

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6037

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Agriculture & Ecology

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide limited veterinarian services.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide limited veterinarian services.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Agriculture & International Trade (originally sponsored by Senators Prentice, Kohl-Welles and Parlette).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Agriculture & Ecology: 2/14/02, 2/26/02 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by House Committee)**

- Authorizes animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies to provide limited veterinary services to animals owned by qualified low-income households.
- Specifies requirements regarding provision of limited veterinary services and requires rulemaking to ensure compliance.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ECOLOGY

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Hunt, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Delvin, Dunshee, Grant, Holmquist, Kirby, Quall, Roach and Sump.

**Staff:** Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

**Background:**

The practice of veterinary medicine is defined in statute to include a variety of activities, such as:

- diagnosing animal diseases, deformities, defects, wounds, or injuries;
- prescribing or administering drugs or treatments; and
- performing operations, manipulations, or application of any apparatus for cure, amelioration, correction, or reduction of any animal disease, deformity, defect, wound, or injury.

Education, training, and examination requirements for licensing of veterinarians are specified in statutes and rules of the Veterinary Board of Governors (board). The board also administers certificate of registration programs for veterinary technicians and veterinary medication clerks, who work under the supervision of licensed veterinarians.

"Animal care and control agency" is defined in statute as any city or county animal control agency or authority allowed to enforce city or county municipal ordinances regulating the care, control, licensing, or treatment of animals within the city or county. The definition also includes any corporation organized as a humane society under state law that contracts with a city or county to enforce the city or county ordinances governing animal care and control.

"Low-income household" is defined for purposes of the state's affordable housing program as a single person, family, or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is less than 80 percent of the median family income, adjusted for household size, for the county in which the project is located.

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### **Summary of Amended Bill:**

Animal care and control agencies and nonprofit humane societies that have qualified under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code are authorized to provide limited veterinary services to animals owned by qualified low-income households. The authorized limited veterinary services are electronic identification, surgical sterilization, and vaccinations. "Low-income household" has the same meaning as in the affordable housing program statutes (i.e., adjusted income less than 80 percent of median family income in the county).

Animal control agencies and nonprofit humane societies receiving animals on an emergency basis may provide emergency care according to the local ordinance's definition of an emergency situation and its provisions regarding temporary time limits. Local ordinances addressing these issues that preexist the effective date of this new authority remain in effect.

Veterinarians employed at animal care or control agencies or nonprofit humane societies must be licensed by the state. These facilities may not impose employment terms or conditions or direct or attempt to direct an employed veterinarian in any way that interferes with the free exercise of the veterinarian's professional judgment or infringes

upon the utilization of the veterinarian's professional skills.

Veterinarians, veterinarian technicians, and animal control agencies and humane societies acting under the limited veterinary services or emergency services authority must meet the statutory requirements and rules as other licensed veterinarians. Animal control agencies and humane societies must register with the Department of Health (department) and pay fees established by the department. The Veterinary Board of Governors (board) must adopt rules to:

- establish registration and registration renewal requirements;
- govern the purchase and use of drugs for limited veterinary services; and
- ensure compliance with the limited veterinary medical services and emergency services authority.

The limited veterinary medical service authority may be denied, suspended, revoked, or conditioned by the board. The Uniform Disciplinary Act governs unregistered operation, issuance or denial of registration, and discipline of registrants.

Legislative intent is specified to allow qualified animal control agencies and humane societies to provide limited veterinary services for household pets of low-income persons, not the general public.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill includes veterinary technicians within the provisions. The amended bill also requires animal control agencies and humane societies performing limited veterinary services or emergency services according to this authority to register with the Department of Health and pay registration fees. In addition, the amended bill allows the state Veterinary Board of Governors to adopt rules, other than compliance-related rules, to address registration and purchase and use of drugs. Further, the amended bill applies the Uniform Disciplinary Act to unregistered operation, issuance and denial of registrations, and discipline of registrants.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** This bill takes effect July 1, 2003.

**Testimony For:** Testimony for (proposed amendment): Nearly 100,000 animals are put to death each year in Washington. The primary causes are preventable diseases, lack of sterilization, and unidentified strays. This bill will address the primary causes and will

directly reduce the number of animals euthanized each year in this state.

This bill allows a limited scope of veterinary practices for low-income owners and requires services to be provided by licensed veterinarians. Humane societies and animal care and control agencies are prepared to go forward with this authority as soon as it is effective.

This bill is the product of many years of discussion, and the proponents have accepted changes to make this program work within the Department of Health. The Washington State Veterinary Medical Association supports the amendment but will not support authority for additional services or authority to provide services to other than low-income households.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** (In support) Sue Shobolm, Department of Health; Gordon Walgren, Federation of Animal Control Agencies and Humane Societies; and Diane Webber, Federation of Animal Control Agencies and Humane Societies.

(Comments) Greg Hanon, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association.