

New England State Issues June 2020

By [AKC Government Relations](#)

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News from the New England State Capitols

Connecticut – The state department of agriculture publicly released notice of [draft regulations](#) overseeing animal importers and shelters. AKC GR reviewed the proposal and issued an [alert](#) encouraging the individual submission of recommendations for strengthening the proposed rules. The deadline for submitting comments is June 16, 2020 and AKC GR will submit formal comment.

Massachusetts – The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources [announced June 4, 2020](#) it had finalized adoption of detailed regulations overseeing animal rescue and shelter organizations and updated regulations for pet shops. A public hearing with strong opposition from animal rights activists was held last April. AKC GR testified in support, submitted written testimony and at numerous grassroots advocacy presentations over the year, encouraged kennel clubs to email the Governor in support. The new rules require annual registration, basic sanitary conditions, core vaccinations prior to importation, record keeping; and adopters may return animals for a full refund of the adoption fee if a medical condition or behavior issue not disclosed is discovered by a veterinarian within 14 days of placement. The 330 CMR 30.00 details are [here](#).

Massachusetts – On May 8, 2020, the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government released a committee re-draft of multiple animal bills that did not include the [HB 1822](#) proposed ban on dogs outside and unattended opposed by AKC GR, dog owners, breeders, sportsmen and police officers that have dogs that would be negatively impacted. The committee re-draft, [SB 2760](#) has been sent to Senate Ways and Means Committee where additional dog legislation is under consideration. It would make significant harmful changes to current law if enacted. AKC GR is working with Massachusetts advocates to create a bill summary outlining all the concerns.

Massachusetts – Two pet retail ban bills [HB 800](#) and [SB 175](#) were re-drafted by the Joint Committee on Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure. The re-draft, [SB 2592](#), Reforming the Sale of Cats, Dogs and Rabbits in the Commonwealth does not ban pet stores from selling dogs or cats. Instead, it establishes health certificate requirements, consumer protections and standards for all animal transfers whether made by a pet store, animal shelter, rescue or breeder. AKC GR is generally pleased with [SB 2592](#) and will advocate for clarifying amendments when the General Court resumes normal session procedures.

Massachusetts – [SB 2158](#) would create a civil infraction for presenting a pet dog as a service dog and authorize the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development to prepare and make available to businesses upon request: (i) a decal suitable for posting in a front window or door stating that service dogs are welcome and that misrepresentation of a service dog is a violation of Massachusetts law; and (ii) a brochure detailing permissible questions a business owner may ask to determine whether a dog is a service dog, acceptable answers to those questions, and guidelines defining unacceptable behavior. It was favorably reported from the Joint Federal Affairs Committee on April 21, 2020 and sent to Senate Ways and Means for consideration. AKC GR supports this bill.

Massachusetts – [HB 4230](#) and [SB 2423](#) (“Nero’s bill”) would allow EMTs to treat and transport law enforcement K9s injured in the line of duty. Grassroots support from the Massachusetts dog clubs has been significant. AKC GR continues to work with bill sponsors to pass the legislation this session.

Massachusetts – [SB 595](#) would prohibit insurance companies from denying homeowners or renters insurance, or from requiring a higher premium based upon breed, size or weight of a dog owned. On April 27, 2020, the bill was reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Financial Services Bill and was referred to the committee on Senate Ways and Means. The Massachusetts Federation of Dog Clubs and AKC GR support it.

New Hampshire –The House of Representatives resumed formal session on June 11, 2020 and a vote to suspend the rules allowing the extension of legislative deadlines and continued activity failed to obtain the two-thirds majority necessary. Both [HB 371](#) and [HB 1630](#) would change the number of dogs that may be transferred from 25 to 35 in a year without requiring a state pet vendor license and were voted

favorably by the House in March and sent to the Senate. Due to the pandemic, neither bill has had a Senate hearing and are unlikely to pass before the end of the session.

New Hampshire – The Department of Agriculture is strongly advocating for the tools to implement the health certificate requirement for animal transfers re-enacted last year. [HB 1627](#) would establish a statewide electronic animal records database where veterinarians, shelters, pet vendors and hobby breeders would be required to submit health certificates and rabies vaccination records. AKC GR and NH DOGS testified in February supporting the requirement for health certificates, but expressing among other concerns, the lack of confidentiality for personally identifiable information included in the database. House Environment and Agriculture committee changes eliminated any reference to “hobby breeder”- a term not defined in NH law, and included extensive privacy protections before favorable release. On June 1, 2020 the House Ways and Means Committee approved the funding stream to establish the database and sent [HB 1627 as amended](#) to the consent calendar. With the legislative session near end, the Senate folded multiple bills already heard in that chamber into multiple omnibus amendments for passage. A 66-page amendment to HB 1234, relative to the heating of state buildings in Concord, includes the animal records database. Although the confidentiality provisions are strong, AKC GR and NH DOGS submitted written testimony and testified remotely requesting that [HB 1630](#), already approved by the House, be added. The Senate committee chose not to do so.

New Hampshire – AKC GR and NH DOGS have successfully negotiated an amendment to address concerns with [SB 608](#) authorizing the public to take whatever action necessary to rescue an animal subject to extreme temperature in a motor vehicle, without liability. The amendment, under Senate Committee on Judiciary review, would authorize law enforcement to permit an individual with a witness present to rescue an animal under extreme circumstances.

Rhode Island – The Department of Environmental Management regulations for the temporary import of animals into the state for fair, exhibition or show become final on June 22. AKC GR and the Rhode Island kennel clubs worked closely with the State Veterinarian to ensure that the [final rule](#) creates a process for identifying any animal that may pose a risk of infectious disease and its removal, but without the proposed text that would have required a veterinarian on-site for the

duration of the event and reporting to the agency the color of every entry.

Rhode Island – [House Bill 7912](#) and [SB 2698](#) would allow state courts to appoint a law student or volunteer lawyer to serve as an animal's advocate during court proceedings to represent the animal in the interests of justice. Advocates of the bill report having approval for the measure from the State Veterinarian and the chiefs of police. AKC GR has spoken with Rhode Island dog clubs about concerns that the measure could result in changing the legal status of animals as property. A fact sheet has been finalized with club logos for distribution to lawmakers if a public hearing is scheduled. The concerns have been communicated to the State Veterinarian.

Vermont – The Vermont Legislature committed to review formal recommendations by the Vermont Animal Cruelty Investigation Advisory Board. After informal discussions, including with the Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs with input by AKC GR, the House Agriculture Committee introduced [HB 940](#) establishing animal cruelty investigation, training and certification for animal control officers. The bill has been posted to the notice calendar for House consideration. AKC GR will continue to work closely with the Federation on bill text.

Vermont – [HB 636](#) requires a dog trainer to inform his or her client of the methods and equipment that will be used to train the client's dog and of the risks and benefits of those methods and equipment, and to require the dog trainer to obtain the client's consent to that training. AKC GR plans to contact the bill sponsor to understand the rationale for the measure once the pandemic emergency subsides.

Vermont – Animal rescues and shelters are [asking Governor Scott](#) for authority via emergency orders to resume importing animals into the state and considering breeding animals to meet the demand for pets. In 2016, registration and oversight requirements for animal importers and shelters were eliminated. The Vermont Federation of Dog Clubs sent a letter to the Governor on May 21st stating that public health and safety requires registration, vaccination and quarantine by these organizations. AKC GR issued [an alert](#) encouraging emails be sent to the Governor in support of the federation's letter and forwarded a similar request to him on June 3, 2020.