

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5356

C 65 L 17
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning the humane treatment of dogs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Fain, Palumbo, Miloscia, Frockt, Bailey, Rolfes, Angel, Keiser, Conway, Pedersen and Wilson).

Senate Committee on Law & Justice
House Committee on Judiciary

Background: Washington first enacted animal cruelty laws in its territorial days. In 1994, the Legislature modernized the animal cruelty laws with intent to require enforcement of the laws by persons who are accountable to local and state elected officials. The animal cruelty laws protect livestock, pets, and working animals from unnecessary pain and suffering, abuse and neglect. Law enforcement agencies and specialized animal care and control agencies enforce the animal cruelty laws by issuing citations for civil infractions and violations of the state's criminal laws.

State animal cruelty laws operate in conjunction with other state and federal laws regulating commercial production and transportation of animals, health, and sanitation of livestock facilities, fish and game regulations, and animal welfare in medical research. Washington's animal cruelty laws also allow exceptions for traditional animal husbandry practices, events such as rodeos and fairs, and working animals used by military and law enforcement agencies.

Current law does not specify penalties or animal cruelty standards when a dog is tied to fixed structures, ropes, chains, or trolley systems for extended periods of time without owner supervision.

Summary: The criminal liability principles for crimes related to animals, chapter 9.08 RCW, apply to inhumane dog tethering. An unsupervised dog must not be tethered for an amount of time that is reckless under the circumstances. Any tethering restraint used must allow for safe and sanitary surroundings, adequate access to food and water, protection from excessive heat or cold, and shelter from the weather. A tethered dog must have enough freedom of movement to comfortably sit, stand, lie down, and not risk entanglement in the restraint. A dog must not be tethered by a choke, pinch, halter, or prong-type collar, or a chain or rope that is so heavy it impedes the dog's free movement; only a properly fitted buckle-type collar or harness is permitted.

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.

Each tethering incident that violates the conditions for humane tethering is a separate offense. The first offense results in a warning to correct the violation within seven days. A second offense is a Class 2 civil infraction. A third or subsequent offense is a Class 1 civil infraction.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0
House	68	28

Effective: July 23, 2017