

Wisconsin Bills Aim to Regulate Dog Dealers

Companion bills set forth licensing requirements, standards of dogs' care and penalties.

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Wisconsin state legislators have introduced two measures, Assembly Bill 250 and Senate Bill 208, which seek to regulate dog dealers, animal shelters and animal-control facilities. The companion bills set forth licensing requirements, standards of care and penalties.

Under Assembly Bill 250 and Senate Bill 208, the following persons would be required to obtain an annual license: A person who sells 25 or more dogs in a year (including a non-resident who takes dogs into the state for sale). A person who operates a dog-breeding facility from which 25 or more dogs are sold in a year. A person who operates an auction at which 50 or more dogs are sold or offered for sale in a year. A person who operates an animal shelter that houses at least 25 dogs in a year. A person who operates an animal-control facility under contract with a municipality or county.

License fees are based on the number of dogs sold, ranging from \$250 to \$1,000. The fee for animal shelters and animal-control facilities is \$125.

The bills require licensees to provide dogs with "sufficient" food and water; "adequate" opportunity for daily exercise; and "necessary and standard" veterinary care, among other provisions. They also set forth recordkeeping requirements.

Under the measures, a licensee would be prohibited from transferring a dog to a buyer before the dog is seven weeks old. A licensee would also have to provide the purchaser with certain health records.

A person who fails to obtain a license may be fined up to \$10,000 and/or imprisoned for up to nine months. The bills also provide the State Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection with the authority to deny and revoke licenses as well as seize dogs from a person required to be licensed if there are "reasonable grounds to believe that the dog is being criminally mistreated."

Assembly Bill 250 has been assigned to the state Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, and Senate Bill 208 is in the state Senate Committee on Small Business, Emergency Preparedness, and Technical Colleges & Consumer Protection. At this point, neither bill has been set for a hearing.