

HB 46 -- IMPOUNDMENT OF ANIMALS

SPONSOR: Viebrock

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources by a vote of 10 to 0.

Currently, any neglected or abused animal may be impounded. This bill prohibits a farm animal weighing more than 50 pounds from being impounded until the district state veterinarian of the Department of Agriculture has examined the animal and determined the animal to be in imminent danger of loss of life or has determined that the condition or conditions deemed to be in violation cannot reasonably be rectified before the disposition hearing. If before the disposition hearing, reasonable attempts to correct the condition have not been made and approved by the veterinarian during a required follow-up visit, the animal may be impounded or destroyed.

If an abused or neglected farm animal in the possession of a caregiver is impounded, the authority having custody of the animal is required to make a diligent effort to notify the owner in writing that the animal has been impounded.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$87,022 in FY 2008, \$82,706 in FY 2009, and \$85,187 in FY 2010. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROponents: Supporters say that caring for an animal that has been seized from its owner can be very expensive, and often the animal is determined to be safe and the abuse case is not pursued. The bill changes the laws to permit the owner to continue to care for the animal while the state veterinarian examines the animal and investigates the case. Owners should have an opportunity to rectify the situation before their animals are taken from them.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Viebrock; Missouri Farm Bureau; and Missouri Federation of Animal Owners.

OPponents: Those who oppose the bill say that they are concerned about the exacerbation and suffering by animals that need better care. A one-day delay by the state veterinarian in checking on the animals could mean life or death for the animals.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Alliance for Animal Legislation; and Humane Society of Missouri.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that there are currently only four state district veterinarians and four federal

veterinarians in the state who are able to examine the animals. Due to a statewide veterinarian workforce shortage, they feel that it is critically important to have an unbiased expert to evaluate the animals.

Testifying on the bill was Department of Agriculture.