

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6712

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & International Trade, February 8, 2002

Title: An act relating to livestock damage.

Brief Description: Developing procedures to compensate livestock owners for damage caused by wildlife.

Sponsors: Senators Morton, Hewitt, Hochstatter, Parlette, Honeyford and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & International Trade: 2/6/02, 2/8/02 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6712 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Parlette, Snyder and Swecker.

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7486)

Background: As the population in Washington grows, conflict between humans and wildlife increases.

Currently, an owner, the owner's immediate family members, documented employees or tenants may kill problem wildlife without the required licenses if the wildlife is causing damage to domestic animals. The statute is clear that if wildlife is in the act of killing or injuring livestock, the owner may take immediate action to protect the livestock. However, when predatory wildlife returns or remains on the property after causing the damage, it is unclear whether an owner may kill the wildlife.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Owners or tenants are allowed to kill a bear, bobcat, cougar, or coyote on their property if one of those species has damaged the owner's cattle, horses, sheep, llamas, or goats within the last 12 months.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill provided for compensation for livestock owners whose livestock had been killed by wildlife. The substitute permits an owner or tenant to kill a bear, bobcat, cougar, or coyote on their property if their horses, cattle, goats, llamas, or sheep have been damaged by one the species listed within the past 12 months.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Damage to livestock committed by wildlife in this state places a huge economic burden on livestock owners. The costs are only going to increase because of recent initiatives and increases in predator populations.

Testimony Against: Other states have private compensation programs, but none are operating in Washington at this time. This bill would place a financial burden on the agency, at a time when the agency is already experiencing budget cuts.

Testified: Carl Anderson, Farm Bureau (pro); Joel Kretz, WA State Farm Bureau (pro); Roger Woodruff, US Dept. of Agriculture; Bruce Bjork, John Broone, WDFW (con).