

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023

A N A C T

RELATING TO ANIMALS AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY -- CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Introduced By: Representative William W. O'Brien

Date Introduced: February 17, 2023

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 4-1-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 4-1 entitled "Cruelty to  
2 Animals" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **4-1-3. Unnecessary cruelty.**

4 (a) Every owner, possessor, or person having the charge or custody of any animal, who  
5 cruelly drives or works that animal when unfit for labor, or cruelly abandons that animal, or who  
6 carries that animal or who fails to provide that animal with adequate living conditions as defined  
7 in § 4-1-1, or who engages in the hazardous accumulation of animals as defined in § 4-1-1, or  
8 causes that animal, to be carried, in or upon any vehicle or otherwise, in a cruel or inhuman manner;  
9 or willfully, intentionally, maliciously, recklessly, and/or knowingly authorizes or permits that  
10 animal to be subjected to unnecessary torture, suffering, or cruelty of any kind; or who places, or  
11 causes to have placed, on any animal any substance that may produce irritation or pain or that is  
12 declared a hazardous substance by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or by the state  
13 department of health, shall be punished for each offense in the manner provided in § 4-1-2. If the  
14 offense described in this section results in the death of the animal, the person shall be punished in  
15 the manner provided in § 4-1-5. If any owner, possessor, or person having the charge or custody of  
16 any animal is found guilty of or pleads nolo contendere to a violation of this section and said  
17 violation involves the hazardous accumulation of animals, the court shall, in imposing a penalty  
18 under this section, take into account whether the defendant's conduct could be considered to be the  
19 result of a mental health disorder as defined in § 27-38.2-2.

1 (b) The substances proscribed by subsection (a) do not include any drug having curative  
2 and therapeutic effect for disease in animals and that is prepared and intended for veterinary use.

3 (c) University, college, or hospital research facilities licensed and/or inspected by the U.S.  
4 Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Public Health Service of the Department of Health and  
5 Human Services shall be exempt from the provisions of subsection (a) provided that they are in  
6 good standing with the federal agency responsible for licensing or assurance of the facility.

7 (d) A person convicted of killing an animal or under circumstances rising to the level of  
8 unnecessary cruelty amounting to torture under subsection (a) of this section shall not harbor, own,  
9 possess, exercise control over, adopt, or foster an animal for their lifetime. Any person found in  
10 violation of this subsection may, in addition to any other punishment provided by law, be fined an  
11 amount not to exceed one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each animal held in unlawful ownership or  
12 possession. Any animal involved in a violation described in this subsection shall be forfeited to the  
13 Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals pursuant to § 4-1-22.

14 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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1           This act would prohibit a person convicted of killing an animal or of unnecessary cruelty  
2 to animals amounting to torture from owning or exercising control of an animal for life and would  
3 be subject to a fine of one thousand dollars (\$1000) for each violation of this act. Any animal  
4 involved in the offense would be forfeited to the Rhode Island Society for Prevention of Cruelty to  
5 Animals.

6           This act would take effect upon passage.

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