

New England State Issues February 2024

Massachusetts – In response to dog injuries and deaths at dog day care facilities, [HB 2019](#) and [SB 1309](#) have been re-filed as “Ollie’s Law” and would impose requirements such as staffing ratios for boarding, training, dog day care, breeding and personal kennels. They would authorize animal control officers to inspect and tell you how many dogs you are allowed to own and enforce a new “personal breeder kennel” license for anyone with more than 4 intact female dogs over 6 months who transfers any offspring. Personal breeder kennels and commercial breeder kennels would be held to the same future regulations. They had a hearing in the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee on September 26. Details are in AKC’s [alert](#). On February 7 the committee requested an extension until June 14 to review these bills.

Massachusetts – [HB 314](#) would provide consumer protections at dog day care businesses and is supported by multiple animal welfare organizations, including AKC. It has been referred to the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee.

Massachusetts – [HB 2424](#) would establish a Retired Police Dog Care Fund. Police K9s are exceptional dogs that immeasurably enhance public safety.

Massachusetts – [SB 876/HB 1367](#) would prohibit housing authorities and certain housing agreements from discriminating against tenants based upon the size, weight or breed of dog owned. They also prohibit insurance companies from discriminating based upon dog breed. The bills have been referred to the Joint Committee on Housing.

Massachusetts – [SB 1311](#) would eliminate from current law text that exempts from pet shop licensure any person selling, exchanging or otherwise transferring the offspring of their personally owned animals. After a September public hearing in the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee the committee requested an extension until June 14 to consider it. Read AKC’s [alert](#).

Massachusetts – [HB 801](#) would eliminate a 48 hour facility quarantine requirement when animals are imported from neighboring states for resale or imported directly to permanent or temporary Massachusetts foster homes. AKC is concerned HB 801 may reduce compliance and increase the risk of communicable disease spread to animals and people resident in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts – [HB 747](#), [HB 826](#), [SB 549](#), and [SB 550](#) would require Massachusetts licensed pet shops or future pet shops to only provide the public with dogs and cats sourced from animal shelter or rescue organizations. In AKC’s experience, the number of puppies produced by responsible breeders does not satisfy demand. Shelter and rescue animals are not the best option for every family that wants a pet. AKC issued [an alert](#) and testimony was provided in opposition to these bills at the November 8 Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources’ public hearing. On February 6 the committee requested an extension until April 12 to consider HB 826.

Massachusetts – [HB 4241](#) is an abuse and exploitation prevention bill favorably released from committee and passed in the House on January 10. It would also define “coercive control” allowing issuance of restraining orders when a person commits or threatens to commit cruelty or abuse to animals connected to the family or household member. AKC supports the bill. It is pending in Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Massachusetts – [HB 1718](#) and [SB 1142](#) would establish a taskforce of Massachusetts lawyers and MSPCA/ARL-Boston to review cruelty laws and make recommendations including whether to establish a domestic animal cruelty misdemeanor charge; prohibit sale of animals under 8 weeks and transferring animals roadside with few exceptions; and allow for animal seizure and owner’s payment of board pending court action for suspected neglect. AKC testified in 2023 supporting the humane care provisions of the bills and requesting the committee ensure due process protections and consistent terminology. The committee has received an extension to consider the bills until April 30, 2024.

New Hampshire – [HB 1102](#) would label brachycephaly a “birth deformity” and make the breeding or sale of any animal that has a “birth deformity” that causes suffering a crime. A public hearing scheduled for January 16 and detailed in this [AKC alert](#) was cancelled by the committee. The hearing has been rescheduled for March 5.

New Hampshire – [SB 541](#) would define “pet vendor” as related to a “retail pet store” as a licensee that transfers animals at retail to the public from a physical facility. It would also: cap “retail pet stores” to the transfer of cats and dogs at 2023 levels; prohibit the sale of “retail pet stores” to anyone but family members; and require future NH “retail pet stores” to source dogs and cats only from animal shelters. AKC issued [an alert](#) and testified in opposition on January 4. The committee voted February 6 to refer the bill to interim study. A companion bill, [HB 1680](#), was considered by the House Environment and Agriculture Committee on January 16. AKC testified in opposition with NH DOGS and the bill was voted inexpedient to legislate on February 6. Details are [here](#).

New Hampshire – [SB 385](#) would allow payments from the cost of care fund to be distributed to a third party for the care of animals during animal cruelty cases. It is pending in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

New Hampshire – [SB 587](#) allow animals as part of a litter transported into the state to be quarantined together. As filed, the bill could result in additional quarantine exemptions. AKC submitted testimony expressing concern and, with NH DOGS, requested an amendment by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources during the January 9 public hearing. [The amendment](#) was adopted before the committee voted favorably and the [amended bill](#) passed the Senate on January 18.

New Hampshire – [HB 1501](#) would repeal the requirement that cats and dogs be registered annually. The bill is pending in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 1505](#) would establish an animal abuse offender registry. The bill is pending in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 1233](#) would exempt individuals who have completed a nationally recognized animal chiropractic program, as determined by the executive director of the office of professional licensure and certification, from veterinary licensure requirements. The Executive Departments and Administration Committee voted February 1 that it ought to pass.

New Hampshire – [HB 1556](#) would remove the requirement that dogs exempt from the rabies vaccine requirement be muzzled. The bill is pending in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 1526](#) would enable the board of veterinary medicine to issue a conditional veterinary license for veterinarians who are educated in other countries. Multiple reports of a New Hampshire veterinarian shortage exist. Timely canine access to veterinary care is an AKC priority and AKC submitted testimony on February 6 in support of enhancing access after issuing [this alert](#). The committee has sent the bill to subcommittee for review.

New Hampshire – [HB 1173](#) would authorize seizure and a court order to issue and euthanize any dog that has attacked a human being or a domestic animal that resulted

in the puncture or tearing of skin, two or more times within a 12 month period. The bill is pending in the House Environment and Agriculture Committee.

New Hampshire – [HB 1626](#) would repeal certain designated funds and change where dog licensing fees are distributed. The House Environment and Agriculture Committee considered the bill on January 8. Committee voted it ought to pass and referred it to Ways and Means Committee on February 1.

Rhode Island – [HB 7163](#) would amend the domestic violence protection orders by authorizing the court to award “custody” of the pet. Given the complex dilemma involving pets and domestic violence situations, AKC supports this concept, but expressed concern about the use of the word “custody” in written testimony.

Rhode Island – [HB 7294](#) would prohibit captive hunting for domestic or wild animals without prohibiting the release of upland game birds for hunting on licensed shooting preserves. AKC negotiated a clarifying amendment with proponents of the bill to ensure that adoption would not interfere with lawful field trials.

Vermont – [H. 626](#) is a comprehensive animal welfare bill to establish a Division of Animal Welfare at the Department of Public Safety that would develop, implement, and administer a centralized program for investigating and enforcing animal welfare requirements in the State. It also would amend or establish standards for the operation of animal shelters and animal rescue organizations and detail requirements for the importation or transportation of animals into the State. The bill has been referred to the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee. The first group of witness testimony was offered on February 15 and additional testimony is expected to be requested.

Vermont – [HB 407](#) proposes to allow courts the discretion to place restrictions on people convicted of animal cruelty offenses regarding their future ownership interest in animals.

Vermont – [HB 536](#) would prohibit insurance companies from discriminating against homeowners based solely on the presence of one or more domestic dogs of a specific breed or mixture of breeds.

Vermont – [HB 567](#) prohibit a pet shop in the State from selling dogs, cats, or wolf-hybrids, unless the pet shop is providing space to an animal shelter or a rescue organization offering dogs, cats, or wolf-hybrids to the public for adoption for an adoption fee or the pet shop was selling dogs, cats, or wolf-hybrids prior to July 1, 2024, and the pet shop maintains its ownership and license and does not exceed the number of dogs, cats, or wolf-hybrids sold in calendar year 2023.

Vermont – [HB 234](#) would create an animal control program that would establish regional offices to: support municipalities with animal control programs and services primarily directed at domestic pets; provide free or low-cost vaccination, spay, and neuter programs; and investigate potential locations, resources, and personnel to establish regional pound and shelter facilities.

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