

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5815

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 5, 2003

Title: An act relating to local public health threats.

Brief Description: Reviewing responsibility for mosquito abatement.

Sponsors: Senators Oke, Franklin, Hale, Fraser, Sheahan and Brandland.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/27/03, 3/5/03 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Franklin, Keiser, Parlette and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

Background: Infected mosquitoes can transmit the West Nile virus to birds, horses, and people. To date, two birds and two horses in Washington have tested positive for the virus. The Department of Health has received no reports of human cases in Washington.

The Department of Health has the authority to inspect and investigate the effect of mosquitoes as a health hazard. To the extent that there are available funds, the department is authorized to provide for the elimination or control of mosquitoes. The department may also abate as nuisances breeding places for mosquitoes. Currently, the department is coordinating surveillance activities designed to provide early detection of the West Nile virus. The surveillance program includes mosquito surveillance, dead bird surveillance, and passive surveillance for human and horse cases of encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain.

Local boards of health (county or district boards) also must provide for the prevention, control, and abatement of nuisances detrimental to the public health. Additionally, counties may be organized as mosquito control districts, which may take all necessary or proper steps to exterminate mosquitoes.

There is concern that the responsibilities for mosquito abatement, as it applies to the West Nile virus, be clarified.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Health must consult with mosquito abatement district representatives, the Washington State Association of Counties, representatives of local public health districts and other interested entities to assist local health departments with mosquito abatement. The department must analyze and present findings on the best means of addressing mosquito abatement, including the responsibility for abatement of nuisance

breeding places for mosquitoes. By December 1, 2003, the department must submit its findings in a report with recommendations to the Legislature.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Washington needs to determine what entity is responsible for mosquito abatement so that the problem may be solved. Local public health districts are not prepared for an extensive response nor do these districts believe they have the authority or resources to respond. There is not one set way to control mosquitoes; flexibility is necessary.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Michael Shaw, Rural Counties; Rick Muckler, WA State Assn. Local Public Health Officials; Tom Haworth, Adams Co. Mosquito Control; Jim Thompson, Grant Co. Mosquito Control #1; Bill White, WA Dept. of Health.