ASSEMBLY, No. 2578

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

220th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 14, 2022

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY
District 7 (Burlington)
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SYNOPSIS

Prohibits surgical declawing of cats and other animals.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/20/2023)

AN ACT concerning the surgical declawing of cats and other animals, supplementing Title 4 of the Revised Statutes, and amending R.S.4:22-26.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. (New section) a. No person shall perform, or cause to be performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectomy procedure by any means on a cat or other animal, unless the procedure is deemed necessary for a therapeutic purpose by a licensed veterinarian. A person who violates this provision shall be guilty of a disorderly persons offense.

b. Whenever a licensed veterinarian determines that an onychectomy or flexor tendonectomy is necessary for a therapeutic purpose, the veterinarian shall prepare and file a written statement with the Department of Health setting forth the purpose for performing the procedure and providing the name and address of the owner or keeper of the animal, and provide a copy of that statement to the owner of the animal. A veterinarian who fails to comply with the provisions of this section shall be subject to disciplinary action by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

c. As used in this section, "therapeutic purpose" means for purpose of necessity to address the medical condition of the animal, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in a claw that compromises the animal's health. "Therapeutic purpose" shall not mean cosmetic or aesthetic reasons or reasons of convenience in keeping or handling the animal.

2. R.S.4:22-26 is amended to read as follows:

4:22-26. A person who shall:

a. (1) Overdrive, overload, drive when overloaded, overwork, abuse, or needlessly kill a living animal or creature, or cause or procure, by any direct or indirect means, including but not limited to through the use of another living animal or creature, any such acts to be done;

(2) Torment, torture, maim, hang, poison, unnecessarily or cruelly beat, cruelly abuse, or needlessly mutilate a living animal or creature, or cause or procure, by any direct or indirect means, including but not limited to through the use of another living animal or creature, any such acts to be done;

(3) Cause the death of, or serious bodily injury to, a living animal or creature from commission of any act described in paragraph (2), (4), or (5) of this subsection, by any direct or indirect

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined <u>thus</u> is new matter.

means, including but not limited to through the use of another living animal or creature, or otherwise cause or procure any such acts to be done;

(4) Fail, as the owner or a person otherwise charged with the care of a living animal or creature, to provide the living animal or creature with necessary care, or otherwise cause or procure such an act to be done; or

(5) Cause bodily injury to a living animal or creature from commission of the act described in paragraph (4) of this subsection;

b. (Deleted by amendment, P.L.2003, c.232)

c. Inflict unnecessary cruelty upon a living animal or creature, by any direct or indirect means, including but not limited to through the use of another living animal or creature; or leave the living animal or creature unattended in a vehicle under inhumane conditions adverse to the health or welfare of the living animal or creature;

d. Receive or offer for sale a horse that is suffering from abuse or neglect, or which by reason of disability, disease, abuse or lameness, or any other cause, could not be worked, ridden or otherwise used for show, exhibition or recreational purposes, or kept as a domestic pet without violating the provisions of article 2 (C.4:22-15 et seq.) of chapter 22 of Title 4 of the Revised Statutes;

e. Keep, use, be connected with or interested in the management of, or receive money or other consideration for the admission of a person to, a place kept or used for the purpose of fighting or baiting a living animal or creature;

f. Be present and witness, pay admission to, encourage, aid or assist in an activity enumerated in subsection e. of this section;

g. Permit a person’s place owned or controlled by the person to be used as provided in subsection e. of this section;

h. Carry, or cause to be carried, a living animal or creature in or upon a vehicle or otherwise, in a cruel or inhumane manner;

i. Use a dog or dogs for the purpose of drawing or helping to draw a vehicle for business purposes;

j. Impound or confine or cause to be impounded or confined in a pound or other place a living animal or creature, and shall fail to supply the living animal or creature during such confinement with a sufficient quantity of good and wholesome food and water;

k. Abandon a maimed, sick, infirm or disabled animal or creature to die in a public place;

l. Willfully sell, or offer to sell, use, expose, or cause or permit to be sold or offered for sale, used or exposed, a horse or other animal having the disease known as glanders or farcy, or other contagious or infectious disease dangerous to the health or life of human beings or animals, or who shall, when any such disease is beyond recovery, refuse, upon demand, to deprive the animal of life;

m. Own, operate, manage or conduct a roadside stand or market for the sale of merchandise along a public street or highway; or a shopping mall, or a part of the premises thereof; and keep a living animal or creature confined, or allowed to roam in an area whether or not the area is enclosed, on these premises as an exhibit; except that this subsection shall not be applicable to: a pet shop licensed pursuant to P.L.1941, c.151 (C.4:19-15.1 et seq.); a person who keeps an animal, in a humane manner, for the purpose of the protection of the premises; or a recognized breeders' association, a 4-H club, an educational agricultural program, an equestrian team, a humane society or other similar charitable or nonprofit organization conducting an exhibition, show or performance;

n. Keep or exhibit a wild animal at a roadside stand or market located along a public street or highway of this State; a gasoline station; or a shopping mall, or a part of the premises thereof;

o. Sell, offer for sale, barter or give away or display live baby chicks, ducklings or other fowl or rabbits, turtles or chameleons which have been dyed or artificially colored or otherwise treated so as to impart to them an artificial color;

p. Use any animal, reptile, or fowl for the purpose of soliciting any alms, collections, contributions, subscriptions, donations, or payment of money except in connection with exhibitions, shows or performances conducted in a bona fide manner by recognized breeders' associations, 4-H clubs or other similar bona fide organizations;

q. Sell or offer for sale, barter, or give away living rabbits, turtles, baby chicks, ducklings or other fowl under two months of age, for use as household or domestic pets;

r. Sell, offer for sale, barter or give away living baby chicks, ducklings or other fowl, or rabbits, turtles or chameleons under two months of age for any purpose not prohibited by subsection q. of this section and who shall fail to provide proper facilities for the care of such animals;

s. Artificially mark sheep or cattle, or cause them to be marked, by cropping or cutting off both ears, cropping or cutting either ear more than one inch from the tip end thereof, or half cropping or cutting both ears or either ear more than one inch from the tip end thereof, or who shall have or keep in the person's possession sheep or cattle, which the person claims to own, marked contrary to this subsection unless they were bought in market or of a stranger;

t. Abandon a domesticated animal;

u. For amusement or gain, cause, allow, or permit the fighting or baiting of a living animal or creature; or engage in, facilitate, or provide the means to engage in, trunk fighting as defined in section 1 of P.L.2021, c.83 (C.4:22-24.1);

v. Own, possess, keep, train, promote, purchase, or knowingly sell a living animal or creature for the purpose of fighting or baiting

that animal or creature; or own, possess, buy, sell, transfer, or manufacture animal fighting paraphernalia as defined pursuant to R.S.4:22-24 for the purpose of engaging in or otherwise promoting or facilitating the fighting or baiting of a living animal or creature;

w. Gamble on the outcome of a fight involving a living animal or creature;

x. Knowingly sell or barter or offer for sale or barter, at wholesale or retail, the fur or hair of a domestic dog or cat or any product made in whole or in part from the fur or hair of a domestic dog or cat, unless such fur or hair for sale or barter is from a commercial grooming establishment or a veterinary office or clinic or is for use for scientific research;

y. (1) Knowingly sell or barter, or offer for sale or barter, at wholesale or retail, for human consumption, the flesh of a domestic dog or cat, or any product made in whole or in part from the flesh of a domestic dog or cat;

(2) Knowingly slaughter a horse for human consumption;

(3) Knowingly sell or barter, or offer for sale or barter, at wholesale or retail, for human consumption, the flesh of a horse, or any product made in whole or in part from the flesh of a horse, or knowingly accept or publish newspaper advertising that includes the offering for sale, trade, or distribution of any such item for human consumption;

(4) Knowingly transport a horse for the purpose of slaughter for human consumption;

(5) Knowingly transport horsemeat, or any product made in whole or in part from the flesh of a horse, for the purpose of human consumption;

z. Surgically debark or silence a dog in violation of section 1 or 2 of P.L.2002, c.102 (C.4:19-38 or C.4:19-39);

aa. Use a live pigeon, fowl or other bird for the purpose of a target, or to be shot at either for amusement or as a test of skill in marksmanship, except that this subsection and subsections bb. and cc. shall not apply to the shooting of game;

bb. Shoot at a bird used as described in subsection aa. of this section, or is a party to such shooting; **[**or**]**

cc. Lease a building, room, field or premises, or knowingly permit the use thereof for the purposes of subsection aa. or bb. of this section; or

dd. Perform, or cause to be performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectomy procedure on a cat or other animal in violation of section 1 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) --

Shall forfeit and pay a sum according to the following schedule, to be sued for and recovered, with costs, in a civil action by any person in the name of the municipality or county wherein the defendant resides or where the offense was committed:

For a violation of subsection e., f., g., u., v., w., or z. of this section or of paragraph (3) of subsection a. of this section, or for a second or subsequent violation of paragraph (2) or (5) of subsection a. of this section, a sum of not less than $3,000 nor more than $5,000;

For a violation of subsection l. of this section, for a first violation of paragraph (2) or (5) of subsection a. of this section, a sum of not less than $1,000 nor more than $3,000;

For a violation of paragraph (4) of subsection a. of this section, or subsection c. or dd. of this section, a sum of not less than $500 nor more than $2,000;

For a violation of subsection x. or paragraph (1) of subsection y. of this section, a sum of not less than $500 nor more than $1,000 for each domestic dog or cat fur or fur or hair product or domestic dog or cat carcass or meat product sold, bartered, or offered for sale or barter;

For a violation of paragraph (2), (3), (4), or (5) of subsection y. of this section, a sum of not less than $500 nor more than $1,000 for each horse slaughtered or transported for the purpose of slaughter for human consumption, or for each horse carcass or meat product transported, sold or bartered, or offered or advertised for sale or barter;

For a violation of subsection t. of this section, a sum of not less than $500 nor more than $1,000, but if the violation occurs on or near a highway, a mandatory sum of $1,000;

For a violation of subsection d., h., j., k., aa., bb., or cc. of this section or of paragraph (1) of subsection a. of this section, a sum of not less than $250 nor more than $1,000; and

For a violation of subsection i., m., n., o., p., q., r., or s. of this section, a sum of not less than $250 nor more than $500.

(cf: P.L.2021, c.83, s.2)

3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill would prohibit a person from performing, or causing to be performed, an onychectomy (declawing) or flexor tendonectomy procedure by any means on a cat or other animal, unless the procedure is deemed necessary for a therapeutic purpose by a licensed veterinarian. Any person who violates this provision would be guilty of a disorderly persons offense, which is punishable by a fine of up to $1,000, a term of imprisonment of up to six months, or both. A violator would also be subject to a civil penalty of between $500 and $2,000.

For purposes of the bill, the term “therapeutic purpose” means for purpose of necessity to address the medical condition of the

animal, such as an existing or recurring illness, infection, disease, injury, or abnormal condition in a claw that compromises the animal's health. "Therapeutic purpose" would not include cosmetic or aesthetic reasons or reasons of convenience in keeping or handling the animal. Under the bill, whenever a licensed veterinarian determines that an onychectomy or flexor tendonectomy is necessary for a therapeutic purpose, the veterinarian would be required to file a written statement with the Department of Health, and provide a copy of that statement to the owner or keeper of the animal. A veterinarian who fails to comply with this provision would be subject to disciplinary action by the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners.

An onychectomy involves amputating the last bone of each toe on a cat's paw with a scalpel, guillotine, or laser. A flexor tendonectomy, involves severing the tendon that controls the claw in each toe, so that the cat keeps its claws, but cannot flex or extend them. Sometimes they are medically necessary such as for the removal of cancerous tumors.