

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6371

As Passed Senate, February 8, 2006

Title: An act relating to dead animal disposal.

Brief Description: Regulating the disposal of dead animals.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Schoesler, Shin, Jacobsen and Sheldon; by request of Department of Agriculture.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 1/17/06 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/8/06, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; Shin, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Delvin, Jacobsen, Morton and Sheldon.

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Through its Animal Health Program, the Washington Department of Agriculture (WSDA) protects animals and the public from communicable animal diseases, including brucellosis, tuberculosis, salmonella, rabies, and avian influenza. The program monitors movement of animals across state lines by inspecting and examining animals, issuing or denying permits, and monitoring health certificates. WSDA veterinarians also conduct tests and inspections to detect and eliminate diseases.

Program officials conduct emergency management planning to trace back and control foreign or domestic animal diseases of concern. The program cooperates with universities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other agencies to collect samples and data.

Currently, animals dead from disease or killed because of disease must be immediately buried at least three feet deep. Any animal found dead is presumed to have died from disease. Dead animals that did not die from disease may be sent to a rendering plant.

It is suggested that these requirements are too restrictive and do not provide appropriate options for disposal of dead livestock.

Summary of Bill: Existing dead animal disposal provisions are narrowed to apply only to "livestock," including horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, bison, sheep, goats, swine, rabbits, llamas, alpacas, ratites, poultry, waterfowl, and game birds. "Livestock" does not include free ranging wildlife--i.e., wild mammals (excluding feral domestic animals and certain rodents), birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish (excluding certain fish and shellfish) and invertebrates (excluding certain marine invertebrates).

The Washington State Department of Agriculture is granted rulemaking authority to prescribe the time frame and methods of disposal of livestock that die because of disease. Prescribed methods for disposal may include burial, composting, incinerating, landfilling, and natural decomposition or rendering.

Only livestock found dead from an unknown cause are presumed to have died because of disease.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: This bill was developed by an interagency group consisting of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, the State Board of Health and Department of Health, and the Department of Ecology. Burial or rendering of dead animals may not be the best options, and WSDA should have the ability to prescribe other options. Burial poses problems in some areas if sufficient soil or space is not available, and rendering may be quite expensive, particularly if dead livestock must be transported to distant rendering plants. This bill will permit WSDA to adopt dead livestock disposal regulations that are consistent with dead animal disposal regulations adopted by other agencies.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Mary Beth Lang and Dr. Leonard Eldridge, Washington State Department of Agriculture; Ed Field, Washington Cattle Feeders Association; Neil Kayser and Jim Sizemore, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Craig McLaughlin, State Board of Health.