

Florida Spay-Neuter Bill Set for Hearing

Proposal requires all dogs and cats to be sterilized at 4 months of age.

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A bill to mandate spay-neuter surgery for dogs and cats over 4 months of age in Florida has been scheduled to be heard at the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Committee's meeting Tuesday, March 24.

The proposal, House Bill 451, describes pet overpopulation as a preventable problem that can be solved "simply by spaying and neutering companion animals." As introduced, the bill requires the owner of every dog or cat in Florida to have each animal sterilized within 30 days of the animal reaching 4 months of age, or within 30 days of the owner taking in the pet.

Criteria for exemption include the following: Dogs with veterinary certification showing that sterilization would endanger the pet's health because of age, disability, or illness; A Greyhound used for racing, until retirement; Show animals registered with an established breed registration group approved by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; Dogs or cats who have earned, or are in the process of earning, a competitive sports title, such as agility or obedience; Animals trained, or in training, for use in law enforcement, military, or rescue; Animals for whom an owner holds a valid breeding permit issued in accordance with an ordinance of a county or municipality.

In addition, the bill authorizes a county or municipality to collect a surcharge of up to \$5 on civil penalties, which range from \$100 to \$250.

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