

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5383

As Passed Senate, March 3, 2009

Title: An act relating to wolf-hybrids.

Brief Description: Regarding wolf-hybrids.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation (originally sponsored by Senators Morton, Jacobsen, Swecker, Stevens, Hargrove, Schoesler, Pflug and King).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/05/09, 2/12/09 [DPS].
Passed Senate: 3/03/09, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5383 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

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 Substitute 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. However, a person in legal possession of a wolf-hybrid, prior to the effective date of this act, may keep

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possession of the animal for the remainder of the animal's life. Additionally, a wolf-hybrid that is confiscated by animal control may be returned to its owner if the owner can show the animal was acquired prior to the effective date of this act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Any pairing between a wolf and dog short circuits the wiring of the dog to be subordinate. There have been advances in technology to specifically identify wolf-hybrids, wolves, and dogs. The potentially dangerous wild animal statute includes all other hybrid species. Wolf-hybrids that are currently in good homes should be allowed to remain. Proponents do not want to see animals removed from good homes, but there have been situations with owners of wolf-hybrids that escape. Wolf-hybrids that are released or escape from their owners are more comfortable with people. They are then more of a threat to livestock as they are more inclined to attack livestock.

CON: Wolf dogs require advanced training and have the same shyness and same strength as other dogs of similar size, but they are loyal to their pack. There are wolf dogs that live in homes with small animals and the dogs do not harm the small animals. There are wolf dogs that are service dogs and therapy dogs. It is important to deal with the irresponsible dog owner, not just prohibit wolf dogs. Laws in others states like this have led to dogs being killed. Wolf-hybrid confiscation occurs now. There should be legislation that deals with predation, not legislation prohibiting the ownership of a family pet.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Steve Pozzanghera, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Jack Field, Washington Cattleman's Association.

CON: Lani Ferrante, Jeanne Hall, citizens; Dave Coleburn, Predators of the Heart.