

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6315

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, January 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to wolf-hybrids.

Brief Description: Including a wolf-hybrid in the definition of a "potentially dangerous wild animal."

Sponsors: Senator Morton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation:1/21/08, 1/28/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Hatfield, Vice Chair; Morton, Ranking Minority Member; Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: A wolf-hybrid is the offspring of a wolf and a dog, a wolf and a hybrid, a dog and a hybrid, or two hybrids. A wolf-hybrid currently is excluded from the definition of a potentially dangerous wild animal.

A person must not own, possess, keep, harbor, bring into the state, have custody or control, or breed a potentially dangerous wild animal. Exceptions to this requirement include: authorized institutions of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, zoos and aquariums, nonprofit animal organizations, veterinary hospitals, holders of wildlife sanctuaries, research facilities, circuses, persons transporting animals if the transit time is not more than 21 days and the animal is confined at all times, people displaying animals at fairs, game farms, and people who currently own potentially dangerous wild animals.

Summary of Bill: Wolf-hybrids are included in the list of potentially dangerous wild animals. Thus, subject to the applicable exceptions, a person must not own, possess, keep, harbor, bring into the state, have custody or control, or breed wolf-hybrids.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Wolf dogs present a greater danger to humans than wolves. Abandoned wolf dogs prey on livestock, as they are more comfortable being around humans than wolves. This bill is necessary because of the integration of grey wolves into Washington. By treating wolf hybrids as potentially dangerous wild animals, this will benefit the natural re-habitation of grey wolves. Although the DNA is very similar, there are other characteristics that differentiate a dog from a wolf. Morphology measurements and physical attributes can be used to show the differences between a dog and a wolf, although they are not totally accurate.

CON: Once you cross a wolf with a dog, you have a domesticated animal. They are normal dogs and they have been socialized. When there are behavioral issues with a wolf dog, it is because the animal has not been properly trained. There are packs of dogs, including wolf dogs, that attack livestock when acting as part of the pack. The problem is with people not the animals. If the animals are confiscated under the potentially dangerous wild animal statutes, there are no sanctuaries in the state for wolf dogs. The public does not know what a wolf dog is because of the incredible amount of cross breeding between wolves and dogs. DNA cannot show how much wolf is in a dog and vice versa.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Morton, prime sponsor; Steve Pozzanghera, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jack Field, Washington Cattleman's Association; John Stuhlmiller, Washington Farm Bureau; Ed Owens, Hunter's Heritage Council, Northwest Wildlife Council, Citizens for Responsible Wildlife Management.

CON: Dave Coleburn, Dan Overman, Predators of the Heart; Shelleen Matthews, Wild Felid Advocacy Center; Jeanne Hall, Steve Johnson, citizens.