

# New England State Issues March 2024

**Connecticut** – [HB 5223](#) seeks to amend the legal definition of “grooming facility” to include those doing business in “any vehicle or trailer”. During a February 28 hearing on the bill by the Joint Committee on Environment, AKC and the Connecticut Federation of Dog Clubs requested a bill amendment to ensure that the bill’s language would not be broadly interpreted to include professional handlers exhibiting in the state. Following AKC’s request and a meeting with legislative and administrative staff, the Connecticut Department of Agriculture determined that those who groom a dog in preparation for a competitive event would not be impacted by the language. Read more [here](#).

**Connecticut** – [SB 339](#) would require restitution be paid by anyone that injures or kills a police K-9 or volunteer search and rescue dog, including costs for incurred veterinary services and costs incurred in the purchase and training of a replacement dog. SB 339 was considered by the Public Safety and Security Committee on March 7, 2024 and AKC provided supportive testimony.

**Connecticut** – [SB 427](#) would (1) increase the penalty for intentionally injuring a police animal or dog in a volunteer canine search and rescue team; (2) establish a penalty for annoying, teasing, tormenting or harassing a police animal confined in a motor vehicle; (3) allow emergency medical services personnel to provide emergency treatment and transportation to an injured police animal under certain circumstances; and (4) establish a grant program to provide canine officers with body armor. AKC supports this bill, which is pending in the Joint Judiciary Committee.

**Connecticut** – [HB 5304](#) would designate the Siberian Husky as the state dog. The Joint Government Administration and Elections Committee held a public hearing on March 8.

**Connecticut** – [HB 5176](#) would establish a task force to study the provision of emergency treatment and transportation to an animal that is injured in the performance of its duties under the supervision of a peace officer. After a favorable public hearing by the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Security, on March 14 the bill was placed on the House calendar for consideration soon. AKC supports the bill.

**Maine** – [LD 2156](#) would provide an exception to the veterinarian license laws to allow the provision of emergency medical treatment to certain law enforcement dogs injured in the line of duty in accordance with protocols adopted by the Medical Direction and

Practices Board. After a February public hearing, the bill was voted favorably on March 12 [as amended](#), to include search and rescue dogs, by the Joint Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee. It then passed the House on March 13 and the Senate on March 14.

**Maine** – On March 12, [S.P. 979](#) was filed recognizing May 1 as Purebred Dog Day. It was immediately adopted in the Senate and the House concurred with its adoption the next day, March 13.

**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, 2024, 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 remains pending in the Joint Municipalities and Regional Government Committee, which requested an extension until June 14 to take action on HB 314.

**Massachusetts** – [HB 2424](#) would establish a Retired Police Dog Care Fund. Police K9s are exceptional dogs that immeasurably enhance public safety. The bill remains pending in the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee, which request an extension until April 8 to take action on the bill.

**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 and an extension until April 18, 2024 was requested for HB 1367.

**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 in Massachusetts. The Environment and Natural Resources Committee heard the bill in November 2023 and has taken no further action.

**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 has been amended in Senate Ways and Means Committee and released on March 14 for consideration by the full Senate as [SB 2703](#).

**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

criminal act. A public hearing was conducted on March 5, 2024. AKC worked closely with its New Hampshire federation (Dog Owners of the Granite State) to establish a broad coalition in opposition, and to organize and prepare extensive testimony, alerts and public outreach, scientific rebuttal and educational information. Following the hearing, at which more than 80% of submitted testimony was in opposition, the committee voted the measure “inexpedient to legislate”. This is a significant achievement, however there are procedural options that could still allow for this measure to advance for a vote on the floor, so AKC and DOGS continue to educate and advocate in opposition to this radical bill, and provide notice and action steps as appropriate. [Read more.](#)

**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. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a public hearing on March 13, 2024 and then voted it ought to pass.

**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. The bill has been assigned to the House Environment and Agriculture Committee for further consideration.

**New Hampshire – [HB 1501](#)** would repeal the requirement that cats and dogs be registered annually. AKC testified in opposition at a House Environment and Agriculture Committee’s February 21 public hearing and the committee voted it inexpedient to legislate on March 13.

**New Hampshire** – [HB 1505](#) would establish an animal abuse offender registry. The House Environment and Agriculture Committee received AKC testimony in opposition for the February 20 public hearing because registries have not been shown to deter animal abuse and alternative enforcement methods are more effective. The committee voted the bill inexpedient to legislate on March 5.

**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. After passing the House, the bill was been scheduled for consideration by the Senate Executive Departments and Administration Committee on March 6, 2024.

**New Hampshire** – [HB 1556](#) would remove the requirement that dogs exempt from the rabies vaccine requirement be muzzled when outside. AKC testified in opposition at a House Environment and Agriculture Committee's February 21 public hearing and the committee voted it inexpedient to legislate on March 13.

**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. AKC expressed concerns at a House Environment and Agriculture Committee's February 21 public hearing that the bill did not account for instances where a dog might respond to a trespasser or have been provoked. The committee voted it inexpedient to legislate on March 13.

**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 and voted it ought to pass, followed by consideration by the Ways and Means Committee that voted the bill ought to pass on February 20, 2024. It is now pending before the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee.

**New Hampshire** – [HB 1684](#) seeks to expand the relationship eligible for “loss of consortium” damages in civil cases to include pet owners in cases involving the person’s pet when its death was caused intentionally or recklessly. AKC expressed opposition to the bill, which was considered by the House Judiciary Committee on February 21, 2024. The committee voted it inexpedient to legislate on March 12.

**New Hampshire** – AKC and NH DOGS expressed opposition to [HB 1680](#), which sought to restrict newly-defined “retail pet stores” to include anyone with a physical facility who transfers more than 30 dogs per year at retail. After a hearing on the bill, the House Environment and Agriculture Committee voted the bill “inexpedient to legislate.”

**New Hampshire** – [HB 1316](#) would define “co-ownership” of dogs so the city of Manchester, NH could verify whether dogs being boarded at an individual’s house without the proper zoning permit is valid or not. AKC reached out to the bill sponsor and city to identify an alternative solution. AKC submitted testimony in opposition to the House Environment and Agriculture’s February 21 public hearing noting the bill would remove privacy protections for some New Hampshire dog owners. On March 13, the committee voted the bill inexpedient to legislative expecting a local solution would be found.

**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. The bill has been held for further study by the House Judiciary Committee.

**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. The bill has been held for further study by the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee. On March 8, [SB 2732](#) was introduced in the Senate with the AKC clarifying amendment included. It had a public hearing on March 13 before the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 7639](#) seeks to declare that animals would no longer be considered as property under the law, reversing centuries of legal tradition and potentially destabilizing laws impacting animals. The bill was assigned to the House Judiciary



Committee. After discussions with AKC and the state veterinarian, the bill sponsor withdrew the bill from further consideration.

**Rhode Island** – [SB 2538](#) was introduced March 1 to authorize the euthanization of vicious dogs seized for dog fighting upon a finding that the dog's medical condition or behavioral condition warrants euthanasia or after a determination by the sheriff, deputy sheriff, constable, police officer, or agent of the RISPCA that there is no reasonable placement for the dog. A public hearing took place March 13 before the Senate Committee on Environment and Agriculture.

**Rhode Island** – [SB 2539](#) would permit the town of Smithfield to enact ordinances that would allow the animal control officer to issue citations which could be paid by mail and to prescribe penalties for violations of the town's ordinances regulating dogs. A public hearing took place on March 13 and the committee recommends passage. AKC is watching this bill.

**Rhode Island** – [HB 8060](#) was introduced March 13 to allow the town of Hopkinton to enact ordinances increasing the fines for violations of any dog ordinance and increasing the fee to be paid before an animal in impoundment may be released to its owner. It has been referred to House Municipal Government & Housing Committee.

**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 was referred to the House Government Operations and Military Affairs Committee which has held multiple meetings and taken testimony on the scope of the problem and how many resources the state currently expends to address it. On March 15 the committee reviewed an [amended H. 626](#) that is much narrower in scope and was approved. It would establish a new Director responsible for developing a legislative roadmap on how to move forward in creating, and funding, a new division with comprehensive responsibility for all activities. The new position would be funded by the state and an additional \$1 surcharge on dog licenses.

**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. The bill is pending before the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development with a March 17 deadline for action.

**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. The bill is pending before the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, which has scheduled testimony from witnesses on March 27. AKC submitted testimony in opposition and issued [this alert](#).

**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. The bill is pending before the House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs with a March 17 deadline for action.

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