

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5320

As of January 25, 2019

Title: An act relating to establishing a nonlethal program within the department of fish and wildlife for the purpose of training dogs.

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

Sponsors: Senators Takko, Rivers, Wilson, L., Van De Wege, Honeyford, Warnick and Short.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks: 1/24/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a program to provide dog training opportunities for non-lethal pursuit for the purpose of protecting livestock, domestic animals, private property, or public safety.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, WATER, NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7428)

Background: With the passage of Initiative 655 in 1996, voters approved a prohibition on the hunting of bear, cougar, bobcat, and lynx with dogs, with certain exceptions. The Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) is authorized to allow the use of dogs to hunt or pursue black bear, cougar, bobcat, or lynx if there is a public safety need; to protect livestock, domestic animals, and private property; for scientific purposes; or to protect endangered species. In addition, the Commission is authorized to allow hunters to harvest bear, cougar, and bobcat without the use of dogs. Lynx are classified as both a state and federal endangered or threatened species and may not be hunted or killed.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) must post the known details of all reported interactions between cougars and humans, pets, and livestock onto their Internet website.

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.

Summary of Bill: DFW must adopt by rule a process to select persons who may act as agents of the state for the purpose of using dogs to hunt or pursue black bear, cougar, or bobcat to protect livestock, domestic animals, private property, or for public safety. A requirement for training program applicants must include a criminal background check. The purpose of this program is to provide dog training opportunities using nonlethal pursuit.

The Commission's authority to authorize hunting lynx or pursuing lynx with the aid of dogs is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2019.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Stakeholders worked together on the need to train dogs to track certain nuisance animals. While there are restrictions on the use of dogs for hunting, there is an exemption for public safety and to protect livestock. Dog owners need to develop skills to be prepared to respond to public safety concerns. The DFW would monitor the training to ensure that working dogs are available and trained.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Dean Takko, Prime Sponsor; Tom Davis, Washington Farm Bureau; Mark Streuli, Washington Cattlemen's Association; Carey Morris, Humane Society of the United States; Jeff Wickersham, DFW Police; Paula Swedeen, Conservation Northwest; Buddy Woodberry, Working Dogs for Conflict Resolution.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.