owner's right to own a large carnivore.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Sutherland; Scott Green, St. Charles Animal Control; Feline Conservation Federation; Carrie Osborne; Eric Miller, St. Louis Zoo; Ingrid Porton, St. Louis Zoo; and Rosella Baller.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Roland Tackett, Legislative Analyst