

SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 1054

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 4, 2021

The Senate Environment and Energy Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 1054 with committee amendments.

This bill, as amended by the committee, would prohibit any rabies testing from being performed on a dead domestic companion animal until the health official requiring, or the veterinarian performing, the rabies testing, and the owner of the animal have complied with the requirements set forth in the bill.

The bill would require any health official requiring, or the veterinarian performing, rabies testing, as applicable, to notify at the first opportunity the owner of the animal, if known, verbally and in writing, of:

- (1) the necessity of the rabies testing and the reasons therefor;
- (2) the rabies testing protocol to be followed;
- (3) the protocol to be followed with regard to the handling of the animal's body;
- (4) the protocol to be followed with regard to the disposal of the animal's body or its return to the owner; and
- (5) the possibility of decapitation of the animal and, if decapitated, the possible loss of the animal's head after completion of the rabies testing.

The requirements established in the bill would not apply to vicious dogs or impounded animals suspected of being rabid.

Finally, the bill would increase penalties for persons who violate the bill's provisions as well as those of certain rabies control statutes.

The committee amendments:

- (1) add a legislative findings and declarations section to the bill;
- (2) remove language that would have required, to the best extent possible, the head of a decapitated animal tested for rabies to be returned to the owner with the rest of the animal's body if the head does not test positive for rabies;
- (3) remove language that would have allowed the owner of a domestic companion animal, who objects to the possible decapitation of the animal, to be offered the option to only have the brain removed for testing, and remove any language referring to this option throughout the bill;

(4) remove language that would have required the owner of the domestic companion animal to pay a reasonable additional cost for rabies testing of only the brain;

(5) alter the definition of “domestic companion animal” to exclude “domestic livestock”;

(6) make technical and clarifying corrections to the bill; and

(7) revise the bill’s synopsis to reflect the removal of the requirement for owner notification of testing options.