

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6279

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, January 31, 2000

Title: An act relating to exotic pets.

Brief Description: Creating a task force to study regulation of owning and breeding exotic pets.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/24/2000, 1/31/2000 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6279 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Gardner, Honeyford, Morton, Prentice, Snyder, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: A number of states have adopted provisions regulating the possession of exotic pets by private citizens.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department of Agriculture must form a task force to study issues relating to regulation of exotic pets. The task force must include representatives of: (1) the Department of Agriculture; (2) the Department of Fish and Wildlife; (3) the Department of Health; (4) local government officials; (5) owners and breeders of exotic pets; (6) veterinarians; (7) zoologists; (8) interested citizens; (9) pet stores (10) zoo veterinarians; (11) animal control agencies; and (12) humane societies.

The task force is to look at the definition of exotic pets, safety and health of people and domestic animals and wildlife, the protection of agriculture, the cost of regulating exotic pets and issues relating to statewide uniformity versus local control.

Recommendations of the task force must be submitted to the Senate Agriculture and Rural Economic Development Committee and the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee.

The task force expires on December 1, 2001.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The time period that the task force has to work is extended until December 1, 2001.

Added to the task force are representatives of pet stores, zoo veterinarians, animal control agencies and humane societies.

The scope of the study is to include exotic pets but is not to include llamas, alpacas, ostriches, emu, American bison reared in captivity, and species designated as deleterious exotic wildlife.

Appropriation: \$45,000 is appropriated to the Department of Agriculture to conduct the study and assemble the task force.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2000.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: A large number of species of exotic animals have been imported into the state for use as pets. There needs to be a comprehensive review as to whether existing regulations are adequate to protect public health and safety of people, domestic animals and wildlife. The study should include a range of agencies and interests to develop recommendations on either statutory or rule changes.

Testimony Against: There is a fundamental concern over the ownership and control of wild animals by people.

Testified: Diane Venberg, Progressive Animal Welfare Society (con); Maryanne Guichard, WA State Dept. of Health (pro); Ron Shultz, Audubon (pro).