
**Rural Development, Agriculture, &
Natural Resources Committee**

HB 1516

Brief Description: Establishing a department of fish and wildlife directed nonlethal program for the purpose of training dogs.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Dent, Chapman, Kretz, Walsh, Lekanoff, Orcutt, Springer, Pettigrew, Hoff and Shea.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Fish and Wildlife Commission to establish and administer a training program for nonlethal pursuit of black bears, cougars, or bobcats with dogs.

Hearing Date: 2/8/19

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

Generally, the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) may authorize the removal or killing of wildlife that is destroying or injuring property, or when necessary for wildlife management or research. In 1996 the passage of Initiative Measure No. 655 prohibited, with certain exemptions, the hunting of black bears, cougars, bobcats, or lynxes with the use of dogs. One of the exemptions allows for employees or agents of county, state, or federal agency, while acting in their official capacity, to hunt black bears, cougars, bobcats, or lynxes with the use of dogs in order to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety. Other exemptions allow for the pursuit, relocation, or capture for scientific purposes, or the hunting of black bears, cougars, or bobcats in order to protect endangered species. Lynx are classified as both a state and federal endangered or threatened species and may not be hunted or killed.

The WDFW must post on its Internet site the known details of all predatory wildlife interactions with humans, pets, or livestock within 10 days of receiving each interaction report. For this

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purpose, predatory wildlife means cougars, wolves, and grizzly bears. Certain information related to wolf depredations is exempt from public disclosure and is not required to be posted.

Summary of Bill:

The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) must establish and administer a program by which certain individuals may be selected as agents of the state to engage in nonlethal dog training to pursue black bears, cougars, or bobcats in order to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety. The Commission rule must outline the requirements an applicant must meet in order to qualify as an agent of the state, including undergoing a criminal background check.

The Commission's authority to allow hunting lynx or pursuing lynx with the aid of dogs is removed, and the exception to allow for the "killing" of black bears, cougars, or bobcats in order to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety is changed to allow for the "hunting" of black bears, cougars, or bobcats in order to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or the public safety. Nonlethal pursuit under the Commission-established training program is added as an exemption to the prohibition on the hunting of black bears, cougars, or bobcats.

Language requiring the Department of Fish and Wildlife to post information on all reported cougar interactions is deleted, but maintained elsewhere in statute for predatory wildlife interactions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.