Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

BILL ANALYSIS

Criminal Justice & Corrections Committee

HB 1108

Brief Description: Establishing penalties for harming a police horse.

Sponsors: Representatives Chase, DeBolt, Lovick, Ahern, Moeller, Blake, McCoy, Eickmeyer, Sump, O'Brien, Mielke and Haigh.

Brief Summary of Bill

· Establishes the crime of harming a police horse as an unranked class C felony.

Hearing Date: 1/28/03

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

Police horses are generally selected based on their friendliness and calmness to be able to stand firm through gunfire, riots, smoke, flares, parades, funerals, bottle rockets, squealing children, speeding traffic, and other obstacles. They are often used by law enforcement officers for crowd control, spotting impending crimes from far away distances, and for search and rescue missions. They are also found to patrol more effectively than officers on foot or motorized vehicles in certain situations.

Unlike dogs which are often used for law enforcement purposes, to help police investigate crimes and apprehend suspects, police horses are not protected by a criminal statute which prohibits the injuring or killing of a police or accelerant dog. A person is guilty of harming a police or accelerant dog if the person maliciously injures, disables, shoots, or kills a dog that the person knows or has reason to know is a police or accelerant dog. The dog does not have to be engaged in police or accelerant detection work when the person injures or kills the dog. Harming a police dog is an unranked class C felony. The maximum sentence for unranked felonies is one year of confinement, along with possible community service, legal financial obligations, community supervision, and a fine.

Summary of Bill:

Police horses used by law enforcement officers are protected by the criminal statute which prohibits the injuring or killing of police and accelerant dogs. If a person maliciously injures, disables, shoots, or kills a police horse when the person knows or has reason to know the horse is a police horse, the person is guilty of an unranked class C felony. The horse does not have to be engaged in police work when the person injures or kills the horse.

"Police horse" is defined as any horse used or kept for use by a law enforcement officer in discharging any legal duty or power of his or her office.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary available.

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