

2019 -- S 0699

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

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A N A C T

RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Introduced By: Senators Ruggerio, Ciccone, Pearson, Lombardo, and Goodwin

Date Introduced: March 21, 2019

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 4-19-1, 4-19-2, 4-19-4, 4-19-5, 4-19-5.1, 4-19-6, 4-19-7, 4-19-8,  
2 4-19-10, 4-19-16 and 4-19-20 of the General Laws in Chapter 4-19 entitled "Animal Care" are  
3 hereby amended to read as follows:

4 **4-19-1. Purpose.**

5 The purpose of this chapter is:

6 (1) To protect the owners of dogs and cats from the sale or use of stolen pets;

7 (2) To ensure that all warm-blooded, vertebrate animals, in the care of facilities licensed  
8 or registered under this chapter, are provided humane care and treatment by regulating the  
9 transportation, sale, purchase, housing, care, handling, and treatment of these animals by persons  
10 or organizations engaged in transporting, [selling](#), handling, housing, and care of these animals;

11 (3) To ensure that animals confined in pet shops, kennels, animal shelters, auction  
12 markets, breeding facilities, and pounds are provided humane care and treatment;

13 (4) To release for sale, trade, or adoption only those animals that appear to be free of  
14 infection, communicable disease, or abnormalities, unless veterinary care subsequent to release is  
15 assured; ~~and~~

16 (5) To ensure the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats that are adopted from a  
17 releasing agency;

18 [\(6\) To ensure pet shops source puppies and kittens from licensed, registered, and](#)  
19 [regulated breeders that are in good standing with the USDA and their state requirements, in order](#)

1 [to decrease the demand for puppies and kittens bred in puppy and kitten mills; and](#)  
2 [\(7\) To ensure pet shops can also source puppies and kittens from rescues and shelters to](#)  
3 [help provide homes for puppies and kittens in need.](#)

4 **4-19-2. Definitions.**

5 As used in this chapter, chapter 13 of this title, and the regulations promulgated under  
6 this chapter:

7 (1) "Adequate feed" means the provision at suitable intervals, not to exceed twenty-four  
8 (24) hours, of a quantity of wholesome foodstuff suitable for the species and age, sufficient to  
9 maintain a reasonable level of nutrition in each animal. The foodstuff shall be served in a  
10 sanitized receptacle, dish, or container.

11 (2) "Adequate veterinary care" means care by a licensed veterinarian sufficient to prevent  
12 the animal from experiencing unnecessary or unjustified physical pain or suffering.

13 (3) "Adequate water" means a constant access to a sufficient supply of clean, fresh,  
14 potable water provided in a sanitary manner and provided at suitable intervals for the species to  
15 maintain the health of the animal(s) and not to exceed twenty-four (24) hours at any interval.

16 (4) "Adopt" means when an adopting party voluntarily acquires and assumes  
17 responsibility for an animal from a releasing agency that is properly licensed or registered by the  
18 department.

19 (5) "Adopting party" means any person who enters into a contract acquiring an animal  
20 from a releasing agency that is properly licensed or registered by the department.

21 (6) "Ambient temperature" means the temperature surrounding the animal.

22 (7) "Animal" means any dog or cat, rabbit, rodent, nonhuman primate, bird or other  
23 warm-blooded vertebrate, amphibian, fish, or reptile but shall not include horses, cattle, sheep,  
24 goats, swine, and domestic fowl.

25 (8) "Animal rescue" or "rescue" means an entity, without a physical brick-and-mortar  
26 facility, that is owned, operated, or maintained by a duly incorporated humane society, animal  
27 welfare society, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or other nonprofit organization  
28 devoted to the welfare, protection, and humane treatment of animals intended for adoption.

29 (9) "Animal shelter" means a brick-and-mortar facility that is used to house or contain  
30 animals and that is owned, operated, or maintained by a duly incorporated humane society,  
31 animal welfare society, society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, or other nonprofit  
32 organization devoted to the welfare, protection, and humane treatment of animals.

33 (10) "Breeder" means a person engaged in the propagation of purebred or crossbred dogs  
34 and/or cats for the purpose of improving and enhancing a breed recognized and registered by the

1 American Kennel Club, American Field Stud Book, a registered cat breed association, or for sale  
2 at wholesale or retail, unless otherwise exempted as a hobby breeder as defined below.

3 (11) "Broker" means any third party who arranges, delivers, or otherwise facilitates  
4 transfer of ownership of animal(s), through adoption or fostering, from one party to another,  
5 whether or not the party receives a fee for providing that service and whether or not the party  
6 takes physical possession of the animal(s) at any point.

7 (12) "Dealer" means any person who sells, exchanges, or donates, or offers to sell,  
8 exchange, or donate, animals to another dealer, pet shop, or research facility, or who breeds  
9 animals for the purpose of selling or donating to another dealer or pet shop or research facility.

10 (13) "Director" means the director of environmental management of the state of Rhode  
11 Island.

12 (14) "Dog officer" or "animal-control officer" means any person employed, contracted, or  
13 appointed by the state, or any political subdivision of the state, for the purpose of aiding in the  
14 enforcement of this chapter or any other law or ordinance relating to the licensing of dogs, cats,  
15 or other animals; the control of dogs, cats or other animals; or the seizure and impoundment of  
16 dogs, cats, or other animals and includes any state or municipal peace officer, animal-control  
17 officer, sheriff, constable, or other employee whose duties, in whole or in part, include  
18 assignments that involve the seizure or taking into custody of any dog, cat, or other animal.

19 (15) "Euthanasia" means the humane destruction of an animal accomplished by a method  
20 that involves instantaneous unconsciousness and immediate death or by a method that involves  
21 anesthesia, produced by an agent that causes painless loss of consciousness and death during that  
22 loss of consciousness.

23 (16) "Guardian" shall mean a person(s) having the same rights and responsibilities of an  
24 owner, and both terms shall be used interchangeably. A guardian shall also mean a person who  
25 possesses; has title to or an interest in; harbors or has control, custody, or possession of an animal  
26 and who is responsible for an animal's safety and well-being.

27 (17) "Hobby breeder" means those persons whose regular occupation is not the breeding  
28 and raising of dogs and cats and whose method of sale is at retail only. A hobby breeder shall not  
29 exceed the limits set forth in § 4-25-1(4). Any person who sells at retail a number in excess of the  
30 limits in the aforementioned section shall be considered a breeder.

31 (18) "Housing facility" means any room, building, or area used to contain a primary  
32 enclosure or enclosures.

33 (19) "Kennel" means a place or establishment, other than a pound or animal shelter, or  
34 veterinary hospital that is housing animals during their treatment, where animals not owned by

1 the proprietor are sheltered, fed, and watered in return for a fee. This definition shall not apply to  
2 the following:

3 (i) Sheltering ~~sheltering~~, feeding, and watering in return for a fee in a residential setting,  
4 of no more than four (4) animals not owned by the proprietor, subject to any applicable municipal  
5 ordinance that may be more restrictive;

6 (ii) Any entity that sells a dog or cat.

7 (20) "Licensed releasing agency" means any animal shelter, animal-rescue, pound,  
8 animal-control officer, or broker that is required to be licensed or registered with the director  
9 pursuant to the provisions of this chapter and is so licensed or registered.

10 (21) "Neuter" means to surgically render a male dog or cat unable to reproduce.

11 (22) "Person" means any individual, partnership, firm, joint stock company, corporation,  
12 association, trust, estate, or other legal entity.

13 (23) "Pet shop" means ~~a temporary or permanent~~ an establishment where animals are  
14 bought, sold, exchanged, or offered for sale or exchange to the general public at retail. This shall  
15 not include an establishment or person whose total sales are the offspring of canine or feline  
16 females maintained on their premises and sold from those premises and does not exceed the limits  
17 set forth in § 4-25-1(4).

18 (24) "Pound" or "dog pound" means a facility operated by a state, or any political  
19 subdivision of a state, for the purpose of impounding or harboring seized, stray, homeless,  
20 abandoned, or unwanted dogs, cats, and other animals or a facility operated for that purpose under  
21 a contract with any municipal corporation or incorporated society for the prevention of cruelty to  
22 animals.

23 (25) "Primary enclosure" or "enclosure" means the most proximal barrier to an animal  
24 that will have the intended purpose or effect of containment of that animal or that will effectively  
25 restrict the liberty of the animal.

26 (26) "Public auction" means any place or location where dogs or cats are sold at auction  
27 to the highest bidder regardless of whether those dogs or cats are offered as individuals, as a  
28 group, or by weight.

29 (27) "Research facility" means any place, laboratory, or institution at which scientific  
30 tests, investigations, or experiments, involving the use of living animals, are carried out,  
31 conducted, or attempted.

32 (28) "Sanitize" means to make physically clean and to remove and destroy, to a practical  
33 minimum, agents injurious to health.

34 (29) "Sexual maturity" means when a dog or cat reaches six (6) months. In all instances,

1 the licensed, releasing agency or a licensed veterinarian will determine the age of the dog or cat.

2 (30) "Spay" means to surgically render a female dog or cat unable to reproduce.

3 (31) "State veterinarian" means a licensed veterinarian from the department of  
4 environmental management.

5 **4-19-4. Registration of animal shelters, rescues, and brokers.**

6 No person shall operate an animal shelter, rescue, or [as a](#) broker unless a certificate of  
7 registration for that animal shelter, rescue, or broker has been granted by the director. Application  
8 for that certificate shall be made in the manner provided by the director. No fee is required for the  
9 application or certificate. Certificates of registration are valid for a period of one year, or until  
10 revoked, and may be renewed annually on the first day of January for like periods upon  
11 application in the manner provided.

12 **4-19-5. Pet shop licenses.**

13 No person shall operate a pet shop, as defined in this chapter unless a license to operate  
14 that establishment shall have been granted by the director. Application for that license shall be  
15 made in the manner provided by the director. The license period is the [state's](#) fiscal year and the  
16 license fee is one hundred dollars (\$100.00) for each license period or ~~partial-period~~ [part thereof](#)  
17 beginning with the first day of the fiscal year.

18 **4-19-5.1. Breeder licenses.**

19 No person shall act as a breeder, as defined in § 4-19-2, unless in possession of a valid  
20 license to operate as a breeder granted by the director. Application for that license shall be made  
21 in the manner provided by the director. The license period is the state's fiscal year and the license  
22 fee is one hundred dollars (\$100) for each license period or ~~partial-period~~ [part thereof](#) beginning  
23 with the first day of the fiscal year.

24 **4-19-6. Public auction and kennel licenses.**

25 (a) No person shall operate a public auction or a kennel, as defined in this chapter, unless  
26 a license to operate that establishment has been granted by the director. Application for the  
27 license shall be made in the manner provided by the director. The license period is the fiscal year  
28 and the license fee shall be fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each license period or part thereof beginning  
29 with the first day of the fiscal year.

30 (b) This section shall not be interpreted to interfere in any manner with the issuing of a  
31 public auction or kennel license by any city or town, nor any fee charged by any city or town. No  
32 license shall be issued by the director except for those premises as shall be designated [for such](#)  
33 [licensure](#) by the respective city or town council.

34 (c) Pursuant to § 4-19-2(19), any person who provides the sheltering, feeding, and

1 watering in return for a fee in a residential setting of no more than four (4) animals not owned by  
2 the proprietor is:

3 (1) Exempt from licensure as a kennel under this chapter; and

4 (2) Subject to inspection by an authorized agent of the department of environmental  
5 management (hereinafter "the department") upon the department receiving a written complaint  
6 against the person. Only complaints related to animal care, animal health, and animal welfare  
7 may initiate an inspection. Any inspection that is conducted by the department shall be conducted  
8 during the hours of eight o'clock a.m. (8:00 a.m.) through five o'clock p.m. (5:00 p.m.), unless the  
9 person who is the subject of the complaint agrees to an inspection at another time; and

10 (3) Required to be compliant with the department's rules and regulations governing  
11 animal care facilities, RICR 250-RICR-40-05-4, §§ 4.7 and 4.8.A.1 through 8 (excluding the  
12 sanitation log requirements of § 4.8.A.3). Any inspection conducted by an authorized agent of the  
13 department shall be limited to the aforementioned sections and shall be limited to areas to which  
14 the animals being cared for have access. Any violations of these sections are punishable in  
15 accordance with § 4.12 of the rules and regulations governing animal care facilities and any  
16 appeal for any enforcement action shall be made in accordance with § 4.11.B of those rules and  
17 regulations; and

18 (4) Any person who is subject to inspection pursuant to the conditions set forth in  
19 subsection (c)(2), but who denies access to authorized inspectors from the department, is subject  
20 to a civil fine of three hundred fifty dollars (\$350). Each day that access is denied shall constitute  
21 a separate punishable offense.

22 **4-19-7. Dealer licenses.**

23 No person shall ~~be~~ [operate as](#) a dealer, as defined in this chapter, after the first day of the  
24 fiscal year unless a license to deal has been granted by the director to that person. Application for  
25 the license shall be made in the manner provided by the director. The license period is the fiscal  
26 year and the license fee is one hundred dollars (\$100) for each license period or part [thereof](#)  
27 beginning with the first day of the fiscal year.

28 **4-19-8. Denial of certificates of registration or licenses.**

29 (a) A certificate of registration may be denied to any pound or animal shelter, rescue, [or](#)  
30 broker, and a license may be denied to any public auction, kennel, breeder, pet shop, or dealer or,  
31 if granted, the certificate or license may be revoked by the director if, after a hearing, it is  
32 determined that the housing facilities and/or primary enclosures are inadequate for the purposes  
33 of this chapter or if the feeding, watering, sanitizing, and housing practices at the pound, animal  
34 shelter, public auction, pet shop, or kennel are not consistent with the intent of this chapter or

1 with the intent of the rules and regulations that may be promulgated pursuant to the authority of  
2 this chapter.

3 (b) Upon revocation of a certificate of registration, all animals in the possession of the  
4 pound, rescue, broker, or animal shelter must be transferred to another licensed releasing agency  
5 for disposition.

6 (c) Upon the revocation of a license, all animals in the possession of the public auction,  
7 kennel, pet shop, breeder, or dealer must be disposed of by the former licensee in a manner  
8 approved by the department. Such disposition must not be for profit and must occur in a  
9 timeframe that is determined by the department. Inspectors from the department or from the  
10 Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals must have access to the facility  
11 where the animals being housed by the former licensee are being held until disposition so that the  
12 welfare of said animals can be assured.

13 **4-19-10. Dealing in animals without a license.**

14 Any person ~~dealing in~~ [who operates as a dealer of](#) animals, as defined in this chapter,  
15 without a currently valid license shall, upon conviction, plea of guilty, or plea of nolo contendere,  
16 be punished pursuant to § 4-19-11.3. Each day of operation shall constitute a separate offense.

17 **4-19-16. Mandatory spaying and neutering of dogs and cats adopted from a licensed**  
18 **releasing agency.**

19 (a)(1) No licensed releasing agency shall release, sell, trade, give away, exchange, adopt  
20 out, or otherwise transfer with or without a fee any dog or cat that has not been spayed or  
21 neutered unless the adopting party executes a written agreement with the licensed releasing  
22 agency to have the dog or cat spayed or neutered in accordance with subdivisions (2) and (3) [of](#)  
23 [this section.](#)

24 (2) The licensed releasing agency is authorized to enter into a written adoption agreement  
25 with the adopting party provided that at the time of execution of the written agreement, the  
26 licensed releasing agency collect from the adopting party an amount equal to the cost to the  
27 licensed releasing agency for the spaying or neutering of the dog or cat to be adopted. The written  
28 agreement must include the dog or cat's age, sex, and general description; the date the adoption  
29 agreement was executed; the date by which the licensed releasing agency anticipates that the dog  
30 or cat will be spayed or neutered; the date by which the adoptive party shall claim the dog or cat;  
31 the adopting party's name, address, phone number, and signature; the licensed releasing agency's  
32 name, address, phone number, and the dollar amount remitted to the licensed releasing agency for  
33 the cost of spaying or neutering the dog or cat.

34 (3) After execution of the agreement, the licensed releasing agency shall cause the dog or

1 cat to be spayed or neutered and, when medically fit, shall transfer custody of the dog or cat to the  
2 adopting party. Any dog or cat that is not claimed by the adoptive party within ten (10) days of  
3 the date enumerated in the written adoption agreement shall be considered unclaimed and may be  
4 offered for adoption to another party.

5 (b) The following are exemptions from the provisions of subsection (a):

6 (1) A licensed releasing agency returns a stray dog or cat to its owner.

7 (2) A licensed releasing agency receives a written report from a licensed veterinarian  
8 stating that the life of the dog or cat would be jeopardized by the surgery and that this health  
9 condition is likely to be permanent.

10 (3) A licensed releasing agency receives a written report from a licensed veterinarian  
11 stating that there is a temporary health condition, including sexual immaturity, which would make  
12 surgery life threatening to the dog or cat or impracticable, in which instance the licensed releasing  
13 agency shall enter into a written agreement for the spaying or neutering of the dog or cat upon  
14 resolution of the temporary health condition or the animal reaching maturity and shall collect  
15 from the adopting party an amount equal to the cost to the licensed releasing agency for the  
16 spaying or neutering of the dog or cat to be adopted. The licensed releasing agency may then  
17 allow the transfer of the dog or cat to the adopting party who shall return the dog or cat to the  
18 licensed releasing agency for spaying or neutering upon resolution of the temporary health  
19 condition or the animal reaching sexual maturity. The licensed releasing agency may grant the  
20 adopting party an appropriate extension of time in which to have the dog or cat spayed or  
21 neutered based on the veterinarian's report.

22 (4) A licensed releasing agency transfers a dog or cat to another licensed releasing  
23 agency.

24 (c) If requested to do so, a licensed releasing agency shall refund fees collected for the  
25 purpose of spaying or neutering the dog or cat to the adopting party upon reasonable proof being  
26 presented to the releasing agency by the adopting party that the dog or cat died before the spaying  
27 or neutering was required to be completed.

28 (d) Any and all licensed releasing agencies:

29 (1) May enter into cooperative agreements with each other and with veterinarians in  
30 carrying out this section; and

31 (2) Shall make a good faith effort to cause an adopting party to comply with this section.

32 **4-19-20. Severability.**

33 If any provision of this chapter or the application of any provision to any person or  
34 circumstances ~~are~~ is held invalid, the remainder of the chapter and the application of any



1 provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid shall not be  
2 affected by this invalidity.

3 SECTION 2. Chapter 4-19 of the General Laws entitled "Animal Care" is hereby  
4 amended by adding thereto the following sections:

5 **4-19-4.1. Sales by pet shops.**

6 (a) A pet shop shall not purchase a dog or cat for resale or offer for sale a dog or cat that  
7 was purchased from any of the following:

8 (1) Breeder, broker, or dealer that:

9 (i) Is not in possession of a current license issued by the United States Department of  
10 Agriculture (USDA) pursuant to the Animal Welfare Act (AWA), and any license that may be  
11 required by an applicable state agency.

12 (ii) Has not had its federal or state license suspended in the last two (2) years.

13 (iii) Was found to have a non-compliance inspection rating of "critical" as defined by the  
14 USDA as "a serious or severe adverse effect on the health or well-being of an animal", to the  
15 AWA as monitored by the USDA within the last two (2) years, and such inspection report citing  
16 the non-compliance has not been rescinded or amended.

17 (iv) Was found to have a non-compliance inspection rating of "direct" as defined by the  
18 USDA as "a critical non-compliance that is currently (at the time of inspection) having a serious  
19 or severe adverse effect on the health and well-being of the animal", to the AWA as monitored by  
20 the USDA within the last two (2) years, and such inspection report citing the non-compliance has  
21 not been rescinded or amended.

22 (2) Hobby breeder or person that is without any criminal conviction in relation to the  
23 welfare of animals in the last five (5) years.

24 (3) Animal rescue or shelter that is without any license revocation within the last two (2)  
25 years.

26 (b) A pet shop shall be required to provide the following:

27 (1) A seven (7) day health certificate prior to the sale of a dog or cat by a licensed  
28 veterinarian in the state of Rhode Island.

29 (2) Records that verify compliance with this section for not less than two (2) years  
30 following the date of acquisition of the dog or cat, they include:

31 (i) USDA inspection reports if applicable;

32 (ii) Source of each dog or cat in the pet shop acquired, including a description of the dog  
33 or cat and the name, address, USDA license number of the breeder, broker, dealer, bureau of  
34 criminal investigation (BCI) results of hobby breeder, and person; and

1           (iii) Records shall be made available immediately upon the request of the department.

2           (4) An owner or operator of a pet shop shall maintain the standards within this section.

3           This section shall prohibit a city or town from adoption of an ordinance that would supersede this  
4           section.

5           (5) A pet shop owner or operator who violates this section, pursuant to the requirements  
6           of this section, shall be punished by a fine of not more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) for a first  
7           offense, by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars (\$100) for a second offense, and a fine of  
8           not more than two hundred dollars (\$200) for a third or subsequent offense. Each dog or cat sold  
9           or offered for sale in violation of this section shall constitute a separate offense.

10           **4-19-4.2. Prohibition on sales in public places.**

11           (a) It shall be unlawful for any person to sell, exchange, trade, barter, lease or display for  
12           a commercial purpose any dog or cat on any roadside, public right-of-way, parkway, median,  
13           park, other recreation area, flea market or other outdoor market, or commercial or retail parking  
14           lot regardless of whether such access is authorized.

15           (b) This section shall not apply to the following:

16           (1) The display or adoption of dogs or cats by an animal shelter, pound or rescue as  
17           defined by this chapter; or

18           (2) The display of dogs or cats as part of a state or county fair exhibition, 4-H program, or  
19           similar exhibitions or educational programs.

20           SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

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1           This act would prohibit pet shops from purchasing dogs or cats from breeders who are  
2 not in good standing with the USDA and/or state regulations, as well as hobby breeders or  
3 individuals who have any criminal violations directly related to the general well-being of animals,  
4 or animal shelters or rescues whose licensure has been revoked. This act would also make it  
5 unlawful for any person to sell, exchange, trade, barter or display any dog or cat on any roadside,  
6 public right-of-way, parkway, median, park, or other outdoor market.

7           This act would take effect upon passage.

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