

Legislation – What’s Hot

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Massachusetts Cat Breeder Licensing Legislation

Some Massachusetts legislators are again trying to regulate cat breeders with proposed Senate Bill 1322. If enacted, personal catteries or kennels with five or more intact females used for breeding and selling the offspring would have to be licensed.

Massachusetts State Senator Harriette L. Chandler (D -1st Worcester) and other legislators petitioned for [Senate Bill 1322](#) requiring licenses for personal breeding catteries and kennels in addition to kennels that are currently required to be [licensed](#). Existing state law allows dog owners with four or fewer dogs to voluntarily apply for a personal kennel license to avoid licensing each dog separately. However, if owners exercise that option, they would be subject to inspections and other licensee requirements. Cattery licenses do not currently exist at the state level. Senate Bill 1322 defines a cattery as a premise maintaining a collection of cats for breeding with the offspring sold as household pets. Licensing would be required of personal catteries or kennels where “not less than 5 or more sexually-intact female dogs or cats are kept for the purpose of breeding the dogs or cats and [where they] sell the offspring as household pets.” [Language added.] The term “household pets” is not used in the existing statutory definition structure where “commercial breeder kennels” only sell at wholesale and “personal kennels” sell to other breeders or individuals by private sale only with no restriction as to purposes. In the bill, “household pets” is not defined, and its use is limited to personal kennels or catteries selling “offspring as household pets” meaning retail and not wholesale transactions.

Licensing application procedures would remain the same. Personal catteries and kennels would obtain licenses from the local officials in the city or town where they are located and be subject to at least yearly inspections. Following the required inspection for the initial license application, the local licensing authority is required to determine and specify the maximum number of cats or dogs that a licensee may maintain. The bill also adds cats and catteries to the provision that 25 citizens of a city or town may file a petition with local officials if they are unreasonably “aggrieved or annoyed” by and animals or the conditions of a facility.

The bill would add a new section charging the Department of Agriculture Resources with promulgating rules and regulations for licensed entities covering a wide variety of topics. In addition to regulations governing inspections, facility maintenance, animal care, socialization, and exercise, the Department must address staff to animal ratios, handling, and insurance. *The rules and regulations must ensure that dogs and cats are bred in accordance with responsible breeding practices.* The Department would also have to develop training programs for facility staff relating to animal behavior, handling, and body language.

The bill was referred to the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government.

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