

Hawaii Considers Two Bills Affecting Dog Owners

Legislators introduce a ban on dog tethering and ownership of pit bulls.

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Hawaii legislators have introduced two bills affecting dog owners. One measure would prohibit the tethering of dogs to stationary objects and the other would prohibit ownership of a pit bull.

The Senate Committee on Water, Land, and Agriculture & Hawaiian Affairs scheduled a public hearing on the tethering bill, Senate Bill 30, for Friday, Jan. 30, at 3 p.m.

Senate Bill 30 states that the practice of animal tethering causes many pets to suffer needlessly and increases the risk of an animal posing a danger to the public. If passed, the bill would make it illegal to tether, fasten, chain, tie, or restrain a dog to a doghouse, tree, fence, or any other stationary object.

The proposed legislation does make exceptions. A dog may be tethered pursuant to the requirements of a camping or recreational area. In addition, a person can tether a dog for a "reasonable" period of time in order to complete a temporary task. A reasonable period is defined not exceeding three hours in a 24-hour period.

Other exceptions are made for herding cattle or livestock, cultivating agricultural products, and activity conducted pursuant to a valid state license that is associated with the use or presence of a dog.

Acceptable means of tethering are provided in the proposed legislation. According to the bill, a person may attach a dog to a running line, pulley, or trolley system, so long as the dog is not attached by means of a choke collar or pinch collar.

If the bill is approved, those found in violation would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Senate Bill 70, which has been assigned to the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Government Operations, would make it a misdemeanor to own, possess, or sell a pit bull. "Pit bull" is defined as any dog that is an American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, a Staffordshire Bull Terrier, or any dog displaying the majority of physical traits of any one or more of those breeds.

It also defines a pit bull as any dog exhibiting those distinguishing characteristics which substantially conform to standards established by the American Kennel Club or United Kennel Club for any of those breeds.

A public hearing for Senate Bill 70 has not been scheduled at this point.